



Community Meetings Set #1 Summary

Community Meetings Overview

The first set of community meetings was held over three days at the following venues:

- ◆ **Fort Mitchell Senior Center** – Tuesday, September 8, 5:30–7:00 PM
- ◆ **Crawford Community Center** – Wednesday, September 9, 5:30–7:00 PM
- ◆ **Old Seale Courthouse** – Thursday, September 10, 5:30–7:00 PM

Each meeting included a brief presentation on the Comprehensive Plan process, followed by an open-house format with interactive activities, questionnaires, discussion boards, and opportunities for one-on-one conversations with the project team. The primary goals for the first set of meetings were to:

- ◆ Educate residents about the Comprehensive Plan and the planning process,
- ◆ Increase awareness of the project and opportunities for community members to participate throughout the process,
- ◆ Encourage participation and input from community members,
- ◆ Gather community perspectives on housing needs and preferences, and
- ◆ Gather input to help develop a community vision for Russell County's future.

In total, the three meetings were attended by about 89 community members, including residents, business owners, and elected County officials. The meetings were supported by County staff and facilitated by the Comprehensive Plan consultant team.

Meeting Advertisement

Meeting notification was provided through several different avenues, with announcements posted to Russell County's social media channels weeks prior to the meetings. County staff also canvassed businesses and business owners in Russell County to invite them to the meetings, and emails were sent out to all community members who previously signed up for the email notification list.

RUSSELL COUNTY 2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Join us for the *first* Community Meeting!

Welcome to
Russell County
Sweet Home Alabama

How Do You Want Russell County To Look in 20+ Years?

Learn more about the Comprehensive Plan process and how you can help shape the future of your community.

Pick the date and location that works best for you.		
Tuesday, September 8 5:30–7:00 PM Fort Mitchell Senior Center 540 Highway 165 Fort Mitchell, AL 36856	Wednesday, September 9 5:30–7:00 PM Crawford Community Center 5 AL-169 Phenix City, AL 36870	Thursday, September 10 5:30–7:00 PM Old Seale Courthouse 5 Jackson St Seale, AL 36875

