



TOWN OF

VIENNA

Planning & Zoning

## MEMORANDUM

**Meeting Date:** May 18, 2026

**To:** Town Council

**From:** David Levy, AICP, Director  
Kelly O'Brien, AICP, CZA, Deputy Director  
Lyndsey Cloutre, Principal Planner

**RE:** Comprehensive Plan Update Discussion

### Background

The Comprehensive Plan is the Town's long-range policy document that guides land use, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and other aspects of the Town's future growth and development. The current Comprehensive Plan was adopted as a complete update on May 23, 2016, with minor amendments approved on Feb. 3, 2020, and Oct. 5, 2020.

Pursuant to Virginia Code § 15.2-2223, jurisdictions with land use authority are required to adopt and periodically review a Comprehensive Plan to ensure it reflects current conditions, community priorities, and future needs.

The Planning Commission, with support from Town staff, completed its Draft 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update as a recommendation to the Town Council, following an extensive multi-year process that included community engagement, stakeholder outreach, board and commission input, Planning Commission subcommittee review, and multiple public meetings and work sessions. The Planning Commission approved its recommended draft on Feb. 25, 2026, and transmitted the document to the Town Council for consideration.

Town Council and the Planning Commission held a joint work session on April 20, 2026, to discuss the Planning Commission's recommended draft and key policy themes. The Town Council subsequently held a public hearing on May 4, 2026, and accepted written comments through May 11, 2026.

The purpose of this meeting is to provide Town Council an opportunity to discuss the draft plan, consider public comments received during the review process, and provide direction to staff regarding any revisions, policy refinements, or additional analysis prior to future consideration of adoption.

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### Key Policy Topics Identified During Joint Work Session

The joint work session on April 20, 2026, focused on several policy areas within the draft 2026 Comprehensive Plan that may warrant additional refinement, clarification, or future Council direction prior to adoption. The discussion was framed around the Planning Commission’s recommended draft and focused primarily on long-range policy considerations rather than line-by-line edits.

- ***Residential Rezoning Criteria and Neighborhood Mixed Use***

Councilmembers discussed proposed criteria for evaluating future residential rezonings involving higher-density housing types, particularly in response to prior discussions regarding townhouse redevelopment proposals near Madison High School. Discussion focused on whether the draft plan appropriately establishes a “high bar” for such rezonings while still allowing a pathway for carefully designed neighborhood-serving mixed-use development. One Councilmember expressed support for maintaining flexibility for neighborhood-scale mixed-use uses, provided adjacent neighborhoods support the concept and impacts such as parking remain well-contained.

Criteria for evaluating future residential rezoning requests involving increased density or alternative housing types can be found on pages 30-31 and 52.

*Q: Does the Town Council agree with these proposed criteria?*

- ***Housing Affordability and Housing Diversity***

Staff noted that State expectations regarding housing planning have evolved in recent years and that the draft plan attempts to expand housing policy guidance while remaining consistent with Vienna’s community character and planning goals. Discussion acknowledged that the draft plan does not contain a standalone housing chapter but instead integrates housing policies throughout the document, particularly within the Land Use chapter under Goal 2 and within the Special Planning Areas framework.

Planning Commission representatives also noted that some housing-related concepts are effectively extensions of policy choices already embedded within the new regulations adopted as part of the Code Create process, including mixed-use redevelopment and residential uses above commercial spaces along Maple Avenue.

Pages 30-31 and 48-49, within the draft Land Use chapter, present a new land use category for the Future Land Use map. The category is called Mixed Use with Ground Floor Residential and allows for ground-floor residential along the Maple Avenue Corridor that do not face directly onto Maple Avenue. (For clarification, a “mixed-use” category does not, in Vienna, indicate that there must be multiple types of uses. Instead, it indicates that there are options.) Housing affordability and housing

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diversity policies, including related recommendations within the Land Use chapter and Special Planning Areas are found on pages 32-33.

*Q: Does the Town Council agree with this discretion and the policies presented regarding Housing Affordability and Housing Diversity?*

- **Maple Avenue Heights and Commercial Viability**

A significant discussion topic involved building height policies and commercial viability along Maple Avenue. Staff and Council members discussed whether current height limitations may unintentionally limit economically viable redevelopment opportunities. The discussion referenced the distinction established during Code Create between the Avenue Center area and the eastern and western portions of Maple Avenue, where differing height approaches were adopted. Council may wish to discuss whether the draft plan appropriately balances redevelopment feasibility, commercial vitality, and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

The difficulty of developing commercially viable mixed-use projects under existing height limitations was discussed and it was noted that achieving true ground-floor retail with two occupied floors above can be difficult within current restrictions. Some Council members observed that no redevelopment proposals have utilized the existing 42-foot height allowance in Avenue Center, adopted in 2023, and discussed the possibility that the “carrot is not big enough” to encourage redevelopment under current market conditions.

Boundaries and development guidance associated with the Avenue Center area are found on page 132.

