



Comprehensive Plan DIAGNOSTIC

FINAL
DRAFT
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Prepared By:



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The recommendations included in this diagnostic report assess Nelson County's Comprehensive Plan to provide a framework for the plan's update.

Purpose and Scope

A Comprehensive Plan is a long-term planning document that establishes a vision for the future of the locality. A plan should be based on a shared community vision and rooted in factual analysis. It should be coordinated with other plans and studies, compliant with applicable codes and regulations, and developed using planning best practices. As part of the current Comprehensive Plan update process, this diagnostic examines the current plan for compliance with the Code of Virginia and community planning best practices.

The analysis includes the following components:

- Review of the Comprehensive Plan for conformance with the requirements of the Code of Virginia.
- Review of the Comprehensive Plan for compatibility with planning best practices.
- Review of existing maps.
- Summary of plan strengths and weaknesses based on code compliance and alignment with planning best practices.
- Assessment of the content, structure, and consistency of the plan for completeness and ease of use.
- Identification of final recommendations for incorporation into the comprehensive plan update.

Diagnostic Process

The planning process began with a kick-off meeting with County staff to discuss the existing Comprehensive Plan, along with community goals and challenges. This meeting identified community progress since the last Comprehensive Plan update, additional community resources and initiatives, and key areas of concern.

The diagnostic process included a comprehensive review and evaluation of the existing Comprehensive Plan by the County's Comprehensive Plan consulting staff. The team assessed conformance with the Code of Virginia, identifying each code requirement by type (mandatory or optional) and summarizing the plan's effectiveness in meeting these requirements. The team also assessed the plan's effectiveness in meeting APA's Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places. These best practices are the result of a four-year effort by the American Planning Association (APA) to define the role

of Comprehensive Plans in addressing the sustainability of human settlements. The standards provide a set of planning best practices to serve as a resource in the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan update. They are optional standards for creating livable, healthy, and sustainable communities. Finally, this report summarizes considerations to better comply with state code and strengthen the effectiveness of the plan.

These recommended changes will be discussed with Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors as a roadmap for an updated Comprehensive Plan that improves the ability of public officials, citizens, and stakeholders to build their visioned community. Each diagnostic matrix is located in the appendix of this report for easy reference and examination.

Report Resources

Click the linked pages below to explore the resources used in this report.

[The Code of Virginia](#)



[APA's Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places](#)



[Nelson County's Current Comprehensive Plan](#)



The Code of Virginia

Nelson County's comprehensive plan includes broad coverage of typical planning topics that are required in Comprehensive Plans by the Code of Virginia as well as detailed planning for topics important to the community, such as trails and greenways. Improvements will build on the aspects of the Plan that work for the community, improve those that need refinement, and bring the entire plan into compliance with the Code of Virginia and acknowledged planning best practices.

Background

Under Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia, every locality is required to adopt and maintain a Comprehensive Plan for the territory that it governs. Once adopted, this plan must be reviewed at least once every five years. This ensures that local governments continue to evaluate changing community needs and actively work to achieve the goals identified in the plan.

The Code of Virginia establishes required and optional elements for adopted Comprehensive Plans. For example, the Code requires elements such as a description of future community trends, a transportation plan, and

recommendations to promote the development and maintenance of affordable housing, including manufactured homes. Some optional elements in the Code include description of future facilities development, identification of existing facilities (such as parks, sports fields, hospitals, schools, etc.), and the designation of historical or urban renewal areas. This diagnostic includes a matrix that categorizes each part of the Code by type (mandatory or optional) and includes an analysis and recommendation based on review of the existing plan.

Code Compliance: Key Findings

Nelson County's Comprehensive Plan includes broad coverage of typical planning topics that are required in Comprehensive Plans by the Code of Virginia as well as detailed planning for topics important to the community, such as trails and greenways. Improvements will build on the aspects of the Plan that work for the community, improve those that need refinement, and bring the entire plan into compliance with the Code of Virginia and acknowledged planning best practices. Improvements to address Code of Virginia requirements will focus on updating information to reflect current data, incorporating any applicable new studies or plans, documenting recent and planned capital improvements, conducting a more thorough analysis of transportation needs and priorities, reviewing development plans and policy strategies for changes based on public engagement and direction from Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, and developing a targeted implementation plan with clear strategies and priorities. Key recommendations from the Code of Virginia analysis include the following;

- The plan should be updated to show current community conditions and data, using updated information from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Weldon Cooper Center, the Virginia Employment Commission, and Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).
- Community engagement, such as forums and surveys, should be updated to reflect current community needs and desires in the updated plan. Community engagement results and analysis should also be moved toward the beginning of the plan to demonstrate how it informs the plan.

Community Data & Analysis:

Comprehensive Plan data should be updated to reflect a current community profile. Profile elements should include such topics as regional and local population trends, general demographics, income, poverty, unemployment, housing vacancy, age of housing stock, and other applicable demographic, economic, and housing data. Maps and graphics will help in visualizing this information and to help create a more engaging plan.

- The plan can be strengthened by including current housing conditions, locations, and needs, as well as strategies to address housing needs in the County as required by the Code of Virginia.
- The transportation component of the Plan should be updated to meet VDOT requirements. This includes integrating the statewide transportation plan (VTrans) and updated studies, such as the regional rural transportation and bicycle/pedestrian plans.
- The Designated Development Areas, along with the development models, should be reviewed and updated, as appropriate, based on community engagement findings, planned capital projects, and future growth needs.
- The plan should include any surveys, studies, and capital improvement plans completed since the last update, such as the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Regional Housing Plan, and VDOT Transportation Plan.



