

Citizen Input: Land Use
As of 11.01.08

James City County's Citizen Input

(Sources: Listening Stations, Mail, Hotline, Community Conversations, Forums, Letters)

ICMA and Virginia Tech Surveys

Virginia Tech

A number of survey items regarding land use issues in James City County were posed to survey respondents. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement regarding land use made by the interviewers. The findings regarding the survey items related to land use appear below combining responses of strongly agree and somewhat agree.

- Development of the land in James City County is happening too quickly. (83% agreement)
- There should be restrictions on the amount of land that can be sold for residential and commercial development. (83% agreement)
- It is more important to preserve farmland in the County than it is to have more development. (79% agreement)
- Developers should always be required to pay a fee to the County to offset public cost even if it means increases in the prices of services and housing for citizens. (69% agreement)
- It is better to have neighborhoods in which there is a mix of low, middle, and high income housing options. (68% agreement)
- It is important to slow development in the County even if it means increasing taxes. (61% agreement)
- It is better to have more homes on smaller lots and set aside areas for open space in order to permanently preserve land and maintain the character of the community. (57% agreement)
- Answers to open ended questions included mentions of the following: control growth, less residential and commercial development; more preservation of open land and open spaces, more parkland and connectivity (sidewalks, bikelanes); more businesses to balance the tax base; more affordable housing; more of certain types of commercial (theaters, restaurants, department stores); link growth to adequacy of water supply and road capacity; more industry or other job sources; filling vacant commercial spaces before building new structures; and scale and mass of new commercial too large for a small town.

ICMA

- Most of James City County residents gave high ratings to their neighborhoods and the community as a place to live. Further, many reported they would recommend the community to others and plan to stay for the next five years.
- The overall quality of new development in James City County was rated as excellent by 18% of respondents and as good by an additional 43%. The overall appearance of James City County was rated above the benchmark with 77% of respondents rating it as excellent or good.
- 80% of respondents indicated population growth was somewhat or much too fast.

Listening Stations, Mail-in cards, Hotline, Emails, Webpage, First Round Community Conversations

- Citizens expressed positive feedback regarding the addition of new commercial options and services close to home over the last five years. However, growth management concerns also topped the list of the most pressing issues facing the County, according responses at the first round of Community Conversations. Citizens expressed concern about growth in relation to the following:
 - Rate of growth and overall amount of both residential and commercial development
 - Infrastructure needed to keep up with growth, and costs associated with that (water and sewer, roads, schools, storm water, etc.) – implications for taxes and for what developers should be responsible for
 - Rate of resource use in relation to growth, especially water use, and concerns about the future implications for these resources
 - Loss of natural areas, historical areas, agricultural land, open space
 - Loss of character, specifically rural and small town nature

- Nature of growth – on greenfield sites rather than redevelopment/focus on keeping up and reducing vacancies in existing commercial structures, or building residential units on already approved lots
- Many suggestions that growth issues should be linked to, and addressed in relation to, housing, environment, transportation/transit, employment, water, and access issues (trails, sidewalks, bikeways, etc.)
- Comments addressed the desire that development impacts be evaluated on a cumulative basis
- Support expressed for a regional approach to solving issues of growth, including job/housing match and traffic
- Suggestions of certain types of preferred development including: mixed use development, higher density development (to support transit), clustering development, and a balance between residential and commercial (retail and office/industrial) growth
- Suggestion of more green building development such as LEED

