

First Public Input Workshop

The first public input meeting was held on June 5, 2023 at Jefferson High School. Forty-two community members attended the meeting with an additional four community members participating remotely via Zoom. The staff began the night by giving a brief presentation on the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan, the community's role in the process, and what was to be accomplished that night.

Small Group Exercise

Five groups of eight-to-ten attendees were formed to brainstorm their individual thoughts on the following questions:

1. What are the current and future strengths of Jefferson County?
2. What are current and future weaknesses of Jefferson County?
3. What are the opportunities for Jefferson County?

Each participant was given three minutes per question to write down their ideas on notes (one idea per note). A group leader then posted each note from their group members to corresponding larger papers representing strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities that were posted on the walls. Prior to any discussion, participants were asked to vote on what they thought were the most important ideas that their group had written down by placing up to three color-coded stickers on the ideas listed for each question. Participants then had time to discuss the top-rated ideas in their small group.

Large Group Exercise

Each small group presented three ideas that they thought were important to the larger group. Participants were given time to walk around and read over the ideas posted by the other groups. Participants were then given three red-colored stickers to place on any ideas in any group that they felt were most critical to Jefferson County.

Visioning and Challenges Individual Survey

At the conclusion of the large group exercise, participants were given an online or paper survey with the following, open-ended questions:

1. What do you believe are the most important topics your group discussed?
2. What are three challenges affecting Jefferson County now and into the future?
3. In your own words, describe your vision for Jefferson County in the year 2045.

BY THE NUMBERS



- There were 42 total participants in person and 4 participants joined over Zoom
- The meeting stayed within the planned two hours
- Five small groups with 8-10 participants were formed to brainstorm ideas
- Cookies were served!

