

CITIZEN INPUT

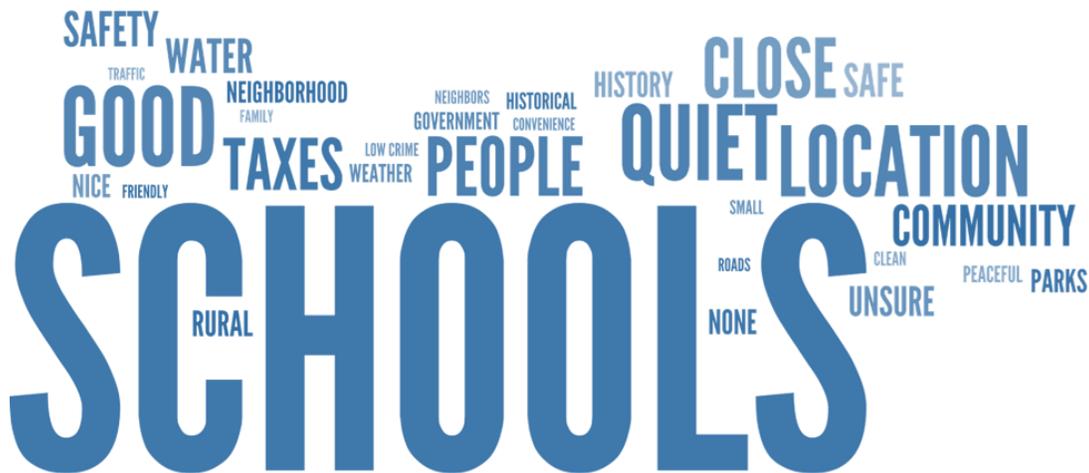
INTRODUCTION

Community planning is a community effort, and citizen input and participation are vital to the success of that effort. As the principal policy document guiding a community’s future growth and development, the Comprehensive Plan has a major impact on the residents’ quality of life. It is important, therefore, that the Plan reflect the citizens’ vision for their community, and public outreach was a major component of the process of preparing this Comprehensive Plan update. These efforts and the results they yielded are described below.

TELEPHONE SURVEY

In an effort to obtain statistically valid data regarding general community goals for the physical development of the County, a telephone survey of County residents was conducted in April 2019. The Southeastern Institute of Research (SIR), a marketing research firm based in Richmond, conducted the survey and tabulated the results on the County’s behalf. The survey questions, developed by the County with input from the consultant, asked citizens for their opinions about growth and development, housing affordability, public facility needs, and other long-range planning issues facing York County. A total of 464 interviews were conducted, yielding a margin of sampling error of ±5% at a confidence interval of 95%. This means that if the survey were conducted one hundred times on different samples that were selected in the same way, the findings of 95 out of those one hundred surveys would fall within plus or minus 5 percentage points of one another. The survey sample was geographically stratified between the upper County and the lower County to mirror the geographic distribution of the population. The consultant presented the survey findings to the Steering Committee on August 7, 2019, and they were posted on the project website. Those findings are summarized below.

Respondents were asked to name the three things they like most about living in York County. The responses are graphically illustrated in the word cloud¹ in **Figure 1** below, which shows that schools were mentioned far more often than any other characteristic. Other commonly mentioned characteristics include “Quiet,” “Safe,” “Community,” “Peaceful,” “Water,” and “Rural.”



Source: Southeastern Institute of Research

Figure 1: What citizens like most about living in York County

¹ A word cloud is a graphic representation of textual data. For each word in the cloud, font size and color are proportional to the number of times that word was mentioned.

1
2 The survey also asked residents to name the three things they like least about living in York County. The
3 responses, graphically illustrated in **Figure 2** below, reflect a high degree of satisfaction with the County
4 based on the fact that three of the top four responses were “None,” “Unsure,” and “Nothing,” with
5 “None” being the number one response. “Traffic” was second on the list of things people don’t like
6 about the County (with “Roads” not far behind), while “Taxes” were fifth.
7
8



9
10 *Source: Southeastern Institute of Research*

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

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13 These results are consistent with other findings of the survey. For example, when asked how satisfied
14 they are living in York County, almost nine out of ten responded that they were either very satisfied
15 (58%) or satisfied (29%), while only 4% indicated that they were not satisfied and 9% were neither
16 satisfied nor dissatisfied. Similarly, when asked what changes have taken place in the County in the past
17 twenty years that they have not liked, more than half the respondents did not name anything. Of those
18 who did name specific changes they haven’t liked, the main concerns were related to growth and
19 development, construction of apartments and townhouses, and traffic.
20

