

# NELSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## INTRODUCTION & CHAPTER 1

*JOINT WORKSESSION DRAFT*

*OCTOBER 25, 2022*





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS





## Placeholder for Nelson 2042 Vision Statement.

Nelson County today is a great place to work, live, and visit. Residents place high value on the rural character of the County and the strong sense of community, but they are concerned about unbalanced growth and limited economic opportunities. The question then, as we blaze a trail to the future, is how do we preserve our rural character as we grow and evolve with changing times? How do we increase housing choices for different types of individuals and families? How do we grow the economy and job opportunities while keeping our community accessible and affordable for everyone? How can we face our more difficult problems, improve the County, and meet our challenges head on?

The distinct benefit of a Comprehensive Plan is that it confronts these big issues in a big-picture way. The Comprehensive Plan fully considers how these big ideas are interrelated and interdependent. In creating this plan, we identified the defining issues that are central to the future success of Nelson County. The challenge before us now in reaching our destination — Nelson 2042 — is to leverage our strengths as we grow, while mitigating the negatives. The Nelson 2042 Comprehensive Plan sets us on a path and provides the directions to reach our destination.



*"I love the rural  
character of Nelson  
County and the  
diverse caring  
communities here."*

- Nelson Resident



## Plan at a Glance

The Nelson 2042 Comprehensive Plan is a policy guide for County officials and a resource for community members. The Plan is our guide to the Nelson of 2042. It articulates Nelson's shared vision for the future and identifies specific directions to reach that vision. These directions, referred to as goals and strategies, are established under a coordinated planning framework of Plan Elements.

### Creating Our Guide

Chapter 1 establishes the legal context for the Comprehensive Plan, describes the Plan's functional relationship to other planning efforts in the County and region, and summarizes the community input process - a key component of drafting the content of this plan.

### Setting the Direction

Chapter 2 describes the Nelson of today and outlines the Nelson of tomorrow. The chapter outlines the plan structure, including: vision, big ideas, plan elements, and supporting goals.

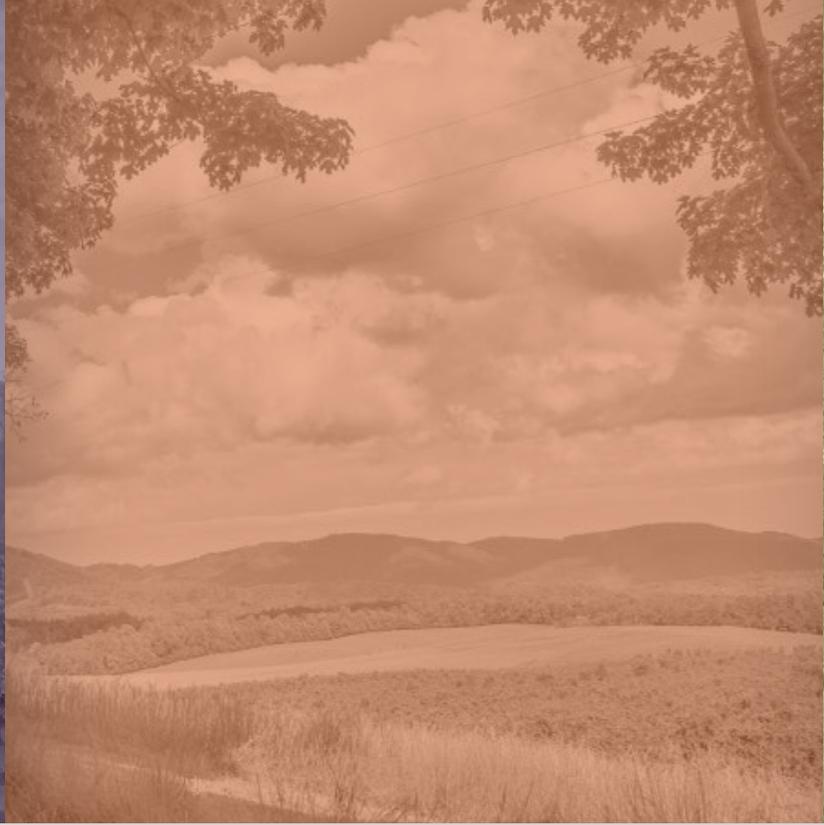
### Plan Elements

Chapters 3 through 8 describe the individual plan elements that contain the policies and strategies to reach our vision for the Nelson of 2042. The following plan elements are discussed in this Plan:

