



Comprehensive Plan 2026



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INTRODUCTION

What is a comprehensive plan?

The Town of Vienna's comprehensive plan is a document that provides the Town's adopted long-range policies regarding a wide range of topics related to the Town's development and character. Key policy areas include land use, transportation, parks and recreation, community facilities, economic development, and the environment. The plan includes data, maps, images, and graphs that illustrate the past and present of the jurisdiction and help to undergird the plan's policies.

Most importantly, comprehensive plans are living documents. An effective comprehensive plan should capture community members' vision for the future; guide the preparation of implementation steps, which include both regulations and capital investments; and provide a vision for how the jurisdiction should grow and evolve into the future. Vienna should regularly revisit its comprehensive plan to ensure it meets these aims, amending the document as necessary to capture actions and decisions guiding the jurisdiction's vision and development as well as any regional changes or trends that may impact the jurisdiction or its comprehensive plan.



DRAFT 09.25.25

Town of Vienna Comprehensive Plan 2026



Virginia State Code Requirements

The Code of Virginia (§15.2-2223 through §15.2-2232) requires every locality to adopt a comprehensive plan to guide its physical development, and to review the plan at least once every five years. The plan must be general in nature and created with the purpose of coordinating and promoting the health, safety, welfare, convenience, and prosperity of all residents, including older adults and individuals with disabilities.

The Code outlines several required and recommended elements that must be addressed in a comprehensive plan:

Mandatory elements:

Land Use: The plan must identify existing and future land uses, and may designate areas for public facilities, redevelopment, mixed-use development, historical and cultural resources, and environmentally sensitive features. It must also include policies for housing, including affordable and manufactured housing options.

Transportation: The plan must include a transportation element that identifies existing and future infrastructure needs. This includes streets, sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian routes, transit networks, and other modes of transportation. The transportation plan must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for review and must align with VDOT's Statewide Transportation Plan and the Six-Year Improvement Program.

Affordable Housing: The plan must include policies that promote housing affordability, both through new construction and the preservation of existing housing stock, so that Vienna remains inclusive for households of varied income levels.

Broadband Infrastructure: The plan must consider the current and future needs for broadband infrastructure to support connectivity and economic competitiveness.

Recommended elements:

Environmental Resilience and

Sustainability: Localities are encouraged to consider strategies to enhance resilience to natural hazards such as flooding and severe weather, and to support sustainable development practices.

Transit-Oriented and Walkable

Development: While not required for a town of Vienna's size (required for cities over 20,000 people and counties over 100,000 people), the plan may also consider policies that support walkability, reduced car dependency, and sustainable development patterns, to encourage reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

Urban Development Areas (if designated):

If the locality designates an Urban Development Areas (UDAs), an area intended to support higher-density, mixed-use, and walkable development consistent with the community's character and scale, it must also include specific policies, design standards, and maps for that area. These elements must be updated at least once every five years.

Resilience: The plan is encouraged to consider strategies to address resilience. As used in this subsection, "resilience" means the capability to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, health, the economy, and the environment.

To ensure transparency and community input, the Code also requires public engagement throughout the planning process. The Planning Commission must advertise and hold a public hearing before recommending a draft plan to the governing body. Afterward, the governing body must also advertise and hold a public hearing before adopting the final plan. The Town of Vienna always exceeds these requirements, to ensure that the community's vision is reflected in the plan.

Vienna's Comprehensive Plan and Community Engagement

The Town of Vienna adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1957. It has been revisited and rewritten several times since then, with the most recent version adopted in May 2016 and subsequently amended in February and October 2020.

In 2020, staff from the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) and the Planning Commission began reassessing the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, in collaboration with staff from other key Town departments. While this effort was partially driven by the state requirement that the plan be reviewed every five years, it was also prompted by two major changes with significant impacts to the plan and its implementation: the suspension and repeal of the Maple Avenue Commercial (MAC) overlay zone and the launch of the zoning ordinance update, in a project entitled "Code Create Vienna." (The updated zoning code was adopted in October 2023 and became effective January 1, 2024.)

The Planning Commission began the process by conducting an internal review of the plan, in collaboration with staff. Once it was determined that changes were needed, the next step was to engage community members and the Town's boards and commissions. Staff held a kickoff event to get community input and visited various Town events. Online input was also solicited. Staff and Planning Commissioners also solicited feedback from the relevant boards and commissions to get their input and for their ideas on what updates are needed to the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies. After the Planning Commission and staff reviewed this feedback, the Commission directed staff to develop drafts of each chapter, which were then reviewed and edited by the Planning Commission.



