



**SUMMARY OF SECOND PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT PERIOD**

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INTRODUCTION

Henrico County 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 update the 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 coming decades

Created in 2021, *HenricoNext* was introduced as the public engagement process developed for the 2045 Comprehensive Plan. Initial efforts included the launch of a project website, two professional surveys, a community visioning workshop, and a mapping exercise in support of a Bike and Trails Plan. In 2024 the county embarked on a second round of public engagement that included a relaunch of the visioning survey, listening sessions across the county and participation at numerous community events.

SUMMARY OF INITIAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Henrico County commissioned two professional surveys through Virginia Commonwealth University's Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory. Conducted in 2021-2022, both the Residents' and the Recreation and Parks Surveys provided statistically significant findings to support the development of visions and goals for the plan update.

In 2022, a community workshop was held that provided participants the opportunity to share input through three activities: a community visioning poll/survey using questions from the Residents' Survey, an interactive map, and a vision and goals exercise. Those same activities were available online during a month-long engagement period. In total, 670 respondents participated and provided over 3,000 comments.

At the same time, the county also provided a separate opportunity for residents to review and provide feedback on a draft of the Bike/Trails Plan network.

A published report on the results from the first round of engagement that can be accessed using the following link:

- [Summary of Initial Public Engagement](#)

The input from these activities, alongside the results from the 2024 engagement period, will serve as foundational information in updating the county's Comprehensive Plan.

SUMMARY OF SECOND ROUND OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

RELAUNCH OF 2022 COMMUNITY VISIONING SURVEY

To validate input from previous efforts while soliciting new feedback from community members who had yet to contribute to the planning process, the county relaunched the visioning survey. Available online between July 1 and August 2, 2024, an additional 1,280 respondents participated, providing over 4,000 comments on a variety of topics.

Detailed summaries of the survey responses may be found at the following links:

- [Summary of Results from Relaunch of Community Visioning Survey](https://publicinput.com/Report/20df5qrvqgb): This report provides a summary of answers to quantitative questions. (Link: <https://publicinput.com/Report/20df5qrvqgb>)
- [Summary of Results from Relaunch of Community Visioning Survey with Verbatim Comments](https://publicinput.com/Report/eqkbcc225sq): This report includes the information above as well as all verbatim comments received. (Link: <https://publicinput.com/Report/eqkbcc225sq>)

2024 LISTENING SESSIONS

The County also held in-person listening sessions in each of the magisterial districts during July and August 2024. They ran from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and were held in the five area libraries. The purpose of the sessions was for the Planning Department to gain feedback on the visions and goals drafted for four of the Plan's chapters (Our Environment, Managed and Sustained Growth, Safe and Connected Spaces, and High

Quality, Livable Spaces). Staff were stationed at display boards with corresponding text and graphics to interact with participants, answer questions, and receive feedback on how much they supported each statement. A QR code linked attendees to an online survey portal where they could also provide their thoughts on issues of importance. As part of the effort to update their Master Plan, the Division of Recreation and Parks also had a dedicated display board seeking input on their vision statement and core values.

Approximately 270 people participated, providing over 100 comments to the question "Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?" Attendees had an opportunity to interact with Planning Department staff, as well as members of the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission. The proposed statements will be used as a framework for the plan's future policies and strategies.

Between 2022 and 2024, planning staff attended numerous events across the county to familiarize residents with the planning process. Celebrations like Juneteenth and Earth Day, farmers' markets, and seasonal festivals provided opportunities to engage the community in non-traditional places. Staff have also presented to neighborhood associations, business groups, and other civic organizations. These efforts have resulted in direct, one-on-one contact with approximately 1,000 residents and stakeholders.

Detailed summaries of the Vision and Goals survey may be found at the following link:

- [HenricoNext Listening Sessions Community Vision and Goals: Summary of Results with Verbatim Comments](#)
This report the results of the support for the draft vision and goals, as well as all verbatim comments that were

received. (Link:
<https://PublicInput.com/Report/4v3tbkm542p>)

THEMES FROM THE RELAUNCH OF HENRICONEXT VISIONING SURVEY

The responses to the relaunched 2022 survey reinforced several key themes from both engagement periods, which will inform work on the Comprehensive Plan Update.

These themes validated and echoed the responses received during the first engagement period launched in 2022. Results, despite the two-year gap and larger response rate for the rereleased survey, are quite similar to the 2022 results.

Overall, 93% of respondents (866 respondents) rated their quality of life in Henrico County in 2024 as “good”, “great”, or “superior.” (This is identical to the 2022 response rate.) Across all comments received, the following topics were most emphasized by participating community members:

- Management of the location of future growth, with a preference for redevelopment and infill, when necessary
- Emphasis on the value of providing a safe environment for residents
- Strong support for the protection of environmentally sensitive lands, open spaces, and rural areas
- Strong support for providing more bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit facilities and infrastructure
- Desire to reduce perceived disparities between the East and West sides of the County, particularly with regard to education and provision of infrastructure

The summaries below provide more detail on these themes, as well as on the input shared regarding the proposed Mission, Vision, and Core Values statements for the Recreation and Parks Master Plan. For additional specifics on the engagement results, please refer to the online report links provided in the previous section, “Summary of Second Round of Community Engagement.”

Managing Growth

The desire to protect the natural resources of the County strongly impacted respondents’ opinions about the quantity and character of new growth over the next 25 years.

