

# FRANKLIN COUNTY, VIRGINIA

## CITIZEN PREFERENCE SURVEY RESULTS

August, 2010

### INTRODUCTION

Franklin County, Virginia is in the process of updating its current zoning and subdivision regulations, and part of the work program includes public outreach in the form of a citizen preference survey. A citizen preference survey is an informal nonscientific digital polling exercise where participants are asked a series of land use-related questions, and they record their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement or question on handheld keypad devices. Participants are then able to see a breakdown of the voting results for each of the questions or statements.



Respondents taking the citizen preference survey in Union Hall.

This document is a summary of results from a series of seven citizen preference survey meetings conducted in various locations across Franklin County during the month of July, 2010. The citizen preference survey consisted of 21 questions inquiring about respondents preferences or perceptions regarding land use and development issues in the county. Results from these surveys will be used to assist the County staff in developing recommendations for revisions to the new Land Development Ordinance (LDO).

The Code of Virginia requires all local governments in the Commonwealth to prepare and adopt a comprehensive plan that “shall show the locality’s long-range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan.” The plan must also contain recommendations for how it will be implemented. Two of the primary means through which a plan’s long-range recommendations for development are implemented are the zoning ordinance and the subdivision ordinance. These two documents control the use and organization of land and development activity across the county.

To function as intended, the zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations must be consistent with the policies in the comprehensive plan. Franklin County updated its comprehensive plan in 2007, and is now in the process of studying how best to amend its zoning and subdivision regulations to be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Clarion Associates, McBride Dale Clarion, and Stone Engineering were hired by the county to assist and advise the staff during this update process.

One of the first steps in the LDO update process was the decision to conduct a demand/capacity analysis. This analysis includes: 1) a review of past development trends; 2) a projection of future population growth; and 3) an objective analysis of the raw land requirements necessary to accommodate this future growth. This study tells us, in general terms, how many new homes we will need to meet future residential demand. It also tells us which areas of the county are most likely to receive this future growth, based on physical geographical conditions and market preferences. The result is an analysis of how much land is needed to accommodate future development, and where that development is most likely to locate.

The demand/capacity analysis indicates that the county is not likely to experience explosive growth rates during the next twenty years, and that it has a more than sufficient supply of vacant, buildable land available for

anticipated development. The demand/capacity analysis also indicates that most new residential development is likely to locate within existing residential areas in the northern and eastern sides of the county, and that there will not be widespread intense pressure for redevelopment or conversion of farmland for new development in the southern and western sides of the county. This is important because it underscores the notion that different portions of the county are likely to experience differing rates of growth pressure, and that a one-size-fits-all approach to land use regulations is not warranted.

This citizen preference survey is proposed as one of the primary ways for Franklin County to determine how and in what ways regulations should be tailored to different contexts in the county. Announcements of the citizen preference survey meetings were publicized in June, then seven different meetings were held in July – one in each of the county’s magisterial districts. This was done to ensure the maximum opportunity for public participation, as well as to gain a greater understanding about respondents’ perceptions of land use and development activity in different parts of the county.

A total of 177 people participated in the meetings. The table to the right shows the number of people attending each of the meetings. Based on sign-in sheets provided during the meetings, some people attended more than one meeting, but repeat responders were a very small part of the survey group. While some areas had low turnout, most of the meetings had 25 or more people in attendance.

The citizen preference survey included 21 questions or statements that deal with various aspects of development in the county. The survey asks respondents to identify their level of agreement with a particular statement or question related to development.

It is important to note that there were no requirements that each person record a response on each question, and in fact, many questions did not have response rates of 100 percent. Therefore, the average response rates discussed in the next section are based on the total number of respondents, not the total number of attendees. Despite the precise numbers and percentages shown, neither the survey nor these results are intended to be definitive or scientific. Instead, the goal of the survey is to gain a deeper understanding of respondents’ preferences for how the built environment looks or operates.

The survey questions were organized by geographic area and development type. The first group of questions deals with development in the rural portions of the county. The second group poses questions about the village and mixed-use centers around the county. The third group of questions deals with the residential neighborhoods in the northern and eastern portions of the county. The final group of questions deals with general perceptions on the effectiveness of the county’s current development regulations.

The following pages include a copy of each slide used in the survey, the respondents’ preference rates, and a summary analysis of the responses. The last page in the report provides some basic conclusions that can be drawn from the results. This information, when combined with guidance in the comprehensive plan, and input received from the community will be used by the Clarion team to determine some of the key areas where the county’s current development regulations are succeeding or failing to produce desired results, and what changes, if any, are appropriate to consider as part of the LDO update.