21 The same attitudes expressed in the answers to the question about undesirable changes that have
22 occurred in the past twenty years are also reflected in the responses to a separate question about
23 specific changes people would like to see in York County in the next twenty years. The number one
24 change that people want to see is improved transportation, particularly better roads with less
25 congestion. A slower pace of development – especially residential development – was second on the list
26 in terms of the number of responses. This was followed by a desire for more businesses and better
27 dining and shopping opportunities, improvements to County schools, and more sidewalks and bike
28 paths.
29

30 With regard to public facilities, the survey asked citizens to rate the importance of building or expanding
31 various public facilities in York County on a scale of one (not at all important) to five (very important).
32 For each type of facility, the percentage of respondents who gave ratings of 4 (important) or 5 (very
33 important) are shown in **Figure 3** below. Not surprisingly, schools earned the highest ratings with 78% of
34 respondents rating them as either an important or very important public facility priority. Infrastructure
35 to mitigate recurrent flooding and sea level rise was ranked second in overall importance (72%),
36 followed by roads (68%), parks for active recreation (66%), bike paths (61%), and sidewalks (60%).
37 Facilities that were considered important or very important by fewer than half the respondents are
38 public libraries (48%), indoor sports facility (43%), transit services (42%), and athletic fields (39%).

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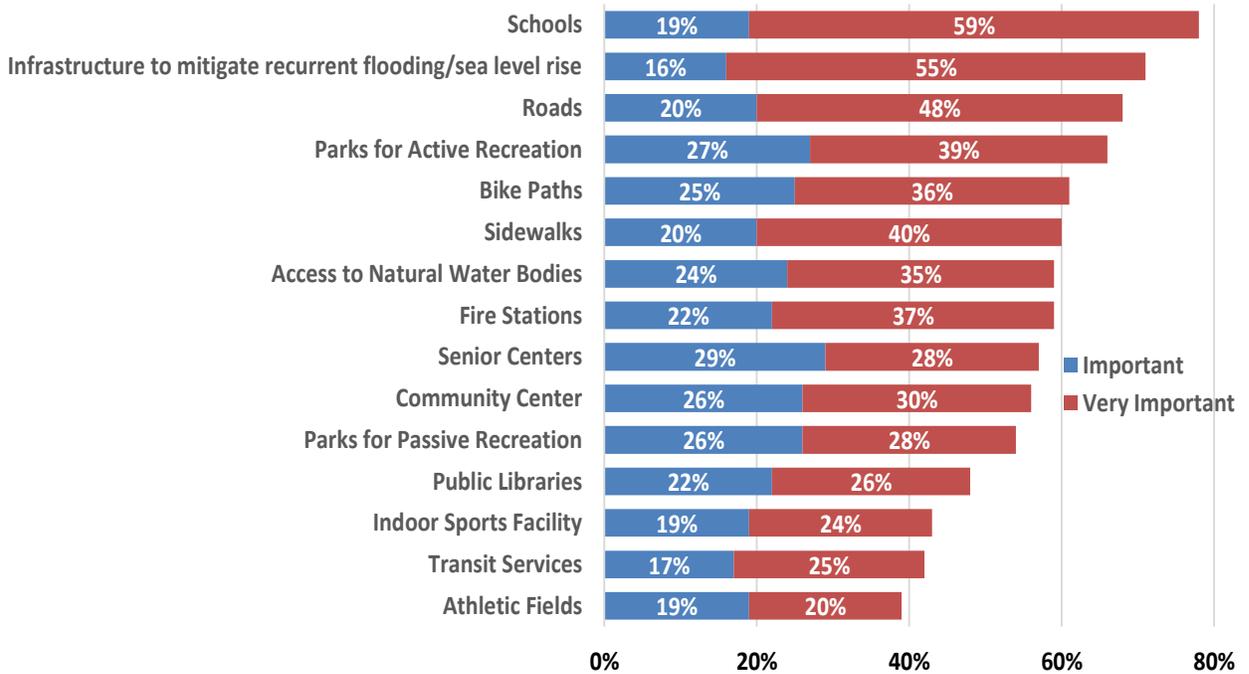


Figure 3

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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.