Best Practices

According to the American Planning Association, “Best practices are the planning action tools used by communities to activate the desired principles, processes, and attributes of their comprehensive plans. They are analogous to the body’s muscles and tendons, linking and moving the components of the planning structure. Based on state-of-the-art practices found in leading plans and planning literature, they represent the best thinking of the planning profession on how to carry out the vision and goals of their plan.”

Background

These best practices are the result of a four-year effort by the American Planning Association (APA) to define the role of comprehensive plans in addressing the sustainability of human settlements. Traditionally, comprehensive plans focus on land use and physical development. These best practices are established to respond to modern community needs and societal trends, such as an increased demand for citizen participation, a greater focus on implementation, and a heightened awareness of climate change and its impacts.

These are optional standards, included to score the Nelson Comprehensive Plan against characteristics of the most effective comprehensive plans across the country. They are added to provide a more complete analysis and facilitate discussion throughout the plan update process. They are not to be interpreted as requirements.

[APA's Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places:](#)



Click the link above or scan this code with your phone camera to see full PDF of APA's Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places



Best Practices: Key Findings

The Nelson County Comprehensive Plan is **most effective** in addressing land use and future development, the natural environment and rural resources, and active transportation.

- The Comprehensive Plan extensively discusses the rural and open natural environment and resources that are important to Nelson County. The plan directs future development and density to already existing communities and preserves rural and open lands.
- The Greenway Plan emphasizes the importance of the County's natural resources and provides an interconnected network both within the County and throughout the region.
- Future land use is addressed throughout the plan and offers different models for designated development areas to achieve the County's vision.
- The plan thoroughly discusses transportation to ensure connectivity and provide more access to multi-modal transportation options for cyclists and pedestrians. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan provides a proposed network for bicycles and pedestrians and outlines possible recreational routes. During the update process, the latest regional bicycle networks should be incorporated, as well as continuing to include opportunities for recreation.

The Nelson County Comprehensive Plan is **least effective** at practical implementation, providing for affordable and manufactured housing, and addressing existing conditions.

- While the plan includes an implementation chapter with implementation tools, a matrix is needed with actions and accountability for each strategy. An implementation matrix that includes timeframes, responsible parties, and benchmarks will help to improve the process of implementing and using the plan effectively.
- The housing discussion is limited in the current plan. The update would benefit from additional discussion on current housing needs and conditions, as well as plans for providing affordable and equitable housing and services to all communities in Nelson County.
- Thorough information on existing conditions are included in the plan and these should be updated to reflect current conditions and provide analysis to guide the plan's goals and principles.

General Recommendations

- The plan would benefit from an implementation matrix within the implementation chapter that assigns each recommendation an implementation type, timeframe, resources, and responsible party.
- The structure of the plan should be modified to improve readability and use. Goals and principles should be located in the appropriate section/chapter and should have standardized formatting. Photos, tables, and graphics should be incorporated for a more user-friendly and engaging document.



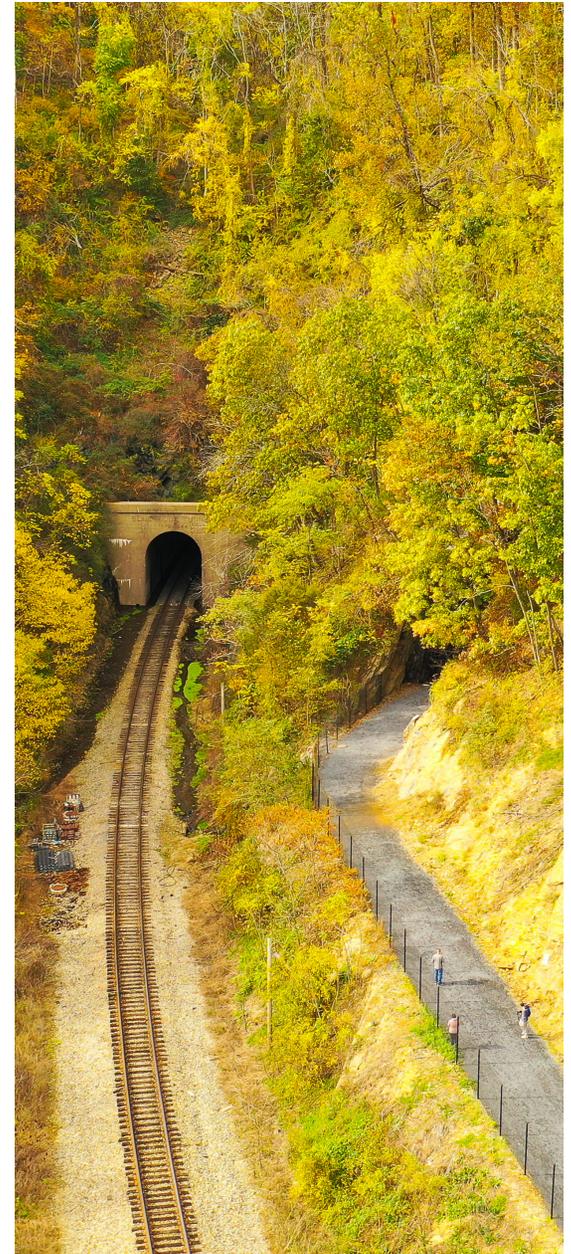
Next Steps

In May of 2022, the Berkley Group will facilitate meetings with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to present the findings of this diagnostic and to discuss the comprehensive planning process. Reviewing and discussing this diagnostic will help lay the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan update. Next steps in the Comprehensive Plan update include:

- Determining which components of this report will be prioritized for incorporation into the draft plan.
- Identifying additional projects and priorities recommended by Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for inclusion in the update.
- Conducting public engagement with the community to determine community goals and priorities.
- Updating the Comprehensive Plan to address the findings of this

report, public engagement, and policy direction from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors during drafting work sessions.

