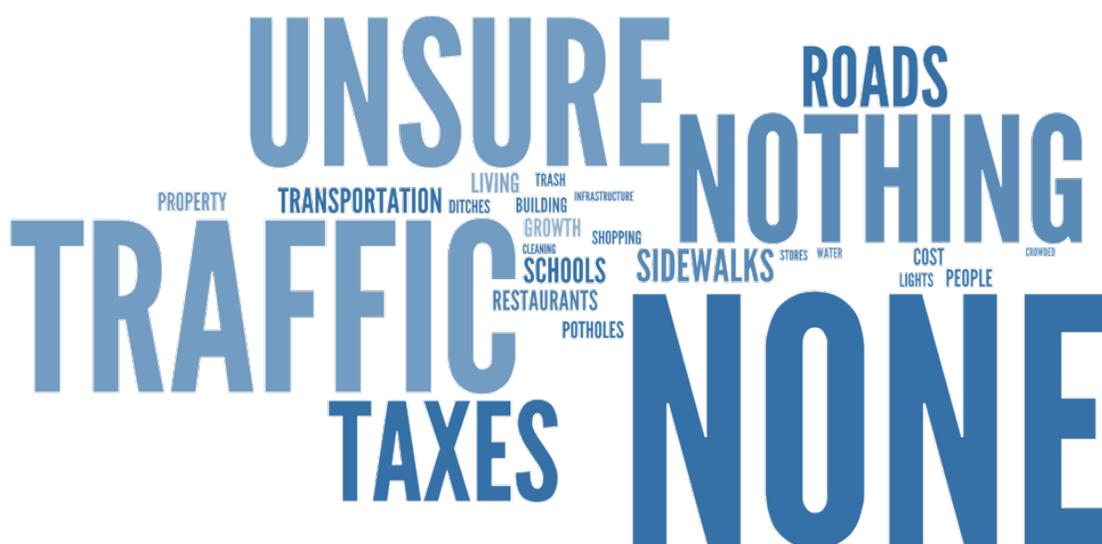


The survey also asked residents to name the three things they like least about living in York County. The responses, graphically illustrated in **Figure 2** below, reflect a high degree of satisfaction with the County based on the fact that three of the top four responses were “None,” “Unsure,” and “Nothing,” with “None” being the number one response. “Traffic” was second on the list of things people don’t like about the County (with “Roads” not far behind), while “Taxes” were fifth.



Source: Southeastern Institute of Research

Figure 2: What citizens like least about living in York County

These results are consistent with other findings of the survey. For example, when asked how satisfied they are living in York County, almost nine out of ten responded that they were either very satisfied (58%) or satisfied (29%), while only 4% indicated that they were not satisfied and 9% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Similarly, when asked what changes have taken place in the County in the past twenty years that they have not liked, more than half the respondents did not name anything. Of those who did name specific changes they haven’t liked, the main concerns were related to growth and development, construction of apartments and townhouses, and traffic.

The same attitudes expressed in the answers to the question about undesirable changes that have occurred in the past twenty years are also reflected in the responses to a separate question about specific changes people would like to see in York County in the next twenty years. The number one change that people want to see is improved transportation, particularly better roads with less congestion. A slower pace of development – especially residential development – was second on the list in terms of the number of responses. This was followed by a desire for more businesses and better dining and shopping opportunities, improvements to County schools, and more sidewalks and bike paths.

With regard to public facilities, the survey asked citizens to rate the importance of building or expanding various public facilities in York County on a scale of one (not at all important) to five (very important). For each type of facility, the percentage of respondents who gave ratings of 4 (important) or 5 (very important) are shown in **Figure 3** below. Not surprisingly, schools earned the highest ratings with 78% of respondents rating them as either an important or very important public facility priority. Infrastructure to mitigate recurrent flooding and sea level rise was ranked second in overall importance (71%), followed by roads (68%), parks for active recreation (66%), bike paths (61%), and sidewalks (60%). Facilities that were considered important or very important by less than half the respondents are public libraries (48%), indoor sports facility (43%), transit services (42%), and athletic fields (39%).