TRENDS FROM PUBLIC INPUT MEETING: STRENGTHS

#1: Natural beauty and open spaces

- Mountains, rivers, scenic views

#2: Historical spaces/sites

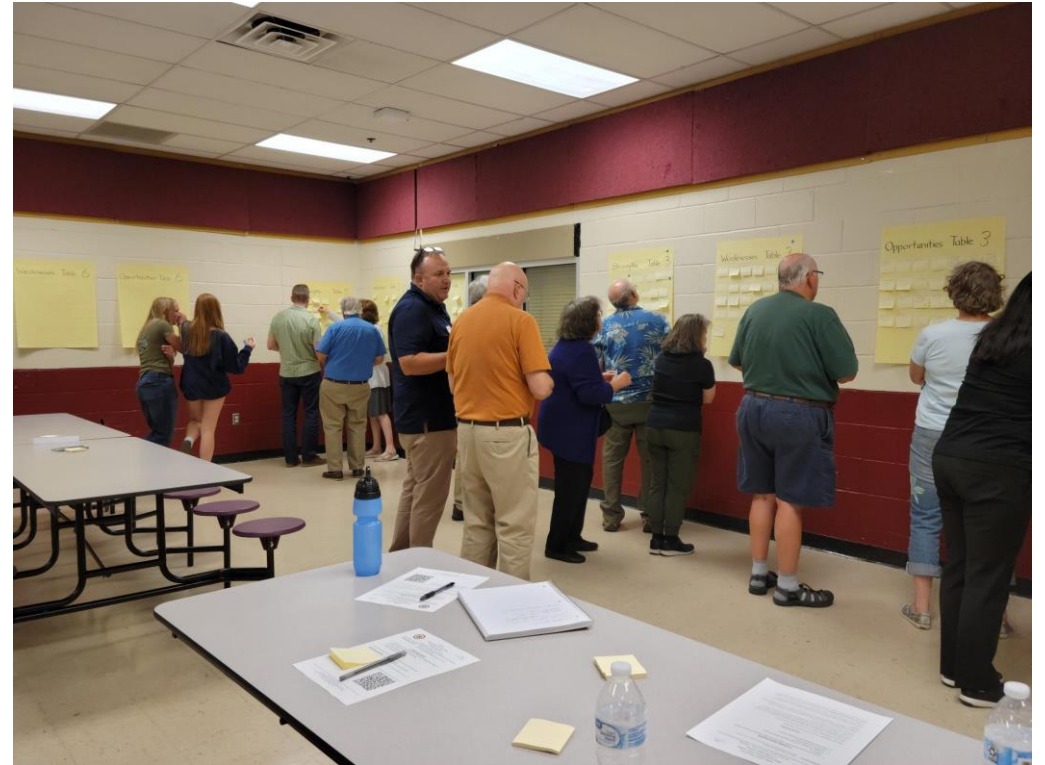
- Downtowns, battlefields

#3: Close proximity to DC Metro Area

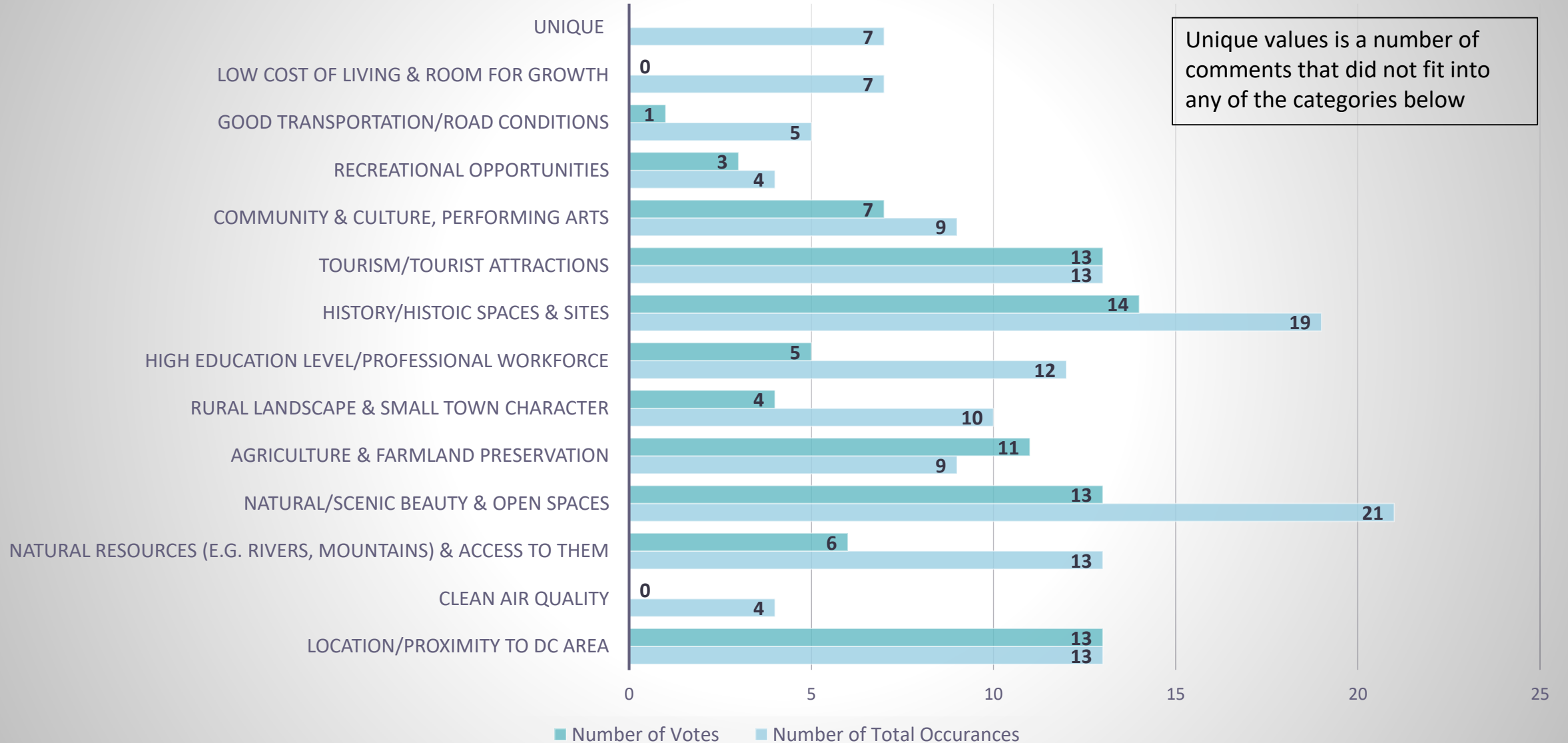
- Train access and commuting distance

#4: Tourism (historic, agritourism, and cultural)

