



**ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING**  
**STAFF REPORT SUMMARY**

<p><b>Project Name:</b> CPA202100002 AC44 Comprehensive Plan Update</p>	<p><b>Staff:</b> Ben Holt, Senior Planner II Tori Kanellopoulos, Principal Planner David Benish, Development Process Manager Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager Kevin McDermott, Deputy Planning Director</p>
<p><b>Planning Commission Work Session:</b> February 27, 2024</p>	<p><b>Board of Supervisors Work Session:</b> Tentative date: March 20, 2024</p>
<p><b>Owner:</b> Multiple</p>	<p><b>Applicant:</b> N/A (County-initiated)</p>
<p><b>TMP:</b> Multiple <b>Acreage:</b> ~464,640 acres (726 sq mi)</p>	<p><b>Comprehensive Plan Amendment:</b> Update of the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan</p>
<p><b>Magisterial Districts:</b> Rivanna, Scottsville, White Hall, Jack Jouett, Samuel Miller, Rio</p>	<p><b>Future Land Use:</b> Multiple</p>
<p><b>DA (Development Area) or RA (Rural Area):</b> All Development Areas and the Rural Area</p>	<p><b>Topics for discussion:</b> Draft Goals and Objectives for the Comprehensive Plan chapter: Rural Area Land Use and Transportation</p>
<p><b>Discussion/Recommendation:</b> Staff recommends that the Commission review the attached draft Goals and Objectives, community input summaries, and information provided in this staff report and consider the following overarching questions for the chapter. Additional topic specific questions will be shared during the work session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the draft Goals aligned with the AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community?</li> <li>• What is missing from the draft Goals and Objectives?</li> </ul>	

**STAFF CONTACTS:**

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Tori Kanellopoulos, Principal Planner  
David Benish, Development Process Manager  
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**PLANNING COMMISSION:** February 27, 2024

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:** Tentative date March 20, 2024

**PROJECT BACKGROUND:**

Albemarle County's Comprehensive Plan Update (AC44) is currently in Phase 2. The Comprehensive Plan is being updated through a four-phased process:

- Phase 1: Plan for Growth
  - AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community (Attachment 1)
  - Updated land use buildout analysis (2022)
  - Review of Growth Management Policy using growth management options
- Phase 2: Goals, Objectives, and Planning Toolkits
  - Updated Goals and Objectives for each Comp Plan chapter
  - Plan recommendations for each of the Toolkit topics (Activity Centers, Factors for potential future Development Areas expansion, Crossroads Communities, Rural Interstate Interchanges)
- Phase 3: Prioritize Action Steps
  - Updated Action Steps for each Comp Plan chapter
  - Prioritized Plan recommendations with 'Big Moves' (wide-reaching initiatives that cover multiple goals of the updated Plan that will set the County on track to reach its vision for 2044; Big Moves may include multiple Action Steps and are priorities for the next 5 years to implement the updated Plan)
  - Metrics for tracking successful Plan implementation
- Phase 4: Finalize and Adopt Plan
  - Finalized Comprehensive Plan document
  - Public hearings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors
  - Final adoption by the Board

At the beginning of Phase 2 (Step 1), staff shared a series of topic reports with data, trends, challenges, and opportunities for each Plan chapter that provide a foundation for updating Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps. Community members shared input on their priorities by topic through an online questionnaire, chat kits, and pop-ups. Several County committees, including the Natural Heritage Committee, the Historic Preservation Committee, the Architectural Review Board, and the Solid Waste Alternatives Advisory Committee shared their input on their topic areas of expertise and suggestions for relevant Plan recommendations.

The second round of Phase 2 engagement (Step 2) focused on the Planning Toolkit Topics: Activity Centers, factors for potential future Development Areas expansion, Crossroads Communities, and Rural Interstate Interchanges. Community members shared their input through questionnaires, open houses, and chat kits. Summaries of Phase 2 Step 1 (Attachment 3) and Phase 2 Step 2 (Attachment 4) are also available on the AC44 website. Staff held work sessions with the Planning Commission (August 8, 2023) and the Board of Supervisors (September 6, 2023) and are continuing to refine the Planning toolkits based on community, Commission, and Board feedback.