Contents of Vienna's Comprehensive Plan

This comprehensive plan includes nine chapters focusing on specific elements of the Town's existing and future development. These chapters provide an overview of current conditions and relevant history, as well as identifying the Town's goals, policies, and strategies as they relate to that topic. While these elements all stand alone, they are also interconnected; strategies may be similar or shared between elements and call for interdepartmental coordination. The following summarizes the content of each of the plan's chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction	Provides an overview of the plan's organization and statutory requirements.
Chapter 2: Community Profile	Provides a history of the settlement and development of the Town, in addition to information about demographics and trends which have or will affect the Town's development or character.
Chapter 3: Land Use	Provides information regarding the existing land uses within the Town and introduces the Future Land Use Map, which provides a vision for the Town and guides development decision-making.
Chapter 4: Economic Development	Provides background on non-residential development and commerce in the Town and provides guidance for additional actions the Town may take to encourage economic development.
Chapter 5: Transportation	Provides an overview of the existing conditions and recommendations for the Town's network of streets, sidewalks, and bike paths; parking; transit; and modes of transportation that are relevant to the Town's residents, visitors, and businesses.
Chapter 6: Community Facilities and Infrastructure	Focuses on non-park properties owned by the Town, Fairfax County, and utility infrastructure that serve Town residents, visitors, and businesses.
Chapter 7: Parks and Recreation	Provides information and guidance regarding the many parks, recreational opportunities, and community facilities within the Town.
Chapter 8: Environment and Sustainability	Describes the key environmental assets and challenges affecting the Town, as well as key resiliency and sustainability measures the Town has enacted and should address into the future.
Chapter 9: Implementation	Provides an overview of the implementation guide, which is a separate document that consolidates the goals, policies, and strategies identified as key for plan implementation in chapters 3-8 and includes prioritization and phasing guidance. The implementation guide is intended to be revisited on a regular basis to ensure progress is being made towards executing the comprehensive plan.
Appendix	Supporting text including a glossary and other resources.

The Land Use, Economic Development, Transportation, Community Facilities and Infrastructure, Parks and Recreation, and Environment and Sustainability chapters include the goals, policies, and strategies necessary to implement the plan. Goals are meant to be general and describe a desired future condition or status. Policies are more specific and describe how the goals will be achieved. Strategies are detailed actions that outline how the plan's policies will be enacted.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

History

Early Beginnings

Originally inhabited by the Algonquian-speaking Tauxenent tribe, the Vienna area was initially settled by Europeans as large farming estates. In 1767, Vienna's first house of record was built. The area was named Ayr Hill after the owner's native Scottish County of Ayr and retained the name for nearly a hundred years. Growth was slow, with no more than eight houses in the village at the turn of the 19th century.

The mid-1800s, however, witnessed great change for Vienna. Between 1840 and 1860 there was significant migration from the north, especially New York State. Inexpensive, yet fertile land and a mild farming climate lured many new residents who brought with them advanced farming techniques. These techniques increased productivity and helped restore the vitality of the old estate farms. Vienna's commercial activities during this period included America's first steel beamed plow factory. The railroad, which reached Vienna in 1858, was used for shipping plows until the factory was sold in 1869.

In 1842, Keziah Carter, a free Black and indigenous Tauxenent and Pamunkey woman, purchased 50 acres of land from what had been the original Wolf Trap plantation. This land, known as both Cartersville and Freedom Hill, became home to generations of Carters, many of whom are buried in the Carter Family Cemetery, just north of Town limits. Keziah's son, Robert Jr., purchased an additional ten acres of land in 1859 that would ultimately become part of the Town of Vienna. Descendants of the Carter family still reside in the Town, and a ceremony honoring the Carter family and unveiling historical signage recognizing their contributions to history occurred in Freedom Hill Park in July 2021. Upon completion of the renovations at the Patrick Henry Library, it will be renamed the Vienna-Carter Library in honor of both the family as a whole and William and Lillian Carter, who worked to ensure the Patrick Henry Library opened as an integrated library.

In the late 1850s, the village recognized its need for a medical doctor and solicited Dr. William Hendrick of New York State. Popular belief holds that the name of the village was changed to Vienna, the name of Dr. Hendrick's New York home, as a condition of his relocation.

