

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



Agenda Date:	November 15, 2021
Action Required:	Resolution Adoption
Presenter:	James Freas, Director, Neighborhood Development Services
Staff Contacts:	James Freas, Director, Neighborhood Development Services Missy Creasy, Deputy Director, Neighborhood Development Services
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan Update</b>

**Background/Discussion:**

The Charlottesville Comprehensive Plan is an important component of the City’s overall policy framework, serving to express a vision and set goals for the future development of the City and a guide for implementation of the City’s subdivision ordinance, zoning ordinance and capital improvements plan. The Cville Plans Together 2021 update to this Plan has come at a critical time as the community has prioritized addressing concerns around equity and the availability of affordable housing. This work has been informed by a wide range of community engagement opportunities as well as the experience and expertise of the Cville Plans Together team including the consultants at Rhodeside & Harwell (RHI) and City staff.

There are two critical components to the Comprehensive Plan Update: (1) the five Guiding Principles, which overarch the entire plan and will guide how strategies are proposed to be implemented, and (2) the six Priority Areas that serve to focus the initial implementation efforts of the plan.

Five Guiding Principles

- **Equity & Opportunity:** All people will be able to thrive in Charlottesville.
- **Community Culture & Unity:** Charlottesville’s rich and diverse culture, history, and form will be celebrated, and the entire community will feel welcomed, valued, and respected.
- **Local & Regional Collaboration:** From the neighborhood to the region, open conversations and partnerships will make the city stronger.
- **Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability:** The Charlottesville community will demonstrate environmental and climate leadership.
- **Connections & Access:** The City will consider land use and transportation in complementary ways, creating more accessible and safer mobility options for all.

Six Priority Areas

- Support the development of more housing throughout the city, with a focus on creation of more housing that is affordable to more people, especially those with the greatest need.

- Make sure all people have access to job opportunities, shelter, healthy food, and other resources they need to thrive and have a high quality of life.
- Work to both mitigate and prepare for the impacts of climate change.
- Make it safer, easier, and more desirable to walk, ride a bicycle, or use other non-vehicle transportation options.
- Keep Charlottesville green, make it greener, and protect the natural environment and the many benefits it provides.
- Continue to evolve and improve communications and collaboration.

### Process

The Code of Virginia sets out a statutory process for adoption and review of a locality's Comprehensive Plan. The Code requires the Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed at least once every five years to determine if amendments are needed (§ 15.2-2230). The current review began in May 2017. The Planning Commission was in agreement that the City would grow, and that this review should focus on putting a framework in place to guide that growth in accordance with key priorities. Staff and the Planning Commission led three phases of community outreach and performed extensive work on a draft future land use map, until the effort was paused in January 2019 to obtain consultant assistance to navigate the continuation of the plan in the context of the community changes including further examination of equity, especially related to housing affordability. To support the City's Comprehensive Plan update, the City hired a consultant team led by Rhodeside & Harwell (RHI) in late 2019 to first develop an affordable housing plan that could provide needed information for the Comprehensive Plan, then complete Comprehensive Plan revisions, and conclude with production of a new Zoning Ordinance, which will provide for implementation of the vision of the plans. Once on board, the RHI team gathered community input and established the visions for the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Plan (March 2021) and Comprehensive Plan and proceeded through development of the plans. Work on the Comprehensive Plan Update continued as the Affordable Housing Plan was completed and endorsed by Council in March 2021. Using information gained through the Affordable Housing Plan, the consultants continued Comprehensive Plan chapter updates and focused on development and presentation of an updated Future Land Use Map. The Planning Commission has recommended that Council adopt the results of the update to the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Community Engagement:**

Community member participation is an important element in the Comprehensive Planning Process. In order to prepare a plan that is fully responsive to the needs of community residents, the Planning Commission, RHI team, and City staff carried out an extensive program of community review and participation. The objectives in encouraging community participation were to assist local residents in understanding the planning process, to allow community members to discuss the future of their community, to incorporate public input into the formation of policies for the future, and to transmit these comments to members of the Planning Commission and the City Council. Emphasis was also placed on open and free distribution of information and encouraging public involvement in the formulation of goals, policies, and implementation strategies.