This table summarizes the attendance figures for the seven citizen preference surveys conducted in July 2010

Location	Attendance
Gills Creek (Burnt Chimney Elementary School)	37
Union Hall (Glade Hill Elementary School)	27
Blue Ridge (Ferrum Elementary School)	40
Snow Creek (Snow Creek Elementary School)	26
Blackwater (Callaway Elementary School)	25
Boone (Windy Gap Elementary School)	4
Rocky Mount (Franklin Co. Gov't Center)	18

# SURVEY RESULTS

## INTRODUCTION

**QUESTION 1: HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN FRANKLIN COUNTY?**



Franklin County | Introductory Questions

### 1. How long have you lived in Franklin County?

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. < 1 Year 2. 1-15 Years 3. 15 + Years 4. 30 + Years 5. Not Resident

## QUESTION 1 RESPONSES

SURVEY GROUP	< 1 YEAR	1-15 YEARS	15 + YEARS	30+ YEARS	NOT RESIDENT
1. Rocky Mount	0	6	2	8	0
2. Blackwater	0	2	0	18	0
3. Boone	0	1	1	2	0
4. Gills Creek	0	13	8	10	1
5. Union Hall	1	9	3	13	1
6. Snow Creek	3	4	3	13	1
7. Blue Ridge	0	1	4	22	2
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>5</b>

This introductory question was used to give respondents practice using the keypad recording devices, but reveals interesting information about those taking the survey. Interestingly, over half of the respondents have been county residents for 30 years or more. There were also a few nonresidents who took the survey as well.

## INTRODUCTION (CONT)

### QUESTION 2: ARE YOU A PROPERTY OWNER?



Franklin County | Introductory Questions

### 2. Are you a property owner?

0 of 5

0% 0%

1 2

1. Yes 2. No

QUESTION 2 RESPONSES		
SURVEY GROUP	YES	NO
1. Rocky Mount	15	0
2. Blackwater	23	0
3. Boone	3	1
4. Gills Creek	33	1
5. Union Hall	24	2
6. Snow Creek	21	0
7. Blue Ridge	29	2
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>6</b>

The second practice question showed that all but a few of the survey respondents were property owners.

## INTRODUCTION

**QUESTION 3: WHO IS YOUR REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS?**

0 of 5

Franklin County | Introductory Questions

**3. Who is your representative on the Board of Supervisors?**

1 Rocky Mount Mr. Charles Wagner	5 Union Hall Mr. David Cundiff
2 Blackwater Mr. Wayne Angell	6 Snow Creek Mr. Leland Mitchell
3 Boone Mr. Ronnie Thompson	7 Blue Ridge Mr. Bobby Thompson
4 Gills Creek Mr. Russ Johnson	

0% 0% 0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(Select appropriate number on keypad)

QUESTION 3 RESPONSES							
SURVEY GROUP	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Rocky Mount	8	1	0	4	0	2	1
2. Blackwater	2	13	0	0	0	0	5
3. Boone	0	0	4	0	0	0	0
4. Gills Creek	0	0	6	24	2	2	1
5. Union Hall	1	0	0	0	24	2	0
6. Snow Creek	0	0	0	0	0	22	0
7. Blue Ridge	0	0	0	0	0	0	31
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>

The third practice question asked respondents to indicate the magisterial district in which they live. The table shows the number of respondents by district. As mentioned previously, there were 177 people who attended the sessions, but 13 came to more than one. Most respondents attended the meeting held in their respective district.


## PART I: RURAL AREAS

**QUESTION 4:** I THINK THE RIDGE TOPS SHOULD BE BETTER PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT.



0 of 5

**4. I think the ridge tops should be better protected from future development.**



0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

**1. Strongly Agree   2. Agree   3. Neutral   4. Disagree   5. Strongly Disagree**

QUESTION 4 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	56%	<b>32%</b>	12%
2. Blackwater	48%	24%	28%
3. Boone	<b>75%</b>	0%	25%
4. Gills Creek	60%	22%	18%
5. Union Hall	63%	18%	19%
6. Snow Creek	62%	24%	14%
7. Blue Ridge	70%	23%	7%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17%</b>

The future land use section of the comprehensive plan identifies the importance of protecting community character along scenic roads and byways across the county. The county’s numerous pristine ridges and ridgelines are a key element of the county’s character. However, the county’s current development regulations do little to address the impacts of proposed ridge top development (including towers and windmills) on surrounding lower elevations. Based on language in the comprehensive plan related to the need for protection of scenic views and county character, the statement presupposes that unmitigated development on ridge tops is inconsistent with the county’s long range development goals.

Over 60 percent of the respondents agreed that ridge tops should be better protected from future development, while 22 percent didn’t agree, and 17 percent were neutral. Agreement with the statement was greatest in the Blue Ridge and Boone districts. Only Blackwater had less than a majority of respondents agreeing with the statement



**PART I: RURAL AREAS  
(CONT)**

**QUESTION 5: I THINK NEW DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE HIDDEN OR HARD TO SEE FROM THE BLUERIDGE PARKWAY.**



Franklin County | Rural Areas

**5. I think new development should be hidden or hard to see from the Blue Ridge Parkway.**

0 of 5

0%

0%

0%

0%

0%

1
2
3
4
5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

**QUESTION 5 RESPONSES**

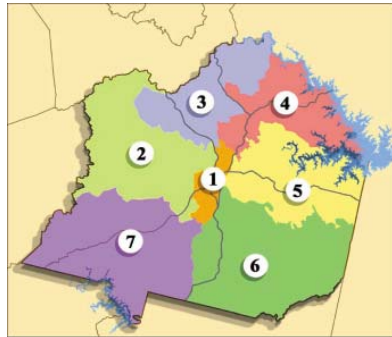
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	61%	23%	16%
2. Blackwater	26%	<b>64%</b>	10%
3. Boone	<b>100%</b>	0%	0%
4. Gills Creek	79%	6%	15%
5. Union Hall	63%	26%	11%
6. Snow Creek	63%	23%	14%
7. Blue Ridge	71%	29%	0%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>11%</b>

This question is similar to the previous one on ridge tops, but it asks about a specific location – the Blue Ridge Parkway. Numerous policies in the future land use section call for new tools that protect scenic character and ensure that new development is compatible with the established character (including design standards around the Parkway). The statement presupposes that the county is committed to protecting the Blue Ridge Parkway as a regional tourism resource, and that one of the best ways to accomplish this is to ensure new development does not detract from the views seen from the Parkway.