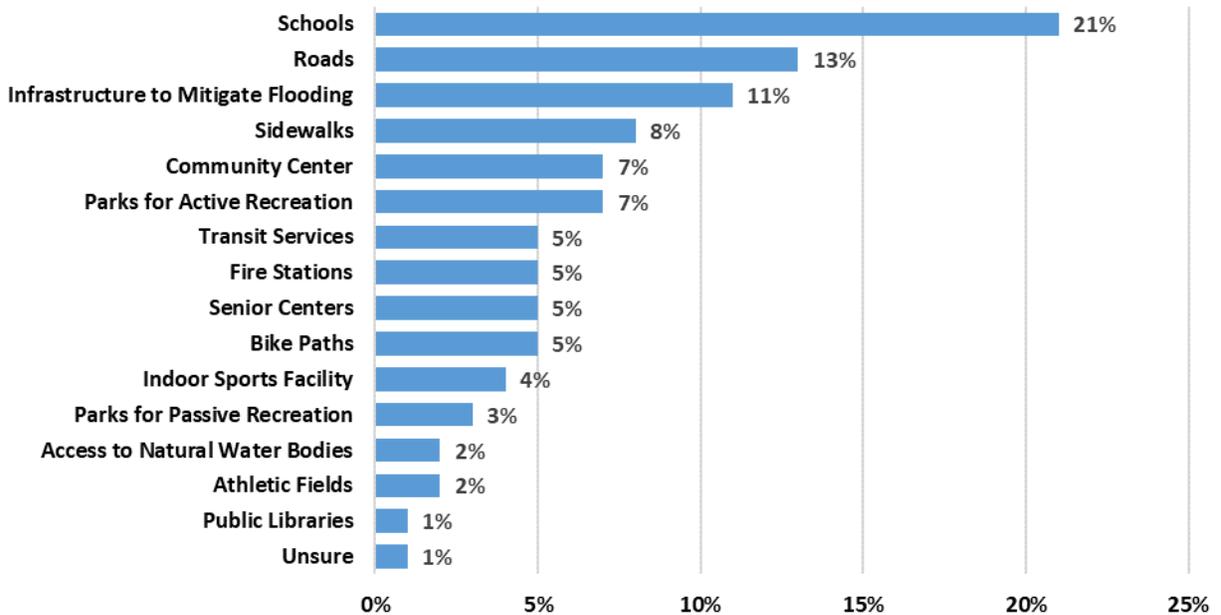


Figure 4

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1 The survey asked a series of additional questions dealing with a variety of Comprehensive Plan issues,
 2 including affordable housing, commercial development, mixed-use development, home occupations,
 3 and internet service. The results, as tabulated by SIR, are provided in the table below.
 4

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%).

1 In addition to the scientific survey, SIR conducted an unscientific “convenience survey,” which was
2 distributed online through a convenience link. The link was posted on the project website and social
3 media sites. To a great extent, the responses to the convenience survey reflected the same concerns
4 and priorities as the scientific survey (e.g. support for schools, flood mitigation, road improvements, and
5 parks), but there were some differences. In contrast to the scientific survey respondents, fewer than half
6 the convenience survey respondents considered it important or very important to encourage
7 moderately-priced housing or to encourage balanced population growth, and they were significantly less
8 likely to support increased residential densities. Eighty percent of the convenience survey respondents
9 indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with living in York County, compared to 87% of
10 the scientific survey respondents.
11

12 **YOUTH SURVEY**

13
14 Since the telephone survey was limited to residents 18 and older, the Steering Committee’s Youth
15 Commission representative took the initiative to design and conduct an online survey of his fellow
16 students at York High School so that the Committee might benefit from hearing the perspective of York
17 County’s younger residents. The survey was conducted in June 2019, and a total of 186 students
18 responded, 144 of whom completed the entire survey. Though this was not a scientific survey, it
19 provided important insight into the attitudes of the County’s youth, and several of the results mirrored
20 the results of the scientific survey with regard to the importance of walkability and good schools, the
21 need to address sea level rise, and concerns about overdevelopment. For example, the youth survey
22 included the same question about what types of public facilities should be built or expanded in the next
23 twenty years, and as with the scientific survey, the number one response was schools, which were
24 deemed important or very important by roughly three-quarters of the respondents. Infrastructure to
25 mitigate flooding and sea level rise was ranked second (approximately 73%), followed by access to
26 bodies of water (70%), bike lanes (67%), and sidewalks (62%).
27

28 The youth survey also included questions about the students’ future housing choices. Slightly more than
29 half the respondents indicated that they would consider living in York County in the future, while 21%
30 said they would not and another 27% were unsure. Of those who did not want to live in York County in
31 the future, most wanted to live in either a suburban area or a big city, while the remainder were fairly
32 evenly divided between wanting to live in either a small town or a rural area. A related question asked in
33 what type of area students would like to live in the future. Roughly half the respondents indicated that
34 they wanted to live in a residential area and a third said they would like to live in a mixed-use area.
35 Another 18.1% said they wanted to live in a rural area. When asked what kind of home they expect to
36 live ten years from now, more than half (56%) responded that they expect to live in a single-family
37 detached home, while 28% and 16%, respectively, answered that they expect to live in an apartment or
38 townhouse.
39

