

Lancaster 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

April 26, 2022 - 6:00pm

Meeting Summary

Attendance

Steering Committee Members Present: Ben Levine, Kim Lineberger, Melissa Thornton, Mike Neese, Audrey Currey, Jon Hardy, Susan DeVenny

Steering Committee Members Absent: Brad Bucy, Melvin Stroble, Britt Blackmon, Michelle Evans, Brian Hernandez

County Staff Members: Ashley Davis, Rox Burhans

Benchmark Planning Team: Jason Epley, Vagn Hansen, Bridget Callea, Tanvi Halde

Welcome

The meeting began at 6:00 with introductions from those in attendance.

Project Updates

Benchmark team members reviewed project updates with the Steering Committee. Since the last meeting, the planning team held two Planning Area Focus Group meetings. They met with the Greater Lancaster Planning Area Focus Group on March 30th and then the Panhandle Planning Area Focus Group met on March 31st. The team is still working to set up a meeting with the Southern Lancaster Planning Area Focus Group.

There will be a round of public workshops to launch the project and these are tentatively scheduled for June, though the official dates and locations have not yet been established. Information on these meetings should be released in the next week or so.

Benchmark team members gave an update on online engagement generated since the launch of the project. The website has received 3,637 views, with 1,172 of these being unique visitors. 112 people joined the email update list, which provides regular updates on the project. 8,500

people have been reached through Facebook advertisements; 850 of these were actual engagements on Facebook (meaning people clicked on or interacted with the ads).

Community Survey

The community survey closed on April 11th, after being open for one month. 1,945 people participated in this survey, which is a great turn out. The survey received enough participation to be statistically significant, with a less than 3% margin of error and a 99% confidence interval. This means that the survey results are representative of the County's overall views.

Benchmark team members discussed the results of the community survey with the steering committee, including a review of all responses, breaking out some responses by region. There was slight over-representation from the Panhandle, and slight under-representation from residents of the unincorporated areas of Greater Lancaster. However, the geographic distribution of respondents was also relatively accurate.

Very few people who took the survey (11%) described their quality of life as low, and the top three quality of life factors were proximity to larger cities, access to full-service grocery stores, and overall cost of living. Recreation / entertainment, community character / appearance, and environmental quality were all listed as the bottom three quality of life factors. People are most concerned with growth and development, traffic congestion, schools / education, and public infrastructure. While almost two-thirds of respondents feel the County is growing too quickly; this is largely because the majority of Panhandle respondents (82%) feel this way. Greater Lancaster and Southern Lancaster respondents are generally divided about their perception of the pace of growth in recent years. Almost three-fourths of survey respondents are concerned about the loss of farms and forest lands, and this is generally consistent across the different regions of the County. More than 60% of respondents support the County developing policies to conserve forested land, to conserve farmland, and to develop accessible greenspaces. When asked about transportation-related issues, the top three issues are traffic congestion, pedestrian facilities, and transit access. Respondents from Greater Lancaster and Southern Lancaster are only concerned with traffic congestion and pedestrian facilities, and Southern Lancaster is least-concerned about traffic-related issues. Only about 37% of respondents are satisfied with current parks, recreation, and open spaces available to them. When asked about new facilities, about two-thirds of respondents indicated an interest in more greenways and trails. About 61% are interested in nature parks, and more than 40% of respondents are interested in river access, facilities for outdoor events, and playground / active play areas. Residents of the Panhandle are most interested in greenways, nature parks, and river access; while residents of Greater and Southern Lancaster are most interested in nature parks, facilities for outdoor events, and playgrounds / active play areas. Approximately 56% of respondents are interested in being able to access the Catawba River and 55% would like access to greenways and trails. Respondents from Southern Lancaster are most interested in having greenway and trail access. About 22% of respondents are concerned about loss of wildlife habitat and air pollution. 19% of respondents are also worried about water quality. The top environmental-

related concerns in the Panhandle are air pollution, loss of wildlife habitat, and water quality. The top environmental-related concerns in Greater and Southern Lancaster are loss of wildlife habitat, loss of open space, and water quality. When asked for suggestions on improving the appearance of Lancaster County, the top suggestions were to clean up litter, to conserve land / protect forests, to improve landscaping along roads, and to improve design standards. People are generally satisfied with the quality and types of services the County provides; about half of respondents feel neutral about County services, 31% are satisfied, and 21% are not satisfied. When asked about new and improved services the County should consider providing, more than 100 people asked for more parks, outdoor spaces, and recreation. Many people also requested public transportation or light rail, more commercial enterprises, and improved road conditions. The top descriptions survey respondents used to describe Lancaster County are growing / developing, crowded / overdeveloped, friendly / welcoming, beautiful / pretty / appealing, outdated / behind, and calm / comfortable / peaceful.

When asked for the most important topics to include in the Comprehensive Plan, the top responses were for traffic management, growth management, education / schools, parks / recreation / open spaces, commercial development, and economic development. Survey respondents' most cited visions for the future of Lancaster County include controlling growth or slowing down development, building and improving roads, creating more parks and greenspaces, improving schools, encouraging more commercial businesses, and creating stricter zoning and design regulations.

Steering committee members asked for some additional information to be broken up by region of respondent, and by age, in an effort to better understand how the interest in river access and greenway access vary from place to place. There was also an interest in understanding the top and bottom quality of life factors by region.

Emerging Themes

Benchmark team members presented the eight themes which they feel should be a starting point for the Comprehensive Plan. These themes were developed based on the background analysis, stakeholder listening sessions, steering committee feedback, focus area group meetings, and community survey results. The themes presented are: transportation, economic development, growth management, recreation, community appearance, education, equity, and environmental quality. Steering committee members discussed their initial thoughts on the themes and how they are very different from one region of the County to another.

Committee Homework

The Benchmark team presented a visioning worksheet to steering committee members and asked them to complete the workshop by filling out their thoughts on the different themes, as well as any additional themes which they feel should be incorporated. Steering committee members were also asked to create a draft vision statement that can be reviewed prior to the next meeting so that we can begin the visioning process for the Comprehensive Plan.

Next Steering Committee Meeting Date

The next Steering Committee meeting will be Tuesday, June 6th at 6:00 pm in the Council Chambers of the County Administration Building.

Committee Member Comments and Discussion

- At the end of the meeting, steering committee members discussed their concerns about council support for some of the issues they feel are most pressing (such as road construction, bridge connections to Interstate 77, and greenway development). They also discussed how different development scenarios may greatly alter their vision for the County and how those scenarios will impact the future of the community.