Over 60 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, with the highest level of agreement in the Gills Creek and Boone districts. However, over 64 percent of the respondents in Blackwater disagreed with the statement. There were fewer neutral responses to this question than the previous question.

**PART I: RURAL AREAS  
(CONT)**

**QUESTION 6: I THINK CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS ARE APPROPRIATE IN THE COUNTY.**



Franklin County | Rural Areas

**6. I think conservation subdivisions are appropriate in the county.**

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

0 of 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

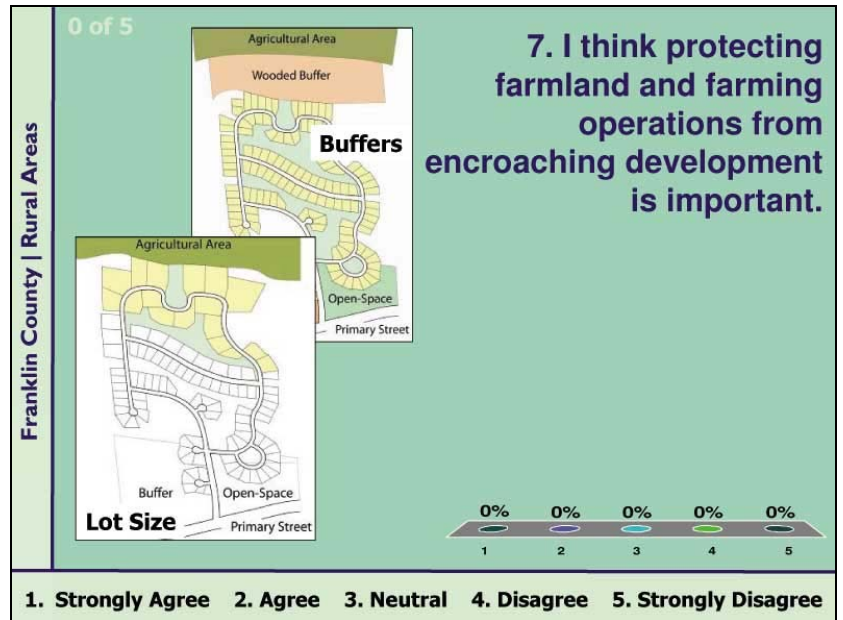
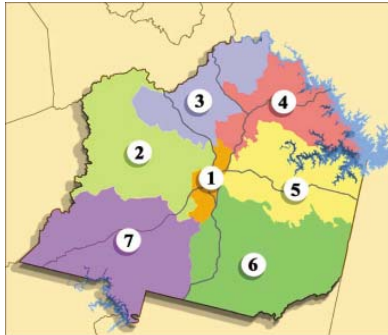
QUESTION 6 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	69%	27%	4%
2. Blackwater	55%	32%	13%
3. Boone	<b>75%</b>	25%	0%
4. Gills Creek	50%	<b>36%</b>	14%
5. Union Hall	60%	24%	16%
6. Snow Creek	60%	15%	25%
7. Blue Ridge	47%	33%	20%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>16%</b>

This slide solicits opinions about conservation subdivisions, which is used in many agricultural areas across the country. Dwellings are placed on small individual lots that are clustered in close proximity to one another (and away from site resources). The balance of the site is left as open space, farmland, or resource land. Conservation subdivisions have proven to be an effective way to protect open space, maintain rural character, and allow farmers to capture some of the land’s development value while continuing to farm. The future land use section of the comprehensive plan indicates that conservation of farmlands, woodlands, and conservation lands are key policy objectives for the county’s future. The current zoning ordinance has residential clustering provisions, but they lack the flexibility and procedural steps necessary to establish effective conservation subdivisions.

An average of 55 percent of respondents agreed that conservation subdivisions are appropriate in Franklin County, with the level of agreement ranging from 47 percent (Blue Ridge) to 75 percent (Boone). A slightly higher percentage of respondents disagreed with this question more than the previous two questions.