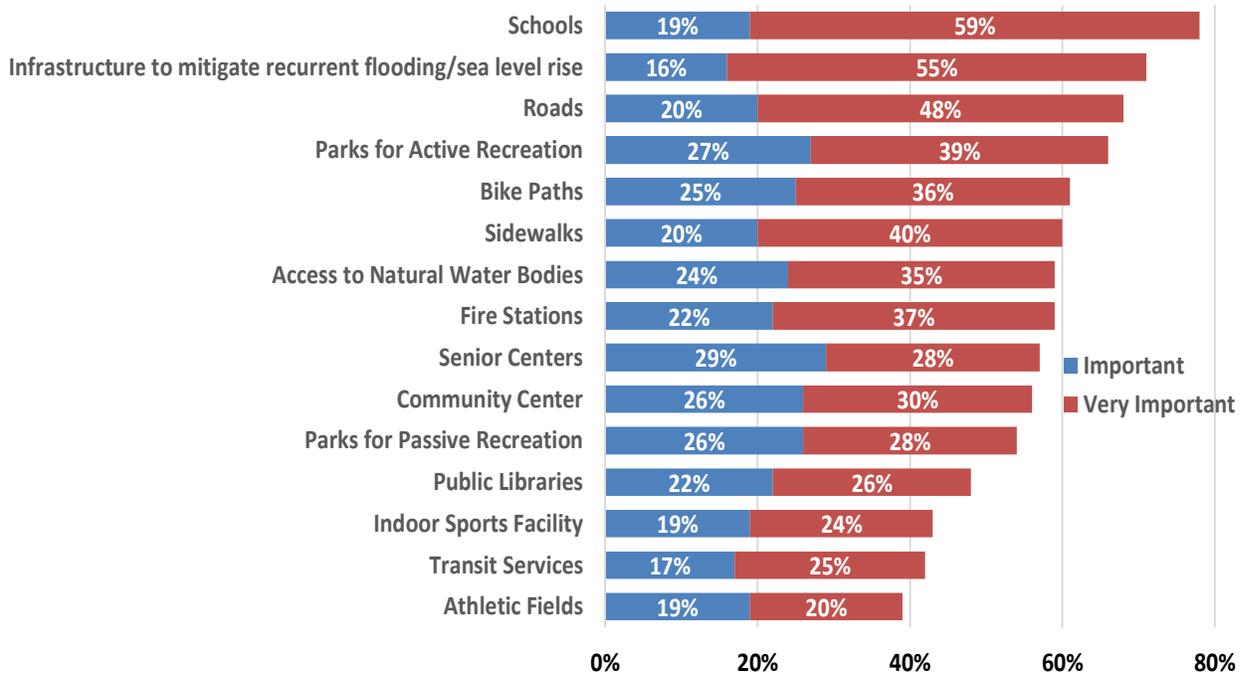


Figure 3

When asked which of the named facilities they considered to be the *most* important to build or expand, once again, the citizens rated schools at the top of the list, named by 21% of the respondents. Schools were followed by roads (13%), infrastructure to mitigate flooding (11%), sidewalks (8%), a community center (7%), and parks for active recreation (7%). The complete results are shown in **Figure 4** below.