Source: historicvienna.org



Civil War, Reconstruction, and Gaining Town Status

Due to its proximity to the Nation's capital, control of Vienna was strongly contested during the Civil War, causing many residents to leave for the duration of the conflict. On June 17, 1861, the fifth skirmish of the war, part of the First Battle of Manassas, took place near the Park Street railroad crossing (now the site of the Town's Community Center). This skirmish marked the first tactical use of a railroad in battle.



*Mural in
Bear Branch
Tavern
by artist
David Barr*

In the years following the war, Vienna experienced a growth in permanent residency, including both White and Black settlers. Among the new residents were Major Orrin T. Hine and Harmon L. Salsbury. A Freedmen's Bureau agent and farmer, Hine settled in Vienna in 1866 and by 1885 had amassed almost 6,500 acres of land. Major Hine was elected the Town's first mayor when Vienna was incorporated in 1890. Salsbury, a Union Captain in the 26th Regiment of Colored Infantry, welcomed settlers to his estate, making housing available to newly freed slaves by providing easy credit and long mortgages.

Thomas West, Daniel West, George M. Brown, and Edmond Harris, freed slaves and landowners, established Vienna's first public school for Black students in approximately 1866. In 1867, Major Hine and his wife Alma sold the four men the land that would ultimately become the First Baptist Church of Vienna and the Vienna Colored School. The school moved to a building at the intersection of Malcolm Road and Lawyers Road in the late 1890s, and it would ultimately move to a building at 324 Nutley Street NW in 1939 and renamed the Louise Archer School. Fairfax County Public Schools were integrated in 1966, and the Louise Archer School became the only school for Black students that remained open after integration.

*Unveiling of the historic marker at
Louise Archer Elementary School in
September 2025.
Source: Fairfax County Government*



The Town's first public school for White students followed in 1872, built on Park Street between Church Street and Maple Avenue. A second school for White children was built in 1890 in what is now known as the Bowman House, with its replacement, now known as Vienna Elementary School, constructed in 1915. A boiler explosion during the 1919-1920 school year temporarily relocated the school back to the Bowman House, and the new Vienna Elementary School opened in 1923. This section of the school is still in use, giving Vienna Elementary the distinction of being the oldest continually operating building in the Fairfax County public school system.



Originally called Georgetown Road, today's Church Street was the Town's first thoroughfare, hosting the business district and most of the churches: the Baptist Church, built in 1868; the Presbyterian Church in 1874; the Methodist Church in 1890; and the Episcopal Church in 1896. The original location of Vienna's oldest continuous business, the Money and King Funeral Home, was at the corner of Church Street and Lawyers Road NW.



As Vienna grew, so too did the need for it to govern itself. In 1890, Vienna received its charter and officially received Town status. Three hundred residents strong, it elected Major Hine as its first mayor, serving until his death in 1899.



Early 20th Century

The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department, organized in 1903 by Mr. Leon Freeman and chartered in 1929, is Fairfax County's oldest volunteer fire department. In 1904 Freeman heralded the advent of Vienna's motorized age with ownership of the Town's first automobile, spurring the first speed limit, 12 miles per hour. Transportation improvements continued with the construction of a trolley line connecting Vienna with Washington, D.C., via Falls Church, as well as the dedication of land for Maple Avenue in 1910.

The 1920s saw the establishment of the first Town Hall, bank, citizens' association, drug store, chain grocery store (Piggly Wiggly), and fire cisterns. After electricity was brought to Vienna in 1922, its first streetlights soon followed.





Post-World War II

In 1940, Vienna was still a small town with a population of 1,237. However, the end of World War II brought suburban pressure and further development, especially upon the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the G.I. Bill, being signed into law. The Town's population grew by 10,000 people during the decade, and the business core shifted from Church Street to Maple Avenue.



The first of many modern shopping centers was built in 1954 along the newly widened Maple Avenue. In 1957, a part of the surrounding area of Vienna's original boundaries was annexed and the Town grew from 2.25 square miles to roughly 3.8 square miles in size.

In 1958, the maple trees that gave the avenue its name were removed for transportation improvements. Transportation, shopping, and residential demands continued to grow with the increasing population of Vienna and Fairfax County. Notable regional developments included the construction of Dulles International Airport in 1962, Fairfax Hospital in 1962, Tysons Corner Center in 1968, and the Vienna-Fairfax/GMU Metrorail Station in 1986.



