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SUMMARY OF PHASE #1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

Per the Public Engagement Plan (endorsed by the Board of Supervisors on November 10, 2021), there will be four different phases of public engagement throughout the update process:

- Phase #1: Identifying Needs

- Phase #2: Visioning

- Phase #3: Addressing Topical/Focus Areas

- Phase #4: Affirmation

Phase #1 of the engagement process (Identifying Needs) is intended to:

- Identify critical needs and issues that need to be addressed throughout the process; and

- Identify common themes that should be reflected in the vision and goals of the plan.

A series of events were held to receive feedback from stakeholders and provide information about the planning process.

This phase of engagement lasted from January 1, 2022 through March 4, 2022.

EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS

- *Project Website*

    A project website (www.envisionhanover.com) launched on January 14 and was regularly updated. During Phase #1 of the engagement process, more than 1,600 unique visitors viewed the website.

- *In-Person Open Houses*

    Four in-person, interactive open houses were held in early February. Participants visited different stations to learn about the planning process and provide feedback regarding the community's strengths and weaknesses. Participants also shared ideas regarding their vision for Hanover County's future.

Location	Date/Time	Attendees
Oak Knoll Middle School	Feb. 8, 2022 (5:00 – 7:00 p.m.)	43
Patrick Henry High School	Feb. 8, 2022 (5:00 – 7:00 p.m.)	52
Atlee High School	Feb. 10, 2022 (5:00 – 7:00 p.m.)	46
Mechanicsville High School	Feb. 10, 2022 (5:00 – 7:00 p.m.)	31
Total Attendance		172

These events were advertised in a variety of ways, including:

o   Public Notices in the *Mechanicsville Local*

o   Published Article/Contributed Report in *Mechanicsville Local* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch*

o   Calendar on County Website

o   Social Media Posts

o   Mass Emails

Open House at Oak Knoll Middle School

- *Virtual Open House*

  A virtual open house was held on February 28, 2022 via Zoom. As part of this event, there was a presentation that provided an overview of the planning process and identified ways participants can be involved. There was also a questions/answers session. Approximately 25 people participated in this event, which was advertised via social media and mass emails. This event provided the same information as the in-person open houses, and the webinar was posted on the County's YouTube page for future viewing.

- *Drop-In Events*

  Three drop-in events were held at local libraries, allowing members of the public to ask questions about the planning process. These events also provided the project team with an opportunity to raise public awareness regarding the project.

Location	Date/Time	Number of Active Participants*
Montpelier Library	Feb. 15, 2022 (12:00 – 2:00 p.m.)	2
Atlee Library	Feb. 16, 2022 (3:00 – 5:00 p.m.)	3
Mechanicsville Library	Feb. 17, 2022 (12:00 – 2:00 p.m.)	8
Total Attendance		13

*Active participants include stakeholders that asked the project team questions and/or had a discussion regarding the Envision Hanover update process.

Information about the drop-in events was shared on social media and in mass emails.

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- *Visioning Survey*

  An online survey (administered via SurveyMonkey) was open from February 8, 2022 through March 4, 2022. In this open-response survey, participants were asked to:
  - Identify the community's strengths and weaknesses;
  - Define rural; and
  - Describe their vision for Hanover County's future.

  The questions mirrored those asked at the in-person open houses, allowing for the responses to be easily compared and analyzed.

  Information about the surveys was shared on social media and in mass emails. 392 online surveys were submitted. 98% of respondents indicated they live in the County.

  Hard copies of the survey were made available at drop-in events and as requested. One (1) hard copy of the survey was submitted.

- *Social Media*

  Accounts were created to promote Envision Hanover on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter:

Number of Posts Made on Social Media During Phase #1 Engagement	
Facebook	17
Instagram	17
Twitter	17

- *Other Advertising and Promotions*

  Regular emails were sent to stakeholders that signed up online or at in-person open houses to receive project updates. Seven (7) mass emails were sent during the Phase #1 engagement period, with more than 180 people signing up to receive those emails through the project website.