- 49% of respondents (427 respondents) indicated that they would prefer growth to be in already developed areas within their magisterial district via infill and redevelopment, and 30% of respondents (261 respondents) indicated they would prefer no growth whatsoever. Comparatively, only 10% and 9% of respondents (87 and 78 respondents) indicated a preference for unrestricted or greenfield growth.
- Overcrowding, overdevelopment, and walkability were the most referenced challenges facing Henrico County. In particular, 31% of respondents (277 respondents) specified that growth management (particularly *where* new development should be located) was one of their top planning priorities.
- Development preferences included affordable housing for local workers (29%, 254 respondents) and a diverse mix of housing types (18%, 157 respondents), both of which were selected more frequently as planning priorities than business development (9%, 81

respondents) and historical preservation (15%, 133 respondents).

Public Safety

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

- A “safe community” (38%, 397 respondents) and a “great place to raise a family” (34%, 361 respondents) closely followed “parks, recreation, and the natural environment” as the characteristics respondents valued the most about Henrico County.

When respondents were asked to describe their ideal vision of Henrico County, crime prevention and public safety were both frequently mentioned as elements of that vision.

Resource Conservation

Respondents expressed support for the protection of the natural environment and agricultural character of the County, especially in the East.

- Respondents emphasized the priority of watershed and farmland preservation when asked what aspects of the County’s physical environment required improvement.
- Preserving open space and protecting environmental quality were the top two planning priorities identified by respondents, with 53% and 48% of respondents (469 and 425 respondents) selecting those as priorities.
- Parks, recreation, and the natural environment are the most valued aspects of Henrico County; 44% of respondents (461 respondents) ranked this option first among eight options.

- Similarly, when asked about Henrico County’s biggest challenge today, conservation of natural resources was one of the most cited (12% of open-ended responses).
- Respondents’ ideal vision of Henrico County frequently included “preserved natural resources (and farmland),” and “environmental stewardship.”

Walking, Biking, and Public Transit

Providing more opportunities for residents to walk and bike to destinations was strongly supported by respondents.

- Car dependency and a lack of safe corridors for pedestrian and bicycle traffic were frequently cited as “Henrico County’s biggest challenge today” (19% of open-ended responses).
- Diverse means of transportation, including walking, biking, and various forms of public transit (specifically light rail) were identified as key to respondents’ ideal vision for Henrico County in 25 years.
- Walkability was brought up as a quality-of-life, safety, and recreation concern.
- While 98% of respondents (885 respondents) currently identify car travel as their primary method of transportation, only 27% of respondents (240 respondents) would not pick another primary mode if the option was available. Approximately 27% of respondents said that if the option were available, they would walk. 35% of respondents (314 respondents) noted “automobile dependency” as one of their biggest transportation concerns.

- Safety (particularly at intersections, associated with a lack of sidewalks) was the foremost transportation-specific concern.

Perceived Disparities Across the County

While differences between the more developed West and more rural East sides of the County were not included as a clickable answer in the survey questions, this was emphasized in the free response comments. A total of 70 comments out of 1,066 responses (6.6%) referenced this topic to the question, “What is Henrico’s biggest challenge today?”. Comments specifically mentioned:

- Education and equity disparities between the two sides of the County, and a need to increase the quality of the former in the East (19 responses).
- Utility infrastructure disparities between the suburban West and rural East, and the importance of closing those gaps where they exist, especially regarding water, sewer, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and broadband (29 responses).
- The stronger agricultural character of the East, relative to the West, and the desire for steps to be taken to preserve that rural character (6 responses, with more supporting farmland protection generally).
- An additional 15 responses indicated disparities between the East and West were Henrico’s biggest challenge, but did not give further details.

RESULTS OF COMMUNITY VISION AND GOALS SURVEY

Participants (270 respondents) were asked whether they supported the newly drafted vision and goal statements for the 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

Four vision themes were presented: “Our Environment,” “Managed and Sustained Growth,” “Safe and Connected Spaces,” and “High Quality, Livable Places.” Each of these vision statements were supported by more than 70% of respondents to each question (selection of “strongly support” or “support”):

- **Our Environment:** 84% support (188 respondents)
- **Managed and Sustained Growth:** 73% support (172 respondents)
- **Safe and Connected Spaces:** 79% support (167 respondents)
- **High Quality, Livable Places:** 77% support (164 respondents)

Each of these vision statements received no more than 15% of responses in opposition (“oppose” or “strongly oppose”).

Respondents were also presented with draft goal statements, which were supported by at least 73% of respondents to the respective questions:

- **Our Environment Goal:** 87% support (187 respondents)
- **Future Land Use Goal:** 73% support (171 respondents)

- **Public Facilities and Services Goal:** 87% support (171 respondents)
- **Transportation and Mobility Goal:** 81% support (169 respondents)
- **Recreations, Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Resources Goal:** 75% support (161 respondents)
- **Community Character Goal:** 74% support (158 respondents)

RESULTS OF RECREATION AND PARKS MISSION, VISION AND CORE VALUES SURVEY

Participants (151 respondents) were presented with the Recreation and Parks department’s independent Mission, Vision, and Core Values statements, which all received broad support.

- The Mission Statement, expanding on the phrase “Enriching Lives, Connecting Communities” was supported by 86% of respondents (129 individuals, a selection of “strongly support” or “support”).
- The Vision Statement, which expanded on the phrase “Innovating Tomorrow’s Parks, Today” was supported by 82% of respondents (121 individuals, a selection of “strongly support” or “support”).
- Four Core Values were presented. Each of these vision statements were supported by more than 80% of

respondents to each question (selection of “strongly support” or “support”), broken down as seen below:

- Community: 87% support (127 respondents)
- Inclusion: 81% support (119 respondents)
- Stewardship: 88% support (129 respondents)
- Wellness: 88% support (129 respondents)

NEXT STEPS

The cumulative results from public engagement will provide a strong foundation for the development of the draft comprehensive plan.

To learn more about the project’s next steps and register to receive project updates, click here:

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

