

# Lancaster 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

December 14, 2021 - 6:00pm

### Meeting Summary

#### Attendance

**Steering Committee Members Present:** Ben Levine, Kim Lineberger, Melissa Thornton, Mike Neese, Dick Christie, Bill Stokes, Audrey Currey, Britt Blackmon, Brad Bucy, Jon Hardy, Susan DeVenny, Brian Hernandez

**Steering Committee Members Absent:** Melvin Stroble

**County Staff Members:** Ashley Davis, Rox Burhans

**Benchmark Planning Team:** Jason Epley, Vagn Hansen, Bridget Callea

#### Welcome & Introductions

The meeting began at 6:05 with introductions. Each steering committee member gave a brief introduction, followed by County staff members, Benchmark Planning team members.

#### Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

Benchmark team members reviewed the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan highlighting the requirements of the SC Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act and the desire of the County to focus on growth management strategies, transportation, loss of agricultural and rural lands, natural resource extraction, recreation and open space, economic development, community beautification, and the three distinct geographic areas of the County: Panhandle, Greater Lancaster, and Southern Lancaster. The Plan will result in a Vision for the future, guiding land use, development, capital investments and community initiatives.

#### Steering Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The Committee, which was appointed by County Council, will act as an advisory body to the Benchmark Planning team and County staff as the Plan is developed. The Committee will also

assist with public outreach at key points during the process, providing a final recommendation on the draft Plan before it moves on to the Planning Commission and County Council. The Committee is expected to meet 12 times during the process.

### **Planning Areas and Planning Area Focus Groups**

The Plan will focus on the Panhandle, Greater Lancaster, Southern Lancaster and the County as a whole. Focus groups will be established for the three geographic areas to provide additional input. Each of the three focus groups will meet approximately 3 times. One member from each of the focus groups will be included in the overall Steering Committee meetings.

### **Scope of Work and Project Timeline**

The project will include 5 major phases to be completed in 21 months. The Baseline Review will be completed by March 2022, the Key Topic Exploration phase to be completed by September 2022, Focus Area Plans by November 2022, Full Draft of the Plan by March 2023, and the Adoption phase by July 2023.

### **Public Engagement Plan**

The Public Engagement Plan includes the 12 Steering Committee meetings, the 5 meetings with each Focus Group, 4 meetings with the Planning Commission, 6 meetings with the County Council, listening sessions/meetings with stakeholders and key topic experts, and 10 general meetings with the public throughout the process. The public will also have the opportunity to engage online during the project through a project website ([www.Lancaster2040.com](http://www.Lancaster2040.com)), a digital community survey, interactive engagement tools, social media, and email. Traditional outreach through local media outlets and press releases will also help provide information to the public.

### **Stakeholder Focus Group Listening Sessions**

As part of the process, stakeholder groups and key subject matter experts can help provide additional information into the process during the Baseline Review phase. The groups initially identified include: elected officials, appointed board members, county department heads/staff, state and regional public agencies, development industry experts, community groups and organizations, economic development experts, agricultural industry, environment and natural resources, and parks and recreation.

### **Committee Meeting Logistics and Schedule**

The Committee agreed Tuesday evenings at 6:00 pm was a convenient day of the week and time of day to schedule future meetings. The Committee agreed the County Administration Building will serve as a good, consistent location for holding the meetings. The Committee agreed that their next meeting would occur on Tuesday February 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **Committee Member Comments**

The Committee provided some initial input on key issues and challenges facing the County that they felt was important to think about while developing the Plan. Some of the key points were as follows:

