

INTRODUCTION

The quality of life in a community cannot be measured by statistics. It can only be expressed in terms of the collective experiences enjoyed by the residents. It includes such things as a comfortable climate, recreational and entertainment opportunities, educational and cultural life, and an aesthetically pleasing living environment. York County is best defined by its quality of life. Mild temperatures, a low crime rate, hundreds of miles of coastline, and abundant flora and fauna contribute to the County's reputation as a pleasant place to live.

To preserve and enhance this high quality of life is the overriding purpose of the York County Comprehensive – or Comp – Plan, which is the long-range plan for the physical development of the County. Like all localities in Virginia, York County is required by Section 15.2-2223 of the *Code of Virginia* to adopt a comprehensive plan, but the reasons for developing the plan go well beyond fulfilling this mandate. The Comprehensive Plan is necessary to ensure the efficient use of land in recognition of environmental constraints and the capacity of the public infrastructure. It seeks to provide for an appropriate mix of residential, commercial, and industrial development; to guide such development to appropriate areas of the County based on the carrying capacity of the land, the existing development character, and the presence of infrastructure and public facilities; to preserve the County's natural and historic resources and aesthetic quality; and to prevent the overburdening of the County's roads, utilities, facilities, and services.

Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia spells out the general scope and purpose of comprehensive plans:

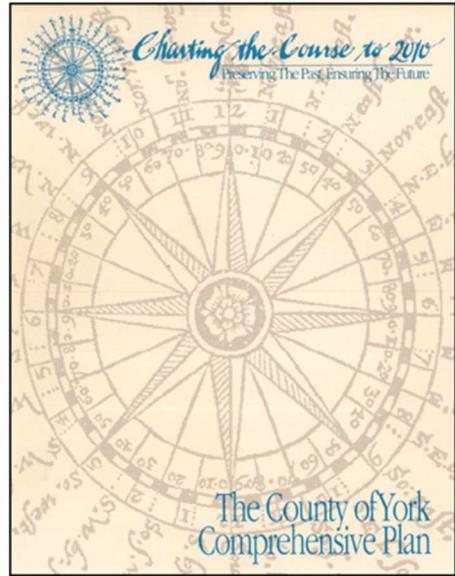
“The local planning commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction and every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.

In the preparation of a comprehensive plan, the commission shall make careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of the existing conditions and trends of growth, and of the probable future requirements of its territory and inhabitants. The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The comprehensive plan shall be general in nature, in that it shall designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use as the case may be...”

Although mandated by state law, comprehensive plans do not have the status of law. Rather, the Plan is a policy document intended to provide direction for present and future policy makers in making the laws and setting the policies to guide the County's development.

Charting the Course to 2040: The York County Comprehensive Plan is the fourth update of the County's first true Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted by the York County Board of Supervisors in 1991 and titled *Charting the Course to 2010*. Previous updates were adopted in October 1999, December 2005, and September 2013. This Plan is the product five years of work on the part of County planning staff, citizen volunteers, and elected and appointed officials. The process of updating the Plan began with the appointment by the Board of Supervisors of a Comprehensive Plan Review Steering Committee, also known as the York 2040 Committee, to oversee the process. This committee of York County residents included two citizen representatives from each of the five election districts, two Planning Commission members; one member each from the York County Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Authority, and Youth Commission; representatives from the York County business and real estate/development communities, and the County's two Deputy County Administrators.



Between November 2018 and April 2023, the York 2040 Committee met 34 times, not including the public input meetings discussed below, first to be briefed by County staff and other subject matter experts on the various topics covered in the Comprehensive Plan and to receive a detailed presentation from the County's survey consultant on the results of the scientific survey. Later meetings were dedicated to a thorough review and discussion of the various draft chapters of the Plan prepared by staff.

Like everything else, the Committee's work was interrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic a little more than a year into the process. Ironically, at the committee's kickoff meeting on November 7, 2018, County Administrator Neil Morgan spoke about "disruptive change" and the fact that despite all our best efforts to plan for the future, we need to recognize that the future will be affected by things that we don't see coming. In March 2020, the truth behind those words became all too clear as the pandemic forced the shutdown of businesses, schools, places of worship, sporting events, and various government



functions. The Committee was required to suspend its operations for a few months and then, like other County boards and commissions, started holding its meetings electronically. After almost a year of the virtual meetings, the Governor's Emergency Order was lifted, and the Committee was able to resume its normal operating procedures in May 2021, holding fifteen more meetings over the next two years. Finally, at its April 5, 2023, meeting, the Committee approved the draft Comprehensive Plan subject to a few revisions and forwarded it to the Planning Commission for review.

Public involvement has been a key component of this process, beginning in 2019 with a statistically valid survey of County residents, followed by a series of four public input meetings and a youth survey in May and June and two land use public forums in September 2021. These efforts are discussed in detail in the Citizen Input chapter of this Plan.

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the draft Plan at its June 14, 2023, meeting and received comments from eleven speakers. The Commission then convened a special work session on June 22 to discuss the Plan and the public comments received. In an effort to ensure that all interested parties had an opportunity to have their voices heard, the Commission decided to hold a second public hearing on the draft Plan and increase the time limit for speakers from three minutes to five minutes. That hearing took place at the Commission's August 9 meeting. Eleven citizens spoke, three of whom had also spoken at the previous hearing. Staff subsequently made revisions to the draft Plan as necessary to address citizen comments and presented the document to the Planning Commission for approval at its September 13 meeting. Seven citizens, four of whom had also spoken at one of the public hearings, spoke about the draft Plan during the Citizen Comment period. Later in the meeting, the Commission discussed the Plan and voted unanimously to transmit it to the Board of Supervisors with a recommendation of adoption subject to the revisions recommended by staff and two additional changes requested by citizens.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PROCESS – TO BE COMPLETED

The updated Plan is divided into chapters or *elements* dealing with various aspects of the County's physical development: broadband, economic development, environment, historic resources, housing, public facilities, transportation, and land use. There are also an Introduction, a Glossary of Terms, a Glossary of Acronyms, and chapters dealing with demographics and the citizen input that was collected in the preparation of this plan. The elements are ordered alphabetically except for the Land Use element, which is presented last since it incorporates information from all the other elements. Each plan element consists of a brief introduction followed by a summary of existing conditions and trends and an analysis of the County's future needs. Each element then concludes with a series of policy recommendations divided into a broad goal (or goals), more specific objectives, and implementation strategies for achieving those objectives. The objectives and implementation strategies are numbered for reference purposes, but this is not intended to suggest any priority order.

This updated Comprehensive Plan, like the original 1991 Plan and the 1999, 2005, and 2013 updates, represents the combined efforts of York County's citizens, elected and appointed officials, and staff to analyze present conditions in the County, identify present and future needs, and devise strategies for meeting these needs consistent with shared community goals and objectives. It is the County's vision for its future, specific enough to provide clear guidance to present and future policy makers yet broad and flexible enough to be adapted to account for changing circumstances.