## PART I: RURAL AREAS (CONT)

**QUESTION 7: I THINK PROTECTING FARMLAND AND FARMING OPERATIONS FROM ENCROACHING DEVELOPMENT IS IMPORTANT.**



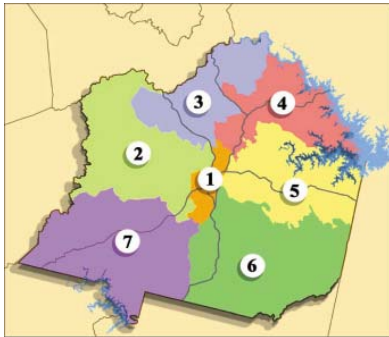
QUESTION 7 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	84%	16%	0%
2. Blackwater	91%	9%	0%
3. Boone	100%	0%	0%
4. Gills Creek	86%	6%	8%
5. Union Hall	61%	27%	12%
6. Snow Creek	87%	0%	13%
7. Blue Ridge	91%	9%	0%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>5%</b>

The comprehensive plan's subsection on Farmland recognizes the need to protect farming operations, and includes policy guidance for the establishment of open space between new residential development and existing farmland (as a means of protecting farmland from incompatible development). The current zoning ordinance includes no provisions for these kinds of buffers or other farming protections. This statement presupposes that new development encroaching on lands used for farming or limiting farm activities is inconsistent with the county's long range planning goals.

Almost 85 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, with only a small portion of respondents being neutral. Only the Union Hill and Rocky Mount respondents showed significant levels of disagreement with the statements. The low number of neutral responses shows that this is an issue where most people have an opinion.

**PART I: RURAL AREAS  
(CONT)**




**QUESTION 8: I THINK RURAL AREAS SHOULD BE BETTER PROTECTED FROM NUISANCES.**



0 of 5

Franklin County | Rural Areas

**8. I think rural areas should be better protected from nuisances.**

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

**1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree**

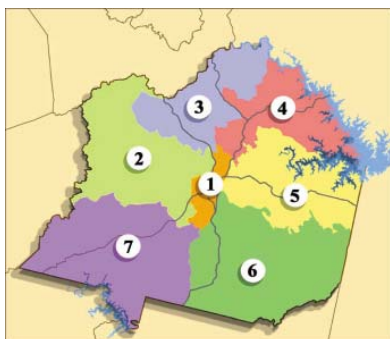
QUESTION 8 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	58%	22%	20%
2. Blackwater	41%	<b>43%</b>	16%
3. Boone	50%	25%	25%
4. Gills Creek	80%	14%	6%
5. Union Hall	49%	26%	26%
6. Snow Creek	<b>90%</b>	10%	0%
7. Blue Ridge	56%	41%	3%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>11%</b>

This slide was intended to solicit respondents’ perceptions regarding nuisances in rural areas, and how well the county is addressing nuisance problems. The slide shows images of junked vehicles, unscreened outdoor storage, and abandoned buildings, but the discussion on the range of nuisances was much broader. The intent of the slide is not to determine what is or what is not nuisance, but rather whether or not respondents felt rural areas are adequately protected from nuisances, whatever they may be.

Over 60 percent of respondents agreed that rural areas need better protection from nuisances. Of particular interest are the responses from the three districts where county zoning regulations do not apply (Blackwater, Blue Ridge, and Snow Creek). A substantial proportion of respondents in Blackwater and Blue Ridge disagreed with the statement, but there was support for the statement in other parts of the county.




## PART I: RURAL AREAS (CONT)

**QUESTION 9:** I THINK RURAL AREAS NEED BETTER PROTECTION AGAINST HEAVY COMMERCIAL OR INDUSTRIAL USES.



Franklin County | Rural Areas

**9. I think rural areas need better protection against heavy commercial or industrial uses.**

0 of 5

0%  
1

0%  
2

0%  
3

0%  
4

0%  
5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

### QUESTION 9 RESPONSES

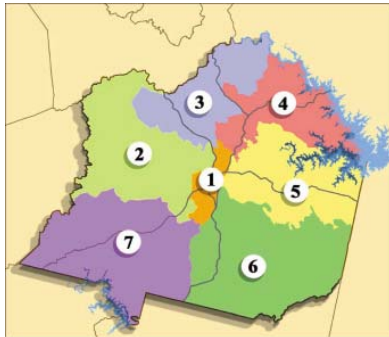
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	58%	16%	26%
2. Blackwater	38%	38%	26%
3. Boone	75%	0%	25%
4. Gills Creek	64%	24%	12%
5. Union Hall	44%	<b>50%</b>	6%
6. Snow Creek	<b>90%</b>	5%	5%
7. Blue Ridge	50%	40%	10%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>13%</b>

The final question about rural areas deals with the perceived need to protect rural areas better protection from new incompatible heavy industry or commercial uses moving into those areas. The images show a landfill, a regional airport, and a poultry processing plant, but there was also lengthy discussion about other types of uses that may locate in rural, unzoned areas such as concrete plants, quarries, and similar intense uses—subject to few or no standards related to compatibility with adjacent development.

In general, more than half of the respondents agree with the statement that additional protection against incompatible development is needed, but there was significant disagreement in Union Hall, Blackwater, and Blue Ridge. It is interesting that no one in Boone disagreed with the statement.

**PART 2: VILLAGES & MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL CENTERS**

**QUESTION 10: I THINK BETTER LANDSCAPING IS NEEDED IN VILLAGE CENTERS.**



QUESTION 10 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	42%	21%	37%
2. Blackwater	26%	34%	40%
3. Boone	<b>75%</b>	25%	0%
4. Gills Creek	47%	33%	20%
5. Union Hall	48%	<b>44%</b>	8%
6. Snow Creek	58%	5%	37%
7. Blue Ridge	66%	21%	11%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>23%</b>

This is the first of the second group of statements that relate to the handful of anticipated villages (like Burnt Chimney) and mixed-use centers (like Westlake) in the county. They focus on the appearance and quality-of-life aspects in these areas, and presuppose that some form of development regulations are either already in place, or are called for in the county’s long range planning goals. This statement seeks respondent’s opinions on whether better (and presumably more stringent) regulations for landscaping in these centers are needed.