40 **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

41
42 An early public outreach effort took place on Saturday, April 27, 2019, at the Yorktown Market Days
43 event in historic Yorktown. That date was chosen because it coincided with the “Pirates Invade
44 Yorktown” event, which always draws large numbers of citizens. A booth was set up in the vendor area
45 and manned by York 2040 Committee members and staff who engaged with passersby to talk about the
46 Comprehensive Plan and asked them for their thoughts and ideas about future development in the
47 County. At least 300 people stopped by the tables to look at large display maps of the County, ask
48 questions, and share their opinions.
49

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

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

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

6
7 Despite significant efforts on the County’s part to publicize these meetings, overall turnout was
8 disappointing, with a combined attendance of slightly more than thirty citizens (not including
9 Committee members and staff). Nevertheless, the dialogue with those who did attend was helpful and
10 productive. In all, more than seventy comments were recorded covering a variety of topics ranging from
11 bike lanes and sidewalks to electric vehicle charging stations to green space to bus shelters. All
12 comments were provided to the Committee members for their information and posted on the project
13 website.
14

15 Two more public forums were held in September 2021 – one in the upper County (Bruton High School)
16 and one in the lower County (Tabb Library) – to invite citizens to offer their views specifically about
17 future land use in the County. The purpose of these forums was
18 to gather input to assist the Committee as it prepared to begin
19 its discussions of the Land Use element of the Plan. Both
20 meetings began with a presentation by the Planning staff to
21 provide information both about current land use and
22 development patterns throughout the County and about the
23 recommendations for future land use that are set forth in the
24 adopted (i.e., 2013) Comprehensive Plan. Each presentation was
25 followed by a question-and-answer period. The second part of
26 each meeting was an “open house” session where citizens were
27 able to review large-scale County land use maps and speak
28 directly with Committee members to share their ideas and
29 opinions about changes they would like to see in the updated
30 Plan. County staff members were present to answer questions
31 and record citizen comments. In addition to providing their input
32 orally, attendees were given the option of submitting written
33 comments on forms that were given to each person as they
34 arrived at the meeting.
35