Activities | Kid-Friendly | Snacks & Refreshments | Accessible

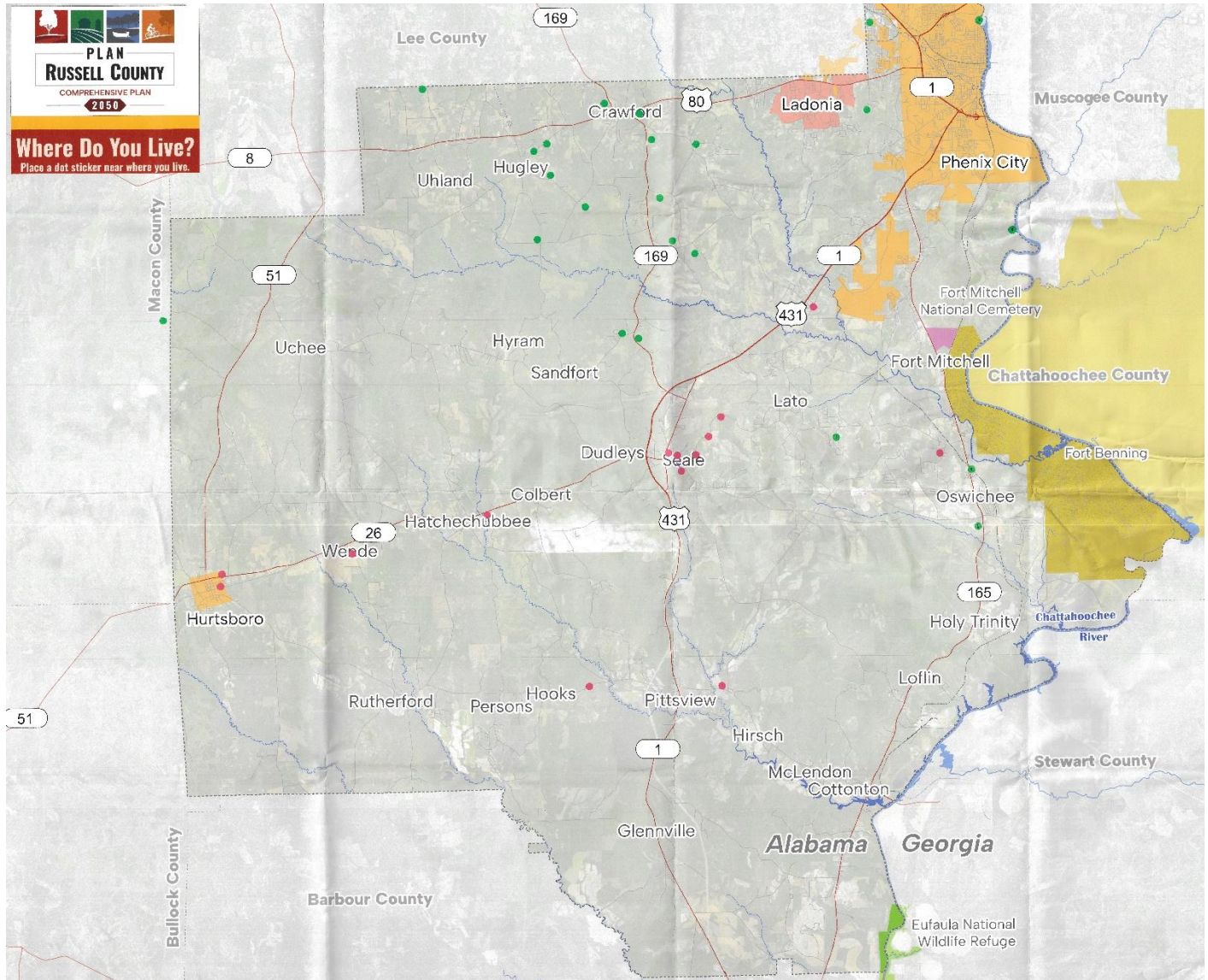
To learn more or if you have any questions, please visit www.PlanRussellCounty2050.com or email us at RussellCountyCP@matrixdesigngroup.com.

Reasonable Accommodations: Russell County ensures that all public meetings are accessible to individuals with disabilities. If you require special accommodations (e.g., auxiliary aids, sign language interpreters, or alternative formats), please contact the County Commission Office at (334) 298-6426 or info@russellcountyal.org at least 72 hours prior to the meeting so arrangements can be made.

Sign-in, Comment Cards, and “Where Do You Live?” Map Activities

Attendees signed in at the entrance to all community meetings, providing their email addresses to stay updated on the project. Emails will be sent periodically throughout the Plan process to notify community members of project updates and invitations for upcoming community events. Participants were also given a trifold fact sheet, comment card, and QR code for the project website.

Participants were invited to share where they live on a large-scale map, by placing a colored dot sticker. This activity helped the project team understand where participants were coming from for each meeting. This activity was available throughout the night in addition to the other interactive boards. While attendees came from throughout Russell County, the greatest participation was from the Crawford area, with additional representation from Seale, Hurtsboro, Fort Mitchell, and surrounding rural communities.



Community Questionnaires

The project team prepared three different questionnaires for participants to complete, focused on:

- ◆ What the community is looking forward to in 2050
- ◆ Housing specific preferences and perspectives
- ◆ Youth engagement (participants under age 18)

During the meetings, 41 participants completed the community questionnaire and 25 completed the housing questionnaire. No youth questionnaires were completed.

All questionnaires are also available on the project website www.PlanRussellCounty2050.com and will be available for completion until December 31, 2026. Ultimately, the results from the community meetings will be combined with the online results and summarized following the closing of the questionnaires.

Presentation

Each meeting included a presentation introducing the project team, explaining the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan update, and outlining opportunities for public participation. The presentation also provided an overview of preliminary project elements, the planning process, engagement opportunities, and next steps. Time was provided for attendee questions and discussion, and the consultant team and County staff were available throughout the evening for questions and discussion.

