

For 60 days starting in late summer and ending October 3, 2022, the Arlington community shared their thoughts regarding the first draft of the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan (FNRP). This input will help inform the direction and content of the final draft.

Participants engaged in a variety of ways including an online form, comments accepted directly on the draft, in-person pop-up events at 23 locations, commission meetings, through stakeholder groups, and at a virtual open house session. In total, the County received more than 1,800 engagement responses.

Plan Outreach and Promotions

Opportunities to read and comment on the FNRP were promoted on the County’s website, social media, the County’s eNews, yard signs, flyers, public meetings and at numerous in person pop-up opportunities.

- QR Code scans from yard signs and flyers: 36

Community Engagement

1. **Online Feedback Form:** An online video presentation was available in both English and Spanish that provided the background and goals of the plan and its key strategic directions. Following the presentation people were instructed to complete an online form to share if they thought the plan was on target and review and prioritize the strategic directions. Here is a link to the raw data.
 - Total online SurveyMonkey responses: 428
 - Total open-ended SurveyMonkey comments: 1,061

2. **Online Draft Plan Review:** The draft plan was posted online in English (minus charts, graphs, and images) in a manner that people could edit and comment direction on the document. Here is a link to the Konveio document.
 - Total comments in the draft plan via Konveio: 998

3. **In Person Pop-Up Events:** Pop-up engagement opportunities were held in 23 locations across the County. Participants could share in both English and Spanish their top five priorities for the County’s plan. Here is a link to the pop-up tabulations.
 - Total pop-up responses: 1,130

4. **Virtual Community Forum:** A Virtual Open House was held at 7 p.m. on September 29. The program included an overview of the project and draft plan, with breakout rooms for participants to learn more about specific areas of the plan. After the program participants were directed to share their ideas on the online form. Here is a link to the recorded meeting.
 - Virtual open house attendees: 93

5. **Arlington County Commission Input:** Staff presented the FNRP at:
 - a. Natural Resource Joint Advisory Group (NRJAG)
 - b. Forestry and Natural Resources Commission (FNRC)
 - c. Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC)
 - d. Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2)
 - e. Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC)
 - f. Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee (PSMP-IAC)

What We Learned

Pop-Up Events

“Pop-up” events were held at 23 locations across the County. Locations were selected to ensure that voices were heard from a wider demographic than those who engage using online feedback forms and at community meetings. Pop-up locations included food distribution centers, Latino grocery stores, farmers markets, community events, and multiple affordable housing complexes. The team found that residents were more willing to engage by posting a sticker on the board to prioritize elements of the plan, rather than scan a QR code to gain access to the online form.

Pop-ups were different from the online engagements in demographics, participant depth of knowledge, and in tone/tenor of conversation. Most of the people we engaged with were unaware that the County was undertaking this effort and were unaware of the Comprehensive Plan. Through this boots-on-the-ground approach we were able to connect new voices to County engagement.

A total of 1,130 people provided feedback through these engagements (933 in English and 197 in Spanish). The top three priorities based on sticker board engagement are as follows, broken out by language:

Top three priorities for English language respondents		Top three priorities for Spanish language respondents	
Develop specific plans for meadows, streams, etc.	711	Educate the public through County programs	170
Ensure we have meaningful standards for public spaces	577	Encourage Volunteerism	157
Develop tools and benchmarks to improve tree equity	569	Develop specific plans for meadows, streams, etc.	156

Online Presentation and Feedback Form

To help orient the community to the draft FNRP, staff posted an online video presentation that reviewed the project scope, general outline of the plan along with its strategic directions. It led people to an online questionnaire that asked if the plan was on target and for people to prioritize the strategic directions.

A total of 429 people responded to the online questionnaire and provided 1,061 open-ended comments.

Approximately 60-75% of the respondents “support the County's vision for its forests and natural resources” and felt the strategic directions on target. Top themes from the open-ended comments include:

- The vision is good, but is long and has too many technical words (e.g., biophilia)
- Minimize development and update zoning / code
- Less impervious area, more natural space
- Do not cut trees and plant more trees
- Protect living things
- Manage invasives / plant natives
- Address climate change (e.g., stormwater, heat island, bird impacts, light pollution)
- More metrics and assessments
- Partner (State, Federal, nonprofits, lawn care, landscapers, homeowners, etc.)
- Add a strong educational component

Online Draft Plan Review

The [Konveio platform](#) allowed the public to make comments directly in the draft Plan. Many of the comments mirror topics and suggestions noted in the online feedback form. These comments were loaded to a master spreadsheet for the Project Team to review, incorporate as appropriate, and provide responses. All these comments will be posted on the project website for review.

A total of 998 comments were provided via Konveio.

Virtual Community Forum

About 93 people attended a Virtual Community Forum on September 29 that included a project overview, what we had learned to date and then invited participants to share their thoughts. Input from the live sessions were more focused and detailed than pop up events. Often attendees were subject matter experts with deep knowledge of the topic and County process. Comments were more specific, related to goals, policy, and the writing style of the draft.

Some of the feedback we heard includes:

- Include more urgency in tone and content in the plan, especially related to climate issues
- Focus on maintenance
- Managing trees and native plants for climate change
- Improve and include more details on how green infrastructure and plants will be used to mitigate stormwater runoff
- Set a more ambitious goal for tree canopy than 40%
- Equity should be core to all elements of the plan
- Detail the priorities and funding with more granularity
- Ensure measurable goals, metrics, and timeframes are a bedrock of the plan
- Change legislative, zoning, ordinance and Site Plan elements to meet FNRP goals
- Partner with Arlington Public Schools, State, Federal, local organizations, businesses, and others to amplify action
- Manage deer for forest health and to protect biodiversity and ecosystems
- A shift in tone and emphasis in the recommendations from vague and aspirational to more direct, specific, and actionable
- Deeper, more creative thinking about land uses, possible incentives, and educational efforts
- Connect the FNRP with other County plans more directly and specifically

Next Steps

Staff are using this feedback as well as input from County leadership, commissions and advisory groups, and subject matter experts to update the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan. The final draft will be shared with the community this winter. The County Board will review the final plan in early 2023.

Forestry and Natural Resources Plan Public Engagement Timeline

Origin: Element of Comprehensive Plan

Funding: General Fund

Staff Contact: Ryan Delaney (fnrp@arlingtonva.us)