- National Park, natural resources



Jefferson County Strengths: Trending Category Occurances and Votes



TRENDS FROM PUBLIC INPUT MEETING: WEAKNESSES

#1: Too many houses being built

- Residential growth is outstripping the county's infrastructure capacity

#2: Need for improved infrastructure

- Roads, water, and school improvements

#3: Mindset surrounding local politics and choices

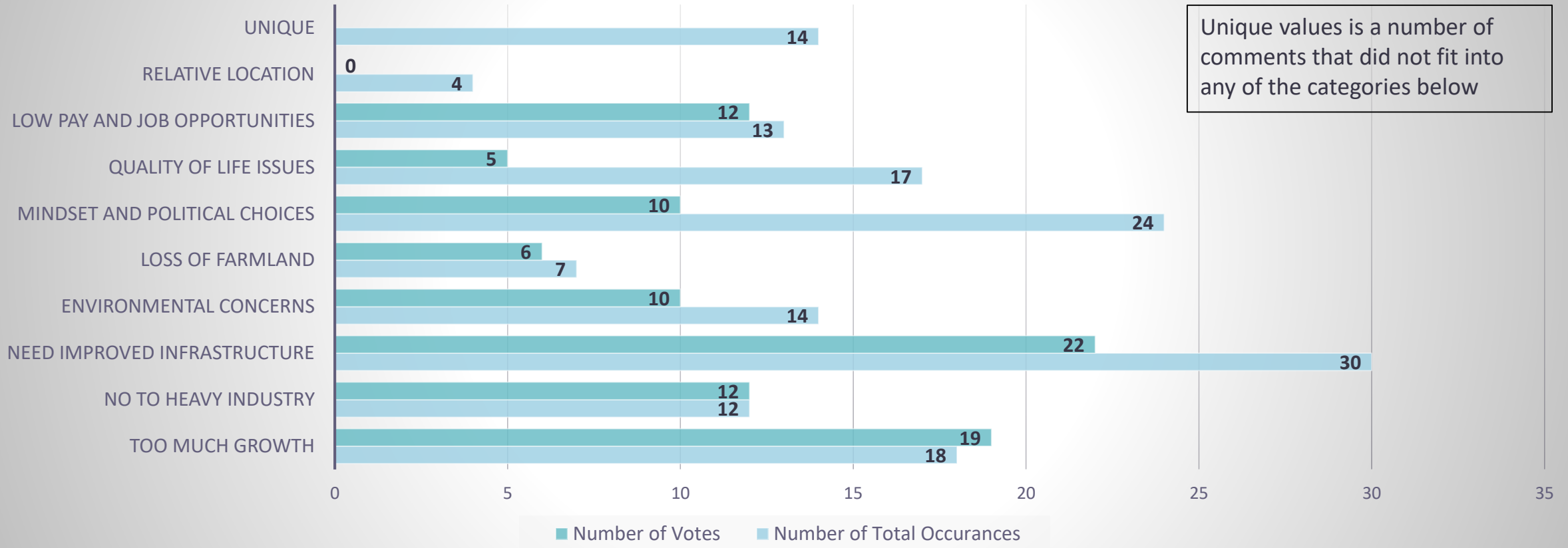
- Divisiveness, lack of dedication to decisions made by local commissions

#4: Income opportunities

- Public servants earn considerably less than neighboring states
- Need better job opportunities within Jefferson County, especially to keep young people