A copy of the presentation is available to download on the project website.



Vision Statement, Boards, and Maps

The primary input activities were conducted through large boards that provided project and vision statement information, asked for input on housing perspectives and multi-family preferences, and gave attendees an option to note opportunities and challenges based on the elements of the Plan.

Vision Statement Boards

The vision statement boards asked participants to share what they love about Russell County and what they would like the County to be like in 2050:

Vision Board One: What Do You Love About Russell County?

Participants identified Russell County's rural character, natural beauty, open space, wildlife, and strong sense of community as some of the qualities they value most about the County.



What Do You Love About Russell County?

Preservation of trees, wildlife.

Its home!

I enjoy that housing is spaced out enough and that wildlife has not been completely driven out.

The Community feel in Crawford.

We love the green space.

We love the community engagement.

Privacy - living on lg tract of land!
Enjoy the wildlife

I Love the wildlife... the fact that houses are on acreage and no subdivisions. Love the growth of Sheriff Substation, Marathon, Park, Community Center & Holiday events.

Keep the forests - trees! X2

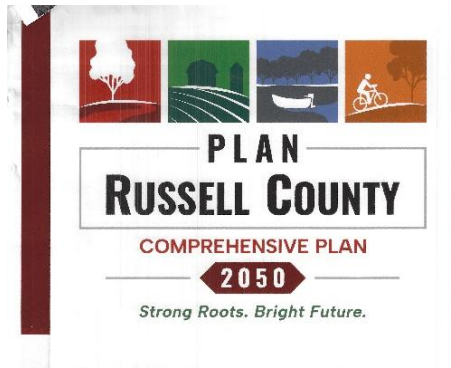
Being out of town limits, wildlife & trees

Self sustaining (opportunity)

the greenery!

Vision Board Two: What Do You Want Russell County to Be Like in 2050?

Looking ahead to 2050, participants expressed interest in expanded recreational opportunities, youth activities, parks, trails, community facilities, and educational attractions. There was also a strong inclination toward economic growth and community revitalization that supports local businesses and preserves historic communities.



What Do You Want Russell County To Be Like in 2050?

✓ Have all dirt Roads paved esp. Where there are at least 10 or more houses.

✓ Grocery Stores - yes! * Kroger or Publix (Not Aldi)

✓ Bed and Breakfast

Bank in Crawford * and a drugstore

Hallmark Community

✓ Internet Accessible in ~~the~~ ALL Areas - Affordable! Fiber

Post Office OR Drop Box in Crawford ✓ love this!

Structure Guidelines for Property.

More consideration by individuals to NOT LITTER at roadways.

✓ Keep City in the City

Fiber optic for cable & internet.

Housing Perspective and Preferences Boards

The housing-specific boards were used as an interactive and visual supplement to the housing perspectives questionnaire and helped spark discussion between residents, community leaders, and the project team on housing needs and future housing opportunities across Russell County.

The first board introduced participants to various multifamily and infill housing types and asked which options may be appropriate for Russell County in the future. Of the five housing types presented, Cottage Clusters (8 votes) and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) (5 votes) received the most support. This suggests a general preference for lower-density housing options that provide flexibility while maintaining larger lot sizes and the County's rural character. Participants also provided written comments, including suggestions to create developer incentives for affordable housing, support growth along the Highway 165 corridor where additional housing demand is anticipated, and protect agricultural lands and large-lot residential development as growth occurs.

The second housing board invited community members to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements regarding housing options and affordability. Statements receiving the strongest support were:

- "There is a growing need for more housing options tailored to seniors in the community." (7 votes)
- "Russell county needs more housing options tailored to young families, professionals, and the workforce populations." (6 votes)
- "There is a need for more housing options that support multigenerational living (ADUs, duplex, triplex)." (4 votes)
- "Allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) could help increase the local housing supply." (4 votes)

The statement that received the greatest level of disagreement was:

- "Current housing options in Russell County are generally high quality." (4 votes)

Overall, the housing exercise indicates a desire for additional housing options that serve residents at different stages of life, including seniors, workforce households, young families, and multigenerational households. Participants generally supported smaller-scale infill housing options, such as ADUs and cottage-style developments, while also expressing concerns regarding the quality and availability of existing housing stock.