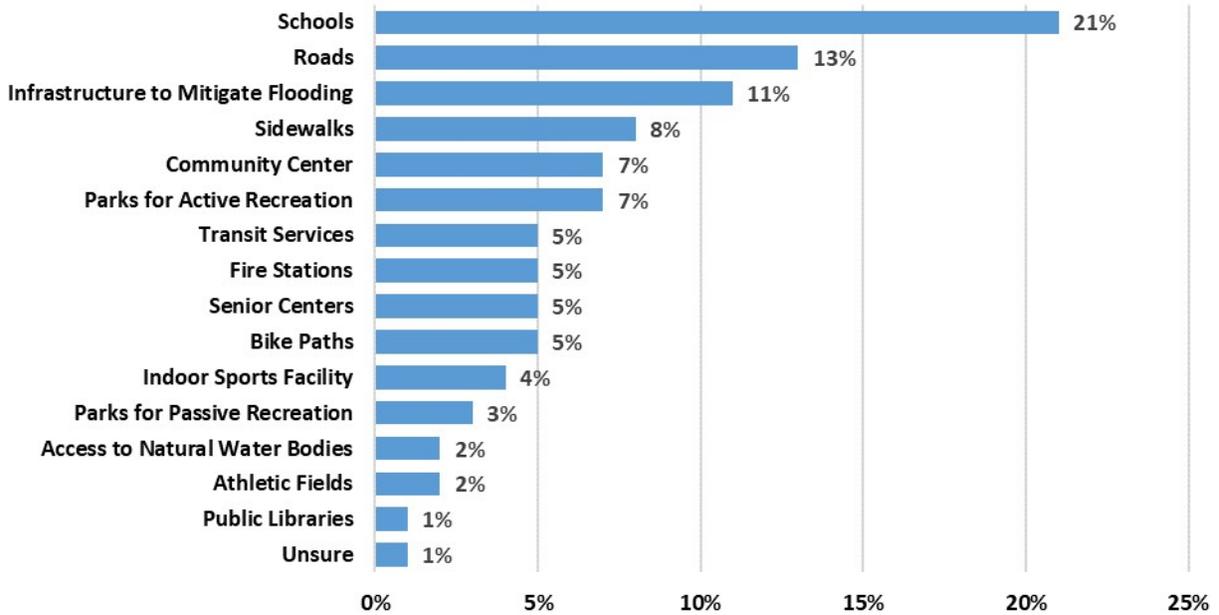


Figure 4

The survey asked a series of additional questions dealing with a variety of Comprehensive Plan issues, including affordable housing, commercial development, mixed-use development, home occupations, and internet service. The results, as tabulated by SIR, are provided in the table below.

SCIENTIFIC TELEPHONE SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES					
Questions	Responses				
	5	4	3	2	1
Overall, how satisfied are you with living in York County? (5=Very satisfied and 1=Not at all satisfied)	58%	29%	9%	3%	1%
How important do you feel it is for York County to focus on attracting commercial establishments, such as national retailers and restaurants, in the next 20 years? (5=Very important and 1=Not at all important)	25%	16%	25%	16%	18%
One way to attract commercial establishments that require a larger population base would be to increase allowable residential densities in York County. Please tell me whether you support or oppose the concept. (5= Strongly support, 3=Neutral, and 1=Strongly oppose)	14%	10%	25%	14%	37%
How important is it for York County to focus on encouraging the development of moderately-priced housing in the next 20 years? By moderately-priced housing we mean housing that is affordable to people who work in the County – such as service and retail workers, entry-level teachers, firefighters, law enforcement, and health care workers. (5=Very important and 1=Not at all important)	45%	21%	17%	7%	10%
One way to encourage the development of moderately-priced housing in York County would be to increase the permitted number of homes per acre in some areas. Please tell me whether you support or oppose the concept. (5= Strongly support, 3=Neutral, and 1=Strongly oppose)	17%	16%	23%	11%	32%
A large portion of the County’s population growth in the next 20 years is going to be among the older population. With this in mind, how important do you feel it is for York County to focus on encouraging and attracting a balanced population growth in the next 20 years (such as younger families)? (5=Very important and 1=Not at all important)	39%	26%	23%	5%	7%
One way to encourage population growth in York County would be to rezone some of the vacant land for residential use. This rezoning could also help attract new businesses and commercial establishments. Please tell me whether you support or oppose the concept. (5= Strongly support, 3=Neutral, and 1=Strongly oppose)	24%	20%	25%	12%	19%
The Comprehensive Plan provides opportunities for mixed-use development, which involves a mix of retail businesses, offices, and different types of housing (i.e., detached homes, townhouses, apartments) arranged in a master-planned, pedestrian-scale development in which people can live, work, and play. Please tell me whether you support or oppose this type of development in York County. (5= Strongly support, 3=Neutral, and 1=Strongly oppose)	26%	19%	24%	13%	18%
Home-based businesses are thriving in York County. Two thirds of business licenses are for businesses located in homes. Please tell me whether you support or oppose the growth of home-based businesses in York County. (5= Strongly support, 3=Neutral, and 1=Strongly oppose)	50%	19%	19%	5%	7%
Please tell me whether you support or oppose York County allowing home-based businesses to have customers or clients come to their home. (Note: Question asked among those supported growth of home-based businesses). (5= Strongly support, 3=Neutral, and 1=Strongly oppose)	39%	16%	29%	8%	8%
How satisfied are you with the quality of internet service in your home? ² (5=Very satisfied and 1=Not at all satisfied)	40%	24%	20%	8%	8%
<i>NOTE: Don’t know/unsure responses have removed for analysis.</i>					