  To increase public awareness of the project, a project banner with the logo and website (including a QR code) was placed at different locations, including the following:
  - County Administration Building
  - Hanover Library
  - Mechanicsville Library
  - Montpelier Library

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KEY THEMES

All of the feedback received was analyzed and categorized into different topic areas. Based on this analysis, key themes emerged:

- *Preserve Rural Character*

  Many respondents think that the rural character found in much of Hanover County should be maintained. Loss of farmland, forests, and open space was identified as the most critical issue Hanover County is currently facing, and the second-biggest concern looking into the future.

- *Manage Growth*

  Many respondents think that growth should be managed and directed to areas with adequate infrastructure, limiting new development within rural areas. A few comments mentioned improving the quality/aesthetics of new development, and a few others expressed interest in reinvesting in established neighborhoods and commercial areas to improve the aesthetics (and desirability) of existing communities.

- *Maintain Good Schools*

  Many comments cited high-quality schools as a community strength and thought it was important to maintain (or improve) the quality of schools during the planning horizon. Some respondents felt that the school buildings should be improved/renovated, while other commented on the quality of the curriculum.

- *Improve the Transportation Network (including Active Transportation)*

  Many respondents commented on the need to improve the local roadway network, and increased traffic/congestion was identified as one of the biggest concerns looking into the future. Some wanted improved roadway design (such as wider shoulders on rural roadways) and/or maintenance, while others thought certain roadways should be improved to address localized issues with congestion. There is also a desire to provide safe, comfortable, and convenient opportunities for walking and biking. Among respondents, there seems to be relatively limited interest in providing transit service.

- *Provide More Parks and Recreational Opportunities*

  Many respondents felt that there should be more amenitized parks and recreational opportunities for people of all ages, especially within suburban areas.

- *Expand Broadband Access*

  Many respondents felt that it is critical to improve broadband access, particularly within underserved areas.

Some of these topics relate directly to land use and growth management (which are specifically addressed in the Comprehensive Plan), while others relate to quality of life and other services provided by Hanover County.

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RESPONSES FROM OPEN HOUSE AND SURVEY

Similar questions were asked at the in-person open houses and through the online survey. Over 4,000 comments were received, and all of the comments were compiled, analyzed, and categorized into different themes. Below is a breakdown of how many comments were received regarding the different themes.

Questions with Set Responses

Current Issues

Prompt: What do you think are the most critical issues Hanover County is currently facing? Select up to five.

Choice	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Loss of Farmland, Forests + Open Space	327	66%
Traffic Congestion	222	45%
Lack of Walking + Biking Options	202	41%
Design + Quality of New Development	177	36%
Lack of Affordable Housing Options	155	31%
Other	150	30%
Limited Access to Parks + Recreational Areas	131	26%
Lack of Shopping + Entertainment Opportunities	117	24%
Few High-Quality Employment Opportunities	93	19%
Lack of Public Transportation	81	16%
No Major Critical Issues Currently	8	2%

Future Issues

Prompt: What are your biggest concerns as Hanover County continues to grow? Select up to five.

Choice	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Increased Traffic/Congestion	342	69%
Loss of Farmland, Forests + Open Space	337	68%
Too Much Development	303	61%
Loss of Sense of Community	197	40%
Housing Affordability	149	30%
Decreased Safety	146	29%
Quality of Architecture/Building Design	92	19%
Other	88	18%
Decreased Water Quality	81	16%
Decreased Air Quality	77	15%
No Concerns about Future Development	24	5%

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Open-Ended Questions

Community Strengths

Prompt: Name 3 features of Hanover County that you like best.

Comment Topic	Open Houses	Online Survey	Total
Rural Character	39	249	288
Sense of Community/Quality of Life	49	125	174
Good Schools	35	117	152
Strong Public Safety	30	60	90
Regional Location	13	75	88
Parks/Libraries/Community Facilities	10	70	80
Agriculture/Farming/Forestry	17	30	47
Good Governance	12	35	47
History	3	44	47
Shopping/Amenities	6	38	44
Planned Growth/Growth Management	15	29	44
Low Taxes/Affordability/Economy	6	38	44
Good Road Network/Low Traffic	9	27	36
Natural Resources/Outdoor Recreation	2	23	25
High-Quality Housing and Neighborhoods	1	13	14

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Community Weaknesses

Prompt: Name 3 features of Hanover County that you think could be improved.