Jefferson County Weaknesses: Trending Category Occurances and Votes



TRENDS FROM PUBLIC INPUT MEETING: OPPORTUNITIES

#1: Expand and Improve Public Transit Systems

- Bike paths, Bus routes

#2: Responsible Development

- Infrastructure, communities, green space

#3: Preserving Natural Resources

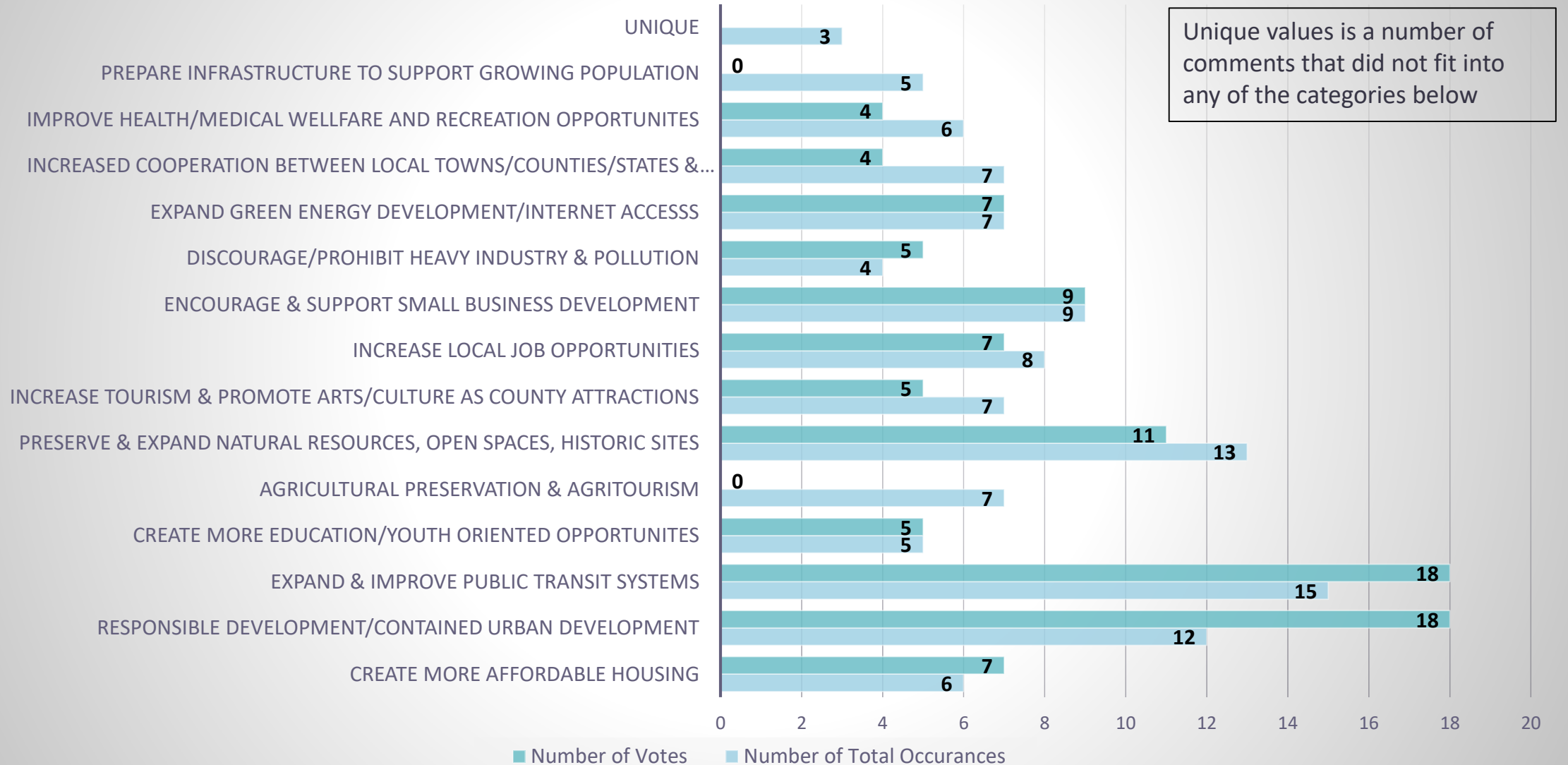
- Conservation measures, expanding green space

#4: Encourage & Support Small Businesses

- Attract tech-related jobs



Jefferson County Opportunities: Trending Category Occurances and Votes



TRENDS FROM PUBLIC INPUT MEETING: HIGHLIGHTS

Strength:

- The natural attractiveness of the county – it is “Almost Heaven”
 - Very strong agreement on this topic

Weakness:

- There is too much development without expanding the necessary infrastructure
 - Very strong focus on roads and clustering development in or near urban areas
 - Second strongest focus was on limiting heavy industry

Opportunity:

- Reinstatement of higher impact fees
 - Second strongest focus was on the need for Responsible Growth
 - Jefferson County should avoid the mistakes of Northern VA

These are summaries of the comments collected during the meeting

CONCLUDING INDIVIDUAL SURVEYS

“What do you believe are the most important topics your group discussed?” Respondents have stated;

- Preserve open space
- Planning growth around infrastructure/municipalities
- Unique county history

Half of all the respondents mentioned preserving natural beauty and controlled growth in the county. Other notable topics were county history, tourism, and heavy industry in the county.

*These are summaries of the comments
collected during the meeting*



CONCLUDING INDIVIDUAL SURVEYS

“In your own words, describe your vision for Jefferson County in the year 2045.” Respondents have stated;

- No additional heavy industry
- Infrastructure that meets the needs of the community
- Green/open spaces, clean air, and safe groundwater

Top results were Industry, Community, and Green with 30% of respondents using these words. Of the three concluding survey questions the Vision in 2045 question had the widest spread of results. Education, development, and tourism were secondary points that were brought up by around 16% of participants.