The final round of Phase 2 engagement (Step 3) involves sharing draft Goals and Objectives for each Plan chapter with a series of community engagement opportunities and Planning Commission work sessions:

- October 10 work session: Environmental Stewardship, Parks and Recreation, and Historic, Scenic, and Cultural Resources
- November 14 work session: Housing and Economic Development
- December 19 work session: Multimodal Systems Plan and Activity Centers, updating future land use designations, draft community design guidelines, calculating residential density, and draft definition of crossroads communities
- February 13 work session: Development Areas Land Use and Transportation, and Community Facilities
- February 27 work session: Rural Area Land Use and Transportation

Community engagement in Step 3 includes online questionnaires, pop-ups, a virtual open house, 'chat with a planner' office hours, Community Advisory Committee meetings for each CAC, and two Rural Area community meetings.

Staff will hold a work session with the Board of Supervisors on draft Goals and Objectives for the Rural Area Land Use and Transportation, Development Areas Land Use and Transportation, and Community Facilities Plan chapters in early 2024 (tentative date March 20), which will include sharing the Commission's feedback. Staff will then revise Goals and Objectives based on community, County committee, Commission, and Board input. Staff will then move into AC44 Phase 3 and share draft Action Steps in Spring 2024.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE WORK SESSION:**

The draft Goals and Objectives for each Comprehensive Plan chapter are developed through collaboration by an interdisciplinary team of County staff, in coordination with partner agencies, by reviewing the current (2015) Comprehensive Plan, incorporating best planning practices, using the AC44 Framework, and by incorporating community, County committee, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors input.

The updated Comprehensive Plan will be organized by goals, objectives, and action steps. Each chapter will have multiple goals, and each goal will have associated objectives and action steps. A goal is a high-level and long-term direction to fulfill the AC44 Framework and Plan vision. An objective is a specific outcome or target that accomplishes a goal. An action step is a policy, infrastructure improvement, planning effort, or other activity or project to achieve and implement a Plan objective.

The purpose of this work session is to receive Planning Commission feedback on the draft Goals and Objectives for the Rural Area Land Use and Transportation chapter, using the following two questions as overarching considerations:

**Q1 – Are the draft Goals aligned with the AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community?**

**Q2 – What is missing from the draft Goals and Objectives?**

The Commission's feedback will be used to refine the draft Goals and Objectives and will be shared with staff topic experts for each chapter and with the Board of Supervisors at their work session.

#### **Rural Area Land Use and Transportation**

## **Topic Overview**

The County's Rural Area has a variety of natural features and landscapes, ranging from rivers and streams to mountain ridges. The Rural Area is currently approximately 95% of the county's land area, or 689 square miles. It is intended to provide land for agriculture, forestry, protection of the natural environment, and historic, scenic, and cultural resources. This purpose for Rural Area land is reflected in the draft Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives and existing County policies and programs, including conservation easements, Agriculture-Forestal Districts, and the Growth Management Policy.

Protection and restoration of the natural environment in the Rural Area benefits both rural and urban community members and supports the County's Climate Action Plan. Based on the County's 2018 Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory, forests and other natural land cover in the county sequestered an average of nearly one million metric tons of carbon dioxide per year, with the majority of forests in the Rural Area. The Rural Area is also the source of the majority of the public water supplies that support the Development Areas and the City of Charlottesville. There is significant overlap between this chapter and the Environmental Stewardship chapter, along with the County's Biodiversity Action Plan.

Transportation planning in Albemarle County's Rural Area works towards the same outcome as transportation planning in the Development Area: the development of a transportation system that supports a variety of transportation options for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to access employment, educational, recreational, and other opportunities safely and efficiently. Historically, transportation planning for the Rural Area has been focused on the safe and efficient movement of personal vehicles. Consequently, there has been an emphasis on keeping roads in a state of good repair and paving unpaved roads. The draft Rural Area goals and objectives refine and expand the County's approach to transportation planning for the Rural Area. These goals and objectives aim to meet the unique needs of the Rural Area and address many of the comments and concerns voiced by rural residents in the Comprehensive Plan update process and in everyday communications with transportation planning staff.