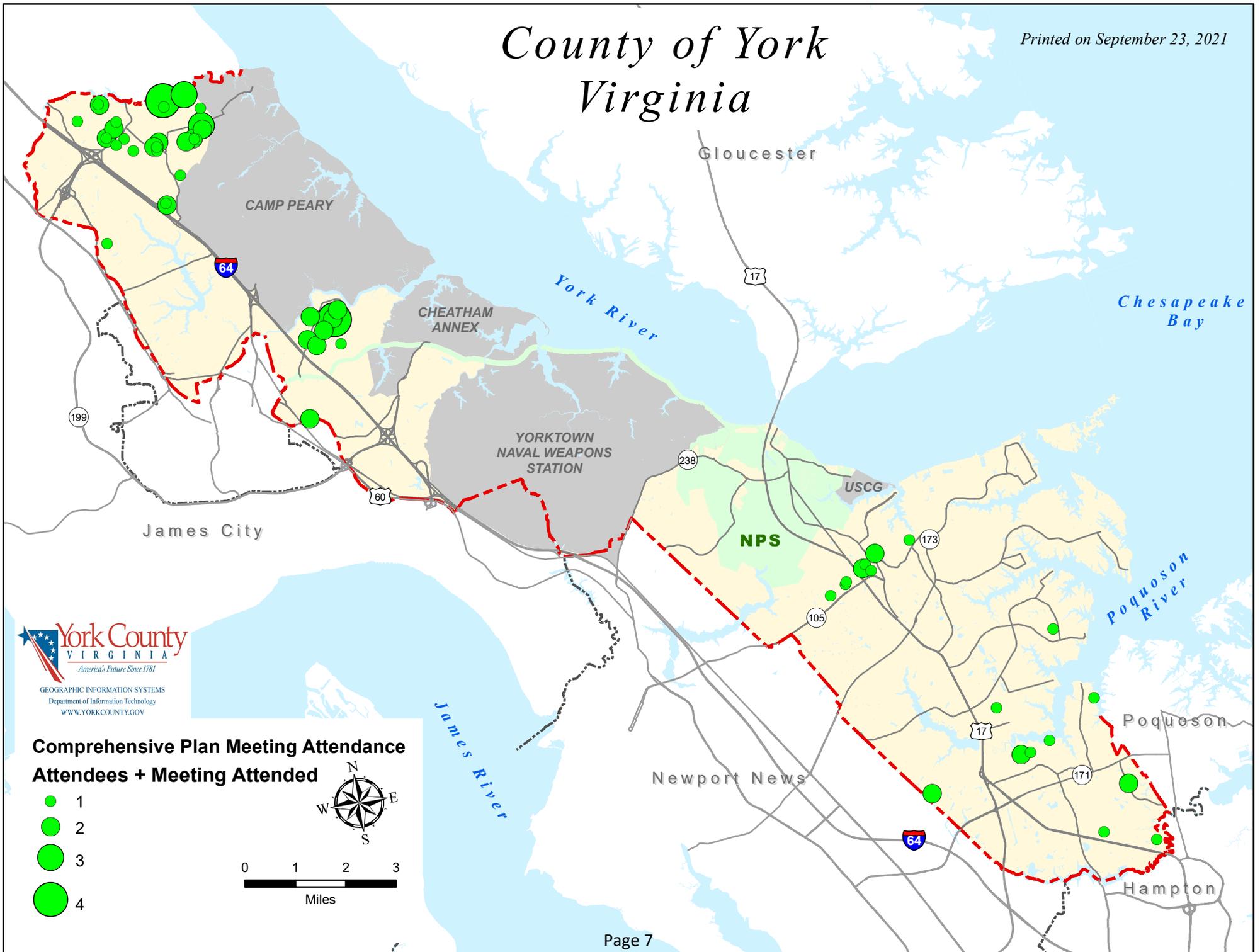


36 Combined attendance at the two meetings, not including Committee members and staff, was 88, with
37 55 at Bruton High School and 33 at the Tabb Library. In all, there were a total of 78 individual
38 participants, as there were several people who attended both meetings. Of those 78 individuals, 53
39 were from the upper County, 20 from the lower County, two from James City County, and one from the
40 City of Chesapeake. Two attendees did not indicate their place of residence. (See the map on Page 7.)
41 Citizen comments were wide-ranging and touched on a number of topics, as briefly summarized below:
42

- 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.

County of York Virginia

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- 1 • MIXED USE OVERLAY DESIGNATION. Several citizens commented that the Mixed Use overlay
2 designation should be removed from the Comprehensive Plan, especially in the Skimino and
3 Lightfoot areas, but Grafton and Tabb were mentioned as well.
4
- 5 • LIGHTFOOT. A number of concerns were expressed specifically about the Economic Opportunity
6 and Mixed Use overlay designations over a large portion of the Lightfoot area and the possibility
7 of large-scale development that would over-burden roads and schools.
8
- 9 • ADAPTIVE REUSE. Many citizens expressed concern about allowing new development to occur
10 when there are already vacant commercial buildings that could be put to commercial use or
11 remodeled as affordable housing.
12
- 13 • TRANSPORTATION. Concerns were expressed about narrow roads that are not able to handle
14 additional development and about the impact of development on traffic in general.
15
- 16 • HOUSING. A few citizens expressed a desire for more affordable housing in the County.
17
- 18 • PUBLIC FACILITIES. Several citizens expressed concern about school crowding and the negative
19 impact of new development, particularly multi-family development in the Grafton area. Other
20 comments included suggestions that schools be located in or within biking/walking distance of
21 residential neighborhoods and that a school be built on the north side of Lightfoot Road. A
22 comment related to parks was that the County needs more parks that are accessible to the
23 general public.
24

25 Following the land use forums, staff prepared a report summarizing the meetings, including copies of all
26 citizen comments, and provided it to the Committee members for them to review and consider as they
27 began their deliberations on possible changes to the future Land Use Map. The report was also posted
28 on the project website.
29

30 CONCLUSIONS

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32 It appears from the various surveys and public meeting comments that in general, most York County
33 residents are relatively satisfied with the County the way it is and do not want it to change very much.
34 These attitudes are reflected in concerns about what many view as excessive growth and development
35 as well as support for road improvements to address traffic, which is seen as a by-product of this
36 growth. It is significant that the top responses to the question “What do you like the least about living in
37 York County?” was “None,” followed by “Traffic,” “Unsure,” and “Nothing.” It is also significant that
38 more than half of the respondents did not identify any changes they would like to see in York County in
39 the next twenty years.
40

41 To a great extent, the attitudes expressed by the citizens for this Comprehensive Plan update mirror
42 those that were expressed in the 2013 update as well as previous Plan updates. These include concerns
43 about growth and traffic, support for schools and green space, and a high level of satisfaction with the
44 County as it is. One change that has occurred over the years is a noticeable increase in citizen support
45 for adding more sidewalks and bike paths. Another change is an increased recognition of the need to
46 address sea level rise and recurrent flooding, which has emerged as a high priority.
47
48