

Town of Occoquan, Virginia
Land Use Diagnostic Questionnaire

The questions appearing below represent the initial step in the review and critique of the Occoquan comprehensive plan. The questions are designed to gain insight about the Occoquan comprehensive plan from persons who are familiar with the plan and its content. Accordingly, key town staff as well as all members of the Occoquan Town Council, the Occoquan Planning Commission, the Occoquan Architectural Review Board and the Occoquan BZA, are being asked to respond to the questions featured on this instrument.

TOWN COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION SUMMARY

1. As you consider the current Occoquan comprehensive plan, what aspects of the plan have worked well over the past three years?

Many objectives featured in the 2003 plan have been implemented including traffic and parking improvements, waterfront enhancements, sustaining the town's character and historic structures and protecting the natural environment.

Traffic flow has improved as has the parking situation. Residential development has been tastefully managed. In the main, the town looks pretty good.

The town's purchase of the Tanyard Hill property will serve the community well from a planning and environmental perspective.

Efforts designed to enhance pedestrian mobility have and are being made. Redevelopment of the Fairfax County Water Authority is a move forward.

Efforts designed to sustain the character of the historic district have been generally successful. Although progress has been made, the four themes from the 2003 plan- protecting our historic character, waterfront development, reducing/managing traffic and protecting the environment- remain relevant today.

2. What aspects of the Occoquan town plan have not worked well over the past three years?

Cut through traffic has worsened. We need a comprehensive strategy inclusive of introduced speed measures and related protocol (4).

Need to strengthen our connection with neighboring localities.

Need to update the comp plan (3).

We need to sustain the river as a key community resource and we need to make sure at-risk areas in town are protected from adverse effects of development.

We need to strengthen standards focused on the appearance and upkeep of property especially in downtown.

We need to improve our infrastructure inclusive of walkways, roads, public transportation, public areas and parks. We also need upgrades per water, sewer, gas and IT.

Improvements in public transportation needed. Need to improve our common areas, parks and green areas. We also need to be attentive to upkeep of vacant land.

The lack of local mail delivery seems odd. Selling alcohol late downtown is disruptive for people who live downtown. Hours of operation should be changed.

Not sure the Tanyard Hill purchase was wise as we are allowing additional development.

We need to redouble our efforts designed to protect significant properties-Rockledge-from development.

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3. As you consider the current Occoquan comp plan, what are its top 3 strengths?

We accomplished much and we can do so again.

Many of the 2003 comp plan goals remain relevant. We will need money to accomplish our goals and may need a formal grant writing committee to help secure the needed revenue.

The plan's internal organization and structure is good as are the graphics.

The 2003 plan addressed most of our needs and identified strategies we could follow. A similar approach/update is needed.

The 2003 plan focused on maintaining our historic area, meeting the Ches. Bay regulations and having a strong ARB. We meet these objectives.

The plan also outlines measures designed to safeguard our natural environment.

4. As you consider the current Occoquan comp plan, what are its top 3 weaknesses?

The plan needs to be updated. New elements needed include a traffic management strategy and a parking management strategy, a pedestrian/walkability strategy and enhancements to the town's building and maintenance codes. The zoning code also needs to be updated.

The objectives featured with existing comp plan goals need to be revised and strengthened.

We need to be clear on the role and responsibilities each town board/commission plays relative to community planning.

We need to stronger commitment to plan implementation, accounting and reporting. We need to be able to measure our progress/success.

We need to find additional revenue that will allow us to achieve our goals and objectives such as completing the riverwalk.

We need incentives to encourage private property owners to maintain the appearance of their property especially in the downtown.

5. What are the top 3 land use issues currently facing Occoquan?

How to manage water run-off from construction projects.

The Jennings property is unattractive. What can we do to save Rockledge?

We need strategy to manage traffic and a strategy to manage parking.(4).

We need to limit the number of residential units that can locate in the business district.

We need to down zone properties in the business and historic district.

We need a "proactive" planning mentality going forward. In the past we tended to witness a "reactive" mentality.

Need a plan for the old PW Marina (2) and we need a plan for the riverwalk sooner rather than later.

