

What is Important to YOU? HOUSING!



What are the hot topics and what do we do with them?

For the past six months, in preparation for the Comprehensive Plan update, the Community Participation Team has been collecting your thoughts and ideas on the issues facing James City County. We have read all the input received, which is available for you to examine at www.jccplans.org, and have developed a list of hot topics that are on your minds. Hot topics were strongly related and many comments crossed categories, but generally included the impacts of growth, community character/quality of life, transportation, economic climate, environment, housing, population needs, and water. We are going to highlight the topics on a regular basis leading up to the second round of Community Conversation meetings. **Housing will be discussed at the Community Conversation on Tuesday, August 19 from 6-9 p.m. at Jamestown High School, 3751 John Tyler Highway.**

What do we mean by "housing"?

Housing is the fourth hot topic highlighted in this series of essays. Based on citizen comments, the biggest issue within this topic was workforce housing and ensuring that the people needed to work in the County, including fire and police staff, teachers, and retail workers can afford to live here too. Citizens seem interested in seeing a choice of housing types, such as condominiums, retirement centers, apartments, and single-family homes in the marketplace to serve the needs of a wide assortment of people. Linked to this was the desire to provide housing for all people at a variety of income levels and stages of life. Also noted was that this mixture of housing type and resident diversity should be provided within the same community. Not only should housing be affordable, sound, and of a quality design, based on your comments housing should also be easily accessible from centers of employment, shopping, and entertainment via different modes of transportation. Finally, there were numerous comments regarding the permitted densities of housing and ideas about clustering housing units to help protect important environmental features.

How does housing affect my daily routine?

Housing is not just a shelter. It contributes to the community's economy as source of tax revenue. Housing also determines transportation needs and social and political relations within a community. Every person has a basic right to have shelter, but it can be difficult for many people to find an affordable place to live in James City County. The topic of housing is strongly linked to another hot topic, the impacts of growth, which was highlighted in an earlier essay. As residential growth increases and more new housing opportunities enter the market, roads, schools, water supply, community character, access to recreation facilities, and public transportation can all be affected in both positive and negative ways that citizens will experience everyday.

How did we get here and how would the Comprehensive Plan address the issue?

Thanks in part to the high quality of life enjoyed by citizens of James City County, housing demands have remained steady. Even with a general slowdown in the housing market, the County continues to see demand and growth in housing supply. **Since 2003, approximately 3,779 occupancy permits have been issued by the County for all types of residential units.** Particularly as commute time and fuel prices increase, affordability of houses in the County is a growing issue for people who work here but live elsewhere. **According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the median sales price for a new home was in excess of \$250,000. Five years later, that median price has grown to \$370,000. In contrast, the cost of a house that is considered affordable (no more than 30% of gross income spent on housing costs) to a family of four making the County's median income (\$55,594) is only \$171,717.** That's a difference of almost \$200,000 which can prevent a firefighter, sales clerk, or teacher from working and living in the same community.

Through the Comprehensive Plan, staff will work to further define affordable and workforce housing and include policies to encourage developers to include more of such units in their proposals. The County operates numerous assistance programs to help individuals afford to live here, including a \$2.9 million commitment of low interest Virginia Housing and Development Authority funds for designated developments which commit to offer affordable homes for sale to first time homebuyers. But affordability is not just purchase price. It is key to consider the costs to operate and maintain the house, transportation to and from employment centers, and property taxes. In this respect, energy efficiency and quality of housing units are also important factors in helping to keep affordable units affordable. *We want to hear from you which segments of the population are not being adequately served by the current housing market and what options, such as rental apartments, modular houses, or rehabilitation of existing housing, would best address these needs in our community at the Community Conversation.* Also, the concepts of neighborhoods and integrating non-residential uses, types of houses, and prices of houses will be incorporated into the update. These different mixes of uses and housing types and prices can add to the liveliness and diversity of a community, making it a more desirable place to live and one that better retains its value over time.



Housing, as many hot topics do, includes a wider regional perspective as well. Policies and demand in adjacent cities and counties influence where developers choose to build and the prices at which they can sell their units. Many people live here, yet work elsewhere, and vice versa.

These relationships and the reasons why people live or work in certain areas needs to be explored further with our neighbors throughout this update.

This topic has strong linkages with many of the other hot topics, including transportation, quality of growth, and economic climate. With the acknowledgement that some residential growth will likely occur in the coming years, the County can evaluate areas best suited to residential development by looking at the Land Use map to determine where currently available and planned infrastructure matches with the amount and type of land needed. The growth model discussed in the first hot topic essay will also play into this analysis and help address the impacts of additional growth.

Where can I go for more information?

-2003 Comprehensive Plan: <http://www.jccgov.com/government/administration/comp-plan.html>.

-JCC Office of Housing and Community Development: <http://www.jccgov.com/communityservices/housing-com-dev.html>

-Virginia Housing Development Authority: http://www.vhda.com/vhda_com/front_page/default.asp

-Virginia Organizing Project: <http://www.virginia-organizing.org/>

-Greater Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance Comprehensive Plan Task Force: <http://www.williamsburgcc.com/website/content/comprehensive-plan-task-force>

-U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: <http://www.hud.gov/>

-Congress for the New Urbanism: <http://www.cnu.org/>

-Pattern Book for Neighborly Houses (by the U.S. Area Office of Habitat for Humanity International and the Institute of Classical Architecture and Classical America):

http://www.classicist.org/workspace/pdf/1_HabitatPB_Overview.pdf