- Providing the updated plan to the public and local and regional stakeholders for review and comment.
- Providing the updated plan to Virginia Department of Transportation for consistency review at least 90 days prior to adoption.
- Advertising public hearings in accordance with Virginia Code § 15.2-2204.
- Conducting public hearings before Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors in accordance with Virginia Code § 15.2-2225 and § 15.2-2226.
- Implementing the Comprehensive Plan recommendations.



Conclusion

Nelson County is to be commended for undertaking a major update of its Comprehensive Plan. A Comprehensive Plan articulates a community's core vision for the future. This vision should be rooted in community values and developed through community engagement. In addition to incorporating community engagement, the Comprehensive Plan update will consider revisions to comply with the Code of Virginia. If desired, the community also has the opportunity to not only comply with minimum standards, but to restructure the plan as an engaging, easy to use document and include APA best practices to work toward a more resilient, balanced, and healthy community.

The recommendations outlined in this report establish a detailed analysis of the Comprehensive Plan and its alignment with the Code of Virginia and APA Standards for Sustaining Places. The Berkley Group looks forward to integrating these recommendations into the planning process and identifying innovative approaches to support Nelson County's long-range planning goals.



APPENDICES

Appendix A:

The Code of Virginia Diagnostic Matrix

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
1.	2222.1	Transportation plan coordination with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)	Process – Information Only	Pg. 23-25; 43-48	<p>The plan includes a section on transportation that includes VDOT studies and policies. The plan also includes a Bicycle and Pedestrian plan that satisfies VDOT requirements for road improvements.</p> <p>The Comprehensive Plan update will require a 90-day VDOT review period as outlined in this state code section. Prior to VDOT review, recommend updating the plan to reflect current transportation projects and plan(s) and to include content as required per current state code.</p>
2.	2223	Comp. Plan scope, purpose, adoption	Best Practice	Pg. 4	<p>The plan provides the legal basis, purpose, and the process of preparing the Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>Recommend adding more information about the planning process and incorporating basic summary of the public engagement process for the updated plan in the beginning of the document.</p>
3.	2223 (A)	Existing Conditions	Mandatory	Various	<p>The Comprehensive Plan provides a comprehensive review of existing conditions for land use. Economic development, transportation, education, public facilities, and natural/historic resources have goals and strategies in the plan, with existing conditions for these are located in the appendix.</p> <p>Recommend updating existing conditions to reflect current data and growth trends.</p>

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
4.	2223 (A)	Future trends of growth	Mandatory	Pg. 40-43; Ch. 5; Ch. 6; Pg. 4-5 (appendix)	<p>The plan projects population growth out to 2010. The Future Land Use Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and Greenway Plan discuss where development should occur in the future.</p> <p>Recommend updating data to the 2020 census, as well as updated population projections from the Weldon Cooper Center. Consider including population projections and information.</p>
5.	2223 (A)	Designate the general or approximate location, character, and extent of each feature, including any road improvement and any transportation improvement, shown on the plan and shall indicate where existing lands or facilities are proposed to be extended, widened, removed, relocated, vacated, narrowed, abandoned, or changed in use	Mandatory	Ch. 4; Ch. 5; Ch. 6	<p>The Land Use Plan designates water and sewer service areas, transportation network and future needs, as well as designated development areas (rural small town, rural village, neighborhood mixed-use, mixed commercial, and light industrial development models). The designated development areas have their own transportation recommendations. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and Greenway Plan designate future networks/facilities and development areas.</p> <p>Recommend reviewing designated development areas and updating as needed to reflect current conditions.</p>
6.	2223 (B)	<u>Chapter 729 Regulations</u>	<i>(See line items 7 – 15)</i>		<i>See recommendations below.</i>

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
7.	2223 (B) (1)	Contains Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities	Mandatory	Pg. 26, 41-44; Pg. 23-25 (appendix)	<p>The plan provides a map of current and projected transportation facilities within the plan itself. The appendix contains a more in-depth review of the existing transportation conditions. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan discusses existing networks and facilities.</p> <p>Recommend updating to show current existing facilities and adding information about road classifications from the appendix to the transportation section.</p>
8.	2223 (B) (1)	Contains Needs Assessment (current and future performance and conditions, future required improvements)	Mandatory	Ch. 4	<p>Transportation needs are shown in Chapter 4 with the Transportation Network and Needs Map (pg. 26), and needs are also discussed in the designated development models.</p> <p>Recommend updating needs assessment and project lists based on recent transportation plans and studies. Consider consolidating transportation information into one chapter for better readability and ease of access.</p>

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
9.	2223 (B) (1)	Contains recommendations	Mandatory	Pg. 7; Ch. 4; Ch. 5; Ch. 6	<p>The plan includes transportation policy goals, objectives, and recommended transportation improvements. The designated development areas contain their own transportation recommendations with maps. The Bicycle and Pedestrian and Greenway plans contain recommendations, along with maps.</p> <p>Recommend updating recommendations, maps, and plans to reflect changes in facility needs and completion of recent projects. Consider integrating Bicycle and Pedestrian and Greenway plan recommendations into overall recommendations.</p>
10.	2223 (B) (1)	Recognize hierarchy of roads	Mandatory	Pg. 26; Pg. 23 (appendix)	<p>The Transportation Network and Needs Map shows future transportation needs along the different type of roads in the County. The appendix contains information about the 2002 road system and hierarchy.</p> <p>Recommend updating to include any new roads or projects.</p>