These are summaries of the comments collected during the meeting

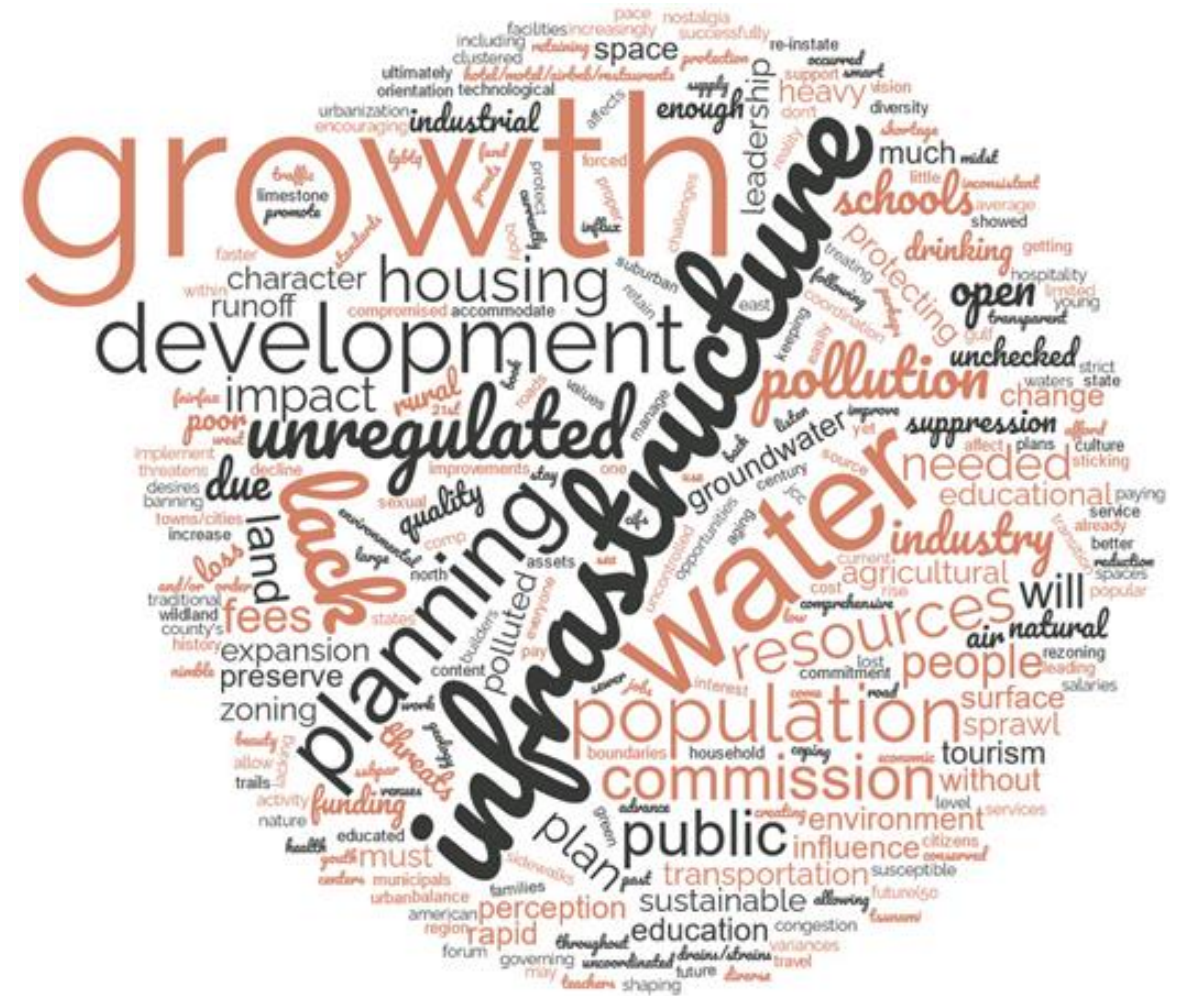


CONCLUDING INDIVIDUAL SURVEYS

“What are three challenges affecting the County now and into the future?” Respondents have stated;

- Jefferson County is seeing large growth
- There has been poor/uncontrolled planning of developments which has created sprawl
- Infrastructure has not kept up
- The Comprehensive Plan has not been followed

*These are summaries of the comments
collected during the meeting*



1st Public Input Meeting: Summary of Individual Table Presentations

Date: 06/06/2023

Table 1: Jefferson County should focus on historic resources and natural resources and beauty as its strength, both preserving it and capitalizing on it by attracting tourists. In response to the decline in agricultural uses, the County needs to managing growth and improving job opportunities within the county in a manner that improves traffic issues and crime rates. The county should also focus on improving the tax base so that public service workers and teachers can have increased pay to better afford living and teaching in the county. Jefferson County should also look to increase its broadband internet access, and to attract and retain talent in its workforce population.

