

# Community Input Themes: Rural Area Land Use



This document includes an overview of community engagement opportunities and major themes heard through community input related to Rural Area Land Use. These themes, along with direction from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, technical research and best practices, and input from staff and partner agencies, inform the development of Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

## PHASE 1 ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

We asked for community input on:

- The successes and challenges of the current Growth Management Policy (per the 2015 Comp Plan) and what should be prioritized with a Policy update
- Options for updating the Growth Management Policy to address 1) projected demand and population growth; 2) equitable access to services/resources; 3) implementing the Climate Action Plan and build community resilience
- The draft Guiding Principles and whether they guide us toward a more equitable and resilient community

AC44 Guiding Principles



Engagement opportunities included:

- 3 online questionnaires
- 4 round tables
- 5 pop-ups
- 4 open houses

### Phase 1 Engagement Totals:

- Attendance at in-person and virtual events: 254
- Online questionnaire responses: 637
- Website visits: 6,964



## PHASE 2 ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

We asked for community input on:

- Challenges, priorities, and opportunities for each Comp Plan topic
- What we want our community to be like in 2044, with questions including:
  - How do you want to get around the County in 2044 (e.g. walk, bike, drive, take transit)?
  - What business or job opportunities do you need to ensure you are financially stable and secure in 2044?
  - How might your housing needs change between now and 2044?
  - What types of businesses, amenities, recreational opportunities and housing do you wish you had closer to where you live?
  - How do you think your life will be different in the next 20 years as a result of climate change, and what should local government do to address future climate change impacts?
- Planning toolkits for coordinated land use and transportation planning, with the specific topics of Activity Centers, Development Areas boundaries, Rural Communities, Community Resilience Hubs, and Rural Interstate Interchanges
- Draft Goals and Objectives for each Comp Plan topic

### Phase 2 Engagement Totals:

- Attendance at in-person and virtual events: 443
- Online questionnaire responses: 861
- Community chat kits and field notes: 52
- Website visits: 16,186

Engagement opportunities included:

- 3 rounds of online questionnaires
- 10 pop-ups
- 6 open houses
- 2 workshops
- 6 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings
- Community chat kits
- Stakeholder meetings with organizations and groups such as the Jefferson Area Board for the Aging (JABA), the County's Economic Development Authority (EDA), Charlottesville Area Developers Roundtable (CADRe), and County Committees including the Natural Heritage Committee, the Architectural Review Board, the Historic Preservation Committee, and the Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee



## COMMUNITY INPUT THEMES

The following summary highlights the major themes from community engagement heard to date related to Rural Area Land Use:

### Protection and Restoration of the Natural Environment

- Use nature-based solutions, such as recommendations from the Stream Health Initiative, to protect and restore water quality
- Protect and restore important habitats and wildlife corridors, prioritizing forest blocks/important areas identified in the Biodiversity Action Plan, mountains and ridge tops, and old growth forests and other carbon sinks
- Protect dark skies including through revised lighting requirements
- Use land conservation tools to protect the Rural Area

### Rural Area Land Use

- Protect farmland and support sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and community gardens
- There should be engagement with individual rural communities prior to land use or zoning changes, and recommended land uses should be tailored to each community; feasibility will vary by location
- For comments on the types of small-scale businesses or services community members would like to see in rural communities, the most frequently mentioned uses (in order of number of comments) were: medical services and healthcare, country stores, small grocery stores, community centers, post offices, fire rescue/EMS stations and services, parks, restaurants, general retail (e.g. bank, hardware store, basic needs), and childcare options
- Rethink density requirements to allow more affordable units to be built in the Rural Area; ‘village residential’ designation could be expanded to allow for some more housing ‘infill’ without too much

uncontrolled growth (especially if designated as affordable units); consider multi-unit and live-work units

- With future Small Area Plans/Zoning Ordinance updates, consider zoning for workforce/small business opportunities that residents have interest in (specific to each rural community)
- Few employment options in Rural Area means many younger community members end up moving away; need transportation options to employment centers
- Mixed feedback (about half and half split) between support for and concern with changes to land uses at the rural interstate interchanges; most comments in support were specific to the Shadwell interstate interchange

### Historic, Scenic, and Cultural Resources

- Historic Freetowns in the Rural Area should be recognized and protected; should use the UVA Finding Freetowns project; better share histories and engage with community members
- Support historic preservation and adaptive reuse of existing buildings; new buildings should have to have similar footprint as previous buildings (if torn down and not salvageable for adaptive reuse)
- Use historic markers to recognize and share information about locally significant historic and cultural resources
- Recognize historic and cultural areas throughout the Rural Area (which may or may not be in rural communities)

## Community Resilience Hubs (recommendations will be included in the Resilient Community chapter)

- Community input generally indicated support for community resilience hubs, with the need for community centers with classes/ events/programming, affordable food access, senior or youth centers and related programming, and emergency shelter with phone/ internet access
- Preference to use existing buildings (e.g. schools, community centers, fire stations) compared with new buildings
- Community spaces in the Rural Area (such as country stores, community centers, resilience hubs): allow folks to stay in the community for social meet up -like play dates for kids without having to “go into town”
- Need more resilient power and broadband infrastructure; often power outages with storms/wind

