

Chapter 5.

Community Engagement and Collaboration



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Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan sets out an agenda for City improvement and progress toward realizing its vision for the future. Many community members tend to think that the City government alone is responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. However, implementation success will depend greatly on partnerships between multiple entities that might include the City, other local, state, and federal agencies, local businesses, the development community, faith-based and community organizations, and individuals. Many issues can only be resolved comprehensively and successfully on a regional basis, so collaboration with Rockingham County is essential. Key internal institutions with which the City hopes to continue collaborating with include: James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Sentara RMH Medical Center. As the following Goal 2 shows, there are many areas where these institutions can collaborate with the City besides just the areas of education and health.

The Vision Statement in Chapter 2 presents a future City that is a great place to live, to raise a family, to work and to prosper. But note that the vision statement also contains another key idea – a City where community members are inspired to work together. Goal 3 supports efforts to engender civic pride, and to encourage all community members to participate in planning for the City and working toward the vision. Generally, this goal is working toward establishing community engagement, where the entire community is involved in local efforts and activities. This requires efforts to make tools and resources available to all residents to be able to communicate effectively with the City, other local, state, and federal agencies, and community organizations.

Community Engagement and Collaboration Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 2. To coordinate and collaborate with surrounding jurisdictions, institutions of higher education, faith-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and other community organizations to meet the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 2.1 To explore ways that the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County might increase collaboration in the provision of public facilities and services and in other public endeavors.

Strategy 2.1.1 To have formal processes under which the City and County discusses and implements coordinated or shared programs in areas such as affordable housing, land use planning, growth and development, transportation, emergency communications systems, parks and recreation, greenways, tourism promotion, stormwater management, environmental protection, healthcare, education, workforce development, and others.

Objective 2.2 To coordinate and collaborate with James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University, Bridgewater College, Blue Ridge Community College, Massanutten Technical Center, Rockingham Academy, and other educational institutions in areas of concern. See Chapter 14, Economic Development and Tourism for related Strategy 16.6.8.

Objective 2.3 To coordinate and collaborate with Sentara RMH Medical Center the Central Shenandoah Health District, Harrisonburg Community Health Clinic, the Free Clinic, the Healthy Community Council, and others in responding to community health needs and concerns.

Goal 3. To reach out to and to engage all segments of the population, as well as, businesses, and industries to work collaboratively in planning, developing, and promoting the City as a great place to live and work.

Objective 3.1 To increase resident involvement in City affairs to promote civic pride and participation.

Strategy 3.1.1 To continue developing and implementing civic pride events, such as clean up days, bike and walk to work/school days, and others.

Strategy 3.1.2 To continue supporting Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) events and other programming that celebrates Harrisonburg's local culture.

Strategy 3.1.3 To establish procedures for including residents in planning and plan implementation and to consider creating a City Council appointed advisory committee for community engagement.

Strategy 3.1.4 To undertake initiatives that promote the accessibility of services to all residents taking into account the multilingual needs of the community and exploring common barriers to access for City and community services.

Strategy 3.1.5 To maintain the City's membership as a Welcoming America City and to participate as an active stakeholder in the Welcoming Harrisonburg Council.