



To: Mike Dale, Hancock County Area Plan Commission Executive Director  
From: Meredith Perks, Associate Planner, Vandewalle & Associates  
Date: Wednesday, November 24, 2021  
Re: Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan Update

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Below is a progress report regarding the Future Hancock Comprehensive Plan. The items below reflect highlights of recent activity and forecast upcoming actions. Information on the Future Hancock plan can also be found at <https://futurehancock.com/>.

## Recent Activity:

### Community Visioning Workshop – November 9<sup>th</sup>

- On November 9<sup>th</sup>, the project team hosted an in-person workshop that was open to the public and was designed to facilitate numerous layers of input and participation from attendees.
- Approximately 90 residents participated in the Visioning Workshop and more than 900 comments were collected
- The Workshop agenda included a presentation on the background of the Comprehensive Plan, and snapshot of existing condition data on the state of the county.
- Numerous polling questions were asked of attendees. Questions varied from demographic questions to understand who was in the room to perceptions of existing conditions in the county, and vision for the future. A few key takeaways include:
  - Meeting attendees were primarily long-time residents (44% have lived in Hancock County for 26+ years), older (69% were 46 years or older), live in unincorporated areas of the County (54%) and are from the west side of the county (61% lived in Buck Creek, Sugar Creek or Vernon Townships)
  - Many residents are invested in the long term future of Hancock County: 88% of attendees plan to stay in the county for the next five years
  - Most participants felt there was room for improvement in the county regarding job opportunities, housing, parks and public amenities, roads, and shopping and entertainment.
  - However, the overwhelming majority of participants would recommend Hancock County as a place to live to family and friends (91%)
- Participants were also asked to complete a series of small group exercises with their table, including identifying issues and opportunities and prioritization for the future. A few key takeaways include:

- Balanced growth management plan with a diverse range of land uses that's actionable and followed by decision-makers
  - Robust infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, electric, broadband) that supports current and future growth
  - Target economic growth / businesses that attract quality high paying jobs and leverage Hancock's unique assets
  - Diverse housing options
  - Small business and entrepreneurial support and development
  - Properly funded public safety and services
  - Quality of place amenities such as parks, recreation, trails, shopping, entertainment, restaurants
  - Preserve and maintain the small community character/aesthetic
- Participants were also asked to complete a mapping exercise with their table to identify future land uses by drawing on a large county map to show potential areas of change and preservation.
  - Instructions for the exercises are included in the attached presentation.
  - A full summary on input results will be provided for the next Plan Commission meeting.
  - The project team also sent a follow up survey to participants to provide feedback on the workshop experience.

#### **Virtual Workshop**

- Following the Visioning Workshop virtual workshop materials were published on the Future Hancock website.
- Virtual Workshop materials include a survey and exercises that reflect the input collected in the workshop and an interactive digital map.
- An email sharing the Virtual Workshop links was to the Future Hancock listserv, as well as elected officials, steering committee members and other stakeholders that have been engaged in the process so far.
- Link to Virtual Workshop: <https://futurehancock.com/get-involved>

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

- Preliminary data analysis on existing conditions in the county has been included in the attached Visioning Workshop presentation.
- Preliminary key data takeaways include:
  - Hancock County has been steadily growing, with a population increase of 44% since 2000, and above the regional growth trend
  - Towns are growing faster than the unincorporated areas of the County, with 59% of the population now living in the Towns or City
  - There's a growing disconnect between jobs available and workforce available, with almost 80% of our residents leaving to work elsewhere
  - Tax base is not very diverse, given that 80% of the land is still in agricultural production
  - There's lag in infrastructure improvements
  - And finally, even with these changes, we still do maintain higher home values and incomes than other donut counties

**Steering Committee Update:** Steering Committee #2 will be held on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. The project team will provide an overview of public input to date and discuss development of the Vision and Framework.

**Meeting with Staff:** The project team and county staff leads have established monthly check ins and updates to stay informed on the planning process and progress.

**Future Hancock Website:** The project website, <https://futurehancock.com/>, has been updated regularly with new information, including public input event details and online questionnaires. Residents are able to sign up for email updates on the website and provide comments.

### Upcoming/Ongoing Actions:

- Final Stakeholder Focus Group Interviews
- Public Information Email Blast
- Continue to Build the Email Listserv and Contact List
- Continued Data Analysis
- Preliminary Future Land Use Review
- Visioning Workshop Analysis
- Vision and Framework Development

### Attachments:

- Visioning Workshop Presentation