



County of Albemarle

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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MEMORANDUM

AGENDA DATE: 12/17/2024

TITLE: CPA2021-02 AC44 Comp Plan Update - AC44 Environmental Stewardship

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST:

Request for Planning Commission feedback on the draft Environmental Stewardship chapter. Specifically, staff is asking for feedback on:

1. Does the Commission support prioritizing the implementation of incentives for low impact development (LID) for stormwater management, as depicted in Objective 2?
2. Should the actions include more measures for biodiversity protection or related demonstration projects on County-owned lands?
3. Do the actions for objectives 1 and 3 sufficiently address protection of public water supplies and groundwater supplies?
4. Are there any topics (especially within the narrative) and/or actions that need additional context or explanation?

ITEM TYPE: Work Session

STAFF CONTACTS: Richardson, Wall, Filardo, Barnes, McDermott, Swartzendruber, Kanellopoulos, Holt

PRESENTERS: Tonya Swartzendruber, Planning Manager and Scott Clark, Conservation Program Manager

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: Albemarle County is updating the Comprehensive Plan through the Albemarle County 2044 (AC44) project. The project is in Phase 3: drafting language for the four-part Comprehensive Plan document and developing Plan actions.

The draft language for the Part III – Environmental Stewardship chapter in Attachment B is built upon community input and reflects the Planning Commission’s and Board’s feedback.

One of the prominent topics for Environmental Stewardship is water quality. The County’s Stream Health Initiative (SHI) provides recommendations to improve water quality and protect

the natural environment. In the Rural Area, water quality protection includes land conservation and protecting and restoring riparian buffers.

Stormwater management is required for permitted development throughout the county, and is especially important in the Development Areas, where the majority of the county's development occurs, and impervious surfaces are more prevalent. There are multiple options for meeting stormwater management requirements, including both on and offsite.

Onsite stormwater management practices capture and filter rainwater on a property using runoff diversion and stormwater retention facilities where runoff and sediment is captured and filtered by the soil. Offsite, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) uses nutrient credits to quantify improvements affecting water quality. The nutrient credit system allows developers to purchase credits from other properties within the same watershed to balance areas of higher sediment and pollution with areas of higher water quality treatment and manage the cumulative amount of runoff and discharge. Most developers choose the offsite solution even though the County's Stream Health Initiative (SHI) encourages onsite stormwater management and runoff capture to improve water quality and decrease local stormwater impacts associated with development. The SHI also encourages onsite low impact development stormwater management practices such as rain gardens, bioswales, and pervious pavement.

The County also seeks to maintain and support biodiversity, which is the variety of life, including plant and animal species and the natural systems that support them. The County's Biodiversity Action Plan provides guidance for protecting native species and natural habitat, which includes preservation of large forest blocks and wildlife corridors, as well as restoring streams. The County can use tools such as land conservation easements, habitat restoration and connectivity projects (e.g. removal of stream dams or culverts), controlling the spread of invasive species, and protecting dark skies.

Recommendations related to climate action and community resilience are incorporated throughout the Comprehensive Plan, most specifically in the forthcoming Resilient Community chapter. The Environmental Stewardship chapter is also strongly tied to the County's Climate Action Plan and in-progress resilience plan (Resilient Together). In particular, protecting forests and increasing tree coverage contributes to climate resilience by capturing and sequestering carbon, as well as limiting the impacts of extreme weather events such as flood mitigation by vegetative buffers along stream corridors.

For reference, a summary of previous Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors feedback on Environmental Stewardship is provided as Attachment D. Community input themes associated with Environmental Stewardship are summarized in Attachment C.

STRATEGIC PLAN: Quality of life – Encourage a vibrant community with economic and recreational opportunities that serve all community members.

DISCUSSION:

An updated AC44 outline is provided as Attachment A. As a reminder, the topics within the red box will be the focus of today's work session. This work session focuses on proposed comprehensive plan language within Attachment B, specifically:

- Does the Commission support prioritizing the implementation of incentives for low impact development (LID) for stormwater management, as depicted in Objective 2?
- Should the actions include more measures for biodiversity protection or related demonstration projects on County-owned lands?
- Do the actions for objectives 1 and 3 sufficiently address protection of public water supplies and groundwater supplies?
- Are there any topics (especially within the narrative) and/or actions that need additional context or explanation?

The Board of Supervisors will hold a work session on January 22, 2025, to discuss the Environmental Stewardship chapter.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is no budget impact associated with this agenda item.

RECOMMENDATION: Staff requests the Commission review and provide feedback on draft Environmental Stewardship Actions.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - AC44 Outline Stewardship](#)

Attachment B – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - Draft Environmental Stewardship Chapter](#)

Attachment C – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - Environmental Stewardship Community Input Themes](#)

Attachment D – [CPA2021-20 AC44 Comp Plan - Summary of Planning Commission and Board Feedback](#)