Overall about half of the respondents agreed with the statement, with the balance of the respondents either disagreeing with the statement or being neutral. There were high rates of agreement with the statement in the Boone and Blue Ridge areas, and substantial disagreement in Union Hall.

## PART 2: VILLAGES & MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL CENTERS

**QUESTION 11:** I THINK THE COUNTY SHOULD REQUIRE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN VILLAGE CENTERS TO BE MORE WALKABLE OR PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY.





0 of 5

**11. I think the County should require new development in village centers to be more walkable or pedestrian friendly.**

Village & Mixed-Use Commercial Centers

**0%** **0%** **0%** **0%** **0%**

1    2    3    4    5

1. Strongly Agree    2. Agree    3. Neutral    4. Disagree    5. Strongly Disagree

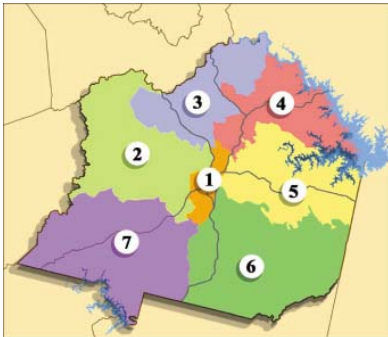
QUESTION 11 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	61%	17%	22%
2. Blackwater	50%	27%	23%
3. Boone	<b>100%</b>	0%	0%
4. Gills Creek	55%	30%	15%
5. Union Hall	50%	<b>43%</b>	7%
6. Snow Creek	73%	14%	13%
7. Blue Ridge	66%	34%	0%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>12%</b>

The future land use section of the comprehensive plan contains numerous examples of policy guidance calling for interconnected streets and the desire for compact, walkable developments with public spaces. The current zoning ordinance contains few provisions that promote pedestrian orientation (like building and parking placement standards) or pedestrian circulation in villages and mixed-use centers. The statement seeks a response to new regulations mandating greater pedestrian orientation, and presupposes that pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development is desirable, based upon the policy direction in the comprehensive plan.

Overall, at least half of the respondents in every group agreed that development in centers should be required to be more pedestrian friendly or walkable. It is noteworthy that a significant number of respondents in Union Hall disagreed with the statement.

## PART 2: VILLAGES & MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL CENTERS

**QUESTION 12: SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ADDRESS HOW PARKING LOTS IN VILLAGE CENTERS LOOK.**



0 of 5

**12. Something needs to be done to address how parking lots in village centers look.**

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

### QUESTION 12 RESPONSES

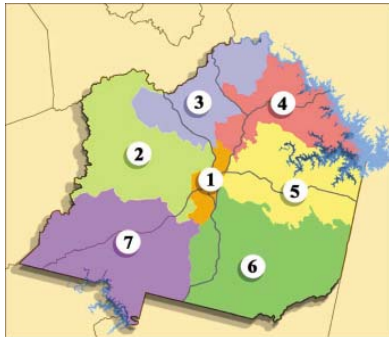
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	61%	17%	22%
2. Blackwater	21%	39%	40%
3. Boone	100%	0%	0%
4. Gills Creek	55%	30%	15%
5. Union Hall	23%	70%	7%
6. Snow Creek	27%	10%	63%
7. Blue Ridge	36%	39%	25%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>29%</b>

This statement addresses respondents' level of satisfaction with the appearance of parking lots in village areas. While the comprehensive plan does not mention parking lot location specifically, it does call for a landscaped strip along all commercial lot frontages, and the application of design guidelines to commercial development (assumedly to ensure new development with a compatible character). The current zoning ordinance includes some basic planting requirements for parking lots with more than 20 spaces, and some frontage landscaping requirements in Westlake.

Taken as a whole, most respondents disagreed with the statement, and there were a significant number of respondents who were neutral on the issue. Over half agreed with the statement in Rocky Mount and Gills Creek, and disagreement with the statement was substantial in the Union Hall, Blackwater, and Blue Ridge areas.

**PART 2: VILLAGES & MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL CENTERS**

**QUESTION 13: I BELIEVE THE COUNTY NEEDS STRONGER SIGNAGE STANDARDS IN THE VILLAGE CENTER.**



**13. I believe the county needs stronger signage standards in village centers.**

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

**QUESTION 13 RESPONSES**

SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	42%	37%	21%
2. Blackwater	16%	48%	36%
3. Boone	75%	25%	0%
4. Gills Creek	64%	22%	14%
5. Union Hall	75%	17%	8%
6. Snow Creek	53%	12%	35%
7. Blue Ridge	50%	38%	12%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>19%</b>

This statement tests respondents’ desire for stronger sign standards in village centers. The term “stronger” was not defined, but discussion about what the term might mean focused on measures such as reductions in maximum height, reductions in maximum sign size, or other changes that would make signs a less obvious feature of the landscape in says nothing about policies related to signage, but does include statements about protecting and improving the appearance of commercial development and commercial areas. The current ordinance has a comprehensive set of signage standards that are applicable to zoned areas (as well as some signage standards for uses along key corridors, including corridors outside of the zoned portion of the county.)

