

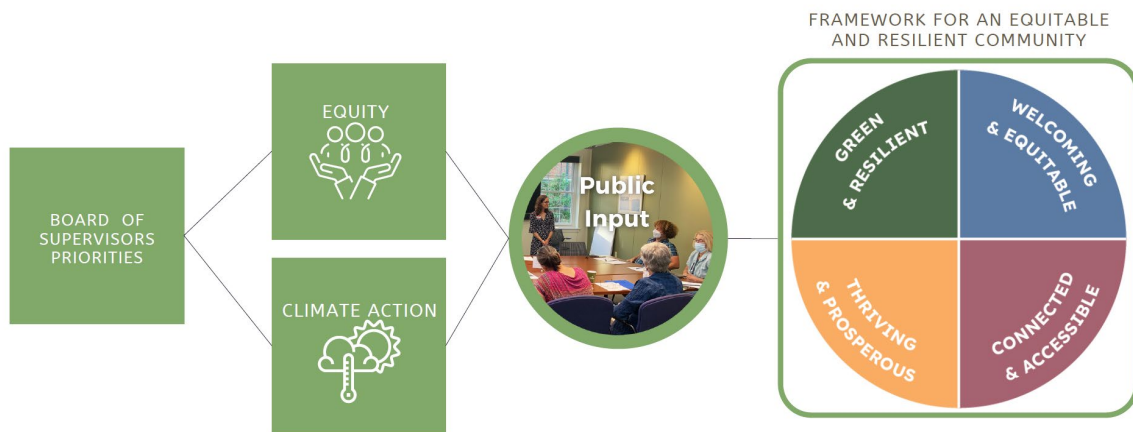


Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community

AC44 Comprehensive Plan Update

What is the Framework:

The AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community is an aspirational view of Albemarle County in the year 2044. This framework prioritizes equity and resilience as key principles to guide our policies and practices for the next 20 years. It is not a game plan for how we get there yet – that will be developed in the next phases of AC44 – but it is a guide for where we want to go, based on extensive input from community members, the AC44 Working Group, the Planning Commission, and initial direction provided by the Board of Supervisors.



The framework presents a snapshot of what the County aspires to be in the year 2044 - a community that has centered equity and resilience in its policies, plans, and actions. It will be a community that is resilient to challenges (including climate change) and where all people have the opportunity to thrive.

Purpose of the Framework:

Public feedback as part of the Phase 1 engagement process reflected the diversity of opinions related to future growth in the County. Some people felt there is not enough density and growth in the County, for example, while others felt that there was too much.

The purpose of the Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community in this phase of the overall AC44 process is to bring together a general consensus among different interests and to prioritize equity and climate action as we move toward updating the policies in the existing 2015 Comprehensive Plan. As the process moves into specific strategies and implementation in the next phases, the community's diverse interests will undoubtedly have differences of opinion about how policies should be implemented. The Framework can help bring us back to the general principles that were our common ground when we start to work through the different ways those principles could be implemented. More specifically, the purpose of the Framework is to:

- To find common ground among different interests for moving forward with a policy direction for growth management; and
- To build a foundation of community support that we can come back to for guidance in drafting policies; and
- To give guidance to an update of the Comprehensive Plan that incorporates the Board's initiatives of Equity and Climate Action; and
- To consolidate similar content and set clear priorities to support the AC44 project goal of improving Plan usability and creating a streamlined document.

As we move towards 2044, Albemarle County aspires to be...



A Green and Resilient Community

The County will strive for healthy and thriving ecosystems with protected natural resources, such as the Rivanna River and Blue Ridge Mountains, water, wildlife, forests, and other natural resources. It will work towards protecting these resources, especially those that serve as natural carbon sinks, increase biodiversity, and enhance its resilience to climate change. As part of the commitment to resilience, the County should encourage sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices that are supported through a robust local food system making healthy food choices available locally. The County's legacy of valuing its natural, historic, and cultural resources should support a thriving rural economy with sustainable farming and heritage based and ecologically based tourism.