- Stakeholder List Suggestions – Indian Land Action Council representative, Municipal staff members/leaders as identified, real estate/realtor,
- Previous Plans – several of the committee members would like to know what has been accomplished from previous plans.
- Growth Management
  - Growth typically follows sewer now. We don't want to be in the position where land and sewer availability are what dictates growth – want the County land use policies to guide growth.
  - Developers / builders took advantage of the Indian Land opportunities but its not panning out because nothing was fully planned out. The alternative would be to build septic tank communities – we want an alternative to both of these scenarios.
  - Need to become proactive instead of reactive.
  - Schools are overcapacity with no land for the next school (want to know how the population is going to grow and where it should go to help dictate this). Ensure we have good communication with the schools during process.
  - Some parts of the County aren't growing – why? How do we change this?
  - How will the three W's (whitewater center, winery, and workout center), which are located outside of the County, impact our future?
  - Growth overflowing from Charlotte will continue to impact us.
  - Will Indian Land be a "town" in the future? A past initiative failed 83% to 17%.
  - Post-COVID, CLT developers moved 20 miles out, Panthers are moving south – there will be a lot of growth pressure in Greater Lancaster too. We're already getting a lot of development calls on Greater Lancaster. But where are they working? Need to also have employment here.
  - It's important to ensure our fire service can support new development before it's approved. EMS is already over-worked – they run around 20,000 calls / year.
- Land Use
  - Want clear guidance on future development / land uses and why (the current plan is a bit vague, indicating areas for "growth" and "no growth" – would be helpful if the planning commission had more direct guidance on types of development, etc.)
  - Indian Land is a totally different consideration from the rest of County. Just a unique situation (something like 3,300 houses per neighborhood).
  - Want to focus on downtown revitalization for Lancaster. Authenticity, similar to Rock Hill, Florence. Use growth in other parts of the County to help Lancaster. Would be interested in the status of the Downtown Lancaster Master Plan that was adopted maybe two years ago. (most recent city sales tax paid for some of the improvements recommended in the plan).
  - Roselyn is the second gold era for this Town (from developer).
  - The Panhandle and Indian Land are activity centers. Why can't we have multiple activity centers?

- Environment
  - Need to protect land and water assets – things that we can't get back (nonrenewable resources).
  - Optimize space by preserving resources.
  - Parks and greenways are a natural drawing card for young people. Lots of people and dogs use the Lindsey Pettus Greenway. Old parks are not well-maintained. Need new parks and better maintenance of the old parks.
  - Catawba River is a great asset: 24 – 30 miles of space and not a single kayak launch / public access point. You have to travel to Rock Hill to get on the river. However, it's important to protect the river by limiting growth adjacent to it.
  - Need to address growth but give adequate attention to open space and water resources to ensure we don't ruin our natural resources.
  - Nuclear sites and similar facilities needing cooling severely limit the water capacity of the Catawba River. This is also a source of drinking water.
  - There was a question about natural resource extraction (mining in southern Lancaster). Hail Gold Mine. Another mine request reached the County a year ago and got major public opposition.
- Transportation
  - Potential collector roads / road plans are needed throughout the County. Need to have an idea of where future roads can go when development comes in so that the developers can help build it. Traffic Impact Analyses only look at intersections.
  - Need L&C Railway – can bring industry south. Should use GIS-based tools to analyze economic development opportunities on railways.
  - The Airport is a high priority for the county.
  - May need to limit access to 521 or it could become the next Independence Boulevard and ruin the connections we have to Charlotte and North Carolina.
  - Appreciate the pedestrian crossing on 521. Need more.
- Public Outreach / Communication
  - Need to make sure we're talking to young people.
  - The School Board and Council don't communicate. This needs to be improved. The School Board needs to know about approved development and how it will impact school enrollment.
  - How does the City figure into this? The City of Lancaster and other municipalities will be part of the sub-area groups and listening sessions.
  - Need to work with surrounding jurisdictions, especially in the Panhandle area, which is greatly impacted by Charlotte, Waxhaw, and Marvin.
- Economic Development
  - People are buying houses sight unseen and not realizing that neighborhoods are not established enough to support the purchase price. Need to fix this.
  - Doesn't feel like we're taking advantage of the opportunity zone funding.
  - Indian Land vote to become a Town was struck down maybe 4 years ago – need to plan for when it becomes a Town. How we finance things, when it should happen, and how. Need a hybrid model (not county / not town) for how to manage it in the meantime. The

County really needs the tax revenue from Indian Land but want it to also have its own government.

- Leverage stimulus funds, potential incentives with opportunity zones, and the recent \$27M for the Promise Neighborhood Project (cradle to career, help clean up neighborhoods, and get kids through school). A lot is happening to help redevelopment and a lot of people are moving here for the schools.
  - We also have stimulus funds – Arras tried to put a toolbox together to help guide how to use this funding. This plan could be an opportunity to think about how to use this, and how we optimize all the funding we have. Can we get matching funds, for instance?
  - We need a “brand” for this region. It’s not upstate or Charlotte, etc. York County is in the same situation. Are we the Sandhills? We need to define our region and better market our area, establishing a stronger identity.
- Plan Content
    - There needs to be a focus on implementation – establish an implementation process: regular meetings, who uses the plan, etc.