Table 2: Jefferson County should encourage future residential and retail growth to be located within the municipalities' urban growth area. Protecting and preserving the rural landscape and scenic corridors of the county is important. The county should also follow its current comprehensive plan with greater strictness, and be guided mainly by it when updating the new plan.

Table 3: A main strength of Jefferson County lies in the quality of life of its residents and the cultural, historic and environmental diversities and experiences the County offers. It is important to protect and develop the cultures within the county. One of the county's weaknesses is the threat of industrial growth and the pollution that accompanies it, which is concerning to the county's residents. Jefferson County has the opportunity to improve its public transit systems for local and commuter travel, and to improve the internet access and connectivity across the county.

Table 4: Jefferson County has a weakness in that its natural resources cannot support future development. The county's main strength is its many historical sites and landmarks, and its rural character and resources. In the future, the county should take the opportunity to preserve its historic and agricultural resources.

Table 5: Natural resources are a main strength of Jefferson County, as are its conservation programs. The county should take the opportunity to protect its rural and natural resources from unchecked urban sprawl. The County needs to reinstitute the Impact Fee program to support infrastructure such as sewer, water and schools. The county's weaknesses are that its infrastructure cannot support development and there is not a supportive system or suitable tax base for sustaining small businesses. The county must improve the tax base and increase tourism to historic, agricultural, recreational and natural resources. The county is also lacking activities for its youth, and so should take the opportunity to create new draws for young people

to stay in the county. The County also needs to develop low income housing opportunities especially for teachers and long-time residents who cannot afford the new house prices.

Overall, the main points drawn from the presentation of individual table groups was that the county's main strength is its natural and historic beauty and resources, and the group consensus was that this should mainly be preserved and/or utilized to encourage tourism and small businesses.

Several weaknesses mentioned in common were the tax base, development in rural areas, and lack of employment/youth activities within the county.

The most agreed-upon opportunities for the county were improving internet connectivity, the tax base, and preservation of natural resources and rural landscapes.

Red Dot Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities Analysis

The numbers indicate the number of times each statement or category of statements was selected by a participant as being something of most importance across all of the groups.

Strengths

Nature and the Natural beauty of the area - the mountains, rivers, rural feel; it's a physically attractive area – 14

Availability of cultural activities such as the events held at Shepherd (the CATF and others) and at the Old Opera House – 3

Location relative to the DMV and the connections that location allows – 2

Shepherd University and the community it provides – 1

Historic sites – 1

Weaknesses

Too much growth (especially new housing developments) without the necessary infrastructure – leading to crowded schools, inadequate roads for the amount of traffic – 11

Rockwool effect – don't want heavy industry/smokestack industries – this is the wrong kind of economic development – 8

Limited opportunities – not enough professional jobs available; Pay scale for public servants is way below neighboring states; lack of opportunities for young people – 5

Unaddressed pollution – worried about marring our natural beauty asset and pollution's impact on the residents of Jefferson County – 4

Trust issues - Lack of commitment to the current plan by Planning Commission and County Commission – 3

Oppression of diverse lifestyles – 2

Opportunities

Impact Fees (reinstatement of higher fees) – only mentioned at one table and did not get any initial votes. Prior to the red dot activity, impact fees were mentioned during the large group discussion and there was an audible "aha" moment in the crowd - 13

Responsible growth and planning that takes into account the available infrastructure; more restrictions on growth in the rural districts; keep good zoning with a minimum of variances; don't over-promote growth – don't make the mistakes of Loudoun and Fairfax - 8

Provision of services and infrastructure – broadband improvements, senior services, bike paths, regional bus, train and road improvements – 6

Economic development - more jobs for locals; emphasis on high tech (light industry), small businesses, and tourism – 5

Need focus on low-income housing – 4

Preservation of history and farmland - 2

Environmental protection – 2