

Community Input Themes: Environmental Stewardship



This document includes an overview of community engagement opportunities and major themes heard through community input related to Environmental Stewardship. 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 Environmental Stewardship:

Protect waterways and improve water quality

- Use nature-based solutions
- Implement the Stream Health Initiative
- Restore degraded streams and wetlands to improve habitat and flood resiliency
- Protect against flooding, including with improved stormwater management
- Use low impact development stormwater management practices
- Monitor water supplies and prepare for potential droughts due to climate change
- Protect groundwater supplies

Biodiversity and Ecosystems

- Have stronger protections for local habitats and native species, including mountains and ridge tops, old growth forests, unique local habitats, aquatic habitats, open space, wildlife corridors, pollinators, and natural carbon sinks
- Increase the use of land conservation tools (e.g. conservation easements)
- Prioritize protection of the habitats and species identified in the county's Biodiversity Action Plan
- Protect forest vegetation for its many benefits, including carbon sequestration and habitat for native species

- Encourage community members to practice environmental stewardship
- Protect dark skies, including through improved lighting requirements
- Remove invasive species
- Require the use of native plants
- Increase our community's resilience to the effects of climate change, including flooding, droughts, extreme heat, and wildfires *[note: the majority of recommendations will be found in the forthcoming Resilient Community chapter]*
- Increase tree coverage and protect existing healthy native trees *[note: the majority of recommendations are found in the Development Areas chapter]*

Improve habitat connectivity

- Use conservation easements and other tools to prevent habitat fragmentation
- Consider barriers to wildlife movement, such as roads