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
11.	2223 (B) (1)	Align transportation improvements with planning assumptions that will influence the transportation network (population growth, employment growth, location of critical infrastructure)	Mandatory	Ch. 4; Ch. 5	<p>The Land Use Chapter contains transportation present and future needs using VDOT information, as well as population change, steep slopes, and proximity to water and sewer. The Bicycle and Pedestrian plan follows planning assumptions.</p> <p>Recommend updating as needed and including more detailed discussion on how future trends/projections, such as updated population growth, and employment growth, inform transportation needs.</p>
12.	2223 (B) (1)	Comparison of the existing facilities with the community's plan for its future land use pattern	Mandatory	Ch. 4	<p>The plan acknowledges development constraints and the designated development areas take into account the existing facilities when determining where they should be located.</p> <p>Recommend updating as needed based on current data.</p>
13.	2223 (B) (2)	Contains map of recommended transportation improvements	Mandatory	Pg. 26; Pg. 46	<p>The Transportation Network and Needs Map displays needed transportation improvements. The Bicycle and Pedestrian plan includes a map of recommended improvements.</p> <p>Recommend updating the map(s) by incorporating a map of recommended transportation improvements from VTrans, Six-Year Improvement Program, and other local transportation studies.</p>

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
14.	2223 (B) (2)	Contains VDOT cost estimates for recommended improvements	Mandatory	-	Plan does not contain VDOT cost estimates for recommended improvements. Recommend including cost estimates for any newly identified projects from VTrans, Six-Year Plan and other transportation studies, as available from VDOT.
15.	2223 (B) (3)	Consistent with Statewide Transportation Plan, Six-Year Improvement Plan, and location of routes to be followed by roads comprising systems of state highways set by the Commonwealth Transportation Board	Mandatory	-	The plan does not reference the Six-year Improvement Program or the statewide transportation plan (VTrans). The plan must be updated to ensure consistency per VDOT requirements. This includes incorporating the most recent VTrans recommendations; indicating significant new, expanded, or relocated roadway projects under VDOT control from the Six-year Improvement Program; and showing Commonwealth Transportation Board route locations.
16.	2223 (C)	Future requirements of territory	Mandatory	Ch. 4	The plan identifies future requirements of the territory, including transportation improvements and the designated development areas. The Bicycle and Pedestrian and the Greenway plans identify areas of future development in the County. Recommend that designated development areas, Bicycle and Pedestrian plan, and Greenway plan be reassessed as appropriate, based on public engagement, growth trends, and staff input.

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
17.	2223 (C)	Long-range recommendations for the general development of the locality	Mandatory	Ch. 3; Pg. 44-48; Pg. 49-52	<p>Chapter 3 of the plan includes the goals and principles for the plan including: economic development, transportation, education, public/human services, natural/historic resources, recreation, development areas, and rural conservation. The Bicycle and Pedestrian and Greenway plans contain their own individual recommendations.</p> <p>Recommend updating goals, objectives, and strategies based on public engagement, PC/BOS direction, and best practices.</p>
18.	2223 (C)(1)	Designation of features for public and private development and use; business; industrial; agricultural; mineral resources; conservation; recreation; public service; flood plain and drainage; etc.	Best Practice	Pg. 18; Pg. 20; Pg. 22; Pg. 24; Pg. 26; Pg. 27-42; Ch. 5; Ch. 6	<p>The plan provides the 5 designated development areas (rural small town, rural village, neighborhood mixed-use, mixed commercial, and light industrial), to accommodate a variety of densities. The Future Land Use Map displays where these development areas should be instituted in the County. The Land Use Plan for Rural Areas establishes scenic vistas appropriate development. The plan also maps existing land use, water and sewer service areas, steep slopes, soil potential for agricultural use, and transportation network and needs. The Bicycle & Pedestrian and Greenway plans designate existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian corridors</p> <p>Recommend updating the designated development areas as appropriate, based on community engagement and staff input. Update other maps as needed.</p>

Nelson County, Virginia
Comprehensive Plan Diagnostic Matrix



#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
19.	2223 (C)(2)	Designation of a system of community service facilities such as parks, sports playing fields, forests, schools, playgrounds, public buildings and institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, community centers, waterworks, sewage disposal or waste disposal areas	Optional	Pg. 20; Pg. 48; Pg. 28-37	<p>The plan identifies areas served by water and sewer. The Bicycle and Pedestrian plan map depicts community facilities and schools. The development models for designated development areas depict where civic buildings/areas should be located for each model.</p> <p>Recommend adding and updating community facility and infrastructure information based on existing conditions, available studies, and staff and community-identified needs.</p>
20.	2223 (C)(3)	The designation of historical areas and areas for urban renewal or other treatment.	Optional	Pg. 28-29; Pg. 38-39	<p>Historical areas are discussed in the plan including the development model for rural small towns and the Land Use Plan for Rural Areas.</p> <p>Recommend updating as needed.</p>
21.	2223 (C)(4)	Designation of areas for the implementation of reasonable measures to provide for the continued availability, quality, and sustainability of groundwater and surface water	Optional	Pg. 9; Pg. 26 (appendix)	<p>The public and human services goal supports the development of a groundwater plan. The Appendix Environment section discusses groundwater existing conditions.</p> <p>Recommend updating groundwater existing conditions and identifying clear policies for the protection of groundwater and surface water.</p>

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#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
22.	2223 (C)(5)	A capital improvements program, a subdivision ordinance, a zoning ordinance and zoning district maps, mineral resource district maps and agricultural and forestal district maps, where applicable	Optional	Ch. 7	The plan implementation chapter includes the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, and capital improvements program. Recommend updating as needed.
23.	2223 (C)(6)	The location of existing or proposed recycling centers	Optional	Pg. 30	No existing recycling centers. Rural village development model can support future recycling centers. Recommend updating recycling information based on information provided by County staff.
24.	2223 (C)(7)	The location of military bases, military installations, and military airports and their adjacent safety areas	Optional	-	No military bases, etc. in Nelson County.
25.	2223 (C)(8)	The designation of corridors or routes for electric transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more	Optional	-	The plan does not discuss corridors or routes for electric transmission.
26.	2223 (E)	Broadband consideration	Mandatory	-	Broadband service is not addressed in the current Comprehensive Plan. Recommend identifying and adding existing broadband service, as well as potential future needs/considerations.