- Shaping Community Character
- Connecting People & Places
- Creating Livable Communities
- Protecting Valuable Resources
- Creating a Resilient Economy
- Serving the Community

### Blazing the Way

Chapter 9 catalogs the specific strategies included in the Comprehensive Plan in an Implementation Work Plan. The Work Plan prioritizes and provides accountability for the strategies from each Plan Element; provides specific guidance for decision-making; and defines the ongoing process that will be used to monitor progress towards the vision for the future.



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# Creating Our Guide

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## Using Nelson 2042

Nelson 2042 is Nelson County's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the County's long-range planning document that serves as a guide for future growth and development of the community. While it is not regulatory, the Plan, based on the vision and values of the community, is used by County staff, appointed officials, elected officials, and others as a decision making and policy guide.

The Plan describes the community's vision for Nelson County over the next 20 years and includes goals, strategies, and implementation measures to achieve the community's objectives. The Plan addresses

a wide range of topics related to development and land use including transportation, housing and neighborhoods, parks and open space, community facilities and services, economic development, and community character.



## Legal Basis for Comprehensive Plans

Every locality in Virginia is required by state code to adopt a Comprehensive Plan.

The Code of Virginia §15.2-2223 and §15.2-2224, among others, outline the required and optional Plan elements and offer a general framework for plan activities. Typical elements of the Comprehensive Plan, include, but are not limited to:

- Future land use planning maps and recommendations for development and physical improvements;
- A comprehensive system of transportation facilities, including maps and cost estimates for improvements;
- A system of community service facilities, including parks and recreation infrastructure;
- Areas and implementation measures for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing; and
- Approaches for coordinated economic development.

State requirements for Comprehensive Plans also recognize that community development is ongoing and ever-changing. Virginia Code §15.2-2230 requires localities to review the Comprehensive Plan every five years, and to amend it as needed, to ensure its relevancy and usefulness to the community.