It is important to note that housing feedback varied by location. During the community meeting at the Old Seale Courthouse, participants did not add any additional votes to the housing preference boards. However, the project team engaged many attendees in detailed conversations while discussing the housing boards and reviewing questionnaire responses. Participants in Seale were generally more likely to express concerns about higher-density residential development and emphasized the importance of preserving the County's rural character. Several attendees supported maintaining agricultural lands, open space, and large-lot development patterns that they believe contribute to Russell County's unique identity and quality of life.



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What Types of Multifamily Housing Would Work In Russell County?

Place a dot sticker next to the housing type that you would like to see in Russell County. You may select multiple options.



Accessory Dwelling Units

Small rental homes on the same lot as a primary residence

Four green dot stickers are placed on the paper background for this category.



Duplex

Two attached units, often under single ownership, with at least one often rented

Two green dot stickers are placed on the paper background for this category.



Triplex

Three attached units, typically under single ownership, often rental units

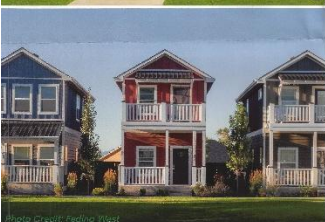
Two green dot stickers are placed on the paper background for this category.



Cottage Cluster

Individually owned small homes grouped around shared outdoor space

Seven green dot stickers are placed on the paper background for this category.



Modular

A factory-built structure, often under single ownership, built on a permanent foundation

Two green dot stickers are placed on the paper background for this category.

Write in your additional idea(s) here:

Leave them
from hand

Entirely new
single detached
new home, modern
new construction
planned housing

Don't afford
and buying
Don't have
buying plan
better job

I don't think
there is space
the feedback. I
am hearing is
no apartment
development
etc. They want to
single family house
in already built

Don't like
challenge!
Don't think
house for
single detached
house

don't like
to be in
driving down
there is no
space

← Enlarged on
next page

leave Farm
land
Farm land

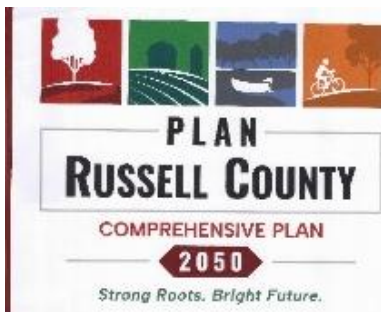
Incentivize
developers
for small affordable
homes for
middle income or
lower

Infrastructure on
Hwy 165 does not
support additional
Citizens in the numbers
that would use
multifamily housing

I can not afford
any housing
and I have 2
jobs Russell
County needs
better jobs

I am a local
Realtor in Seale.
The feedback I
am hearing is
no apartments,
duplexes, rental,
etc. They want nice
single family homes
on acreage
Tammy
Woods

Unclear of gov's
role in determining
housing types since
there is no zoning



Housing Perspectives

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
There are diverse housing types distributed across Russell County.			
Current housing options in Russell County are generally high-quality.			
Russell County needs more housing options tailored to young families, professionals, and the workforce population.			
There is a need for more housing options that support multigenerational living (ADUs, duplex, triplex).			
There is a growing need for more housing options tailored to seniors in the community.			
More affordable housing options are needed for low-income residents.			
Russell County should focus on developing more missing middle housing (duplexes, triplexes, cottage courtyard etc.).			
Allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) could help increase the local housing supply.			

Issues/Opportunities Boards

The community provided input on opportunities and challenges related to the Comprehensive Plan elements through a series of interactive Boards. Participants were originally asked to use green sticky notes for opportunities and pink sticky notes for challenges. To simplify participation, the project team later transitioned to a single sticky note color to increase ease of use for participants. As a result, the color of individual notes does not always indicate whether a comment represents an opportunity or a challenge.