The following processes and outreach efforts demonstrate the City's efforts to engage in effective community participation:

## **City Outreach 2017 -2018**

During Phase I of the Planning Commission and staff effort, a series of workshops were held to gather feedback from the community on how the update to the Comprehensive Plan should be shaped. The goal of Phase II of the Comprehensive Plan update was to gather more specific public input for informing the plan's land use chapter. During Phase III, a series of workshops were held to gather feedback from the community on their reactions to the recommended updates to the Comprehensive Plan. Details of these efforts are documented here:

[Booklet UPDATE 10 2018.pdf - Google Drive](#)

## **Cville Plans Together Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee was established to serve an advisory role to the City and consultant team throughout the Cville Plans Together process (which included creation of the Affordable Housing Strategy and updates to the Comprehensive Plan, and will include a rewrite of the zoning code). The group, made up of a diverse membership, met regularly to provide input on a variety of project elements, including helping to ensure that earlier efforts and input were considered in this process. While not a voting or decision-making group, the City and consultant team has weighed the input of the Steering Committee in development of plans, policies, and other recommendations. Their feedback was provided throughout the process and noted in the documentation. Detailed information on their membership and meetings is located here:

<https://cvilleplanstogether.com/document-media-center/>

## **Cville Plans Together – May - June 2020 Engagement**

The goal of the May-June 2020 community engagement efforts was to share information about the Cville Plans Together process led by RHI, begin creating a network and connections in the Charlottesville community and develop partnerships in order to bring people into the process, and receive initial input related to the Comprehensive Plan and Affordable Housing Strategy. Due to COVID-19, the planned community kick-off was not only pushed back from late March to May, 2020, but the City and consultant team were required to adapt the process to utilize safe, socially distanced methods of community engagement. While original plans called for a focus on in-person engagement, including several events and activities in neighborhoods, virtual methods had to be employed instead. To further increase engagement during the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the original survey period was extended to June 27 and the original set of five scheduled open discussions was expanded to ten. Details and outcomes of these efforts can be reviewed here: Full document [here](#).

## **Cville Plans Together – November - December 2020 Engagement**

The goal of the November 2020 community engagement efforts was to share the draft Affordable Housing Strategy and draft initial revisions of the Comprehensive Plan. The team also wanted to continue building a network of connections in the Charlottesville community and bring people into the process. Due to COVID-19, the City and consultant team were required to continue adapting the process to utilize safe, physically-distanced methods of community engagement. Details and outcomes of these efforts can be reviewed here: Full draft document [here](#) (PDF), with links to appendices.

## **Cville Plans Together – Spring 2021 Community Engagement**

The goal of the May-June 2021 community engagement efforts was to gather community input on draft updates to the Comprehensive Plan chapters and Future Land Use Map. This process included virtual components as well as in-person pop-up events at various community locations. Details and outcomes of these efforts can be reviewed here: [available here](#).

## **Planning Commission Work Sessions and Meetings**

The Planning Commission spent many hours in review of elements of the Comprehensive Plan during 2017-2018. In addition to attending many community events in support of the plan and to gather community input, Commissioners participated in multiple work sessions to provide staff with guidance. The Commission remained engaged once the Cville Plans Together project started and participated at various stages. The process looked different due to COVID-19 but allowed for continued engagement throughout the process. All meetings and work sessions were open to the public and additional public input was provided at a majority of these events. Materials were available online and provided by other means to those without computer access.

There were 51 speakers at the joint public hearing held on October 12, 2021.

### **Budgetary Impact:**

No direct impacts. The Comprehensive Plan is supposed to be used as one tool to guide development and priorities within the Capital Improvement Program and should be referenced in that process, which is upcoming, and used as a reference point in establishing priorities for funding within the CIP.

**Recommendation:** Following a public hearing on October 12, 2021, the Planning Commission adopted a Resolution, recommended approval of the proposed Comprehensive Plan, with the following changes:

1. In the LAND USE chapter, add the following sub-strategy to Strategy 1.2 following bullet two (“...preserve and enhance natural resources...”): “Require that zoning changes preserve and enhance historic cultural resources. In particular, require that development of historic properties within Historic Preservation Architectural Design Control (ADC) Districts, Historic Conservation (CV) Districts, or Individually Protected Property (IPP) maintain the National Register’s “contributing resource” designation.”
2. In the LAND USE CATEGORY DESCRIPTION: SENSITIVE AREA: Consider allowing additional units and height under a bonus program or other zoning mechanism with greater and deeper affordability than non-sensitive areas.
3. Revise LAND USE CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS Table 2 "Residential" header to add "Zoning tools will regulate affordability and maximum allowable development for all categories and consider demolition disincentives as feasible".
4. Recommend that SENSITIVE AREA delineation should continue to be defined and additional means and metrics beyond Census Block Data need to be considered. (This will also require revisions to the description of Sensitive areas on page 25 in addition to the FLUM. This is additional text to the document for now.)