### VIRGINIA CODE §15.2-2223

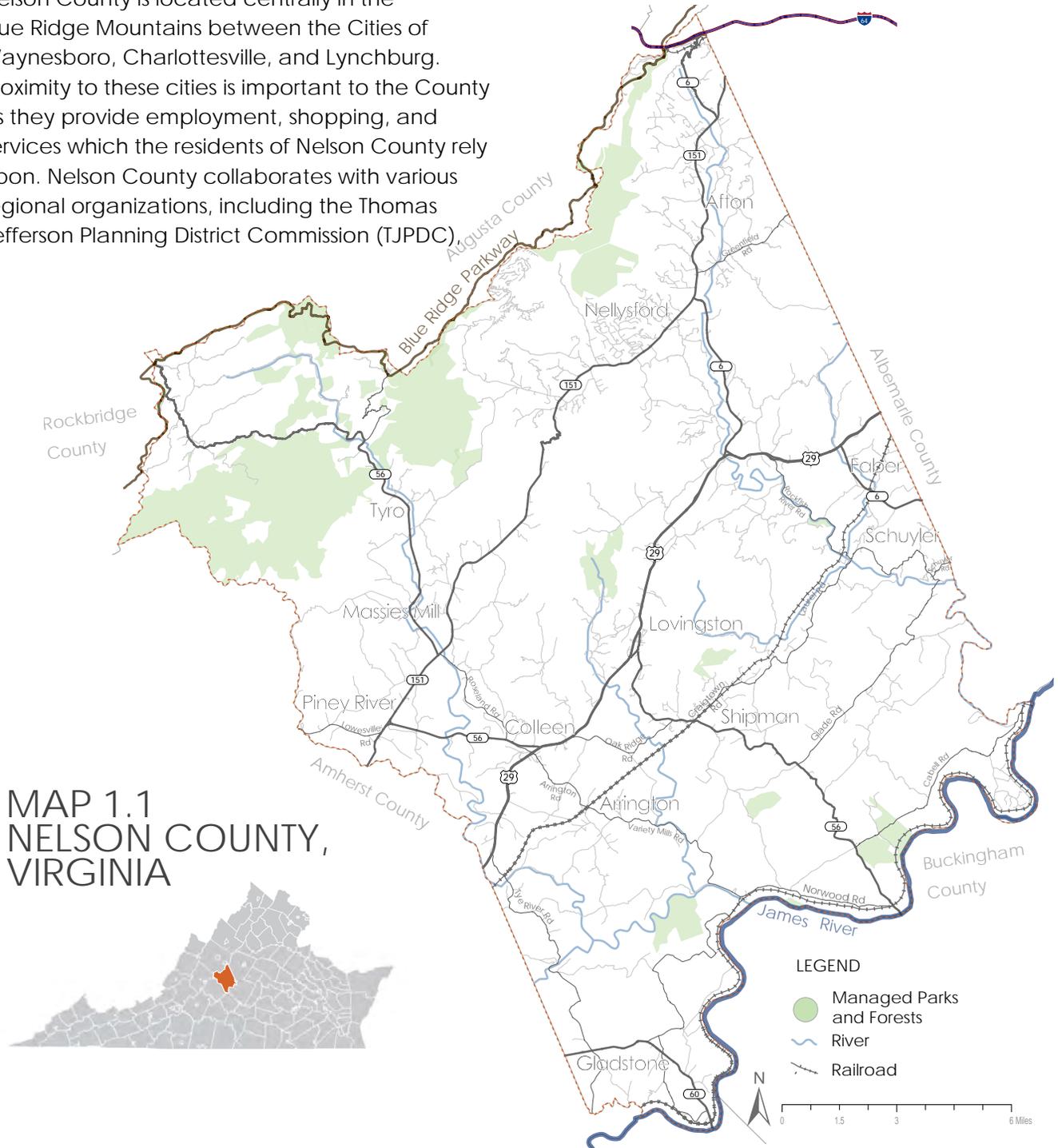
*“The Comprehensive Plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants, including the elderly and persons with disabilities.”*

# Planning Jurisdiction

Nelson County's planning jurisdiction is shown in Map 1.1. The County contains 474 square miles of land area and a population of 14,775<sup>1</sup>. While Lovingston - the County seat - and Nellysford are sometimes referred to locally as Towns, they are unincorporated areas that are subject to this Plan.

to help implement many of the goals and strategies contained within this plan. As such, the Comprehensive Plan recognizes that collaboration amongst regional partners is critical to effective long-range planning.

Nelson County is located centrally in the Blue Ridge Mountains between the Cities of Waynesboro, Charlottesville, and Lynchburg. Proximity to these cities is important to the County as they provide employment, shopping, and services which the residents of Nelson County rely upon. Nelson County collaborates with various regional organizations, including the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC).



**MAP 1.1  
NELSON COUNTY,  
VIRGINIA**

1. US Census 2020 Population Count



## Relationship to Other Plans & Ordinances

Nelson 2042 is an organizing document for other plans, policies, and ordinances. The Comprehensive Plan includes data, ideas, and recommendations from many existing plans, studies, and strategic documents. The Comprehensive Plan informs and influences future updates to land development regulations and decisions. Zoning matters, capital improvements, transportation projects, and environmental and historic resource protection initiatives rely on the content of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Zoning & Subdivision Ordinance

