

What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range document that provides the Town with guidance regarding a wide range of issues including, but not limited to, land use, transportation, parks and recreation, community facilities, community character, economic development, and the environment. They include information like maps, images, and graphs that illustrate the past and present of the jurisdiction and serve to generate further discussion about the Town's future.

Most importantly, comprehensive plans are living documents. An effective comprehensive plan should capture residents' vision for the future, guide the development of specific policies to achieve common community goals, and provide a vision for how the jurisdiction should grow and evolve into the future. The jurisdiction should regularly revisit its comprehensive plan to ensure it meets these aims, amending the document as necessary to capture actions and decisions guiding the jurisdiction's vision and development.

Virginia State Code Requirements

The Code of Virginia (§ 15.2-2223 through § 15.2-2232) requires every locality to adopt a comprehensive plan to guide its physical development and to review it at least once every five years. The plan must be general in nature and created with the purpose of coordinating and promoting the health, safety, welfare, convenience, and prosperity of all residents, including older adults and individuals with disabilities.

The Code outlines several required and recommended elements that must be addressed in a comprehensive plan:

- **Land Use:** The plan must identify existing and future land uses, and may designate areas for public facilities, redevelopment, mixed-use development, historical and cultural resources, and environmentally sensitive features. It must also include policies for housing, including affordable and manufactured housing options.
- **Transportation:** The plan must include a transportation element that identifies existing and future infrastructure needs. This includes streets, sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian routes, transit networks, and other modes of transportation. The transportation plan must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for review and must align with VDOT's Statewide Transportation Plan and the Six-Year Improvement Program.
- **Affordable Housing:** The plan must include policies that promote housing affordability, both through new construction and the preservation of existing housing stock, so that Vienna remains inclusive for households of varied income levels.

- **Broadband Infrastructure:** The plan must consider the current and future needs for broadband infrastructure to support connectivity and economic competitiveness.
- **Environmental Resilience and Sustainability:** Localities are encouraged to consider strategies to enhance resilience to natural hazards such as flooding and severe weather, and to support sustainable development practices.
- **Transit-Oriented and Walkable Development:** While not required for a town of Vienna's size (required for cities over 20,000 people and counties over 100,000 people), the plan may also consider policies that support walkability, reduced car dependency, and sustainable development patterns, to encourage reduced greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Urban Development Areas (if designated):** If the locality designates an Urban Development Areas (UDAs), an area intended to support higher-density, mixed-use, and walkable development consistent with the community's character and scale, it must also include specific policies, design standards, and maps for that area. These elements must be updated at least once every five years.
- **Resilience:** The plan is encouraged to consider strategies to address resilience. As used in this subsection, "resilience" means the capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, health, the economy, and the environment.

To ensure transparency and community input, the Code also requires public engagement throughout the planning process. The Planning Commission must advertise and hold a public hearing before recommending a draft plan to the governing body. Afterward, the governing body must also advertise and hold a public hearing before adopting the final plan.

Vienna's Comprehensive Plan

The Town of Vienna adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1957. It has been revisited and rewritten several times since then, with the most recent version adopted in May 2016 and subsequently amended in February and October 2020.

In 2020, staff from the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) and the Planning Commission began reassessing the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. While this effort was partially driven by state law requiring the review of the most recently adopted comprehensive plan every five years, it was also prompted by two major changes with significant impacts to the plan and its implementation: the suspension and repeal of the Maple Avenue Commercial (MAC) ordinance and the launch of the zoning ordinance

update, “Code Create Vienna” (adopted in October 2023 and effective January 1, 2024). During this review process, DPZ staff collaborated with other Town departments, boards, and commissions to evaluate and update the existing plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies. The result is a revised plan that reflects Vienna’s community vision and addresses the changes that have occurred since the last plan amendment.). DPZ staff also hosted a number of in-person and virtual outreach events in order to capture the community’s input on the updated plan.

This comprehensive plan includes nine chapters focusing on specific elements of the Town’s existing and future development. These chapters provide an overview of current conditions and relevant history, as well as identifying the Town’s goals, policies, and strategies as they relate to that topic. The following summarizes the content of each of the plan’s chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction – Provides an overview of the plan’s organization and statutory requirements.
- Chapter 2: Community Profile – Provides a history of the settlement and development of the Town, in addition to information about demographics and trends which have or will affect the Town’s development or character.
- Chapter 3: Land Use – Provides information regarding the existing land uses within the Town and introduces the Future Land Use Map, which provides a vision for the Town and guides development decision-making.
- Chapter 4: Economic Development – Provides background on non-residential development and commerce in the Town and provides guidance for additional actions the Town may take to encourage economic development.
- Chapter 5: Transportation – Provides an overview of the existing conditions and recommendations for the Town’s network of streets, sidewalks, and bike paths; parking; transit; and modes of transportation which are relevant to the Town’s residents, visitors, and businesses.
- Chapter 6: Community Facilities and Infrastructure – Focuses on the Town-owned properties, Fairfax County-owned properties, and utility infrastructure that serve Town residents, visitors, and businesses.
- Chapter 7: Parks and Recreation – Provides information regarding the many parks, recreational opportunities, and community facilities within the Town.
- Chapter 8: Environment and Sustainability – Describes the key environmental assets and challenges affecting the Town, as well as key resiliency and sustainability measures the Town has enacted.

- Chapter 9: Implementation – Consolidates the goals, policies, and strategies identified as key for plan implementation in chapters 3-8 and includes prioritization and phasing guidance.
- Appendix - Supporting text including a glossary and other resources.

The Land Use, Economic Development, Transportation, Community Facilities and Infrastructure, Parks and Recreation, and Environment and Sustainability chapters include the goals, policies, and strategies necessary to implement the plan. Goals are meant to be general and describe a desired future condition or status. Policies are more specific and describe how the goals will be achieved. Strategies are detailed actions that outline how the plan's policies will be enacted.