² Most of the respondents indicated that their internet service provider is cable (55%), followed by fiber (34%), cellular (7%), DSL (2%), and satellite (1%).

In addition to the scientific survey, SIR conducted a non-scientific “convenience survey,” which was distributed online through a convenience link. The link was posted on the project website and social media sites. To a great extent, the responses to the convenience survey reflected the same concerns and priorities as the scientific survey (e.g. support for schools, flood mitigation, road improvements, and parks), but there were some differences. In contrast to the scientific survey respondents, less than half the convenience survey respondents considered it important or very important to encourage moderately-priced housing or to encourage balanced population growth, and they were significantly less likely to support increased residential densities. Eighty percent of the convenience survey respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with living in York County, compared to 87% of the scientific survey respondents.

YOUTH SURVEY

Since the telephone survey was limited to residents 18 and older, the Steering Committee’s Youth Commission representative took the initiative to design and conduct an online survey of his fellow students at York High School so that the Committee might benefit from hearing the perspective of York County’s younger residents. The survey was conducted in June 2019, and a total of 186 students responded, 144 of whom completed the entire survey. Though this was not a scientific survey, it provided important insight into the attitudes of the County’s youth, and several of the results mirrored the results of the scientific survey with regard to the importance of walkability and good schools, the need to address sea level rise, and concerns about overdevelopment. For example, the youth survey included the same question about what types of public facilities should be built or expanded in the next twenty years, and as with the scientific survey, the number one response was schools, which were deemed important or very important by roughly three-quarters of the respondents. Infrastructure to mitigate flooding and sea level rise was ranked second (approximately 73%), followed by access to bodies of water (70%), bike lanes (67%), and sidewalks (62%).

The youth survey also included questions about the students’ future housing choices. Slightly more than half the respondents indicated that they would consider living in York County in the future, while 21% said they would not and another 27% were unsure. Of those who did not want to live in York County in the future, most wanted to live in either a suburban area or a big city, while the remainder were fairly evenly divided between wanting to live in either a small town or a rural area. A related question asked in what type of area students would like to live in the future. Roughly half the respondents indicated that they wanted to live in a residential area and a third said they would like to live in a mixed-use area. Another 18.1% said they wanted to live in a rural area. When asked what kind of home they expect to live ten years from now, more than half (56%) responded that they expect to live in a single-family detached home, while 28% and 16%, respectively, answered that they expect to live in an apartment or townhouse.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

An early public outreach effort took place on Saturday, April 27, 2019, at the Yorktown Market Days event in historic Yorktown. That date was chosen because it coincided with the “Pirates Invade Yorktown” event, which always draws large numbers of citizens. A booth was set up in the vendor area and manned by York 2040 Committee members and staff who engaged with passersby to talk about the Comprehensive Plan and asked them for their thoughts and ideas about future development in the County. At least 300 people stopped by the tables to look at large display maps of the County, ask questions, and share their opinions.