Overall, only a small majority of respondents agreed with the statement, with Union Hall and Boone showing the highest levels of agreement. On the other hand, almost half of respondents in the Blackwater area disagreed with the statement.



## PART 2: VILLAGES & MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL CENTERS

**QUESTION 14:** I WOULD SUPPORT NEW STANDARDS FOR SCREENING OUTDOOR STORAGE AND SERVICE AREAS IN VILLAGE CENTERS.



Village & Mixed-Use Commercial Centers

**14. I would support new standards for screening outdoor storage, and service areas in village centers.**

0 of 5

0%

0%

0%

0%

0%

1
2
3
4
5

1. Strongly Agree   2. Agree   3. Neutral   4. Disagree   5. Strongly Disagree

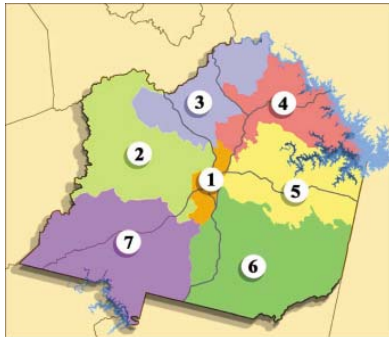
QUESTION 14 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	<b>74%</b>	6%	10%
2. Blackwater	50%	26%	24%
3. Boone	50%	25%	25%
4. Gills Creek	72%	15%	13%
5. Union Hall	68%	24%	8%
6. Snow Creek	72%	15%	13%
7. Blue Ridge	51%	<b>33%</b>	16%
AVERAGE	<b>63%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>16%</b>

This statement deals directly with the level of support for new standards for screening of outdoor storage and service areas within village centers. The current zoning ordinance requires perimeter landscaping, but does not require screening of storage or service areas (except within the Westlake village center area).

In general, over 60 percent of the survey respondents agreed that they would support new, screening standards for service areas on sites in village centers. Unlike many of the other statements, the level of agreement was fairly consistent across all the groups. Levels of disagreement were slightly more varied, but averaged around one fifth of the respondents in the various districts.

**PART 2: VILLAGES & MIXED-USE COMMERCIAL CENTERS**

**QUESTION 15: I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE HOUSING IN VILLAGE CENTERS.**



**15. I think it is important to include housing in village centers.**

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

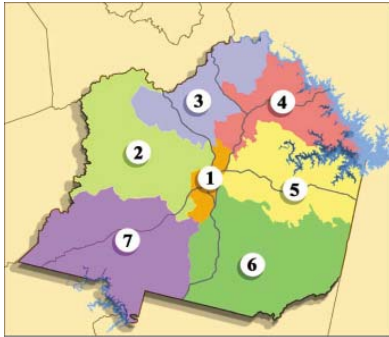
QUESTION 15 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	74%	16%	10%
2. Blackwater	73%	17%	10%
3. Boone	50%	25%	25%
4. Gills Creek	72%	15%	13%
5. Union Hall	37%	42%	21%
6. Snow Creek	72%	15%	13%
7. Blue Ridge	59%	25%	16%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>17%</b>

This statement addresses the perceived importance of housing in village centers. Numerous social indicators and demographic trends point towards the need for more urban housing in places that do not require the use of an automobile to meet all of one’s daily needs. Locating residential and nonresidential development forms in close proximity to one another is a key way to address that need, and is called for in numerous comprehensive plan policies.

For the most part, there was fairly strong agreement that housing is an important element of functioning village centers in all but the Union Hall area. The Boone and Blue Ridge groups also registered somewhat significant levels of disagreement.

### PART 3: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

**QUESTION 16: I BELIEVE THAT ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS SHOULD BE BETTER CONNECTED BY:**



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**16. I believe that adjacent residential subdivisions should be better connected by:**

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

**1. Just Streets 2. Just Sidewalks 3. Streets and Sidewalks/Paths 4. Neither Streets or Sidewalks/Paths 5. Not Sure**

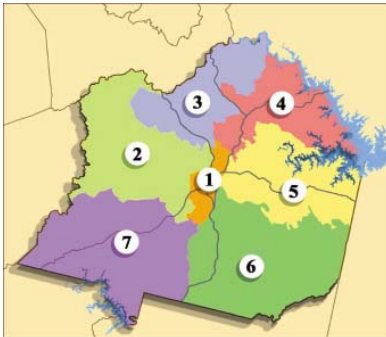
QUESTION 16 RESPONSES					
SURVEY GROUP	JUST STREETS	JUST SIDEWALKS	BOTH	NEITHER	Not Sure
1. Rocky Mount	5%	21%	63%	11%	0%
2. Blackwater	5%	9%	45%	23%	18%
3. Boone	0%	0%	<b>75%</b>	<b>25%</b>	0%
4. Gills Creek	6%	3%	56%	24%	12%
5. Union Hall	0%	12%	65%	8%	15%
6. Snow Creek	4%	<b>22%</b>	39%	17%	17%
7. Blue Ridge	<b>18%</b>	12%	41%	21%	9%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>12%</b>

This first question of the third section of the survey deals with the connections between adjacent residential neighborhoods in the county. Unlike previous questions, this statement did not call for agreement or disagreement, rather it required respondents to choose among multiple competing options for completing the statement. The statement solicits respondents' thoughts on the desirability of connecting different neighborhoods with one another, as well as how that connectivity should best be achieved. Policies related to the need for better connected developments (both residential and residential with nonresidential) are found throughout the future land use section of the comprehensive plan. The current ordinance has little in the way of standards for connected streets or ideas about pedestrian connections between adjacent developments.