The discussion boards were organized around the eight Comprehensive Plan elements:

- Parks and Recreation
- Natural Resources, Conservation, and Resilience
- Land Use and Development
- Fort Benning Compatibility
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Public Facilities and Services

This interactive activity allowed residents to highlight community strengths, areas for improvement, and future priorities. The project team also documented participant comments and discussions to help inform future recommendations.

Comments emphasized preserving Russell County's rural character and wildlife, protecting agricultural lands and low-density development patterns, and avoiding development that would cause Seale or other rural communities to resemble more rapidly developing areas such as Fort Mitchell. Participants also identified needs for additional parks, youth activities, trails, an agricultural or equestrian facility, improved roadway safety and capacity, public transportation options, affordable internet service, stronger emergency response services, higher-paying jobs, grocery access, and carefully planned housing growth. Several comments specifically referenced Highway 165, U.S. Highway 431, and the need to coordinate transportation and infrastructure improvements with future development.

An image of the four Issues and Opportunity Boards is shown on page 11, while sticky notes are transcribed on pages 12 and 13.

Issues/Opportunities

Add your comments under each topic, using a pink note for an issue/challenge or a green note for an opportunity/benefit

Parks and Recreation	Natural Resources, Conservation, and Resilience
Need more flexibility 4-H/FFA complex Need more flexibility 4-H/FFA complex Need more flexibility 4-H/FFA complex	We live here because of Russell Wildlife Country Living We live here because of Russell Wildlife Country Living We live here because of Russell Wildlife Country Living

Issues/Opportunities

Add your comments under each topic, using a pink note for an issue/challenge or a green note for an opportunity/benefit

Land Use and Development	Fort Benning Compatibility
Don't want to become Ft Mitchell Walking trails / biking / hiking More turn lanes for traffic More local events	Don't want to become Ft Mitchell Walking trails / biking / hiking More turn lanes for traffic More local events

Issues/Opportunities

Add your comments under each topic, using a pink note for an issue/challenge or a green note for an opportunity/benefit

Housing	Economic Development
Acquire requirements for homes! Acquire requirements for homes! Acquire requirements for homes!	No better jobs high paying (remote) No better jobs high paying (remote) No better jobs high paying (remote)

Issues/Opportunities

Add your comments under each topic, using a pink note for an issue/challenge or a green note for an opportunity/benefit

Transportation and Infrastructure	Public Facilities and Services
Don't want to become Ft Mitchell Walking trails / biking / hiking More turn lanes for traffic More local events	Don't want to become Ft Mitchell Walking trails / biking / hiking More turn lanes for traffic More local events

Sticky notes are transcribed on next two pages

Parks and Recreation

- "Need horse facility / 4-H / FFA complex / Boy/Girl Scout!"
- "Keeping parks + walking trails maintained + CLEAN; i.e., trash + litter free"
- "Better parks for kids, little ones Hurtsboro-basically no park"
- "Great job w/ what we have and the ideas to come."

Natural Resources, Conservation, and Resilience

- "Ethical + human development. We have so much wildlife that could be driven out."
- "We live here because of rural wildlife + country living!"
- "Keeping the rural roadways clean of debris and trash."

Land Use and Development

- "A community or rec center in Russell Co."
- "Don't want Seale to become Fort Mitchell."
- "Don't want Seale to become Ft. Mitchell."
- "More kid events."
- "More turn lanes for traffic."
- "Need to retain some of the rural environment near our developed areas."
- "Overdeveloping our area is concerning!"
- "Tear down the gas station."
- "Walking trails / biking / hiking."

Fort Benning Compatibility

- "Reopen the old back gate at Fort Benning to help alleviate traffic on 165."

Housing

- "Acreage requirements for houses. Single-family homes, not apartments or large subdivisions."
- "Acre requirements for homes!"

Economic Development

- "No data centers."
- "We need a grocery store that isn't Dollar General or Renfroes."
- "Better jobs, high-paying (remote): A.I., Tech, White collar."