About a month later, the Committee held the first of four public meetings to give citizens an opportunity to learn about the Comprehensive Plan review and speak with Committee members and County staff about changes they would like to see in the future. These were informal “open house” meetings; there were no formal presentations, and citizens were invited to come and go as they pleased anytime

between 5:00 and 8:00 PM. Large-scale display maps depicting land use, roads, and more were available for citizens to review and make comments using Post-It Notes. Many residents also wrote their comments down on one of several flip charts that were placed throughout the meeting space. The meeting schedule is provided below:

- May 30, 2019: Bruton High School
- June 5, 2019: Tabb Library
- June 6, 2019: Queens Lake Middle School
- June 10, 2019: Yorktown Library

Despite significant efforts on the County’s part to publicize these meetings, overall turnout was disappointing, with a combined attendance of slightly more than thirty citizens (not including Committee members and staff). Nevertheless, the dialogue with those who did attend was helpful and productive. In all, more than seventy comments were recorded covering a variety of topics ranging from bike lanes and sidewalks to electric vehicle charging stations to green space to bus shelters. All comments were provided to the Committee members for their information and posted on the project website.

Two more public forums were held in September 2021 – one in the upper County (Bruton High School) and one in the lower County (Tabb Library) – to invite citizens to offer their views specifically about future land use in the County. The purpose of these forums was to gather input to assist the Committee as it prepared to begin its discussions of the Land Use element of the Plan. Both meetings began with a presentation by the Planning staff to provide information both about current land use and development patterns throughout the County and about the recommendations for future land use that are set forth in the adopted (i.e., 2013) Comprehensive Plan. Each presentation was followed by a question-and-answer period. The second part of each meeting was an “open house” session where citizens were able to review large-scale County land use maps and speak directly with Committee members to share their ideas and opinions about changes they would like to see in the updated Plan. County staff members were present to answer questions and record citizen comments. In addition to providing their input orally, attendees were given the option of submitting written comments on forms that were given to each person as they arrived at the meeting.

