

City Council candidates on the city's comprehensive plan  
written by Newspark Team | November 3, 2011



In the run up to Election Day on November 8

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Charlottesville Tomorrow

will once again mail out our in-depth nonpartisan voter guide, featuring exclusive one-on-one interviews  
with all the candidates for

Albemarle County Board of Supervisors

and

Charlottesville City Council

. In the weeks before the election, we will feature one to two questions a day so that citizens like you  
can compare candidates' answers and make an informed choice November 8

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*Charlottesville Tomorrow's*

*2011 Election Center*

*website features links to the full written transcript and audio of candidate interviews, as well as links to  
videos of candidate forums, copies of our 2011 voter guide, information on where to vote, and more. All  
the following passages are excerpts from our interviews.*

*CITY COUNCIL, FOURTH IN A SERIES*



What changes, if any, would you make to the city's Comprehensive Plan?

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Scott Bandy (I) - Challenger

I've done some studying on that now. To be honest I can't say whether, you know, my knowledge whether the current council has updated that or if there has been an update, but certainly I would not want to make any grandstanding or dramatic changes. Any changes would have to be gradual, subtle, acceptable of course.

One thing that I know for sure would affect it, they talk about improving the sewer infrastructure in that. The residents of the Fry's Spring Neighborhood Association are interested in a rezoning of that area of town south of the railroad tracks from the current residential zoning status to an R1, I believe they said R1, status. That would impact the sewer collection basin. That would hopefully reduce the overwhelming runoff from the storm drainage going into the basin. Hopefully it will add to lowering costs and trying to improve not just storm drainage but also add an emphasis for getting the sewer lines improved, replaced. There's a lot of mess and there's a lot of things to do.

Some priorities, the water plan, phew. What a mess. That is one thing that has been on the city and the county's plate for a long time. It needs to be addressed. You can't keep sweeping things under the carpet. Bring it out into the light of the day. Address it. Reach some sort of, not just compromise, but some sort of tenable active plan and go with it because there are just too many issues and they are piling up and we need these issues addressed.

Brandon Collins (I) - Challenger

... [The comprehensive plan] does not necessarily include ... how we deal with new roads, or our water supply, and how we protect natural spaces. There's a little bit of lip service in the comprehensive plan about that. On the whole when we look at the environment, when we look at jobs, when we look at housing, our economy, these things need to find some kind of way to interlock inside the comprehensive plan and then we can move on it.

When you look at transportation in the comprehensive plan, there's some good ideas, as I mentioned—Park and Ride, direct service shuttles—but nothing has become of that. When we look at housing, I think we need to completely rework that and to be very clear that our mission is to provide affordable housing in a way that the market's not going to drive up rents further than they are. We really need to have a place in there for transition points between—say homelessness into [single room occupancy units], from SRO's into public housing, from public housing into renting and owning a home. Those transition points are really the sticking point and why we are not really getting anywhere ...

The same goes for economy. Inside the plan, we place a lot of hope on incentives to businesses but I think on the whole that's not necessarily working out ... We need to have a much more aggressive approach on the economy and when we are looking for a business to come to Charlottesville, we need to identify where and what kind of business we want, how many people we want to employ when we are trying to lure or get business to come here, and make sure they are meeting our needs instead of the

other way around. ...

One point back to housing, and I'm not sure it's actually in the comprehensive plan, but this 5 percent of units being deemed affordable for certain projects, I think we need to change that in the near term to be at least 50 percent. Five percent is nothing and we shouldn't grant any kind of incentives for that, it's really a giveaway. ...

I think we need to rework a lot of the comprehensive plan, and you can go through it, and I could list everything on every portion of it, but we are not going to do that today.

Bob Fenwick (I) - Challenger

Well, right now we have plans coming out of our ears. What we need are fewer plans and more action. If we want a greener community, we should take action to make it so—dredging. If a city councilor says trees are important, then he can take actions that promote that—don't clear tens of thousands of trees in the Ragged Mountain Natural Area.

If we want less congestion in the city, we should make it so. Free bus transportation.

If we want a business-friendly city, we should make it so. Let realtors put their open house signs in medium strips of roads and spark some sales. I recognize plans are important but what good is a plan if it is mere words crafted only to garner votes.

Kathy Galvin (D) - Challenger

... I have looked over the city's history and I think in 2006 there was a design day where all the neighborhoods were asked to be part of a process to identify strengths, and weaknesses, and goals, for their community, their smaller community, and nothing was done in terms of a next step, i.e. what is the vision? ...

Second in 2009, the Weldon Cooper Center did a management efficiency study of the city and one of the interesting observations that they made was that there seemed to be a lack of analytical mapping in the city that would begin to start both helping us assess what our needs are as well as then illustrate, visualize for the public what we could be doing.

... [A]s part of a comprehensive plan redo, I would love to move towards a more small area planning approach where we are strategic about where we need to do our small area plans ... I think if we pick key corridors in our city to focus on, along with the straddling neighborhoods for example, we can start to begin to get that visualization that we need ... It's a rule of thumb for good walkable communities is that there is a park ... within a half a mile or a quarter mile walking distance of every residence. That would give us a tool a yardstick to measure how well we are providing park space ...

I'd just like to point out too that there has been a lot of issues with the development community and neighborhoods. ... One of those rules was the Planned Unit Development. You see all over the city small parcels that have been developed under the PUD overlay district ... [b]ut if you've got such small land areas, then there's no room for open space and all the public sees is the lack of open space and they see high density [housing] pockets that don't seem to make sense in the middle of very low density single

family detached [homes]. [We need] transitional zones from those areas down to the existing single family detached [housing] areas. ...

Satyendra Huja (D) - Incumbent

The city and county are now jointly developing a comprehensive plan for each jurisdiction. As you know, the comprehensive plan is a policy guide for the future of development and the maintenance of our community. I would pay special attention to neighborhood integrity, development of corridors, and mixed-use development, so that we can achieve the density we need as well as have mixed-use in the corridors in the city.

Dede Smith (D) - Challenger

This will be an important issue for the upcoming city council as the comprehensive plan will be reviewed and updated. What I would really like to see is an assurance that the separate plans, the separate issues in the comprehensive plan, are looked at comprehensively together. I'd like to see a matrix, whereby a decision, perhaps if it's in development, that part of that decision takes into account what impact does that have on education, what impact does that have on neighborhoods, what impact does that have on the environment, and be sure that we are really making all of our plans, as it relates to the comprehensive plans and all of our decisions, that we look at them in a very comprehensive way.

I think too often what we see are unintended consequences for looking independently in one arena, that we don't anticipate the impact, say on the schools, that's one people can relate to. So as we are reviewing... and again with the One Community grant where we are looking at really working closely regionally, I think that will be really important to integrate into our comprehensive plan.

Andrew Williams (I) - Challenger

First I would look into trimming the fat. It always goes back to trimming the budget, it always goes back to looking at operations, and ultimately making sure that everything is consistent with Charlottesville's vision and looking at it basically just itemizing the plan, and making sure that it's consistent with the vision. And if we need to revisit a few things on the comprehensive plan, then that's what we need to do. And Charlottesville along with our region needs to be self-sustainable, especially in hard economic times. I believe that we have the potential and the capacity to support ourselves and not be fully dependent on external circumstances. We're on the way to being a world-class city, but to have a comprehensive plan you need someone with a comprehensive approach. I think that's myself in this case.