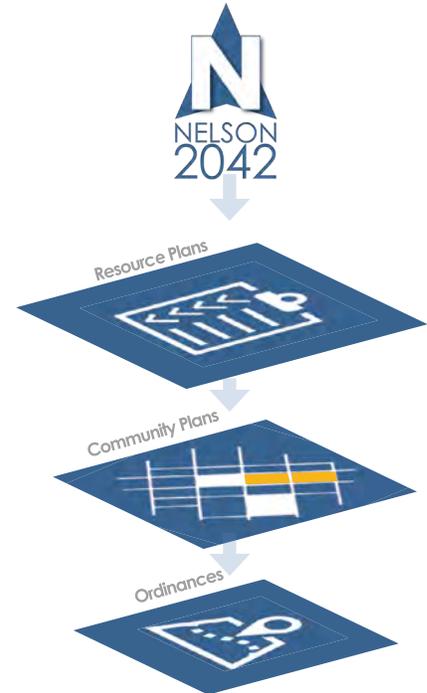
Nelson County's zoning and subdivision ordinances are the primary tools used to implement the Comprehensive Plan. While the Comprehensive Plan offers vision, policy, and future land use recommendations, zoning and subdivision regulations directly control the location, form, and character of development. The Comprehensive Plan should guide updates to the zoning and subdivision ordinances. In addition, when a development or rezoning application is submitted to the County, decision makers must ensure that the application meets the specific standards of County ordinances and contributes to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Capital Improvement Plan

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is the County's resource and fiscal management process that coordinates the location, timing, and financing of capital improvements over a multi-year period. Capital improvements are major, non-recurring infrastructure and equipment projects. The community's goals and long-range vision are achieved when the priorities of the CIP align with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

### Other Plans, Studies, & Initiatives

Nelson 2042 encompasses multiple community plans, studies, and initiatives to ensure regional coordination. Existing plans and studies considered in the development are listed in the appendix of this document.





## Creating Nelson 2042

Nelson 2042 is the culmination of two years of research, data analysis, and most importantly, community input and engagement. Throughout the planning process this Comprehensive Plan update has taken deliberate steps to guarantee that citizen voices define Nelson County's vision and goals – past, present, and future.





= over 1,000 participants

## Community Input

### Community Survey

A survey consisting of 23 questions, tailored to identify strengths, weaknesses, and future needs of the community, was made available for community members to take online through the Comprehensive Plan website or in paper copies distributed throughout the County between July 1 and August 31, 2022. In total, 885 people completed the survey.

### Stakeholder Listening Sessions

Over 35 local organizations, business representatives, and industry professionals participated in four discussion based listening sessions. Each session focused on a separate theme relevant to the Comprehensive Plan update process.

- July 13, 2022 | Housing & Development
- July 20, 2022 | Tourism, Lodging & Hospitality
- August 3, 2022 | Agriculture & Agritourism
- August 3, 2022 | Community

### Groups & Nonprofits

#### Community Workshops

During four community workshops, community members were introduced to the Comprehensive Plan process and invited to work together in groups to complete exercises on Countywide and the topic-focused issues: Growth & Development, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Recreation & Outdoors. Over 150 people participated.

- July 13, 2022 | Nelson County High School
- July 20, 2022 | Rockfish Valley Elementary School
- August 3, 2022 | Nelson Heritage Center
- August 28, 2022 | Nelson Center

#### Input Results Forum

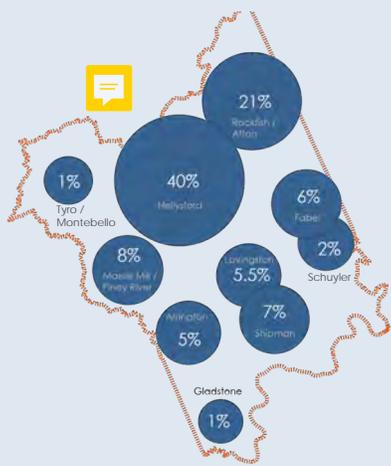
On October 2, 2022, a Public Forum was held to present the results of public engagement, verify and discuss results, and solicit additional input on goals and strategies to address the key issues and opportunities identified