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#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
27.	2223 (D)	Affordable housing - area designation, implementation measures for construction, maintenance, and rehab Current and future considerations	Mandatory	Pg. 14; Pg. 30; Pg. 36	The Development Goals contain principles for encouraging and supporting affordable housing, especially in designated development areas including the rural village model and light industrial model. Recommend discussing existing affordable housing conditions and future considerations based on updated community data, such as population and employment.
28.	2223.1	Comprehensive Plan to include urban development areas (UDA)	Best Practice	Ch. 4	Nelson County currently does not have any UDAs. Recommend updated assessment of future growth needs and considering creating a UDA in Nelson County that: is appropriate for higher density development, provides for commercial and residential densities that are appropriate for development on the developable acreage, is a sufficient size to meet projected residential and commercial growth for at least 10 years and no more than 20 years, and reexamining and, if necessary, revising the boundaries and size every 5 years. UDAs can be beneficial by providing new funding opportunities and limiting other fees, among other incentives.
29.	2223.2	Comprehensive Plan including coastal resource management	N/A	-	The locality is not located in Tidewater Virginia; therefore, this is not applicable.

Nelson County, Virginia
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#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
30.	2223.3	Strategies to combat sea-level rise and recurrent flooding	N/A	-	The locality is not located in the Hampton Road Planning District Commission; therefore, this is not applicable.
31.	2223.4	Transit-oriented development	N/A	-	The county does not have a population greater than 100,000, therefore this is not applicable.
32.	2223.5	Manufactured housing	Mandatory	-	<p>The plan does not currently address manufactured housing.</p> <p>Recommend addressing manufactured housing as required by State Code. Analyze manufactured housing during the housing assessment to ascertain current conditions, locations, needs, status of local ordinances, etc. in order to determine appropriate strategies.</p>

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
33.	2224	Surveys and studies shall be made in preparation of Comprehensive Plan on topics such as: land use, ag preservation, development trends, historic areas, environmental resources, infrastructure, transportation, affordable housing, etc. (See full list in 15.2-2224)	Varies	Throughout	<p>The plan includes a comprehensive assessment of community conditions. These conditions and measures are explored through the various chapters of the plan.</p> <p>Recommend maintaining and updating existing data, as appropriate for the updated plan. County should provide any relevant studies that should be integrated into the plan.</p>
34.	2224 (A) (2)	Probable future economic growth	Mandatory	Pg. 5-6	<p>Economic growth is discussed in the goals and principles, but there is no information or discussion about projected economic growth.</p> <p>Recommend updating economic growth goals and principles as needed. Add current economic growth trends and projections, as available.</p>
35.	2224 (A) (2)	Probable future population growth	Mandatory	Pg. 4-5 (appendix)	<p>Plan discusses population projections up to 2010.</p> <p>Recommend updating population with the most recent census data and including updated population projections from Weldon Cooper Center.</p>
36.	2224 (B)	Contains current map of locality	Mandatory	Various	<p>The plan includes an existing land use map, as well as a future land use map, among others such as water and sewer services.</p> <p>Recommend that maps be updated based on available data.</p>

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#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
37.	2224 (B)	Contains implementation methods, which may include but need not limited to official map, capital improvements program, subdivision ordinance, zoning ordinance and zoning map, mineral resource map, recreation and sports resources map, and dam break inundation zones map.	Mandatory	Ch. 7; various	<p>The plan includes policies, goals, and objectives. Chapter 7 includes implementation methods including a capital improvements program, zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, zoning map, and proffers. The Bicycle and Pedestrian and Greenway plans both contain maps designating where these changes should occur.</p> <p>Recommend updating goals to align with new community vision and including the specific tasks and timeframe/priority for implementation methods.</p>
38.	2225	Notice and hearing on plan; recommendation by local planning commission to governing body; posting of plan on website	Process – Information Only	Pg. 3 (Code of VA comp plans)	<p>Plan briefly outlines the adoption process.</p> <p>Prior to adoption of this amendment, the plan should follow public notification and hearing procedures outlined in state code.</p>
39.	2226	Adoption or disapproval by governing body	Process – Information Only	Pg. 3 (Code of VA comp plans)	<p>Plan briefly outlines the adoption process.</p> <p>Prior to adoption of this amendment, the plan should follow public notification and hearing procedures outlined in state code.</p>
40.	2227	Return of plan to local planning commission; resubmission	Process – Information Only	Pg. 3 (Code of VA comp plans)	<p>Plan briefly outlines the adoption process.</p> <p>Prior to adoption of this amendment, the plan should follow public notification and hearing procedures outlined in state code.</p>

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#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
41.	2228	Adoption of parts of plan	Process – Information Only	-	Plan does not discuss adoption of parts of the plan. Recommend including adoption of parts of plan into the state code section. Sections or Divisions may be adopted as work progresses.
42.	2229	Amendments process	Process – Information Only	-	Plan does not include the amendments process. Recommend including the amendments process in the plan. Amendments shall be properly advertised; recommendation and action shall be subject to timeframes set in state code.
43.	2230	Five-year review	Mandatory	-	The plan does not include the required five-year review. Recommend acknowledging the five-year review in the introduction section of the Comprehensive Plan.
44.	2230.1	Optional public facilities study and requirements of study	Optional	-	Plan does not include optional public facilities study. Consider incorporating public facilities study as a plan strategy.
45.	2231	Incorporated towns may be included	Optional	Pg. 28	There are no incorporated towns in Nelson County.
46.	2232	Legal Status of plan	Mandatory	Pg. 4	The plan discusses the legal basis for the comprehensive plan.
General Comments					