During the 1980s Vienna had a front row seat to witness the rise of a new social phenomenon, the "Edge City," a term popularized by Joel Garreau. Tysons Corner (now simply known as Tysons) transformed from a suburban retail center into an employment and business center that rivaled the area's traditional urban core of Washington, D.C. in office space and jobs. The traditional pattern of suburb-to-city commuting changed, as the area saw the growth of the suburb-to-suburb commute. In turn, families looking for affordable housing filled in previously undeveloped land in nearby Fairfax County—and Vienna—and pushed development further west and south.

The 1990s brought another wave of change to Vienna, Fairfax County, and the greater Washington, D.C. area. The explosive growth of information technology and Internet-related companies in the area fueled an economic boom for the region. Northern Virginia emerged as a preeminent location for high-technology firms. In 1993, a boundary adjustment agreement with Fairfax County increased the size of the Town to 4.4 square miles.

In September 2020, the Town's Planning and Zoning Department staff launched an ambitious zoning ordinance update, called "Code Create Vienna," that would be the Town's most significant zoning code change since 1969. Guided by five core land use goals—Vienna as a complete community, encouraging housing for residents of all age groups, maintaining and strengthening the Central Business District within its existing boundaries, creating a more walkable Vienna, and ensuring that Vienna retains its unique single-family residential character and quality of life—Town staff worked closely with consultants to develop a new zoning ordinance aligned with these priorities. The update process included extensive collaboration with the Town Council, Planning Commission, various boards and commissions, Town residents, and Town businesses to shape and refine the code. After several years of community engagement and careful review, the Town Council adopted the new zoning ordinance on October 23, 2023, with an effective date of January 1, 2024.

Meanwhile, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 brought significant changes to the lives of not just Vienna residents, but people all around the world. In a matter of days, people had to adapt to major changes impacting work, school, shopping, and participation in one's community to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In and near Vienna, the emergency meant a large increase in remote telework for individuals whose jobs could accommodate this approach; schools shifting from the traditional in-person model to virtual learning; and community businesses, public amenities, places of worship, and other similar establishments limiting the number of people who may be inside at one time or even changing their business models altogether (such as restaurants shifting to all-takeout models). While pandemic restrictions have since lifted, they also led to more longer-term changes in our behaviors, such as the sustained increase in teleworking and a dramatic increase in online shopping. Some businesses have fully returned to in-person work while others remain more telework-friendly. There is significant uncertainty about the long-term impact on land uses, traffic and transportation patterns, and the local economy moving forward.

Given the changes occurring both within and outside the Town, Vienna's citizens and leadership remain dedicated to promoting a stable community with a small-town feel. At the same time, the Town continues to pursue policies which maintain or enhance Vienna's attractiveness as a place to live while providing the facilities and services necessary for a successful community.



Demographics

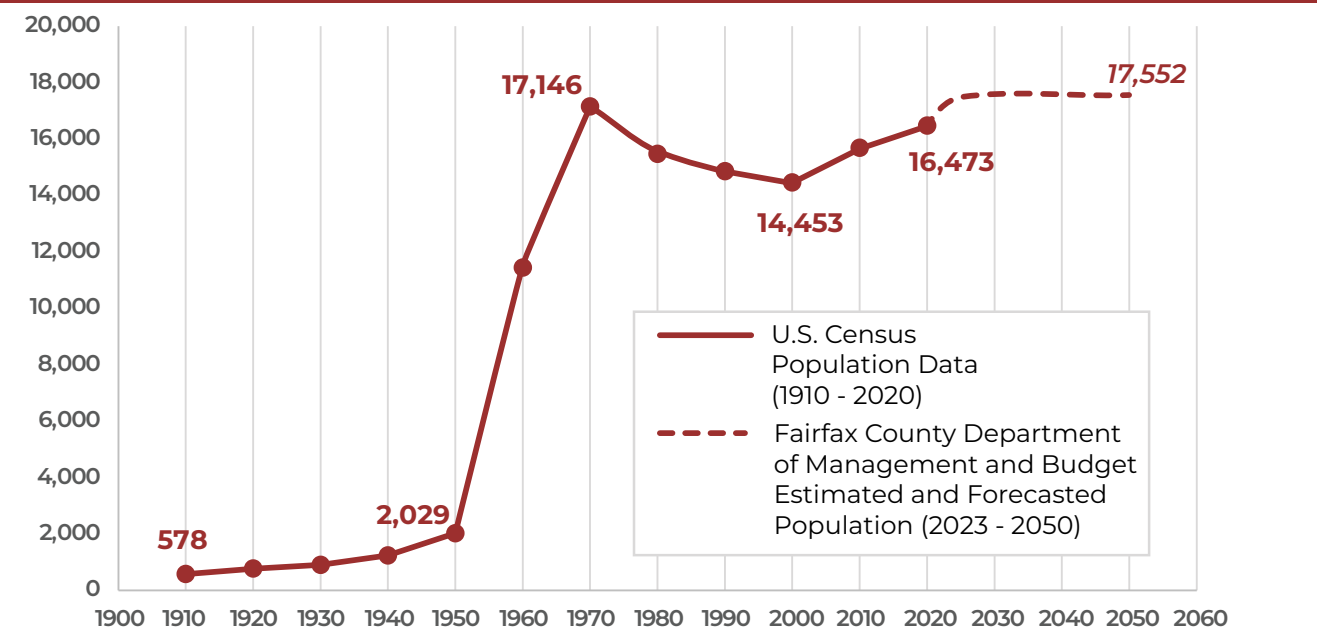
Demographic statistics and trends provide an important background for evaluating land use, transportation needs, and infrastructure requirements. The following is a profile of the Town's population compared, where appropriate, to the total population of Fairfax County. Data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau, as well as data collected by Fairfax County and the Town of Vienna.

