

Fauquier County Community Conversations: Public Meeting #1  
Summary of Responses

**Question 1**

The first question asked of the meeting participants was, “What kind of future do you want for Fauquier County?” The top five themes that emerged in the responses included:

- A place that manages growth and concentrates development within established communities
- A place with expanding business and employment opportunities
- A place with vibrant towns and villages
- A place that preserves its rural areas and open spaces
- A place with a strong agricultural economy

**Managed Growth and Concentrated Development (44 Responses):** The most common idea shared in these responses was that Fauquier County should carefully manage growth in order to preserve its rural and small town characteristics. Many responses cited surrounding counties such as Loudon and Prince William as examples of places where they perceive unmanaged growth as having diminished the quality of life. Terms such as suburban sprawl and chain or box stores were used as examples of undesirable growth, while small towns, walkable communities, and downtown businesses were all used as examples of desired growth.

**Expanded Business and Employment Opportunities (39 Responses):** The second most common response was a desire to see business growth and expanded employment opportunities, especially in high-value, white collar industries. Multiple reasons were cited for this suggestion. First, it would allow more people to live and work in the county rather than living in Fauquier and commuting to DC or Northern Virginia. Secondly, it was presented as a way to attract and retain younger generations of residents. Finally, several people also discussed the benefits of increasing the business tax base in order, among other benefits, to reduce pressure from property taxes.

**Vibrant Towns and Villages (31 Responses):** The third most common theme was the desire for the county to create vibrant small towns and villages. Though similar to the “Managed Growth” category, these responses focused less on the negative aspects of growth that should be controlled by service districts and more upon the positive aspects of growth that should be promoted within them. Respondents indicated qualities such as thriving business districts, an eclectic mix of stores and restaurants, good sidewalks, and abundant street lighting as characteristics they desired to see in the county’s towns and villages.

**Preserving Rural Areas and Open Spaces (29 Responses):** A corollary to the “concentrated development” theme, the fourth most common response was the desire for the county to preserve its rural areas and open spaces. Many suggested that the preserved farmlands and forests of Fauquier County held as much appeal and attraction for many residents as the county’s services or amenities and should be carefully protected from sprawling or discontinuous developments.

**Strong Agricultural Economy (20 Responses):** The fifth most common response was the desire for the county to retain a strong agricultural economy. Although no respondents spoke against local food systems and farmers markets, most of the responses seemed to be derived primarily from a desire to preserve the agricultural heritage and farmland of the county rather than enhancing direct access to local foods. As such, suggestions focused on ideas such as wineries, horse farms, agri-tourism, and the sale of organic foods to DC markets.

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**Question 2**

The second question asked of the meeting participants was, “What forces or trends do you think will most shape the county’s future?” The top five themes that emerged in the responses included:

- Developments in telecommunications and technological infrastructure
- Generational Needs and Preferences
- Environmental Challenges and Green Technology
- Changes in the Agricultural Economy
- Economic Challenges and Opportunities

**Telecommunications and Technological Infrastructure (33 responses):** The most common response to this question focused on the effect of telecommunications and technological infrastructure such as broadband on the county. It is assumed that these communication technologies will reduce the economic disadvantages presented by the relative geographic remoteness of the county and thus enable businesses and individual employees to successfully operate away from urban centers such as Washington DC. Most people expressed this as a positive development (if it is managed properly), but some indicated a concern that the subsequent growth could overwhelm the county and destroy its rural character.

**Generational Needs and Preferences (26 Responses):** Tied for the second-most common response was one discussing generational needs and preferences. These responses were split almost evenly between those citing the need to provide services and care for elderly populations and those discussing the need to cater to the Millennial Generation’s living, working, and entertainment preferences.

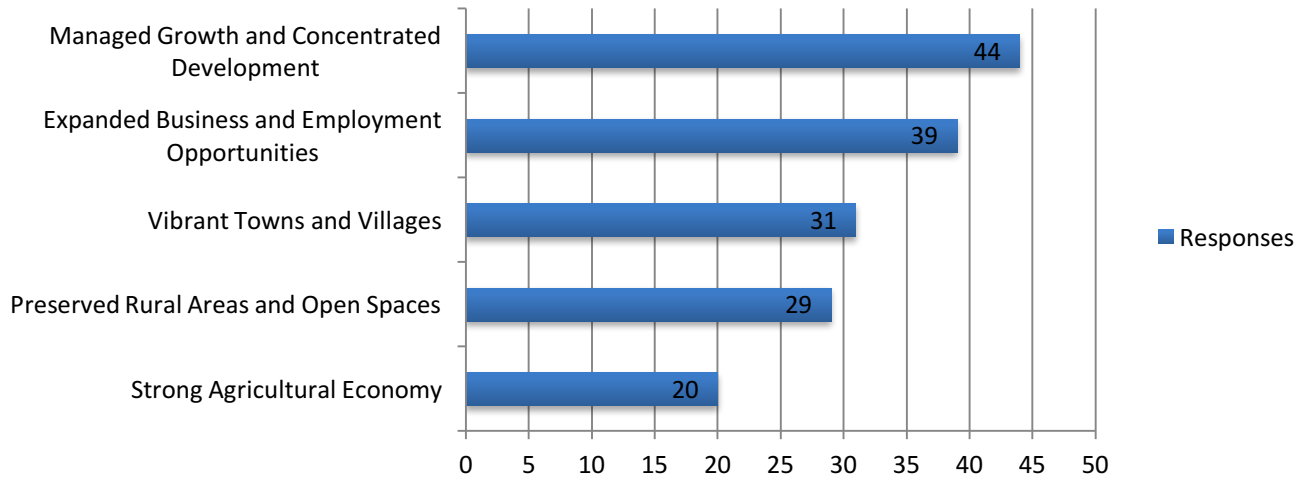
**Environmental Challenges and Green Technology (26 Responses):** The other second-most common response was one discussing the challenges of changing environmental conditions and/or the opportunities provided by green technologies developed in response to those challenges. Water scarcity was the most common environmental concern cited by respondents, while the potential development of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, and water power were presented by several people as a future opportunity for the county.

**Agricultural Changes (23 Responses):** The fourth most common response was one that discussed changes in the agricultural economy. The increased demand for local and organic foods, agri-tourism, and wineries were all cited as positive developments that could strengthen and preserve the agricultural sector of the county. Several respondents also expressed concerns, however, regarding the increasing average age of farmers and the need to attract younger generations to the occupation.

**Economic Challenges and Opportunities (18 Responses):** The fifth most common response cited the discussion of economic challenges and opportunities that was presented during the meeting. This discussion focused on projections that indicate that the Northern Virginia region is expected to continue strong growth in services and industries, while Virginia as a whole is expected to lag behind the national average in those areas. As such, Fauquier County’s economic future may be strongly influenced by the extent to which it integrates itself into the Northern Virginia region. Few responses expanded beyond this idea, but it was frequently cited as an important factor for the future of the county.

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### What kind of future do you want for Fauquier County?



### What forces or trends do you think will most shape Fauquier County's future?

