



SUMMARY OF INITIAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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Prepared by: Clarion Associates

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INTRODUCTION

Henrico County has launched a major community planning effort, *HenricoNext*, to establish a cohesive, countywide vision for the future and an actionable strategy to achieve it. Input collected during the process will be one of several components used to rewrite Henrico County's key policy and regulatory document, the Comprehensive Plan.

HenricoNext is a process to:

- Define Henrico County's priorities for the future
- Revisit and update the County's vision and goals on a range of issues
- Outline a path to success for the coming decades

SUMMARY OF INITIAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: ENVISIONING WHAT'S NEXT TOGETHER

A community workshop was held on March 23, 2022, that provided participants with the opportunity to share input through three activities including a community poll, an interactive map, and a vision and goals exercise. The same activities were available online until April 22, 2022. In total, 670 individuals participated and provided over 3,000 comments. The input from these activities will serve as foundational information in updating the County's Comprehensive Plan.

For more details on the engagement activities and their results, please access the links below.

- [Initial Public Engagement: Summary of Results](https://publicinput.com/Report/0sh1bxy0d41): This report provides a summary of answers to quantitative questions. (Link: <https://publicinput.com/Report/0sh1bxy0d41>)
- [Initial Public Engagement: Summary of Results with Verbatim Comments](https://publicinput.com/Report/pz0yx54swck): Summary of Responses with Verbatim Comments: This report includes the information above as well as all individual verbatim comments that were submitted. (Link: <https://publicinput.com/Report/pz0yx54swck>)

These public engagement results are in addition to two professional surveys Henrico County commissioned through Virginia Commonwealth University's Survey Evaluation and Research Laboratory (SERL) in 2021: the Residents' Survey and the Recreation and Parks Survey. The Residents' Survey provides statistically significant findings to support development of the 2045 Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals. The Recreation and Parks Survey will inform development of the goals and strategies for the plan's recreation and park chapter.

- [Residents' Survey](#)
- [Recreation and Parks Survey](#)

At the same time, the County also provided a separate opportunity for residents to review and provide feedback on a draft of the Bike Plan network. The results of that effort are available for review [at this link](#).

THEMES FROM FIRST ENGAGEMENT PERIOD

Participants were asked about their views of life in Henrico County and the current Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals. The vast majority of respondents (93%) rated quality of life in Henrico County as either good (40%), great (44%), or superior (9%). Respondents were generally supportive of the vision and goals statements. Using a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being highly support, the average response ranged from 55 to 84 in favor of the existing statements. Respondents also wanted to enhance the current Comprehensive Plan statements to address new issues including redevelopment, sustainability, energy, and water resources.

A closer look at the responses revealed several key themes, which will inform work on the Comprehensive Plan Update. They include:

- Strong support for providing more bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Strong support for the protection of environmentally sensitive lands, open spaces, and rural areas
- Emphasis on the value of providing a safe environment for residents
- Management of the location of future growth, with a preference for redevelopment and infill
- Support for addressing affordable housing needs

The summaries below provide more detail on these themes. For additional specifics on the engagement results, please refer to the online report links provided on the previous page.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROVIDING MORE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Providing more opportunities for residents to walk and bike to destinations was strongly supported, as illustrated through the following responses:

- Car dependency and infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians were identified as two of the county's biggest current challenges.
- When asked to describe the vision for the county's future in a single word, the top responses included "walkable" and "bike."
- When asked to identify aspects of the county's physical environment that should be priorities for improvement or change, 40% of respondents called for adding sidewalks in older neighborhoods and commercial corridors. This was the most preferred answer choice.
- Respondents identified greenways and trails as the top recreation and park needs in the county.
- Nearly half of respondents identified biking or walking to destinations as the preferred way to travel in the future.
- When asked about the biggest transportation concerns for the future, the top four identified concerns were pedestrian safety (40%), automobile dependency (36%), bicycle safety (31%), and access to bike lanes or trails (28%). (Note: For this question, participants could choose up to three responses.)

MANAGEMENT OF STRONG SUPPORT FOR PROTECTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS, OPEN SPACES, AND RURAL AREAS

Respondents expressed support for the protection of the natural environment. Results included:

- Protecting environmental quality (53%) and preserving open space and sensitive environmental areas (51%) were the top priority planning topics identified. (Note: For this question, participants could choose up to three responses.)
- When asked what they value most about the county, 44% identified parks, recreation, and the natural environment. This was the most preferred answer choice.
- When asked what they thought is the biggest current challenge for the county today, respondents listed the environment, including littering, pollution, and preserving rural lands.
- Through the mapping activity, respondents identified many locations to protect wetlands, rivers, riparian areas, open spaces, farms, and rural lands.

EMPHASIS ON THE VALUE OF PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR RESIDENTS

Residents stated that safety is important and valued in Henrico County and should influence future planning policies.

- When asked what they value most about the county, respondents identified a “safe community” as the third highest value (27%).

- Bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety were listed as several of the biggest challenges the county faces today.
- When asked to identify words that describe their vision for the county’s future, “safe” was included in the top five choices.

MANAGEMENT OF THE LOCATION OF FUTURE GROWTH IS IMPORTANT, WITH A PREFERENCE FOR REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL

Participants identified management of future growth as an important priority for Henrico County. Redevelopment and infill development (new buildings proximate to existing structures, already served by utilities, and located on open parcels) were identified as a preference. Specifically, the following responses were provided:

- Management of where different types of development occur was identified as one of the top five planning topics for Henrico County.
- When asked where new development should go in their magisterial district, 47% of participants identified “growth in already developed areas through infill and redevelopment.” This received the highest response of all answer choices. The next highest response (29%) was “prefer no new growth but understand growth can’t be stopped.”
- When asked where new development should go countywide, 52% of participants identified “growth in already developed areas through infill and redevelopment.” This also received the highest response of all answer choices. The next highest

response (19%) also “prefer no new growth but understand growth can’t be stopped.”

- When asked about statements that describe the preferred land use vision for the county, many respondents provided input that addressed redevelopment of urban areas.
- When asked about other topics that should be in the Comprehensive Plan’s vision and goals, many respondents identified redevelopment as a theme for inclusion.

SUPPORT FOR ADDRESSING AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS

Affordable housing was identified as a need for the county to address. Specifically, the following responses were provided:

- Participants identified housing affordability and providing a variety of housing types, like multifamily housing, as priorities for the land use vision and goals.
- Supporting the development of housing that is affordable to local workers was the fifth priority planning topic identified.

NEXT STEPS

The community input gathered during the first public engagement period will be used to guide development of an “alternative growth” scenario that can be compared to Henrico County’s currently adopted land use plan. Once the mapping analysis and development modeling effort is complete, residents will have the opportunity to review the two alternatives and share their opinions on various aspects of both.

To learn more about future engagement opportunities and register for project updates, click here:

<https://www.henriconext.us/>

