

Brainstorming Summary: Let's Talk @ Air, Water and Green Space in Henrico County
Henrico Conservation Action Network
August 11, 2022
Libbie Mill Library

Methods

In mid-August, 2022, 55 citizens from across Henrico County, VA, gathered to discuss environmental issues and opportunities in the county at a meeting hosted by the newly formed Henrico Conservation Action Network (HCAN.) For approximately 90 minutes, eight small groups worked to identify, share, and post their concerns. A total of 141 ideas were generated. At the end of the session, individuals were asked to identify areas in which they would most like to concentrate their personal efforts, given factors such as perceived urgency of concerns; the probability of addressing them with success; and the skills, interests and time they might be able to contribute to the process. Additional considerations about HCAN's brainstorming process:

- Participants worked quickly, essentially with a "blank slate."
- While the small group process discouraged duplication of ideas, the abbreviated whole group process did not. This factor then affected multi-voting, effectively splitting votes among very similar ideas.
- In the multi-voting phase of the process, each participant had 5 votes to assign to whatever topics they chose.
- The splitting of votes during the multi voting process was able to be (somewhat) corrected for later in tabulation of data.

While issues receiving more votes should be considered worthy of attention, issues receiving few or no votes should not be discounted. The full list of topics/ concerns is representative of the environmental issues and conservation opportunities on our minds today. Each is worthy of further consideration and action in our locality. The extent to which any are addressed will be entirely dependent upon the availability of leadership and citizen participation.

Selected Highlights from the Data

- * 141 ideas put forward
- * Approximately 118 unduplicated ideas when consolidated
- * 13 categories emerged: agriculture, air, climate, education, energy, greenspace, history, natives, planning, transportation, waste, water, wildlife
- * Ideas sorted by primary category only
- * Categories with most ideas: Greenspace (25)
- * Categories with most votes: Greenspace + Natives (67); Planning (48); Climate+ Energy+ Transport (45)

Ideas receiving most votes when consolidated

Include sustainability in comp plan + adopt a local climate action plan (21)
Protect and Plant More trees (20)
Preserve Varina and Open Space East End (13)
Better yards, less lawn (11)
Zoning for smaller homes (11)

Potential scaled action emerging from the meeting

- *Action for existing neighborhoods: smart yards, more trees, protect night sky.
- * Planning for new neighborhoods: mandatory green space, native trees and shrubs, transit oriented, decrease surface runoff.
- *Planning for commercial and industrial development: preserve farming, application of Leed standards, planting of native trees and shrubs, wildlife preservation
- * Countywide/ landscape level planning: To protect clean air, water, and soil the county needs a sustainability plan/ climate action plan that would address these issues; future land uses need to be thoughtfully mapped and upheld by the county with protection of our prime agricultural soils and prime forest/wildlife areas.

Potential committees emerging from the meeting (but committee formation not limited to these subjects)

Committees underway:

Better Yards
Henrico Comprehensive Plan
Climate

Potential committees needing leadership:

Agriculture
Water
Zoning/Planning
Energy (could be combined with Climate)
Natives, Trees and Wildlife

Additional Preliminary Conclusions

- *Henrico citizens have good energy for this! Despite Covid and this a summertime, in-person meeting.
- * People are ready to work- signed up, attended, actively participated
- * Our positive approach has appeal
- * community conversations provide valuable information
- * community conversations are doable and affordable

- * There is environmental interest across the county's magisterial districts (all 5 represented at meeting)
- * We urge Henrico County to make use of this feedback.