#	VA Code Section	Intent	Status	Comp. Plan Reference	Analysis / Recommendation
1	N/A	General clarification and streamlining of plan content	-	-	The plan should update existing conditions and should be restructured for clarity, ease of use, and to reflect current issues and conditions. Photos and graphics should be incorporated into the plan to make it more engaging and user-friendly.
2	N/A	Public Input and Engagement	-	-	The Comprehensive Plan update should include the summary and key findings from community forums and surveys of residents at the beginning instead of the appendix to show how it informs the plan.
3	N/A	Policies, Objectives, and Strategies	-	-	Recommend updating the policies, objectives, and strategies, as appropriate.
4	N/A	Implementation strategies	-	-	Recommend including implementation strategies, as well as sources for implementation, in an implementation matrix that assigns each strategy and/or recommendation the following: implementation type, responsible party, and time frame for completion (short-, medium-, and long-term implementation).
5	N/A	Mapping	-	-	Recommend updating maps to reflect current information and best practices. Recommend including map numbers and adding a table of maps/figures for ease of use.
6	N/A	Development Concepts & Recommendations	-	-	Recommend updating development models for the designated development areas with updated data, maps, public engagement findings, etc. as needed. Draw on updated local and regional plans and studies as needed and available.
Source: Code of Virginia - Chapter 22 Article 3					

Appendix B:

Best Practices

Diagnostic Matrix

(Based on APA's Comprehensive
Plan Standards for Sustaining Places)

Principle		Description
1. Livable Built Environment		Ensure that all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide sustainable places for living, working, and recreation.
Included	Best Practices	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	1.1 Plan for multi-modal transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan includes a thorough discussion and recommendations for multi-modal transportation as well as transit-oriented development seen in the Bicycle and Pedestrian plan section. To further meet the principles of creating a livable environment, the County should continue considering opportunities for transit-oriented development projects, including other modes like buses. The plan concentrates growth based on designated development models mainly in the eastern portion of the County. The plan outlines five designated development models that are used as the building blocks for future development in the County. These models focus on mixed-use land applications and encourage infill development in qualifying areas. These models also address access to public facilities and services and the use and protection of historic resources. Identifying major transportation corridors, County gateways, and growth areas can help Nelson County better plan their service deliveries and development opportunities.
Yes	1.2 Plan for transit-oriented development	
No	1.3 Coordinate regional transportation investments with job clusters	
Partial	1.4 Provide complete streets serving multiple functions	
Yes	1.5 Plan for mixed land-use patterns that are walkable and bikeable	
Yes	1.6 Plan for infill development	
Yes	1.7 Encourage design standards appropriate to the community context	
Yes	1.8 Provide accessible public facilities and spaces	
Yes	1.9 Conserve and reuse historic resources	
No	1.10 Implement green building design and energy conservation	
Partial	1.11 Discourage development in hazard zones	

Principle		Description
2. Harmony with Nature		Ensure that the connection between natural resources and human well-being are explicitly recognized and that maintaining the health and viability of natural resources is a primary objective.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	2.1 Restore, connect, and protect natural habitats and sensitive lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nelson County highly values its natural resources and rural, open space. The plan's goals include protecting natural resources and encouraging development that fits the environment of the area. The plan addresses environmental considerations for steep slopes and soil potential for agriculture use. The plan thoroughly discusses implementation measures to protect and enhance natural resources including conservation planning, conservation easements, purchase of development rights, agricultural and forest conservation districts, land use taxation, groundwater protection overlay districts, and watershed protection design standards. The plan does not address green infrastructure, climate change mitigation or adaptation, or renewable energy. Discussing these in the plan would ensure that the County is prepared for a resilient and sustainable future.
No	2.2 Plan for the provision and protection of green infrastructure	
Yes	2.3 Encourage development that respects natural topography	
No	2.4 Enact policies to reduce carbon footprints	
Yes	2.5 Comply with state and local air quality standards	
No	2.6 Encourage climate change adaptation	
No	2.7 Provide for renewable energy use	
Yes	2.8 Provide for solid waste reduction	
Yes	2.9 Encourage water conservation and plan for a lasting water supply	
Yes	2.10 Protect and manage streams, watersheds, and floodplains	

Principle		Description
3. Resilient Economy		Ensure that the community is prepared to deal with both positive and negative changes in its economic health and to initiate sustainable urban development and redevelopment strategies that foster business growth and build reliance on local assets.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	3.1 Provide the physical capacity for economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan identifies the service, local government, and agriculture industries as being the most prominent sectors within the County. The goals and policies in the plan support economic growth within designated development areas to ensure they are compatible with the County's size and rural character. These areas allow for a range of uses from commercial to light industrial and discuss the future growth/change potential in that area. Nelson County should continue planning for development that supports a variety of uses and encourages community-based economic development and revitalization. The County should also discuss and plan for promoting more green businesses and jobs, as well as proactive planning for post-disaster economic recovery.
Yes	3.2 Plan for a balanced land-use mix for fiscal sustainability	
Yes	3.3 Plan for transportation access to employment centers	
No	3.4 Promote green businesses and jobs	
Yes	3.5 Encourage community-based economic development and revitalization	
Yes	3.6 Provide and maintain infrastructure capacity in line with growth or decline demands	
No	3.7 Plan for post-disaster economic recovery	