Green and resilient designs should be incorporated into new neighborhoods, including compact, mixed-use developments with parks, trails, and energy-efficient design. Existing neighborhoods should have parks, trails, and new landscaping and tree canopy added to them to bring greater access to green space and resilience to climate change and environmental challenges. Green and resilient designs should also be incorporated in the Rural Area through energy efficient building practices, retrofits of existing building stock, and conservation site design.



A Welcoming and Equitable Community

The County seeks to be a place that enhances the well-being and quality of life for current and future community members. Neighborhoods should be inclusive and incorporate where possible a mix of uses, green spaces, and a variety of housing types that are accessible and affordable to all income levels and abilities. Access to a range of services, including schools, community centers, recreation, health care and other needs for daily life should be equitably distributed to all communities and income groups, including within key locations in the Rural Area to support rural communities. New developments should be designed as “complete communities” where possible with a core of amenities and services within or adjacent to a wide choice of housing types and connected trails and green spaces.

Older single-use commercial centers should be redeveloped as vibrant mixed-use communities that are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. These new centers may be stand-alone mixed-use centers or provide a complementary mix of uses to adjacent residential or commercial uses. County policies and investment should support the revitalization of older residential neighborhoods to incorporate accessible amenity spaces and community services. New housing and infill development within existing neighborhoods should be appropriately scaled and designed to be compatible with nearby homes. Continued transparency, openness of information, and accessible locations and formats for engagement should be promoted to create an informed and engaged community with a variety of opportunities to participate in civic life.



A Connected and Accessible Community

The County will work to become more equitably connected and accessible with safe, affordable, and comfortable multimodal transportation options for all ages and abilities. Fast, reliable, public transit should be available along major corridors connecting key nodes of the County, and many community members should be able to safely travel throughout the County without needing a personal vehicle. In existing and new neighborhoods, there should be a network of trails, parks, streets, and greenways that serve all ages and abilities. In the Rural Area, there should be multimodal options for walking and bicycling that coexist safely with cars and buses. Natural and wild areas should be protected and there will be wildlife habitats with connecting corridors and stream networks.

This connectivity needs to be achieved by proactively using public funds and by leveraging private improvements through development practices that build better connections for people and nature in our communities. The County should partner regionally to improve access and connections beyond its boundaries to enhance livability and connectedness for all residents and businesses.



A Thriving and Prosperous Community

Albemarle County aspires to be economically thriving with ample job opportunities and clear pathways for all community members to thrive. The County should ensure that there is substantial land and infrastructure to support new industries, while supporting and expanding existing businesses and local entrepreneurs. The County's workforce should have robust educational and job training with career ladder opportunities for all, as well as a supportive system that includes affordable housing, flexible transportation options, and accessible community services. There should be available makerspaces and incubators for local artists, entrepreneurs, and small businesses.

Economic development should also be integrated into broader community planning, incorporating data to track economic opportunity and plan for industry and workforce development needs as growth occurs. The County should value, enhance, and preserve its vital local assets, capitalizing on its historic resources, natural resources, activities, local businesses, and arts and cultural resources to leverage a variety of tourism opportunities. The County should also partner with schools, colleges, and universities to support a 21st century workforce.

How the Framework will be used:

Phases 2 and 3 of the AC44 process will refine and update the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, using the Framework for guidance. In Phase 2, the Framework will be used to guide the overall structure of the Plan update, incorporating the focus on equity and climate action in a new plan format and structure. It will also be used to provide specific input on equity and resilience into each of the various topics in the updated Plan. In addition, in Phases 2 and 3, we will continue to explore the Growth Management Options that were shared in the previous Phase 1 round of engagement, again using the themes in the Framework for policy guidance. Finally, the Framework will provide guidance for developing a structure for measuring success as policies are established and implemented. In recognition of the AC44 project goals and diverse interests that have been expressed in the community outreach process in Phase 1, the Framework should be used as a common benchmark to return to as we collaboratively explore solutions.