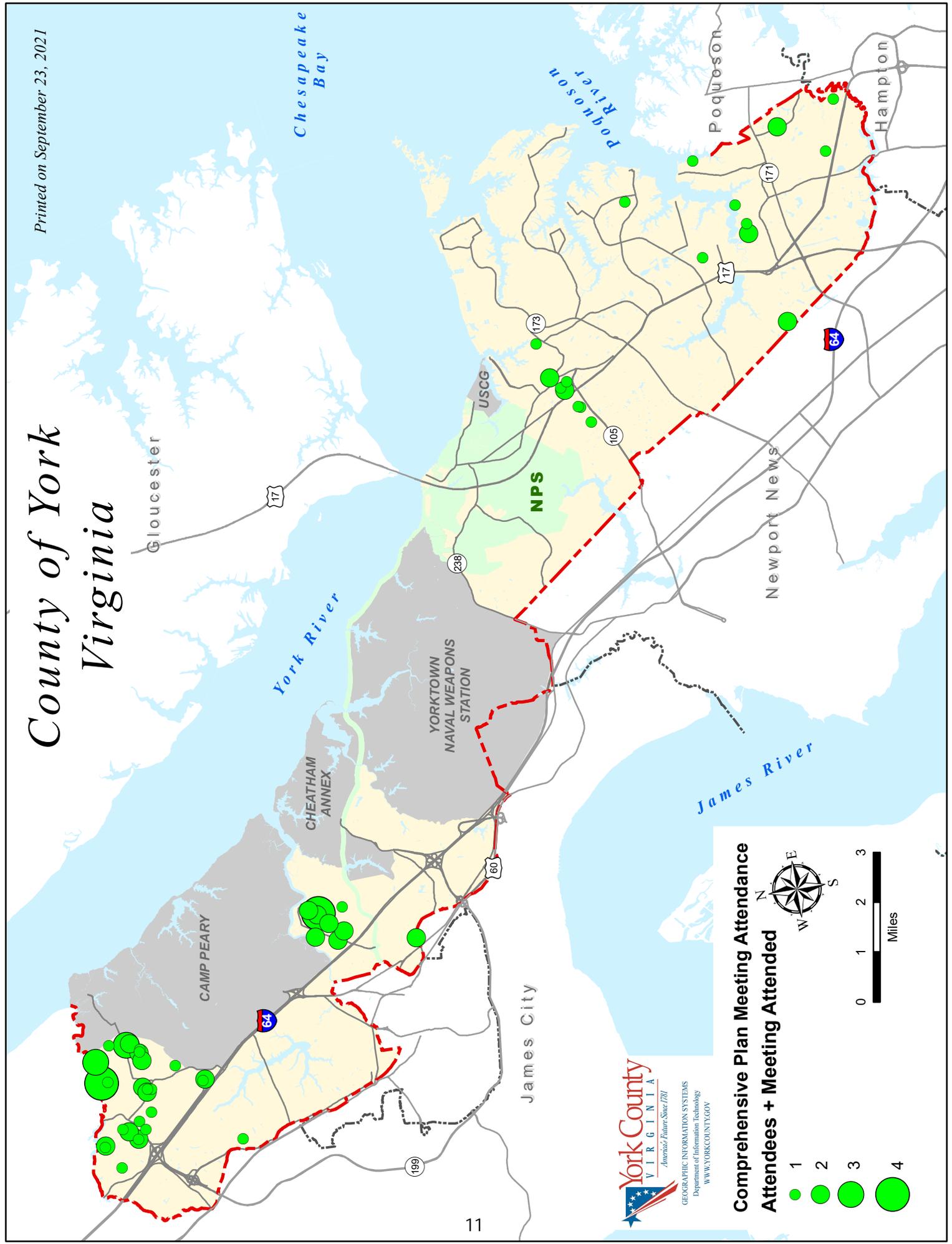


Combined attendance at the two meetings, not including Committee members and staff, was 88, with 55 at Bruton High School and 33 at the Tabb Library. In all, there were a total of 78 individual participants, as there were several people who attended both meetings. Of those 78 individuals, 53 were from the upper County, 20 from the lower County, two from James City County, and one from the City of Chesapeake. Two attendees did not indicate their place of residence. (See the Comprehensive Plan Meeting Attendance Map.) Citizen comments were wide-ranging and touched on a number of topics, as briefly summarized below:

- **OVERDEVELOPMENT.** The overriding theme of most of the comments was a general concern that too much development is occurring in the County, resulting in a loss of trees, open space, and rural character as well as increased traffic, school crowding, and tax burdens on the citizens.
- **CONSERVATION.** Related to the concerns expressed about overdevelopment, many comments expressed a desire for conserving vacant land to prevent it from being developed.

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- MIXED USE OVERLAY DESIGNATION. Several citizens commented that the Mixed Use overlay designation should be removed from the Comprehensive Plan, especially in the Skimino and Lightfoot areas, but Grafton and Tabb were mentioned as well.
- LIGHTFOOT. A number of concerns were expressed specifically about the Economic Opportunity and Mixed Use overlay designations over a large portion of the Lightfoot area and the possibility of large-scale development that would over-burden roads and schools.
- ADAPTIVE REUSE. Many citizens expressed concern about allowing new development to occur when there are already vacant commercial buildings that could be put to commercial use or remodeled as affordable housing.
- TRANSPORTATION. Concerns were expressed about narrow roads that are not able to handle additional development and about the impact of development on traffic in general.
- HOUSING. A few citizens expressed a desire for more affordable housing in the County.
- PUBLIC FACILITIES. Several citizens expressed concern about school crowding and the negative impact of new development, particularly multi-family development in the Grafton area. Other comments included suggestions that schools be located in or within biking/walking distance of residential neighborhoods and that a school be built on the north side of Lightfoot Road. A comment related to parks was that the County needs more neighborhood or “pocket” parks that are accessible to the general public.