Principle		Description
4. Interwoven Equity		Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	4.1 Provide a range of housing types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan identifies the need for a range of housing types that are safe, sanitary, and affordable. A range of housing types is presented for each of the designated development models but is not discussed in greater detail. The plan addresses the number of housing units, whether they have plumbing, and who occupies them. The plan lacks any discussion or strategies on providing equitable housing and services or environmental justice to disadvantaged groups. Consider recommendations for at-risk and disadvantaged populations to ensure equity.
Partial	4.2 Plan for jobs/housing balance	
No	4.3 Plan for the physical, environmental, and economic improvement of at-risk, distressed, and disadvantaged neighborhoods	
Partial	4.4 Plan for improved health and safety for at-risk populations	
Yes	4.5 Provide accessible and quality public services, facilities, and health care to minority and low-income neighborhoods	
Partial	4.6 Upgrade infrastructure and facilities in older and substandard areas	
No	4.7 Plan for workforce diversity and development	
Yes	4.8 Protect vulnerable populations from natural hazards	
No	4.9 Promote environmental justice	

Principle		Description
5. Healthy Community		Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for access to healthy foods, physical activity, recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	5.1 Reduce exposure to toxins and pollutants in the natural and built environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The natural, rural environment is very important to Nelson County, and the plan emphasizes reducing pollutants and toxins and creating and conserving open space areas. Nelson County notably included a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and a Greenway Plan, both of which encourage and promote healthy and active lifestyles. The Greenway Plan makes use of abandoned railway lines and roadbeds with access throughout the County, as well as connecting to parts of the Appalachian Trail, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and other state and federal public land. Nelson County should continue to capitalize on its scenic and natural open space and recreation/tourism opportunities. While Nelson County made provisions for increased access to healthcare facilities, which was an identified need from the public engagement, there was no information concerning access to healthy foods. Consider incorporating current conditions, needs, and strategies for access to healthy and local food. Fire protection, rescue services, and crime protection and prevention are listed as goals in the plan, but could benefit from more information on existing conditions.
Partial	5.2 Plan for increased public safety through reduction of crime and injuries	
Partial	5.3 Plan for the mitigation and redevelopment of brownfields for productive uses	
Partial	5.4 Plan for physical activity and healthy lifestyles	
Yes	5.5 Provide accessible parks, recreation, facilities, greenways and open space near all neighborhoods	
No	5.6 Plan for access to healthy, locally grown foods for all neighborhoods	
Yes	5.7 Plan for equitable access to health care providers, schools, public safety facilities, and arts and cultural facilities	

Principle		Description
6. Responsible Regionalism		Ensure that all local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the surrounding region.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	6.1 Coordinate local land use plans with regional transportation investments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nelson County's comprehensive plan acknowledges the importance of planning and coordinating within the regional framework. The plan discusses the importance and impact that neighboring localities have on Nelson County. The plan promotes regionalism by discussing current conditions for regional population and economic data. The plan also uses and expands upon the Bicycle and Pedestrian and Greenway plans, which were regional plans created for the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC). Both of these plans work to connect Nelson County to neighboring localities. To further promote regionalism in the plan, housing and capital improvement programs should be related to regional plans or goals. Additional regional partnerships can be expanded upon thorough reference to the many regional plans created by the TJPDC such as the hazard mitigation plan and regional housing plan.
No	6.2 Coordinate local and regional housing plan goals	
Yes	6.3 Coordinate local open space plans with regional green infrastructure plans	
Yes	6.4 Delineate designated growth areas that are served by transit	
Yes	6.5 Promote regional cooperation and sharing of resources	
Yes	6.6 Enhance connections between local activity centers and regional destinations	
Yes	6.7 Coordinate local and regional population and economic projections	
Yes	6.8 Include regional development visions and plans in local planning scenarios	
No	6.9 Encourage consistency between local capital improvement programs and regional infrastructure priorities	

Principle		Description
7. Authentic Participation		Ensure that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	7.1 Engage stakeholders at all stages of the planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nelson County's comprehensive plan includes a brief discussion of community engagement in the appendix. Community engagement included a community survey and four in person forums, which helped to create the vision and goals for the plan. As the plan update progresses, thorough documentation of engagement opportunities and outcomes will be documented and included as part of the comprehensive plan document. As plan updates continue, effort should be made to engage diverse populations. The process will be made available in more formats, such as online and on social media, to involve more of the community in the planning process. Additionally, the plan should encourage community participation at all steps of the planning process, including after its adoption.
No	7.2 Seek diverse participation in the plan development process	
No	7.3 Promote leadership development in disadvantaged communities during the planning process	
No	7.4 Develop alternative scenarios of the future	
Partial	7.5 Provide ongoing and understandable information for all participants	
Partial	7.6 Use a variety of communications channels to inform and involve the community	
No	7.7 Continue to engage the public after the comprehensive plan is adopted	

Principle		Description
8. Accountable Implementation		Ensure that responsibilities for carrying out the plan are clearly stated, along with metrics for evaluating progress in achieving desired outcomes.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Partial	8.1 Indicate specific actions for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan includes clear strategies for implementation and highlights other implementation tools, including zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, the county zoning map, capital facilities impact, capital improvements program, and proffers. Future updates to the comprehensive plan should include additional implementation elements, such as an implementation schedule and implementation matrix with clear and concise indicators, benchmarks, and timeframes. This can help improve the process of implementing the plan and ensuring desired outcomes.
Yes	8.2 Connect plan implementation to the capital planning process	
No	8.3 Connect plan implementation to the annual budgeting process	
No	8.4 Establish interagency and organizational cooperation	
Partial	8.5 Identify funding sources for plan implementation	
No	8.6 Establish indicators, benchmarks, and targets	
No	8.7 Regularly evaluate and report on implementation progress	
No	8.8 Adjust the plan as necessary based on evaluation	