We need a plan for property maintenance, appearance, upkeep and safety.

We need a plan for the open field on Mill St. opposite Madigans.

We need a woodland buffer between the town and PW County.

We need a pedestrian movement plan and a plan for our common areas, parks and green spaces.

We also need a strategy for upkeep of vacant and/or underused property in town.

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6. Thinking long term, what land use issues will dominate as opportunities in Occoquan 5 years from now?

We must sustain and protect our natural environment, inclusive of the river, as Occoquan is a special place thanks to our natural environment.

We need a focused development plan for the riverwalk (4) inclusive of a strategy/plan for the old PW Marina (2) and the open field by the Rt 123 bridge.

We need a plan for the Jennings property (3).

We need an infill strategy for selected properties in the downtown as well as other sections of town.

We need to have the building official/building permit service currently provided by PW County in-house. This will make land development process easier and more accountable.

We need to choose the future we want for Occoquan and make sure it is in the revised plan.

Retain the natural character of the north bank of the Occoquan river while providing better access through managed trails and possible board walk sections.

We need to protect the wooded areas surrounding the town as well as the riverfront. These attributes help define our character.

We need to strengthen our ability to address building appearance, upkeep and maintenance issues especially in the historic district.

7. In like fashion, what land use issues will dominate as threats in Occoquan 5 years from now?

We need a commuter traffic management plan (3).

We will need plan to balance the mix of commercial and business uses with residential uses in the commercial district.

We need to adjust our zoning regulations so land in the historic district is not converted to residential uses. We need to sustain our commercial district, and where appropriate, expand it.

Development of the Jennings' property is both an opportunity as well as a threat.

The River Mill Park needs to be properly managed.

We need to be involved with land development that occurs on our shared border.

We need to better manage the type and intensity of residential development that takes place in Occoquan (zoning ordinance changes are needed).

We need to decide if the environmental and natural resource protection goals from 2003 remain relevant for 2015 and beyond.

Development of the woodland buffer is a real threat. We must not over-develop (commercially) as our footprint is small and we need to sustain our residential character.

8. As you consider the current goals and policies featured in the Occoquan plan (pages 29-35), are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed? Please be specific with your response. Continue your response on the next page.

Many of the goals and policies remain relevant. Several of the policies need updating however.

We need incentives for finishing the riverwalk (30).

We also need to broaden our mindset relative to industrial uses to include wineries and craft breweries and distilleries.

We need a solid mixed use district narrative and our zoning ordinance needs to be updated.

Our ordinance regarding not building on 20% slope needs to be enforced.

We need policies that will preserve our special places such as Rockledge.

Need to have mail delivered locally.

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9. As you consider the future land use action plan discussed in the Occoquan plan (pages 36-42), are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed? Please be specific with your response.

Many remain relevant but updating is needed.

We need to limit the amount of residential development taking place especially in the historic district.

We need a strategy that will allow the riverfront in a responsible and deliberate manner.

We need to make sure the town's gateways are managed and developed in a deliberate manner.

Environmental standards should not be sacrificed in favor of development.

Our streetscape planning needs to be broadened.

We need to capitalize on telecommuting as an option and opportunity.

We need to update the town's zoning ordinance as it is out of step with your planning goals.

10. As you consider the future land use map featured on p. 37 are any changes or adjustments needed? Please be specific with your response.

It needs to be enlarged and updated.

11. As you consider the future transportation and circulation action plan featured in the Occoquan plan (pages 43-46), are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed? Please be specific with your response.

Many remain appropriate but need to be updated.

Parking strategy is needed as is a traffic management strategy (3). Are speed bumps permitted?

A shuttle system for downtown might be nice if people will park under the bridge.

We need to explore public transportation options.

We need a pedestrian/walkability strategy for the town.

Overnight parking should not be permitted under the bridge.

12. In like fashion, are any changes, adjustments, additions or deletions needed with regard to the natural resources action plan in the Occoquan comp plan (pages 47-53)? Please be specific with your response.

Need to update our storm water policies. We need to put accountability measures in the plan. We need to sustain Occoquan's character as we plan for the future.