

## Chapter 2

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

### PART 1: PURPOSE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

#### Section 1: Introduction

The Town of Round Hill (the Town) encourages citizen input through: the broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, public meetings after effective notice, opportunities for written comments, communication programs, information services, provisions for open discussion, and consideration of public comments. The Town of Round Hill works to achieve an interactive dialogue between local decision makers, its staff, county staff, and its residents.

#### Section 2: Public Meetings

The Town of Round Hill (the Town) holds public meetings to allow for open discussion of relevant issues at hand and allow for public comments to be considered. When public meetings or hearings are conducted, the Town makes every effort to ensure participants have the opportunity to assist in planning efforts. All persons attending a meeting or hearing and who desire to comment are allowed to do so. However, specific circumstances, such as the purpose of the meeting or hearing, number in attendance, time considerations, or future opportunities to participate may require appropriate constraints be applied. These constraints are clearly outlined by the facilitator or chair if the need arises.

#### Section 3: Comprehensive Plan

The Round Hill Comprehensive Plan promotes the value of public participation in the development and implementation of town plans and projects. The Town of Round Hill strives to share information and involve the community and key stakeholders in the process of making decisions.

### PART 2: ENGAGING THE PUBLIC

#### Section 1: Boards, Commissions & Committees

Residents of Round Hill can provide valuable leadership to the town through participation on boards, commissions and committees. Members participate in advisory, regulatory, governance and oversight activities pertaining to a wide variety of subjects. The Round Hill Mayor and Town Council are committed to appointing residents who have diverse qualifications and viewpoints that represent all segments of the community. The job of board, commission or committee members is crucial to the success of the Town of Round Hill. By sharing their

experience, expertise, and time, residents provide valuable insight to the operations of the town and town government administration's decision-making process. boards, commissions and committees can review new and existing projects and proposals in specific areas and suggest an appropriate course of action to the Round Hill Mayor and Town Council.

## **Section 2: Purpose of Community Surveys**

The Town of Round Hill (the Town) encourages active participation in town government. As part of these efforts, the Town conducts community surveys periodically to assess the opinions of residents in regards to the quality of town services, the quality of life in town, and attitudes toward immediate issues currently before the town government. Several community surveys were conducted to gather input from the community to be used in the update of this comprehensive plan.

## **Section 3: 2014 Community Survey**

The 2014 Community Survey was conducted in November 2014 as part of Phase 3 in developing the 2017 Comprehensive Plan. The Town received 223 responses to the survey. The survey categories were as follows:

- Living in Round Hill
- Character of Round Hill
- Downtown Round Hill
- Economic Development
- Public Services & Community Projects
- Town Identity

## **Section 4: 2014 Community Survey Results**

The results of the survey offered two main types of data for the Town to consider. First, survey respondents were asked to rank town services and amenities. This provided the Town with preferences to analyze the quality of town services as well as the quality of life for residents in Round Hill. Second, survey respondents were asked open-ended questions that provided an opportunity to write comments or suggestions for each question. These comments and suggestions offered town administration a closer look at what residents want and care about beyond numbers through specific and personal responses.

## **Section 5: 2015 Community Vision Meetings**

In late summer 2015, the Town of Round Hill hosted a series of meetings inviting members of the public to participate and share their vision of the future of Round Hill. These meetings were called "Community Vision Meetings." The meetings were held on three different dates to provide several opportunities for residents to participate.

The public was notified of the meetings through: signage, social media, the Town website, and the Town newsletter. Also, those people who had completed the 2014 Community Survey and

provided the Town with an email address were directly invited to attend the public input meetings.

The three meetings had a combined total of 130 attendees, with additional attendance from members of the Round Hill Town Council, Round Hill Planning Commission, and the Loudoun County Planning Department.

Each meeting featured a different set of exercises and highlighted the importance of working in smaller groups to encourage thoughtful conversation amongst the participants. For various exercises, the attendees were broken into smaller groups and asked to brainstorm and discuss a series of questions before submitting their answers.

### Summary of the Public Input Meetings & Surveys:

#### **August 11, 2015 – 1<sup>st</sup> Public Input Meeting (Attendance: 20 Residents)**

##### Exercises:

- History & Purpose of Comprehensive Plan
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats Analysis (SWOT)
- Visual Preference Survey:
  - Participants reviewed a variety of photos related to transportation, public space, housing, and commercial development elements
  - Participants voted if they liked, disliked or felt neutral about the photos
  - This exercise “paints a picture ”of what residents want to see in Round Hill

#### **September 15, 2015 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Input Meeting (Attendance: 70 Residents)**

##### Exercises:

- Hot Topics Discussion:
  - Participants discussed pros/cons of accessory dwellings, commuter lots and boundary line adjustments
- Center of Town Revitalization Exercise
- Eastern Commercial District Exercise

#### **September 23, 2015 – Online Public Input Survey (Participation: 112 Respondents)**

##### Questions:

- Hot Topics (accessory dwellings, commuter lots and boundary line adjustments)
- Center of Town Revitalization (size & scope of downtown revitalization, art studios and new commercial uses)
- Eastern Commercial District (types of shopping centers, allowing residential uses, demand for shopping center, alternatives to shopping center)

#### **October 13, 2015 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Public Input Meeting (Attendance: 40 Residents)**

##### Exercises:

- Review of Survey Results

- Comprehensive Plan Elements Discussion:
  - This exercise was set-up in a way that both residents who had not attended a meeting before or had come to earlier meetings could both add valuable input while learning what their neighbors were thinking about issues
- Open Public Comment

Staff reviewed the answers that workshop attendees provided and organized the comments and suggestions into categories. The answers expressed ideas that help define how residents view the future of Round Hill.

## **Section 6: 2015 Vision Report**

The results of the 2014 Community Survey and the 2015 Community Vision Meetings were combined to develop the 2015 Community Vision Report that served to provide input for the 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update. Combining community survey results with resident input gathered at meetings, allowed more focused strategies to be developed and implemented with a much higher rate of success because the ideas were built upon resident feedback.

# **PART 3: COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION**

## **Section 1: Town Newsletter**

The Town of Round Hill provides a town newsletter for all residents in the area. The newsletter contains information about programs and projects the town is working on and information about town events. The newsletter is mailed out with the utility bills. The town newsletter has opened the doors of communication with residents and has improved the availability of information to residents about town news.

## **Section 2: Town Website**

The new Town of Round Hill website was launched in February 2015. The new website that allows residents and visitors to find information about their local government, upcoming events and activities, communicate with town staff, and stay informed about the issues before boards and commissions. It also promotes public participation through advertising public meetings and volunteer opportunities.

## **Section 3: Town Facebook Page**

The Town Facebook Page is the town's social media outlet for posting real-time notices to the public about events, meetings, and important updates. Town staff will post items on both the town website and the Facebook page at the same time to reach more members of the public.