

What is Important to YOU?
COMMUNITY CHARACTER/QUALITY OF GROWTH!



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. **Community character/quality of growth will be discussed at the Community Conversation on Wednesday, August 13 from 6-9 p.m. at Lafayette High School, 4460 Longhill Road.**

What do we mean by “community character/quality of growth”?

The second hot topic we are highlighting centers around comments about community character and quality of growth in the County. This topic goes hand-in-hand with the first topic discussed, the impacts of growth. Citizens are concerned that due to the fast-paced growth, the County is losing its uniqueness and turning into the “average” suburban area. They want to preserve the rural farmland areas of the County and retain a separation between Williamsburg and Newport News. Maintenance of the current quality of life also showed a strong appearance in the comments received.

How does quality of growth and community character affect my daily routine?

Community character is what you see everyday as you drive your children to school or go to work. Some of you may live in Community Character Areas, like Toano, Norge, or New Town, where the Comprehensive Plan and in some cases design guidelines detail what new development or redevelopment should look like. Or you may live along a Community Character Corridor, like Jamestown Road, John Tyler Highway, Greensprings Road, or Forge Road. You experience the distinctive feel of these areas daily and would notice changes that could negatively impact that special character. It's what makes James City County an attractive and unique place to live, visit, or do business. Community Character Areas and Corridors continue to attract and retain visitors and businesses and include everything from architecture to tree preservation to protecting historic resources in the area. As new businesses and residential neighborhoods come into the County, it's important to make sure they fit in with the character of the area to keep it unique.

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

The character of James City County is important to the citizens and businesses and has contributed to the large amount of growth in the County. This growth has caused concerns among residents who fear it will change the character and appearance that attracted many of them to the area. For this reason, the County has taken many steps toward shaping future



development and has been sensitive to the many characteristics that already exist through past Comprehensive Plans.

Tools used to preserve the quality of life include Community Character Area (CCA) and Corridor (CCC) designations for roads and areas that promote the rural, natural, built, or historic character of the County. 17 designated road segments and 4 designated areas (Norge, Toano, Jamestown Island-Greensprings Road, and New Town) are included and cover a wide variety of development scenarios. For example, CCCs can fall into three classifications. The first, suburban and urban CCCs, includes Monticello Avenue and are characterized by moderate to heavy traffic volumes, and moderate to high levels of commercial and residential uses. These CCCs may contain some wooded buffers. The second classification, wooded CCCs, includes Greensprings Road and are characterized by natural wooded areas and vegetation along the road, low to moderate traffic volumes, and suburban or rural development patterns with minimal existing or planned development. Third, open/agricultural CCCs, includes Forge Road and are characterized by primarily rural areas where farming and forestall activities are common.



Through the update, each corridor and area will be examined to see if it still merits the additional guidelines, and new areas, such as Five Forks, will be considered for designation. Also, guidelines for areas that have been studied in depth over the last five years, such as Toano, will be included. Appropriate architecture, preservation of historic and archaeological sites, and design guidelines for development in sensitive areas are themes that will likely be carried throughout and strengthened in the Community Character and Land Use sections.

In addition to special design features in sensitive areas, preservation of open space and development of greenways also contribute to the character of the County. Some tools in this area include a Greenspace Program, which includes dedicated tax funding to purchase priority properties like the Jamestown Campground and Marina; the Greenway Master Plan, which balances preservation with the need for recreational sites; Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs), which is a way to assemble tracts of land into large, contiguous parcels for short- or long-term conservation; and the Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, which pays property owners to place land in conservation easements to limit future development. The County wants your input during the second round of Community Conversations to determine whether these and other programs should continue to be a priority in this Comprehensive Plan and whether an active role should be taken to try to acquire or protect sensitive land prior to development.

From a recreational standpoint, standards for how much area per population there should be in linear greenspace/trails (such as the Greensprings Trail behind Jamestown High School) and regional open space/natural areas (such as Freedom Park). Both fall into the category of green infrastructure, which, according to greeninfrastructure.net, is a “strategically planned and managed network of wilderness, parks, greenways, and conservation easements...” that provide habitats for native animals and plants and protects air and water resources. These natural corridors should be planned as much as grey infrastructure (things like roads, water, and sewer), to provide an interconnected system. This design could serve to retain community character, contribute to the health of residents, and offer educational and



recreational benefits.

As tourism in the County has grown, particularly with Jamestown's 400th Anniversary Weekend in 2007, way-finding signage to direct visitors has become an important element on the County's roads. The Comprehensive Plan will likely look into the design and quantity of these signs to determine their impacts on community's character. Areas for improved landscaping and underground utility projects, particularly those near entrance corridors from neighboring localities and in CCAs, will also be evaluated.

Finally, according to the recent Business Climate Task Force report, the County's quality of life is a key competitive advantage to attract businesses and potential employees to the area. The report emphasizes how important it is to preserve this character while simultaneously making the County more "business ready" to prevent it from becoming Anytown, USA. The recommendations in this study will be important to incorporate into the Comprehensive Plan in both this and the Economic Development section.

Where can I go for more information?

- 2003 Comprehensive Plan: <http://www.jccegov.com/government/administration/comp-plan.html>.
- Greenways Master Plan: <http://www.jccegov.com/communityservices/greenways-document.html>
- Community Appearance Guide:
<http://www.jccegov.com/pdf/devtmgmtpdfs/CommunityAppearanceGuide.pdf>
- Business Climate Task Force: <http://www.jccegov.com/pdf/businesstaskforce/07Dec28FINALReport.pdf>
- Williamsburg Land Conservancy: <http://www.williamsburglandconservancy.org/>
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation: <http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/>
- Green Infrastructure: <http://www.greeninfrastructure.net/>