Principle		Description
9. Consistent Content		Ensure that the plan contains a consistent set of visions, goals, policies, objectives, and actions that are based on evidence about community conditions, major issues, and impacts.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
No	9.1 Assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan contextualizes County data including population and economic current conditions and projections that, along with community engagement results, are used to help set the vision, goals, and objectives in the plan. An updated assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats will be developed based on new public engagement results and community baseline analysis. An implementation matrix including timeframes, responsible parties, benchmarks, and funding opportunities is needed to provide more clear and consistent use of the plan. While the plan utilizes maps throughout, there is an opportunity to make the plan more visually engaging and to highlight important factors within the plan through tables, graphics, and summaries.
Yes	9.2 Establish a fact base	
Yes	9.3 Develop a vision of the future	
Yes	9.4 Set goals in support of the vision	
Yes	9.5 Set objectives in support of the goals	
Yes	9.6 Set policies to guide decision making	
No	9.7 Define actions to carry out the plan	
Partial	9.8 Use clear and compelling features to present the plan	

Principle		Description
10. Coordinated Characteristics		Ensure that the plan includes creative and innovative strategies and recommendations and coordinates them internally with each other, vertically with federal and state requirements, and horizontally with plans of adjacent jurisdictions.
Included	Best Practice	Analysis / Recommendation
Yes	10.1 Be comprehensive in the plan's coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current plan utilizes a Neighborhood Model approach to land use planning that is innovative and targeted to the unique conditions of Nelson County but may require more focused strategies to make the models easier to implement. The existing plan addresses a range of planning topics including future land use, bicycle and pedestrian planning, greenway planning, population, the economy, transportation, housing, education, and current land. These topics should be updated to and expanded to include more contemporary topics such as climate change and hazard/disaster mitigation. The updated plan should continue to think regionally and integrate updated plans and information from relevant sources. The implementation section does not adequately explain how the plan will be put into place and needs further expansion on how the plan will be implemented. The updated plan should make use of more graphics and visually cohesive components to make the plan more interesting and readable. Additionally, the plan should be available both in print and online, considering any ADA needs for a plan.
Yes	10.2 Integrate the plan with other local plans and programs	
Yes	10.3 Be innovative in the plan's approach	
No	10.4 Be persuasive in communicating the plan	
Partial	10.5 Be consistent across plan components	
Yes	10.6 Coordinate with the plans of other jurisdictions and levels of government	
Yes	10.7 Comply with applicable laws and mandates	
Yes	10.8 Be transparent in the plan's substance	
Partial	10.9 Use formats that go beyond paper	

Appendix C:

Mapping Elements
Diagnostic Matrix

Nelson County, Virginia
Comprehensive Plan Mapping Elements



VA Code Section	Type of Content	Status	Map Currently Included in Comprehensive Plan	Map Data Availability
§ 15.2	<u>Overall requirements</u>			
§ 15.2 - 2223 (B) (1)	Roads	Optional	Pg. 26, Pg.54	Local & VDOT
	Bicycle accommodations	Optional	Appendix	TJPDC & VDOT
	Pedestrian accommodations	Optional	Appendix	TJPDC & VDOT
	Railways	Optional	Pg. 26	VGIN
	Bridges	Optional	-	VDOT
	Waterways	Optional	Pg. 18	VGIN
	Airports	Optional	-	-
	Ports	Optional	N/A	-
	Public transportation facilities	Optional	Pg. 26	Local
	Functional classes	Optional	-	VDOT
	Crash data	Optional	-	VDOT
	Annual average daily traffic (AADT)	Optional	-	VDOT
	Level of Service (LOS)	Optional	-	VDOT
Road and transportation improvements/projects	Mandatory	Pg. 26	VDOT, Local, To be created	
§ 15.2 - 2223 (C)*	Future Land Use	Mandatory	Pg. 42	Local & To be created
	Community facilities – services, utilities, public buildings, recycling centers, electric transmission corridors	Optional	-	Local
	Community facilities – recreation	Optional	Partial (Greenways, Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan)	Local & DCR
	Wetlands / Watersheds	Optional	-	DCR
	Flood plain and drainage	Optional	-	Local & FEMA

Nelson County, Virginia
Comprehensive Plan Mapping Elements



VA Code Section	Type of Content	Status	Map Currently Included in Comprehensive Plan	Map Data Availability
	Conservation areas	Optional	-	DCR & Local
	Mineral resources	Optional	-	-
	Historical areas	Optional	-	Local & DHR
	Military designated areas	Optional	N/A	-
	Agricultural and Forestal areas	Optional	-	Local
	Economic incentives (tourism zones, enterprise zones, etc.)	Optional	-	VEDP
	Housing	Optional	-	TBD
	Communications facilities	Optional	-	-
	Groundwater & surface water protection	Optional	-	Local
§ 15.2 - 2223.1 (B) (4)	Urban Development Areas (UDA)	Optional	-	VDOT & Local
§ 15.2 - 2224 (B)*	Area covered by plan	Mandatory	Pg. 18	Local
	Dam break inundation zones	Optional	-	-
Other	<u>Other Maps Included in Existing Plan</u>			
	Steep Slopes		Pg. 22	USGS
	Soil Potential for Agricultural Use		Pg. 24	USDA
	Existing Land Use		Pg. 18	Local
	Water & Sewer Service Areas		Pg. 20	Local
	Route 29 Corridor Study		Pg. 46	TJPDC
	Scenic Byways		Pg. 53	VDOT
	Proposed Greenway Corridors		Pg. 52	Local
	2001 Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan		Appendix	Local

* Code of Virginia requires items in this section to be included in the plan through maps, plats, charts, and/or descriptive matter. Maps are an optional feature.