Over 80 percent of the respondents agreed that adjacent neighborhoods should be better connected, whether through streets or sidewalks, or both (with a majority preference for both). Sidewalks were indicated more frequently than roads as appropriate ways to make connections with just one mode. It is also important to note that each group included respondents who felt that neighborhoods should not be connected by either streets or sidewalks.

**PART 3: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS (CONT)**

**QUESTION 17: I BELIEVE THE COUNTY'S SUBDIVISION STANDARDS RESULT IN RESIDENTIAL LOTS THAT ARE:**



0 of 5

**17. I believe the county's subdivisions standards result in residential lots that are:**

0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4

**1. Too Big 2. Too Small 3. About Right Size 4. Not Sure**

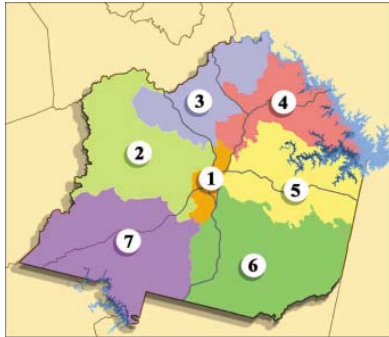
QUESTION 17 RESPONSES				
SURVEY GROUP	TOO BIG	TOO SMALL	ABOUT RIGHT SIZE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	17%	6%	61%	17%
2. Blackwater	33%	0%	54%	13%
3. Boone	25%	0%	25%	25%
4. Gills Creek	21%	9%	52%	18%
5. Union Hall	19%	11%	63%	7%
6. Snow Creek	11%	6%	56%	28%
7. Blue Ridge	19%	16%	41%	25%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>18%</b>

The next slide included another multiple choice statement seeking respondent's perceptions of lot sizes for residential development in the county. The images depict three common densities in the county: one unit per five acres in the top image, one unit per acre in the middle image, and more than one unit per acre in the bottom image. The statement does not address which of the densities shown is preferable, but instead seeks respondents' opinion about whether the county's current regulations are resulting in lots of an appropriate size or scale.

When considered as a group, a little over half of respondents felt that lots created under the current subdivision standards were about the right size. A significant percentage of respondents indicated that the county's regulations allow lots that were too large, but few agreed with the statement that new lots are too small.

### PART 3: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS (CONT)

**QUESTION 18:** I BELIEVE THE COUNTY SHOULD ADOPT STANDARDS TO PROTECT MORE EXISTING TREE COVER DURING AND AFTER DEVELOPMENT.



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18. I believe the county should adopt standards to protect more existing tree cover during and after development.

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

QUESTION 18 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	41%	24%	35%
2. Blackwater	62%	24%	14%
3. Boone	100%	0%	0%
4. Gills Creek	69%	24%	7%
5. Union Hall	57%	40%	3%
6. Snow Creek	86%	9%	5%
7. Blue Ridge	70%	28%	2%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>9%</b>

This statement concerns the need to protect and preserve existing tree cover during and after new development. The comprehensive plan has policies related to the need to protect forestry operations, as well as policies to protect rural development character, scenic vistas, and encourage natural resource protection. The current zoning ordinance has no requirements, except for protection of existing trees along portions of the Highway 220 corridor.

Taken as a whole, two-thirds of the respondents agree that the county should adopt new standards to better protect existing tree cover. Agreement levels were particularly high in the Boone, Snow Creek, and Blue Ridge groups. Levels of disagreement with the statement were highest in the Union Hall group, though a majority of respondents there agreed with the statement. A significant number of respondents in the Rocky Mount district were neutral on the statement.

### PART 3: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS (CONT)

**QUESTION 19:** I THINK THAT NEW LAKEFRONT DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS TO PROTECT WATER QUALITY AND VISUAL QUALITY FROM THE LAKE.



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**19. I think that new lakefront development should be subject to design and development standards to protect water quality and visual quality from the lake.**

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

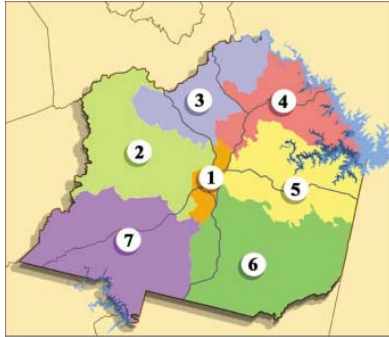
QUESTION 19 RESPONSES			
SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	61%	28%	11%
2. Blackwater	50%	30%	20%
3. Boone	50%	25%	25%
4. Gills Creek	69%	21%	10%
5. Union Hall	49%	33%	18%
6. Snow Creek	84%	5%	11%
7. Blue Ridge	75%	21%	4%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>12%</b>

This statement received considerable discussion and many respondents felt it was poorly worded, and likely should have been posed as two questions – one on water quality and one on visual quality. The focus of the statement is on respondent’s perceptions about the impact of standards addressing lakefront development, and presupposes that the appearance of development around the lakefront is a key issue (based on the economic significance of tourism and tax revenue generated by the lake).

