

Lancaster 2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

August 9, 2022 - 6:00pm

Meeting Summary

Attendance

Steering Committee Members Present: Ben Levine, Melissa Thornton, Jon Hardy, Michelle Evans, Melvin Stroble, Susan DeVenny

Steering Committee Members Absent: Britt Blackmon, Brian Hernandez, Audrey Currey, Kim Lineberger, Mike Neese, Brad Bucy

County Staff Members: Ashley Davis, Rox Burhans, Matthew Blaszyk

Benchmark Planning Team: Jason Epley, Vagn Hansen, Bridget Callea, Jonathan Guy, Sean Scoopmire, Robin Spinks, Mary Lilley

Welcome

The meeting began at 6:10 pm with introductions from those in attendance. The subconsultants on the project attended the meeting and introduced themselves to the steering committee. This included Jonathan Guy of Kimley Horn (transportation, stormwater, natural resources / geology, and resiliency components), Robin Spinks and Mary Lilley of Greenfield (economic development, agriculture / agribusiness, and natural resource extraction components), and Sean Scoopmire of White & Smith (development regulations, priority investment, and research and policy components).

Public Input Meetings Summary

The Benchmark team provided updates on public input meetings which were conducted in June and July. There were three meetings held in person (June 28 in the Panhandle, June 30 in Greater Lancaster, and July 12 in Southern Lancaster). About thirty participants attended each in person meeting, providing feedback on key topics related to the plan. Benchmark also

created a narrated version of the “Plan Orientation” presentation, which was made available to the public through YouTube, and created a virtual (survey) version of the public meetings. The virtual meetings provided the same information as was available in person, and asked the same questions of respondents. 254 people participated in the online public meeting, garnering participation from around 350 people in total. In addition to the orientation video, attendees were presented with a series of stations that included large boards of graphics, maps, and information. There were eight interactive components, in which attendees could “circle the responses they most preferred” (selecting as many as they’d like) and write in an “other” option as well. Most attendees elected to simply circle their preferences, with the average attendee only choosing between two to four of the options. The Benchmark team then provided a summary of the findings from the various meetings (by interactive element):

RECREATION: When asked about specific recreation facilities, the countywide preferences were for nature parks, greenways / trails, river access, and outdoor events. In the Panhandle, those preferences (in order) were greenways and trails, nature parks, river access, and facilities for outdoor events. In Greater Lancaster, those preferences (in order) were nature parks, greenways and trails, river access, facilities for outdoor events, and playgrounds / active play areas. In Southern Lancaster, those preferences (in order) were greenways and trails, nature parks, facilities for outdoor events, and river access.

TRAILS: Meeting attendees were presented with a map of the Carolina Thread Trail plans for Lancaster County and asked to select the trail segments which they would prioritize. Countywide, most requests were for Segment C (in the Panhandle, on the northwestern boundary line), Segment H (in Greater Lancaster, north of the City of Lancaster), Segment D (in the Panhandle and Greater Lancaster, along the eastern edge of Van Wyck), and Segment G (in Greater Lancaster and almost entirely within the City of Lancaster). Generally speaking, residents of each area preferred the trail segments which were in their region of the County.

TRANSPORTATION: Meeting attendees were presented with a range of transportation improvements and asked to select those which they think are most needed to improve safety and reduce traffic congestion in the County. Countywide, the top requests were for road widening / additional lanes, regional public transportation, and pedestrian / bike connections. Road widening / additional lanes was the number one request in the Panhandle, Southern Lancaster, and online responses. In the Panhandle, most attendees would also like to see pedestrian / bike connections and access / turn management. In Greater Lancaster, the top requests were for regional public transportation, pedestrian and bike connections, and traffic circles. In Southern Lancaster, in addition to road widening / additional lanes, attendees would like increased traffic enforcement and new thoroughfares / collectors. The top requests online were for road widening / additional lanes, regional public transportation, and traffic circles.

GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD: Meeting attendees were presented with a range of “ingredients” that make a neighborhood a great place to live: pedestrian friendly, access to neighborhood parks, architectural character and quality, access to preserved open spaces, convenient to shopping

and dining, close proximity to schools, quality landscaping and aesthetics, and safe and efficient transportation access. They were then asked to select those elements which they would most like to see near their homes. Countywide, the top responses were pedestrian friendly, access to preserved open space, and convenient to shopping and dining. Access to preserved open space was the number one request from attendees at the Panhandle and Greater Lancaster meetings, as well as online. Additional top preferences in the Panhandle included being pedestrian friendly, having quality landscaping / amenities, and safe and efficient transportation access. Additional preferences in Greater Lancaster included being convenient to shopping and dining and being pedestrian friendly. Southern Lancaster preferences were for convenience to shopping and dining, being pedestrian friendly, and having architectural character / quality. Online responses preferred pedestrian friendliness, access to preserved open space, safe and efficient transportation access, and convenient to shopping and dining.

APPEARANCE: Meeting attendees were given a list of improvements which assist in enhancing community appearance and asked to select those which they think would make their area of Lancaster County more attractive. The options included streetscape enhancements, branded community signage, prominent gateway features, public art installations, community gathering spaces, and enhanced commercial landscaping standards. The top requests countywide included community gathering spaces, streetscape enhancements, and enhanced commercial landscaping standards. Community gathering spaces were either the first or second preference identified at each meeting, including online. Streetscape enhancements were the number one request online, the number two request at the Greater and Southern Lancaster meetings, and the number three request at the Panhandle meeting. The Panhandle meeting also identified enhanced commercial landscaping standards while Greater Lancaster attendees also identified branded community signage, and Southern Lancaster attendees also identified public art installations. Online respondents selected the same responses as the Panhandle attendees (though in a different order of preference).

GROWTH MANAGEMENT: Meeting attendees were prompted with a sentence about infrastructure needing to be in place prior to a community growing, and then asked to select the infrastructure elements which they feel are most important to have ahead of time. The options included schools, public safety, transportation infrastructure, utility infrastructure, parks and recreation facilities, and stormwater infrastructure. Countywide, the top requests were for transportation infrastructure, utility infrastructure, public safety, and stormwater infrastructure. Transportation infrastructure was the number one response across the meeting locations and online. Utility infrastructure was the number two request in the Panhandle, in Southern Lancaster, and online. Public safety was number two or three in all meetings. Stormwater infrastructure was identified as one of the top three elements in the Panhandle and Greater Lancaster meetings. Lastly, schools came up as one of the top three responses in Greater Lancaster and online.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Meeting attendees were asked to select the most important industry sectors for the future of Lancaster County’s economy (options included: office and corporate headquarters, manufacturing, natural resource extraction, medical services, agricultural production, transportation and logistics, recreation and tourism, and higher education). Countywide, the top requests were for medical services, recreation and tourism, and higher education. Medical services were the top response in the Panhandle, Southern Lancaster, and online meetings. Transportation and logistics were the second response in the Panhandle and online meetings. Office / corporate headquarters was the third-highest request in the Panhandle meeting and online. Recreation and Tourism were the second-most request in Greater Lancaster, Southern Lancaster, and online. Higher education was the number three request in Southern Lancaster. Manufacturing was also (via a tie) the third-highest request in the Greater and Southern Lancaster meetings.

DRAFT VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES: The final station at the community meetings presented the draft vision and guiding principles which were drafted at the June Steering Committee meeting (and subsequently edited based on feedback). Meeting attendees were presented these drafts and asked to share their general feedback. There were 36 comments received in person and 56 comments received online. There weren’t any comments disagreeing with the current draft, and many of them expounded on the parts they liked most or on specific recommendations they would like to see beneath each guiding principle. Some comments generally expressed their happiness with the draft vision and guiding principles.