While the provision of public services and infrastructure will continue to vary between the Rural Area and the Development Areas, the Comprehensive Plan update is an opportunity to find ways to provide, support, and distribute some public services in the Rural Area in a more equitable manner. This includes essential health and safety services (such as mobile health services), spaces for community gathering and community programs, access to healthy and affordable food, and emergency shelters. Recommendations for crossroads communities and community resilience hubs are focused on communities that are more distant to designated Development Areas (and the services and resources available there) and increasing community resilience.

## **Key Themes from Community Input**

The following summary highlights the most prominent themes from community engagement heard to date during AC44 Phases 1 and 2. These community priorities help inform Plan recommendations.

- Protect and restore environmental features and natural areas, including waterways, mountain ridges, wildlife corridors, and dark skies
- Recognize and protect historic and cultural resources in the Rural Area, including historic African American Freetowns, cemeteries, and communities
- Protect farmland and support sustainable agriculture and food systems
- Consider allowing other types of housing units in certain areas (e.g., places designated Village Residential and crossroads communities) in the Rural Area besides single-family detached, such as small-scale multi-unit and live-work units

- Community input generally indicated support for community resilience hubs, with the need for community centers with classes/events/programming, affordable food access, senior or youth centers and related programming, and emergency shelter with phone/internet access
- Land uses in crossroads communities should be small-scale/local businesses and community services such as health care (e.g., mobile), country stores, community centers, and post offices
- Engage with individual crossroads communities prior to land use or zoning changes
- Identify opportunities for walking and biking in the Rural Area, including rural recreational roads
- Improve public transit/paratransit service in the Rural Area, especially to access employment areas and health care (which may be in the Development Areas)

## **Draft Goals and Objectives**

The draft Goals and Objectives for Rural Area Land Use and Transportation are provided in Attachment 2 (starting on page 5), along with a summary of community input and the topic report.

The updated Goals and Objectives for this chapter reflect community input and carry forward key themes from the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, including thriving farms and working forests, a strong agricultural and silvicultural rural economy, traditional crossroads communities, protected scenic and historic resources, protected and restored natural systems, and focusing on safety and congestion issues for Rural Area roads. The updated recommendations include a greater focus on community resilience and equitable distribution of resources and services, updated recommendations for crossroads communities, recommendations to develop a policy for utility-scale solar siting, a greater emphasis on supporting bike and pedestrian opportunities where feasible, and recommendations to proactively plan for unique locations in the Rural Area with established and concentrated land-use patterns, zoning, and existing development that are inconsistent with Rural Area goals. The proactive planning for these unique locations is also paired with Community Facilities Objective 1.4 to evaluate the possibility of public water and/or sewer in locations with concentrated legacy zoning (non-RA zoning in the RA) that are near or adjacent to the Development Areas to address public health and safety needs generated by the existing uses and potential by-right development.

## **Next Steps**

At the upcoming Board work session, which includes this chapter, staff will share a summary of the Commission's input and ask for Board feedback and direction, building on the Commission's recommendations. After the Board work session, staff will revise draft Goals and Objectives and will draft associated Action Steps. From that point, staff anticipates moving into Phase 3 where the Action Steps, metrics for tracking successful implementation of the Plan, and prioritized "Big Moves" for the next 5 years will be developed and refined.

## **Attachments:**

Attach 1: [CPA2021-02 AC44 Comp Plan Update – AC44 Framework for an Equitable and Resilient Community](#)

Attach 2: [CPA2021-02 AC44 Comp Plan Update – Rural Area Land Use and Transportation: Draft Goals and Objectives](#)

Attach 3: [CPA2021-02 AC44 Comp Plan Update – Phase 2 Step 1 Engagement Summary](#)

Attach 4: [CPA2021-02 AC44 Comp Plan Update – Phase 2 Step 2 Engagement Summary](#)