In general over 60 percent of the respondents agreed that new lakefront development should be subject to new design and development standards aimed at protecting water quality as well as visual quality. It is interesting to note that respondents at meetings in two of the unzoned districts (Snow Creek and Blue Ridge) reported the highest levels of agreement with the statement, and respondents at meetings in the districts bordering the lake (Gills Creek and Union Hall) differed significantly in their levels of agreement.

## PART 4: CONCLUSION

**QUESTION 20:** IN GENERAL, I THINK THE COUNTY'S CURRENT DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS ARE:



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20. In general, I think the county's current development regulations are:

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4

1. Too Strict 2. About Right 3. Not Strict Enough 4. Not Sure

### QUESTION 20 RESPONSES

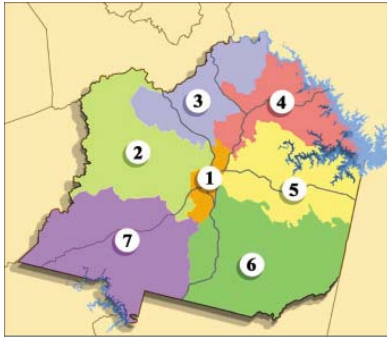
SURVEY GROUP	TOO STRICT	ABOUT RIGHT	NOT STRICT ENOUGH	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	17%	44%	33%	6%
2. Blackwater	29%	50%	13%	8%
3. Boone	0%	50%	50%	0%
4. Gills Creek	32%	29%	38%	0%
5. Union Hall	30%	30%	33%	7%
6. Snow Creek	13%	43%	35%	9%
7. Blue Ridge	38%	35%	21%	6%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>6%</b>

This multiple choice statement seeks respondent's general opinion on the county's current development regulations being too strict, too lenient, or about right.

In general, results were fairly evenly divided across each of the three options, with a slight majority of respondents reporting the current regulations to be about right in terms of the level of protection. Only a small percentage of respondents were neutral on the subject.

## PART 4: CONCLUSION (CONT)

**QUESTION 21:** I THINK MY PROPERTY IS ADEQUATELY PROTECTED BY THE COUNTY'S CURRENT DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.



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**21. I think my property is adequately protected by the county's current development regulations.**

0 of 5

0% 0% 0% 0% 0%

1 2 3 4 5

1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree

### QUESTION 21 RESPONSES

SURVEY GROUP	AGREE OR STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE OR STRONGLY DISAGREE	Neutral or No Opinion
1. Rocky Mount	63%	16%	21%
2. Blackwater	48%	35%	17%
3. Boone	50%	25%	25%
4. Gills Creek	45%	34%	21%
5. Union Hall	48%	52%	0%
6. Snow Creek	23%	63%	14%
7. Blue Ridge	64%	25%	11%
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>13%</b>

This final statement in the survey explores respondent's general perceptions about whether their properties are adequately protected by the county's current regulations.

When considered as a group, half the respondents agreed that they are adequately protected by the existing regulations. Interestingly, respondents from Blue Ridge (an unzoned area), reported the highest amount of agreement with the statement, while respondents from Snow Creek (another unzoned portion of the county), reported the lowest levels of agreement with the statement. A majority of the respondents in these two groups disagreed with the statement. It is also interesting that no respondent in the Union Hall group reported being neutral on the subject.

This concludes the survey reporting portion of the report, and is followed by a series of basic conclusions or issues for further consideration.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the results described in the preceding pages, our review of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, and the results of the demand/capacity analysis, we offer the following conclusions or issues for further consideration by the county as it moves forward with the Land Development Ordinance process.

The results of the survey show that there are diverse opinions on approaches to managing land use in the county. Not only are there different opinions about the need for or desirability of additional regulations, there appear to be different levels of desire or appetite for regulatory control in differing portions of the county. Respondents from some areas consistently reported strong desire for more land use regulation, while others consistently disagreed with statements calling for increased regulations.

Given the diversity of opinions and contexts across the county, it is clear that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to the county’s new LDO is not appropriate, and that standards may need to be tailored to the areas where they are proposed. One approach may be to use character areas (like those identified in the demand/capacity analysis) as the organizing framework for new regulations.

While some areas may be ready for new regulations, other portions of the county may not be ready for these kinds of changes. Public responses indicate that regulatory changes, where proposed, should be carefully constructed and generally should include only the minimum standards necessary to address the concerns important to specific areas.

The responses to the survey indicate interest in a more sophisticated system of regulatory control that can accommodate areas with differing levels of protection. There may also be interest in incentive-based approaches that offer greater flexibility for preferred development forms.

The survey was not scientific, but it did prove a useful tool for gauging public perceptions and helping the county identify geographical areas where regulatory change is desired versus areas where it is not. These findings will be used in the formulation of more detailed recommendations described in the forthcoming Diagnosis of the county’s development regulations.