Comment Topic	Open Houses	Online Survey	Total
Improve Roadways (incl. Road Design, Maintenance + Congestion)	31	138	169
Control/Manage Growth (Including Quality/Aesthetics)	21	104	125
Improve Broadband Access and Wireless Communications	21	69	90
Enhance and Broaden Recreational Opportunities	16	71	87
Provide More Active Transportation Options	21	58	79
Improve Planning Process + Transparency	16	59	75
Improve Educational System	11	52	63
Lack of Shopping Options/Amenities	7	47	54
Provide Housing Options (including Affordable Housing)	16	38	54
Lack of Diversity	12	30	42
Loss of Agricultural Land + Open Spaces	10	25	36
Improve Older Neighborhoods + Existing Commercial Areas (including Code Enforcement)	5	26	31
Opposition to Recent Industrial Development	4	24	28
Environmental Degradation Due to Development	9	14	23
Lack of Employment Opportunities/ Limited Support for Businesses	6	16	22
Provide Transit Opportunities	2	12	14
Promote Growth/Expand Growth Area	5	4	9

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Defining Rural

Prompt: What does rural mean to you?

Comment Topic	Open Houses	Online Survey	Total
Agriculture/Farming/Forestry	78	195	273
Large-Lot Residential Development	58	156	214
Open Space	50	147	197
Sense of Community	29	25	54
Rural Roads/Low Traffic	17	33	50
Natural Resources/Outdoor Recreation	20	27	47
Minimal Services + Infrastructure	15	29	44
Quiet	7	32	39
Small Towns/Villages with Small-Scale Businesses	2	25	27
Dark Night Skies	7	7	14

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Visioning for the Future

Prompt:

- In 20 years, I want Hanover to have _____.
- In 20 years, I want Hanover to look like _____.
- In 20 years, I want Hanover to be _____.

Comment Topic	Open Houses	Online Survey	Total
Manage Growth + Maintain Rural Character	141	567	708
Maintain a High Quality of Life	17	229	246
Embrace Diversity	10	91	101
Provide More Parks/Recreational Amenities	16	78	94
Provide Good Governance	19	75	94
Provide More Active Transportation Options	24	66	90
Improve/Maintain Educational System	15	74	89
Provide Housing Options (including Affordable Housing)	19	59	78
More Shopping/Dining Amenities	19	50	69
Expand Broadband Access	20	45	65
Improve Roadways	17	43	60
Preserve Natural Areas + Environmental Resources	15	34	49
Support Quality Economic Development	12	30	42
Maintain/Improve Community Aesthetics/Design	6	35	41
Opposition to Recent Industrial Development	3	31	34
Enhance Existing Neighborhoods	1	13	14
Provide Transit Opportunities	1	12	13
Limit/Discourage High-Density Housing	6	1	7
Limit/Discourage Transit Opportunities	3	0	3

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Game Changers

Prompt: What would be a "game changer" for Hanover County?

Comment Topic	Open Houses	Online Survey	Total
Manage Growth + Maintain Rural Character	33	80	113
Provide Good Governance	9	40	49
Expand Broadband Access	9	39	48
Provide More Parks/Recreational Amenities	12	28	40
Support Quality Economic Development	17	22	39
Improve/Maintain Educational System	12	26	38
Provide More Active Transportation Options	12	15	27
Opposition to Recent Industrial Development	5	18	23
Improve Roadways	7	15	22
Provide Housing Options (including Affordable Housing)	8	12	20
More Shopping/Dining Amenities	4	13	17
Provide Transit Opportunities	7	10	17
Preserve Natural Areas + Environmental Resources	8	3	11
Embrace Diversity	1	9	10
Enhance Existing Neighborhoods	2	6	8
Maintain/Improve Community Aesthetics/Design	0	7	7
Limit/Discourage High-Density Housing	0	3	3
Limit/Discourage Transit Opportunities	2	0	2

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