## NELSON2042.COM

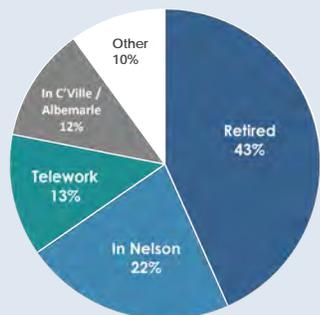


In July of 2022, Nelson County launched the official website for the Comprehensive Plan update process known as Nelson 2042. This website contained links to public engagement opportunities and useful resources, news posts and pertinent information, as well as an idea wall where community members were encouraged to post on the interactive site to let the County know their thoughts regarding the update process and what they hoped to see in Nelson in the future.

# Survey Respondents



Where Do You Live?



Where Do You Work?

Detailed community engagement results are available in the Public Engagement Summary document posted on Nelson2042.com.

# Community Survey Results

Through the community survey, community members contributed their opinions on the current state of the County, focus areas for improvement, and priority issues and opportunities. The survey was available online and in paper form at government buildings, churches, businesses, and community centers throughout the County.

## What did the community have to say?

### TOP 3 FOCUS AREAS



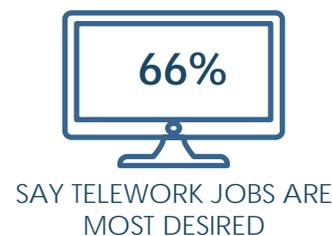
### WHAT CONCERNS US THE MOST?



AGREE		DISAGREE
16.3%	There is enough affordable housing	61.4%
73.3%	Roads are in good condition	21.4%
91.1%	Nelson feels safe and secure	4.8%
32.3%	Provides equitable services	31.8%
17.3%	Has enough public transportation	47.9%



DESIRE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT ALONG ROUTE 29



# Stakeholder Listening Sessions Results



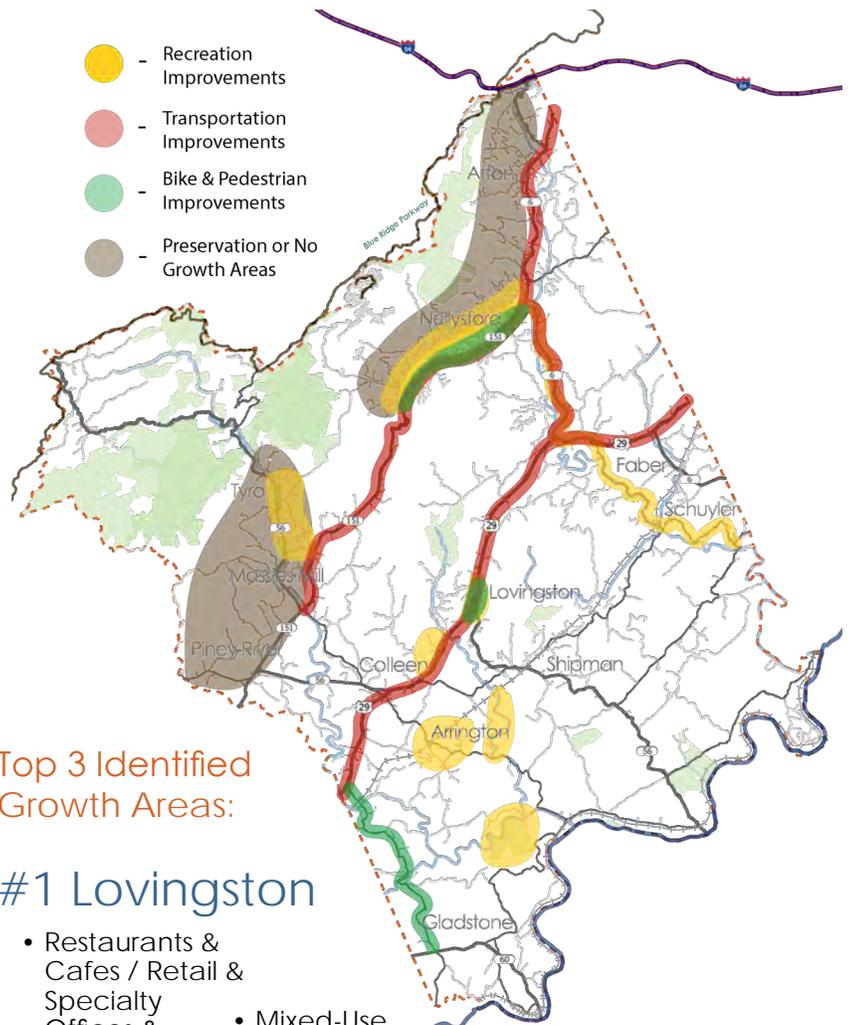
Stakeholder listening sessions are focused conversations regarding specific topics, industries, and/or issues facing Nelson County. Key themes heard throughout each listening session include:

- ✓ There is a lack of affordable housing & housing choice; Service & tourism employees must commute in to Nelson
- ✓ The poor condition and capacity of existing water & sewer infrastructure presents challenges to economic development as well as health & environmental concerns
- ✓ There is a lack of amenities for families and few local healthcare services
- ✓ There are few transportation choices — not unusual in a rural county — but there are opportunities to partner with services for commuters as well as tourists
- ✓ There are few career oriented job opportunities

# Community Workshop Results

Through the community workshops, community members had the opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the County and dive into hands-on exercise pertaining to specific topics such as where the County should grow, where transportation improvements are needed, and where there are recreation opportunities. The following map summarizes the results of the hands-on mapping exercise completed by participants.

## What did the community have to say?



### Top 3 Identified Growth Areas:

#### #1 Lovington

- Restaurants & Cafes / Retail & Specialty
- Offices & Community Services
- Mixed-Use
- Apartments & Condos

#### #2 Colleen

- Light Industrial
- Grocery or Farm Market/Retail & Specialty
- Offices & Community Services
- Mixed-Use
- Duplexes & Townhomes
- Apartments & Condos

#### #3 Schuyler

- Restaurants & Cafes
- Mixed-Use
- Single-Family Housing
- Mult-Family Housing



## Plan Drafting

Virginia Code § 15.2-2230 calls for the Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed by the local planning commission at least once every five years to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan. For this Comprehensive Plan update, the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors met bi-monthly to review and draft plan content generated using the crucial information gathered during the community engagement process.



## Public Review & Refinement

Comprehensive Plans are a product of the community's input as interpreted by appointed and elected officials. As such, the Comprehensive Plan follows a public review and refinement period that ensures the Plan accurately represents the community's concerns and articulates ways to address them. On XX date, Nelson County hosted a Public Open House to showcase progress and gather feedback on the drafted plan.



## Adoption

During the public review and refinement period, the draft Plan was available for public review and comments, which were considered by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. The Plan was adopted through a formal public hearing process on XX date.

*(Editor's Note: This section will be updated following the completion of the public review phase)*

## Using Nelson 2042

Comprehensive Plans are community documents and are used by a variety of individuals and stakeholders. The Comprehensive Plan serves the community well when it is consistently used to make recommendations and decisions. The Planning Commission should conduct annual reviews to identify necessary amendments and track progress. Annual reviews should analyze the implementation matrix and performance indicators to measure achievements and prioritize strategies to meet community goals.



Private citizens, business owners, and developers use the Plan to better understand the community's assets, vision, and development goals.



County staff and Planning Commission use the Plan when reviewing zoning applications and drafting ordinances, striving for consistency with the community's vision.



The Board of Supervisors uses the Plan to guide decisions on budget priorities, capital projects, and ordinance amendments.



Regional partners use the Plan to understand local priorities and advocate for grant funding and studies.