Transportation and Infrastructure

- "Hwy 165 & 431 are both dangerous. 431 needs the speed limit lowered from the industrial [unclear] into town. 165 needs limited sight-distance advising signs."
- "169–431 Hwy needs east/west lanes to deter traffic going straight across. Too much traffic in area."
- "Control traffic coming on and going off 165."
- "Some kind of bus or shuttle for community members | perhaps teens can use public transportation."
- "165 is 2-lane; needs to be main 4-lane from 431 to end."

Public Facilities and Services

- "Internet service provider options at affordable cost."
- "Enhance emergency first responders, fire & EMS services."

Comment Card Responses

Over a dozen comment cards were received throughout the community meetings, providing community members with an additional chance to leave input anonymously.

Responses highlighted several priorities for Russell County, including interest in expanding recreational amenities, such as an equestrian event center and accessible playgrounds.

Participants also identified a need for additional educational resources, assistance for historic businesses, and services to support individuals experiencing homelessness.

Several comments also focused on economic development and community growth, with an emphasis on the need for additional jobs, business investment, and housing opportunities, particularly in communities such as Seale and Fort Mitchell. Participants also noted infrastructure and public facility concerns, such as public safety capacity, volunteer fire department resources, and whether existing water, sewer, and electrical infrastructure can support future development.

Additional Engagement – Labor Day Fair

Although the community meetings were the primary focus of the week, the project team also conducted outreach at the Labor Day Fair at the Old Seale Courthouse grounds on September 7. A total of 322 people engaged with the project team by asking questions, discussing the Comprehensive Plan and potential issues and opportunities, or receiving a brochure or giveaway. Attendees also shared ideas on two vision statement activity boards about Russell County's future and what they value about their community.

Common responses to **What Do You Want Russell County To Be Like in 2050?** included more outdoor activities, a grocery store, a Hallmark-style community, and paved dirt roads.

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What Do You Want Russell County To Be Like in 2050?

More hiking + biking Trails
Need a new place
Where kids can play
When they are off
(Skate rink, bowling, pool)

REDO
RIDGE
ROAD

needs more
sidewalks &
for kids!!

have wetland &
grassland/~~prairie~~ prairie
restoration projects

good people
clean up
community

Arctic/Wildlife
Center or Museum ← this
w/ interactive areas
for kids to learn
about the local
wildlife & water systems

less trash on road

Equestrian Event Center
Rodeo, 4H, FFA

A community pools

archery team

Things
to
see
in the
Court
House

Sidewalks
on Dobbs Dr
near central high.

