

Town of Occoquan, Virginia
Land Use Diagnostic Questionnaire

The questions appearing below represent the initial step in the review and critique of the Occoquan comprehensive plan. The questions are designed to gain insight about the Occoquan comprehensive plan from persons who are familiar with the plan and its content. Accordingly, key town staff as well as all members of the Occoquan Town Council, the Occoquan Planning Commission, the Occoquan Architectural Review Board and the Occoquan BZA, are being asked to respond to the questions featured on this instrument.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS/ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD SUMMARY

1. As you consider the current Occoquan comprehensive plan, what aspects of the plan have worked well over the past three years?

Many recommendations featured in the plan were acted upon including one-way traffic, angled parking, mixed use development downtown, the foot bridge, the commitment to maintaining the small town feel and the historic character, limiting truck traffic, the removal of the water tank and trying to protect older structures in town.

The plan is a source of data, information and insight regarding the town's history. It is, however, in need of updating. (3)

2. What aspects of the Occoquan town plan have not worked well over the past three years?

Cut-through traffic continues to be a problem (3).

Parking continues to be a problem downtown as well as in residential areas (3).

We need better land use controls (3) that will address the maintenance and upkeep of properties; that will protect environmentally sensitive land as well as historic properties such as Rockledge; we need to lower the by-right residential development density in town; we need to redouble efforts to preclude development on steep slopes (greater than 20%); and, we need to agree on a shared vision for what we want Occoquan to be in the future.

We need to attract new businesses and new restaurants to town.

We have chunks of vacant land/open space in town that need to be addressed.

The Craft's Fair, unfortunately, is losing its appeal. New activities/events need to be considered.

3. As you consider the current Occoquan comp plan, what are its top 3 strengths?

Several of the goals and recommended actions remain relevant (2).

The narrative and strategy focused on preserving/maintaining the downtown streetscape, the town's historic character and the appearance of buildings and structures is valuable (4).

The plan provides important information relative to the town's history as well as the community's desire to sustain its small town feel and charm (3).

The plan's attention and focus on pedestrian movement is positive as is the link with the county.

The fact citizen's participated in developing the plan through the town survey is a strength.

The plan presents a nice balance between people and business. Attention on open space is good.

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4. As you consider the current Occoquan comp plan, what are its top 3 weaknesses?

The plan is out of date (4). The plan needs an over-arching vision.

The plan lacks strategies/ideas for attracting new businesses and eateries to town (3).

The plan needs stronger strategies/policies designed to reduce cut-through traffic (3).

The plan needs to address the issue of by-right residential development densities (2).

The plan needs to outline property upkeep and maintenance standards (2).

The plan needs a solid implementation schedule with identified parties and reasonable timelines.

The plan needs to include a parking strategy for the town (2).

Once revised and adopted, the plan needs to be followed by the town (2).

The goals and objectives featured in the current plan need to be updated. Selected goals featured in the town strategic plan need to be added to the “new” plan.

The “revised/new” plan this process will yield needs a stronger alignment with PW County, Fairfax County, and the Lake Ridge Assn.

5. What are the top 3 land use issues currently facing Occoquan?

We need to address the downtown parking issue as well as residential parking issues (3).

We need a strategy for addressing cut-through traffic (3).

We need a strategy for enhancing/improving the waterfront (3). Example: Sale of Mill St. property.

We need to address the issue of by-right residential development densities (3).

We need a strategy for addressing storm water, erosion and flood control in town (3).

We need to address the issues associated with appearance, maintenance and upkeep of properties in town and the downtown (2).

Accessibility for handicapped and elderly residents is a concern. The lack of playground and recreational amenities is an issue.

We need a green space/open space plan/strategy for the town inclusive of property maintenance.

6. Thinking long term, what land use issues will dominate as opportunities in Occoquan 5 years from now?

We need proper balance between private development and public access along the waterfront(2).

We need to settle on a pedestrian walkability strategy inclusive of sidewalks and trails (2).

We need to finish the river walk project and allow for public access.

We need a property maintenance strategy in the plan focused on building appearance and upkeep(2).

We need to fashion a strategy for how green space and open space is to be managed. We also need a plan that will preserve Rockledge and assure proper development/management of the Jennings property. We also need park and recreation areas for youth, the elderly and handicapped persons.

We need to consider placing power lines underground in addition to diversify the mix of businesses in the downtown.

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7. In like fashion, what land use issues will dominate as threats in Occoquan 5 years from now?

Flood control and storm water management controls are needed.

We need a strategy/incentive effort designed to assure landowners take pride in maintaining and upgrading their property.

We need a comprehensive traffic management strategy as well as a parking management strategy (3).

We need a strategy/regulation that will address the appearance and maintenance of building facades and storefronts in downtown.

We need a strategy for keeping prized properties (Mill St., Rockledge, and parks) safe from poor development.

We need to strengthen our regulations (zoning, subdivision building codes) to better management development in town.

We need plans and strategies for how park land and open space is going to be preserved and managed.

We need to make sure downtown businesses are not abandoned in favor of townhouses.

8. As you consider the current goals and policies featured in the Occoquan plan (pages 29-35), are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed? Please be specific with your response. Continue your response on the next page.

Many of the goals and objectives remain relevant but some need to be tweaked (4)

Each goal needs a champion/patron. We also need a stronger implementation schedule.

We need to preclude or dissuade future medium and high density residential developments especially in the downtown from happening.

Some respondents said they appeared OK while others had no comment.

9. As you consider the future land use action plan discussed in the Occoquan plan (pages36-42), are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed? Please be specific with your response.

Stronger ties with PW County needed. Oaks 111 has been a learning experience.

Several stated they appeared OK.

10. As you consider the future land use map featured on p. 37 are any changes or adjustments need? Please be specific with your response.

The map is hard to read. It needs to be enlarged and updated (Gaslight Landing, Mamie Davis Park, townhouses on Ellicott St. and properties on McKenzie as example.)

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11. As you consider the future transportation and circulation action plan featured in the Occoquan plan (pages 43-46), are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed? Please be specific with your response.

Map on page 8 needs to be updated as do several others.

Certain streets ought to be pedestrian only.

Scenic Byway status for Tanyard Hill should be secured.

We need sidewalks throughout town.

Transition yards and buffer lines should be featured in our development regulations.

The narrative for this section of the plan as well as other topical goals and objectives needs to be updated.

12. In like fashion, are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed with regard to the natural resources action plan in the Occoquan comp plan (pages 47-53)? Please be specific with your response.

No comments.

13. Please add any thoughts, suggestions or ideas you may have that will enhance and strengthen the Occoquan comprehensive plan. PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SURVEY TO MIKE CHANDLER NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14. THANKS!

Read and incorporate content generated through the Charrette in the revised plan.

Rockledge needs to be preserved.

The revised plan needs a specific prioritization program for all goals and objectives featured in the document along with a designated leader/responsible party. An implementation timeline is also needed.