*Q: What approach does the Town Council wish to take for the Comprehensive Plan on heights along Maple Avenue? An alternative to the draft language would be to provide general language in the Plan that embraces commercial viability for at least three stories of mixed-use development.*

- **Wireless Telecommunications Policy**

The work session also included discussion of wireless telecommunications infrastructure and cellular coverage issues. Staff explained that the draft plan moves away from older mapping approaches and instead incorporates more intentional policy language expressing the Town’s interest in improving wireless coverage and service reliability throughout the Town. By the May 18<sup>th</sup> Town Council meeting, a May 11<sup>th</sup> Town Council work session will already have been held on this topic.

Wireless telecommunications policies and strategies are addressed on pages 132 and 138. Staff suggest that, at minimum, the language on page 132 include a

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subsection header that makes it easier to find the discussion of wireless communications. That discussion is now included in the Other Utilities subsection.

Q: *There are two main areas of questions, as staff view it:*

1. *Does the Town Council agree with the Planning Commission’s approach to move away from the traditional map and to focus on policies and strategies?*
2. *Does the Town Council support the strategies for wireless telecommunications, as articulated in Strategies 3.3.3 through 3.3.6 or wish to amend them and potentially pull them into a new Policy?*

- **Tree Canopy and Environmental Policies**

Environmental sustainability and tree canopy preservation were identified as other significant policy areas for future Council consideration. Discussion generally focused on whether the proposed policies appropriately reflected the Town’s increased emphasis on environmental stewardship and tree preservation in recent years.

The Policy and Strategies for the draft plan on tree canopy are addressed on page 170, after a discussion of the topic on page 160.

Q: *Does the Town Council support, or wish to amend, the policy and strategies as presented on page 170?*

- **Transportation and Intersections of Concern**

Transportation policy discussions included the newly proposed “intersections of concern” list within the Transportation chapter. Staff noted that the concept is new to Vienna’s Comprehensive Plan framework and is intended to identify locations that may warrant future study or operational improvements. As requested by the Council, staff discussed the list with the Police Chief, who was supportive of the list. As a reminder, the process for developing the list was as follows: 1) the Planning Commission requested that such a list be included but asked that the Transportation Safety Commission (TSC) work with Transportation staff to develop the list; 2) the TSC provided its list, working with staff; 3) the Planning Commission reviewed and finalized the list for inclusion in its draft Plan. The proposed list of intersections identified for future transportation study and evaluation is found on page 91.

Q: *Does the Town Council support including a list of intersections, and is the Town Council satisfied with the list and how it is presented?*

- **Town-Owned Properties and Future Planning Flexibility**

Council members discussed how Town-owned properties should be addressed

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within the Comprehensive Plan, including whether certain properties should remain categorized according to their current uses or whether broader flexibility should be maintained pending future Town decisions. The discussion reflected an interest in balancing long-term planning guidance with flexibility for future Council decisions regarding public land use and facilities planning. Policy guidance regarding Town-owned properties and future planning considerations for those sites is found in two different chapters. Some properties are presented in the Community Facilities and Infrastructure chapter, on page 123, if there is no presumption that the properties are not going to be park facilities. Town-owned properties that are assumed to be park facilities, either currently or in the future, are addressed in the Parks and Recreation chapter, on page 146.

*Q: Is the Town Council satisfied with how this topic is addressed in the draft Plan? (A related question is raised, below, based on public comments through the public hearing.)*

### Public Comments Received

The public hearing for Town Council was held on May 4, 2026, and the record was kept open for written input until May 11, 2026, at 9 a.m. One member of the public spoke at the public hearing, and four additional comments were received by email. The comments received are included as Attachment 02.

Public comments generally focused on balancing preservation and change within the Town; redevelopment and commercial vitality along Maple Avenue; housing affordability and diversity; parks, placemaking, and public spaces; transportation safety and congestion; environmental stewardship and tree preservation; and the future use of Town-owned properties, including the Beulah Road and Robinson properties.

### Staff Policy Questions

Based on prior Town Council and Planning Commission discussions, public testimony, and comments received during the review process, staff identified several policy topics that may warrant additional Town Council discussion and direction as part of the Comprehensive Plan deliberation process. These topics are not intended to represent a complete list of potential discussion items.

Potential discussion topics include:

- ***Housing Affordability and Diversity***

The draft plan expands policy language related to housing affordability and housing diversity. Town Council may wish to discuss whether the draft plan's policy approach appropriately addresses housing objectives, neighborhood character, and long-term community goals.

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- ***Future State Legislation and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)***

Town Council may wish to discuss whether the Comprehensive Plan should address potential future State legislation related to transit-oriented development or whether the Town should defer consideration of such issues until additional direction is provided at the state level.

Senate Bill 717 was intended to encourage significantly more housing near transit by requiring localities to allow higher-density residential development by right within specified distances of major transit stations and corridors. For Vienna, the concern was that, although no Metro station is located within the Town limits, portions of the Town fall within one mile of nearby Metro stations and would therefore potentially be subject to State-mandated higher densities, particularly within proximity of the Vienna/Fairfax-GMU station and potentially the Dunn Loring, Greensboro, Spring Hill, and Tysons stations.

