



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2024.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

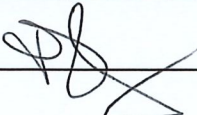
PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Hanover County
Program Title: Envision Hanover Comprehensive Plan Update
Program Category: Community + Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Todd Kilduff, P.E.
Title: Deputy Community Administrator
Signature:  4-3-24

***Nomination: Virginia Association of Counties
2024 Achievement Awards***



Executive Summary

The **Envision Hanover Comprehensive Plan Update**, a multi-year planning effort completed in September 2023, was based upon more than 4,000 stakeholder comments, with unprecedented levels of public engagement aimed at ensuring the plan's vision and goals truly reflected the community's vision for the future. The planning process can serve as a **model for other rural and suburban communities** working to ensure their growth management and land use strategies reflect feedback from a variety of stakeholders.

Program Overview

Why was this project undertaken?

The project launched in Fall 2021 to update the previous comprehensive plan, which was adopted in February 2018. Per the Code of Virginia, comprehensive plans must be reviewed every five years. As part of this regular review, the Board of Supervisors wanted to have robust public engagement to reaffirm major principals in the plan and conduct a complete rewrite of the document to help ensure that the document best reflects the current vision of community members. Additionally, the plan adopted in 2018 did not include key emerging issues, such as housing, resiliency, or solar energy facilities.

What is significant about this planning process?

This planning effort was significant to Hanover County for the following reasons:

1. Significant virtual and in-person public engagement
2. Specific outreach to underrepresented communities
3. Shift from use-based to design-based recommendations

More detail is below:

1. Significant Virtual and In-Person Public Engagement

Stakeholders had the opportunity to participate virtually or in-person throughout different phases of the planning process, with public outreach events occurring from January 2022 through September 2023 (plan adoption). A project-specific website (www.envisionhanover.com), along with dedicated social media pages and mass emails, provided up-to-date information and different ways to provide feedback. There was project-

specific branding, with banners and business cards placed throughout the County (libraries, YMCAs, public buildings, community centers, etc.) raising awareness of the project. In total, over 4,000 comments were received throughout the planning process.

Public outreach occurred in different phases and included the following:

- *Community Needs and Visioning (January 2022 – March 2022)*
 - Interactive Open Houses (In-Person + Webinar): Four in-person, interactive open houses at different locations (172 attendees), along with a virtual open house held via Zoom (25 attendees).
 - Drop-In Events (Office Hours): Multiple drop-in events (office hours) were held at local libraries (13 attendees).
 - Online Survey: An online survey featured content that mirrored the in-person events (392 participants).

- *Visual Preference Survey (April 2022 – May 2022)*

An online visual preference survey allowed stakeholders to provide their opinions regarding the design of future development (336 participants).

- *Land Use Visioning Workshops (July 2022 – August 2022)*

Two interactive workshops focused on land use. Participants heard a presentation regarding land use planning in Hanover County and divided into small groups (usually 4 to 5 people) to share their thoughts on potential changes to the General Land Use Plan (79 participants).

- *Topic Outreach + Plan Affirmation (January 2023 – July 2023)*

Throughout 2023, the public provided more detailed feedback regarding concepts and recommendations related to specific topic areas included within the plan:

- *Topical Area Outreach: Part #1 (Land Use, Economic Vitality, and History + Culture)*

There were five in-person meetings, three *Stop and Chat* (office hours) events, and a webinar, with 220 event attendees total.

- *Topical Area Outreach: Part #2 (Housing, Active Living, and Rural/Agricultural)*

There were four in-person meetings, one *Stop and Chat* (office hours) event, and a webinar, with 99 event attendees total.

- *Topical Outreach: Part #3 (Transportation, Utilities/Community Facilities, and Environment/Resiliency)*

There were four in-person meetings, one *Stop and Chat* (office hours) event, and a webinar, with 109 event attendees total.



- *Land Use Awareness*

1,759 letters were mailed to landowners whose properties were impacted by a proposed significant change to the General Land Use Plan. Additionally, signs were posted in areas where a significant change was proposed to the General Land Use Plan.

- *Community Participation Team*

The Community Participation Team (CPT) was formed to provide feedback throughout the planning process. The CPT included each member of the Planning Commission and one citizen appointee from each magisterial district (up to 14 total members). The CPT met ten times between June 2022 and June 2023.

- *Other Outreach*

- Presentations to multiple community groups.
- Booths at local festivals, including Ashland Train Day (2022 + 2023), Ashland Strawberry Festival (2022), and the Tomato Festival (2022).
- Videos provided information about different components of the plan on YouTube.

A memo summarized each phase of engagement and was made available to the public for review.

Based on this outreach, new sections were added to the plan. A new chapter was created focusing on rural/agriculture, since almost 80% of the County's area is intended to remain rural. Additionally, there was a new chapter focusing on housing and a subchapter focusing on resiliency.

2. Specific Outreach to Underrepresented Communities

Several community meetings and small-group discussions were held in three communities that were historically underrepresented in previous planning processes. There were multiple meetings at Brown Grove Baptist Church to develop land use recommendations specifically for a historic African-American community, which includes the recently-created Brown Grove Rural Historic District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places). There is a specific section in the plan dedicated to culturally-sensitive communities.

3. Shift from Use-Based to Design-Based Recommendations

Previous plans (particularly the General Land Use Plan) focused heavily on recommended uses and provided limited guidance regarding the design of new development. For each land use designation, there are more detailed recommendations regarding the design and functionality of development. These recommendations address:

- Recommended project size for some land use designations;
- Recommended mix of uses;
- Transportation and access (including pedestrian/bicycle accommodations);
- Landscaping and buffering (including thoroughfare buffers and buffering between use types); and
- Transitions between use types.

Project Leads

This project was managed by staff in the Planning Department. Two consultants provided technical assistance:

- EPR PC provided background research, including demographic information, and helped create branding for the project.
- Kimley Horn provided information and analysis regarding the transportation component of the plan (Major Thoroughfare Plan).

Local funding sources were used to support this project.

Responsible Department

Hanover County Planning Department

Staff Leads

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Deputy Director of Planning

The full plan and supporting documents are available online at www.envisionhanover.com under the *Project Resources* tab.