All seven commissioners voted in favor of the motion. Subsequent to the Planning Commission’s vote, the Secretary of the Commission has prepared a certified copy of the proposed Comp Plan, reflecting the changes voted upon by the Commission, which can be accessed by you electronically at the link set out at the end of this Memo.

It is recommended that City Council adopt the attached resolution.

The Comprehensive Plan may be accessed here: (note that items 1-4 above have been addressed in the current document) <https://cvilleplanstogether.com/document-media-center/>

**Attachments:**

- Proposed City Council Resolution
- Link to October 12, 2021 Planning Commission meeting materials (starting on page 5):  
<https://charlottesvilleva.civicclerk.com/Web/Player.aspx?id=1235&key=-1&mod=-1&mk=-1&nov=0>
- Link to Certified copy:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RgFVKBqegYLfTvLGkkiwXaLpl-K7A7PP?usp=sharing>

**RESOLUTION  
TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY  
OF CHARLOTTESVILLE**

**WHEREAS**, in 2013 City Council adopted a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Charlottesville, and it has been amended from time to time thereafter (“2013 Comprehensive Plan”);

**WHEREAS**, the Code of Virginia §15.2-2230 requires such plan be reviewed every five years, and commencing in May 2017 the Charlottesville Planning Commission ("Planning Commission") with the assistance of the City's Department of Neighborhood Development Services, and has undertaken a review of the City's 2013 Comprehensive Plan, and has determined that it would be advisable to update and amend such plan;

**WHEREAS**, the Planning Commission made careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of existing conditions and trends of growth within the City, and of the probable future requirements of the City's territory and inhabitants, including surveys and studies, such as those contemplated within Code of Virginia §15.2-2224;

**WHEREAS**, on October 12, 2021, following notice given in accordance with Code of Virginia §15.2-2204, a joint public hearing was conducted by the Planning Commission and the City Council on the proposed amendments to the 2013 Comprehensive Plan;

**WHEREAS**, on October 12, 2021, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan and directed that the 2021 Comprehensive Plan be transmitted to City Council for consideration (“2021 Certified Comprehensive Plan”); and

**WHEREAS**, as required by Code of Virginia §15.2-2225 a link to the proposed 2021 Certified Comprehensive Plan has/have been posted on the City’s website on which the Planning Commission generally posts information, and that is available to the public;

**WHEREAS**, the 2021 Certified Comprehensive Plan transportation element was submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (“VDOT”) for review and comment in accordance with Code of Virginia §15.2-2223(B)(4), and VDOT has approved the proposed transportation element;

**WHEREAS**, City Council desires that certain amendments to the 2021 Comprehensive Plan certified by the Planning Commission be made, to-wit:

1. In the LAND USE chapter, add the following sub-strategy to Strategy 1.2 following bullet two (“...preserve and enhance natural resources...”): “Require that zoning changes preserve and enhance historic cultural resources. In particular, require that development of historic properties within Historic Preservation Architectural Design Control (ADC) Districts, Historic Conservation (CV) Districts, or Individually Protected Property (IPP) maintain the National Register’s “contributing resource” designation.”
2. In the LAND USE CATEGORY DESCRIPTION: SENSITIVE AREA: Consider allowing additional units and height under a bonus program or other zoning mechanism with greater and deeper affordability than non-sensitive areas.
3. Revise LAND USE CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS Table 2 "Residential" header to add "Zoning tools will regulate affordability and maximum allowable development for all categories and consider demolition disincentives as feasible".

4. Recommend that SENSITIVE AREA delineation should continue to be defined and additional means and metrics beyond Census Block Data need to be considered. (This will also require revisions to the description of Sensitive areas on page 25 in addition to the FLUM. This is additional text to the document for now.)

**WHEREAS**, this Council finds and determines that, with the amendments desired by City Council, the 2021 Certified Plan has been made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory within the City 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 city's inhabitants;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, that the aforesaid 2021 Comprehensive Plan certified by the City Planning Commission, amended to include the four (4) amendments made by City Council as noted above within this Resolution, is hereby approved and adopted as the official Comprehensive Plan of the City pursuant to Code of Virginia §15.2-2226, and shall hereafter be known as the City's "Comprehensive Plan (2021)".