*Q: Does the Town Council wish for the Plan to address this topic in anticipation of potential legislation or to wait to see if such legislation is approved and then respond with a relevant amendment to the Comprehensive Plan?*

- ***Implementation Framework***

The Planning Commission discussed the idea of an implementation guide accompanying the Plan. The draft Comprehensive Plan includes a significant number of policies and strategies intended to guide long-term Town decision-making across multiple topic areas. Council may want to discuss whether they support a future implementation/work program document to help prioritize actions, identify departmental responsibilities, establish timelines, and distinguish between short-term and long-term initiatives.

- ***Maple Avenue Redevelopment and Height/Topography Considerations***

Discussion during the joint work session included whether additional policy language should address redevelopment feasibility, building height, and topographic considerations along Maple Avenue, particularly within the Avenue Center area and mixed-use redevelopment areas. Discussion also included whether the current framework provides sufficient flexibility to support economically viable redevelopment opportunities.

*Q: Does the Town Council wish to include language in the Comprehensive Plan that is directive to explore the idea of zoning that takes topography into account?*

- ***Town-Owned Properties and Parkland Discussion***

Public comments and prior discussions of boards and commissions raised questions regarding the future treatment of Town-owned properties, including the Beulah Road and Robinson properties. Specifically, the Conservation and Sustainability Committee (CSC) has asked, through their public comments, that

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these two properties be zoned as parkland. The Comprehensive Plan’s role with respect to zoning is to provide land use policies that would support the Town Council’s preferred zoning. Those policies are shown in the Future Land Use Policy Map on page 49 of the draft plan. The Planning Commission’s draft plan shows the Beulah Road property as “Governmental” to reflect 1) the site’s traditional use as a site for public works operations and 2) The Town Council’s not yet having determined the future use of the property. The Robinson property is shown as “Low Density Residential” to reflect the traditional use of the site as a residential lot. If the Town Council wished to present these sites as future parkland, it could change the map to show the sites as “Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.”

*Q: Does the Town Council wish to change the land use category to Parks, Recreation, and Open Space for either (or both) of these sites, or to wait until decisions are made on the future use(s) of the sites?*

### **Shared Mobility Device Ordinance**

- Transportation Strategy 3.2.5 (page 117) of the draft Plan states that the Town should “Adopt a Shared Mobility Device (SMD) ordinance that governs fleet size, parking, safety, and data sharing, based on lessons learned from the Town’s 2023 pilot program.” At the Town Council work session on December 9, 2024, the Town Council decided not to develop a permanent SMD ordinance and to continue under the pilot program option indefinitely. As of this writing, only one vendor has participated in the Town’s pilot program. Staff’s view, similar to that of the Town Council in 2024, is that continuing with and adjusting the pilot program provides more flexibility that would a permanent ordinance. Staff therefore recommend that the Council consider removing Transportation Strategy 3.2.5.

*Q: Does the Town Council support removing Transportation Strategy 3.2.5?*

### **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure**

- Transportation Strategy 4.2.1 (page 118) of the draft Plan states that the Town should “Require EV-ready infrastructure in new public facilities and redevelopment projects.” More broadly, Transportation Policy 4.2 is strongly encouraging, and sometimes calls for requiring electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure be developed and made available. Where Town property is involved, there are budgetary implications of such a policy. This also somewhat conflicts with Environment & Sustainability Strategy 2.3.5, which “Encourage[s] the installation of electric vehicle charging stations to promote the expanded use of electric vehicles.” Staff recommend that the Council decides on a preferred path for electric vehicle infrastructure in regards to new development—requiring it, recommending it, or remaining silent on whether or not it should be included.

*Q: Does the Town Council support requiring new development to include EV-ready infrastructure or does it wish to amend/remove it? Does the Town Council wish to*

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*“encourage” that EV charging station infrastructure is included in new developments rather than “requiring” them?*

### **Board and Commission Input in Project Development**

- Transportation Strategy 6.1.1 (page 119) states that the Town should “engage the Transportation Safety Commission, Bicycle Advisory Committee, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Conservation and Sustainability Commission, and Tree Advocacy Committee in project development.” Staff’s view is that these bodies are designed for policy-level guidance, rather than project management. Staff recommend that the strategy be revised to state “Engage the relevant boards and commissions with project updates.”

*Q: Does the Town Council support making the change recommended?*

Staff requests that the Town Council:

- Identify policy areas or sections of the draft plan where revisions, clarification, or additional analyses are desired;
- Provide initial direction regarding policy topics discussed during the review process;
- Identify any additional issues or topics for future discussion; and
- Provide guidance regarding the process and schedule for final Comprehensive Plan adoption.

### **Attachments:**

1. Staff Memorandum (this document)
2. Public Comments Received