Key Topic Forums Discussion

The next phase of the Lancaster2040 Comprehensive Plan process includes delving into key topics: land use, development, and growth management; transportation; economic development; and agriculture / natural resources. There will be four forum-style public meetings conducted related to these topics in the months of September and October and preliminary planning has begun. Full details will be released in the coming weeks. Currently, the dates are set for **September 8, September 29, October 13, and October 27**. Benchmark provided some highlights that have already been determined regarding the meetings:

LAND USE, DEVELOPMENT, AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT: This meeting will take place in Greater Lancaster. Speakers have been preliminarily identified as Tyson Smith (attorney and consultant engaged in the County’s UDO and comprehensive plan process), one or two local developers, a representative from Lancaster County Waster and Sewer District, Rox Burhans (Lancaster County Planning Director), a representative from the County Planning Commission, and the Lancaster County Schools Facilities Director.

TRANSPORTATION: This meeting will take place in the Panhandle. Speakers have been preliminarily identified as Jonathan Guy (transportation consultant engaged in the comprehensive plan and on a variety of local transportation initiatives), a representative from

the Rock Hill – Fort Mill area Transportation Study (RFATS), a representative from the Catawba Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG), a representative from the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), and a representative from Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: This meeting will take place in Greater Lancaster. Speakers have been preliminarily identified as Robin Spinks (consultant working on the comprehensive plan), the interim County Economic Development Director, a representative from the South Carolina Department of Commerce, a representative from the Charlotte Regional Alliance, and a representative from the I-77 Alliance.

AGRICULTURE / NATURAL RESOURCES: This meeting will take place in Southern Lancaster. Speakers have been preliminarily identified as Mary Lilley (consultant working on the comprehensive plan), the South Carolina Agricultural Extension Agent, a representative from Haile Gold Mine, an agricultural industry representative, a member of the South Carolina Forestry Commission, and a representative from the Katawba Valley Land Trust.

The exact dates, locations, and speakers for these forums will be announced shortly.

Committee Member Comments and Discussion

A range of discussions occurred throughout the meeting, particularly in relation to the results from the public input meetings. These comments are described here:

- Committee members discussed how the people who attended the meetings and participated online may have skewed results, and that this needed to be taken into consideration. There was a concern that a lack of participation from young families may have limited the interest in playgrounds / active play areas. Other members noted that they have children and didn't request playgrounds because they already have good access and that the results mimic the community survey results from the beginning of the project.
- It was noted that a recently formed Greenway Committee is currently looking at revisions to the Carolina Thread Trail map in the Panhandle area and they should see the responses we received on preferences. It was also noted that it would have been helpful to also ask respondents how they would like the County to pay for the construction and maintenance of trails. Maybe we should include that as a question that needs to be answered moving forward.
- On the feedback related to transportation, there was discussion about limited support for public transportation. It was noted that much of the population will age out of their ability to drive and that transit may become more necessary in the Panhandle. There was also discussion about transportation issues / car sharing for the labor force employed in the Panhandle. There isn't any uber or lyft in Greater and Southern

Lancaster, and LARS is only for the elderly, so it is difficult for those without cars to maintain jobs that require transportation access. There was further discussion about limited bicycle and pedestrian access, including lack of sidewalks or disconnected sidewalks and the need to figure out solutions to these.

- One attendee remarked that they were surprised street lighting didn't come up as a safety improvement request.
- Respondents were surprised that schools were not more heavily weighted in the responses concerning growth management. They speculated about why this may be the case and who participated in the meetings.
- On the economic development feedback, there was some discussion about higher education and the ability for Lancaster County to have its own technical college. Conversations included interest in examining more institution-type programs and stronger partnerships with York Tech.
- When discussing the upcoming public forums, some of the steering committee members made recommendations on who should be speakers. There was also the request to stream these meetings live (which is possible on YouTube or Facebook, depending on the facilities' internet service). It was determined that the consultants will plan to stream the meetings live, and if there are any difficulties, they will at least record the meeting. There was also a request to do live polling at the forums, which is also possible.