Have easy
access to info
for GRANTS
for Historic
Buildings open in the 1920's

MORE
COMPUTERS
IN SCHOOLS

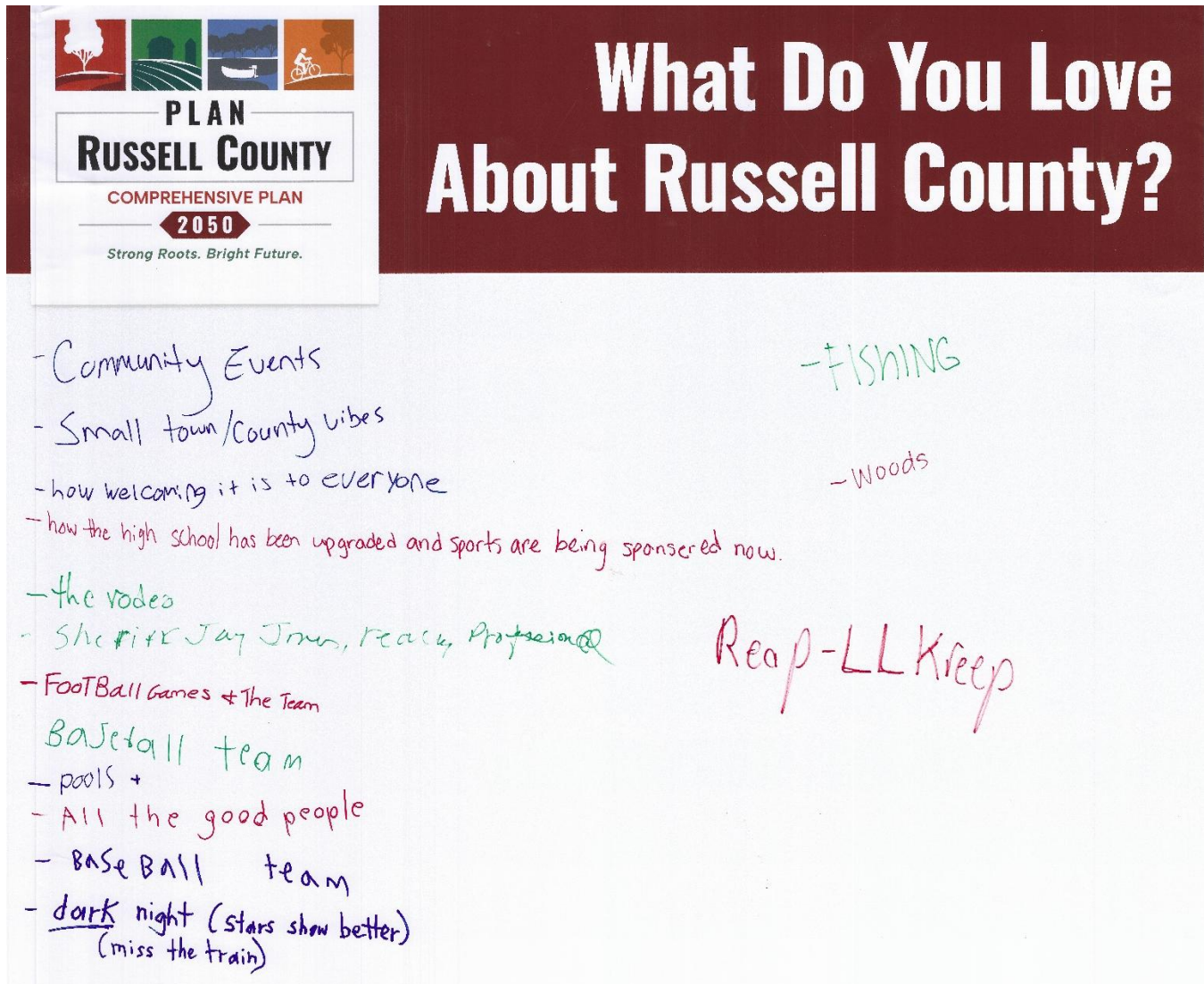
Park
A Big community that
comes to
Safe + Affordable housing for
first time buyers.
young people.

Call centers / Large companies
w/ clerical work

Revitalize small
communities -
Serk, Pittman,
Huntsboro
Keep historical sites/buildings

Archery team

Common responses to **What Do You Love About Russell County?** included the community feel, forests and green space, and wildlife.



Synopsis

The first round of community meetings for the Russell County Comprehensive Plan successfully engaged residents, business leaders, and elected officials across three locations to help shape the vision for the County's future. Through presentations, questionnaires, interactive boards, and pop-up event outreach, community members shared what they value most about Russell County, including its rural, small-town character, natural beauty and recreation, and strong sense of community. While residents generally recognized the need for thoughtful growth and investment, there was a strong desire to preserve the County's rural character, sense of community, and quality of life for future generations.

Throughout the week, community feedback highlighted several priorities for the future, such as expanding recreational opportunities, improving infrastructure and public services and facilities, strengthening economic development actions, and increasing access to infill housing options.

Next Steps

Vision Statement

The project team will consolidate comments from the first round of engagement to develop a vision statement that can help guide the rest of the Comprehensive Plan, This will also include input from County staff and steering committee members.

Existing Conditions Report

The project team is developing an Existing Conditions Report that will provide information on demographic and housing trends and summaries of County services that will provide information for use in developing the Comprehensive Plan.

Community Meetings Set #2

The next set of community meetings will be held in early 2027. These meetings will focus on getting public input on draft goals and policies and the future land use map.