Following the land use forums, staff prepared a report summarizing the meetings, including copies of all citizen comments, and provided it to the Committee members for them to review and consider as they began their deliberations on possible changes to the future Land Use Map. The report was also posted on the project website.

CONCLUSIONS

The overall picture that emerges from the various surveys and public meeting comments is that most York County residents are relatively satisfied with the County as it is, but they do see room for improvement in certain areas. Although it is significant that the top responses to the question “What do you like the least about living in York County?” was “None,” followed by “Traffic,” “Unsure,” and “Nothing,” some changes are seen as desirable. Citizens see a need for new or expanded public facilities – particularly schools and parks for passive recreation – and infrastructure, including roads, flood prevention and mitigation, bike paths, and sidewalks. There are other changes, however, that are generally considered undesirable. This is reflected in concerns about what many view as excessive growth and development as well as support for road improvements to address traffic, which is seen as a by-product of this growth.

To a great extent, the attitudes expressed by the citizens for this Comprehensive Plan update mirror those that were expressed in the 2013 update as well as previous Plan updates. These include concerns about growth and traffic, support for schools and green space, and a high level of satisfaction with the County as it is. One change that has occurred over the years is a noticeable increase in citizen support for adding more sidewalks and bike paths. Another change is an increased recognition of the need to address sea level rise and recurrent flooding, which has emerged as a high priority.

The telephone survey results reported by SIR include breakdowns for different demographic (age, race, and gender) and geographic groups (upper and lower County) in the County. For the most part, the results did not reveal significant differences of opinion among different categories of citizens; however, the following results are worth noting:

- Nonwhites were more likely than whites to say that attracting commercial establishments is important or very important (60% vs. 37%).
- Millennials were more likely than the older age groups to rate the development of moderately-priced housing as important or very important (81% vs. 60%). This is to be expected since younger adults typically have the most difficulty finding affordable housing. In addition, upper County residents were more likely than lower County residents (80% vs. 64%) to view this as an important goal.
- Nonwhite respondents were significantly more likely to support mixed-use development than were white residents (57% vs. 41%).
- Millennials were significantly more likely to support the growth of home-based businesses in the County (84%) than either Generation X (67%) or the “Baby Boomers and older” age group (59%). Similarly, among those who support home-based business growth, support for allowing those businesses to have clients come to their home was much stronger among Millennials (72%) than among Generation X (47%) or Baby Boomers and older (45%).
- Lower County residents were significantly more satisfied with their internet service than were upper County residents (65% vs. 45%).

AGE GROUP DEFINITIONS

- **Millennials – born 1983 to 1996**
- **Generation X – born 1965 to 1982**
- **Baby Boom – born 1946 to 1964**
- **WWII Generation – born before 1946**

It is important to keep in mind that public opinion polls and surveys represent a snapshot in time, and the results can be greatly influenced by changes in events and circumstances. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a nationwide surge in bicycling as people across the country found themselves with time on their hands and a desire to get out of the house, and although bike paths scored very highly in the telephone survey, they might have scored even better had the survey been conducted in 2020 or later instead of 2019. Roadway congestion, on the other hand, might have been less of a concern in 2020 given the temporary 14% decline in auto traffic that Hampton Roads experienced as a result of the pandemic. Another consequence of the pandemic was a dramatic increase in Internet use as stores, offices, and schools were forced to close their doors, requiring people to work, shop, attend school, and even conduct medical appointments from their computers. The importance of reliable, high-speed broadband service was never more evident than it was in 2020.

One of the challenges in planning for the County’s future is to look beyond short-term trends and event-driven concerns and focus on what is in the long-term best interest of both the current *and* future residents of the County. Citizen input is not the only factor that needs to be taken into consideration in that process, but it does play a vital role.