Second Round Community Conversations

- When asked about growth boundary issues, larger numbers of respondents indicated they either agreed or strongly agreed with the strategy of maintaining the size of the current PSA than either reducing or expanding the size of the PSA.
- When asked about density/intensity issues, a larger numbers of respondents indicated they either agreed or strongly agreed with the strategies of (a) encouraging lower density in rural areas (outside the PSA) and (b) focusing on redeveloping underutilized areas inside the PSA than with the other strategies listed (promoting higher density inside the PSA or promoting lower density inside the PSA).
- When asked about possible new Board of Supervisors policies, the strategies listed which generated more agree/strongly agree responses were to (a) expand the use of adequate public facilities tests and (b) phase expansion of areas that are connected to public utilities inside the PSA. The other two strategies (target a maximum number of units built annually and expand the cash proffer system) generated more disagree/strongly disagree responses.
- When asked about the current Rural Lands description in the Comprehensive Plan, 76% agreed with the current definition of primary uses.
- When asked about what additional Rural Lands uses respondents would support, three items had more agree/strongly agree answers than disagree/strongly disagree. These items, listed in preference order were: (a) agri-business/eco-tourism; (b) clustered residential; and (c) large lot residential (10-20 acre lots). One item had more disagree/strongly disagree answers, which was the suburban residential (1 to 3 acre lots) option.
- Other open ended land-use related responses at the Community Conversations included comments on: growth rate concerns, growth in relation to needed infrastructure (roads, water) concerns, suggestions to explore growth management tools (higher densities and internal capture rates; focusing on redevelopment before new development; proffers or impact fee payments; transfer of development rights), and suggestions to reduce regulation, in particular in relation to home based businesses with no or limited impact on County services.

Letters, CPT Forums

- The JCC Republican Committee presented information on two goals related to the Comprehensive Plan: (a) Tax Payer Relief - require that 40% of JCC revenue shall be derived by non-residential sources by 2015 and that 50% of JCC revenue shall be derived by non-residential sources by 2025 and (b) Responsible Growth Management – require that infrastructure be designed and constructed in an environmentally sensitive manner concurrent with development to support a maximum population of 100,000 utilizing standardized designs and public/private partnerships wherever possible.
- The J4C Group presented a set of four general recommendations (incorporation of certain documents into the Comprehensive Plan, investigate feasibility of a development moratorium, develop a report card of 2003 actions, and review a comparison document) and eight specific actions.
- The J4C Group presented a cumulative impacts report that looked at adequacy of the water supply, potential for environmental degradation, traffic congestion, and financial strain. A 2007 report had also been submitted on this subject.
- The Friends of Forge Road and Toano presented information including a set of recommendations as follows: no extension of the PSA; sustainable economic development; promotion of agri-tourism; retention

of Community Character Corridors; use of green infrastructure strategies; incorporation of the Toano Community Character Design Guidelines and Streetscape Plan; and special consideration areas in the Upper County.

- The Williamsburg Land Conservancy presented information a variety of topic areas, including: the Governors Land archaeological district; Jamestown Campground and Yacht Basin master planning process; Mainland Farm preservation; conservation tools like Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), greenspace acquisition, Greenway Master Plan, and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR).
- The Economic Development Authority provided information on the following points: encouraging communities that rely less on the automobile; encouraging redevelopment; encouraging planning for and protecting lands suited for future office, industrial, services, retail and workforce residential in the right quantity and right locations; encouraging suitable workforce housing; encouraging attainment of a balanced economic portfolio; exploration of Transfer of Development Rights; encouraging rural economic development; review of commercial SUP development criteria and thresholds; investigation of consistency zoning; discussion of land use designation change applications.
- A letter was submitted suggesting a cap on population growth and encouraging more monitoring of actual environmental quality.
- A letter was submitted which discussed the impacts of growth and suggested limiting growth as a goal and preservation of open space in James City County and in the region as tools for reaching that goal. The letter also discusses assessment of cumulative impacts for rezoning cases; charging fees sufficient to cover County review costs; and avoidance of land use map changes that would increase population, increase the size of the PSA, or increase impervious cover.
- A letter from the Friends of Forge Road and Toano was submitted with suggestions on modifications to the Comprehensive Plan format. The letter also lists the following requested actions: no extension of the PSA; preservation of open land and coordination of green infrastructure; continue the Community Character Corridors; consider the need for an efficient mass transportation system; set an optimum population goal for JCC; retain the SUP mechanism in the ordinance and require complete submission of public hearing case materials; consider a unified development ordinance; include Smart Growth principles; provide incentives for green development including a green building fund and a green building incentive program; and carefully consider the land use applications of properties in the upper County.
- A letter was submitted suggesting the creation of an International Trade Zone and Distribution Center on the Williamsburg Pottery site.
- The Williamsburg Chamber and Tourism Alliance both presented information and submitted a letter presenting six critical issues: retain the uniqueness of our area; target the attraction of new businesses and expansion of existing businesses; strengthen tourism, address workforce needs; enhance our transportation networks; improve County master planning.