Population Growth

Like most places in Fairfax County, the largest period of growth in Vienna occurred between 1950 and 1970 as the area experienced a post-World War II population and housing boom. However, given Vienna's relatively small size and limited land zoned for multifamily housing compared to many other parts of Fairfax County, the Town's population has remained modest and stable, gradually increasing over the past 25 years from the high 14,000s to the low 17,000s.

From 2010 to 2020, Vienna's population grew from 15,687 to 17,004, a total increase of 1,317 residents or 8.4%. Fairfax County's Department of Management and Budget estimates the Town's population at 17,279 in 2023, an increase of 275 residents or 1.6% from 2020.

FIGURE 2.1: VIENNA'S POPULATION



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget

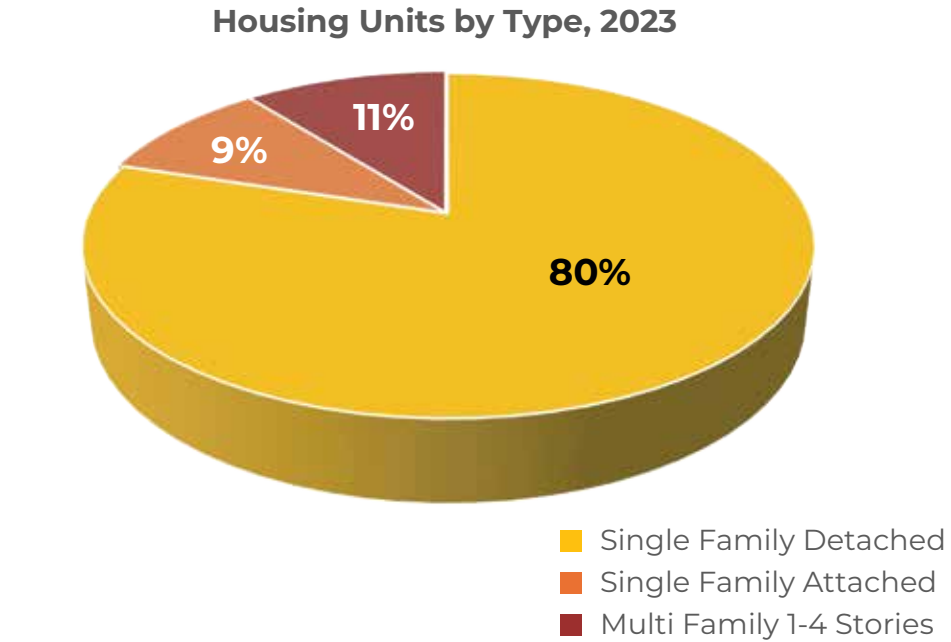
Most of the current residential development in Vienna consists of demolition and rebuilds of existing single-family detached homes, though applications for rebuilds have been slowing. Further, there is both limited vacant land available for new single-family detached dwellings and few remaining properties that can be subdivided. If there are no significant changes in land development trends, Fairfax County's Department of Management and Budget estimates that Vienna's population will peak at 17,552 in 2035 and remain constant through at least 2050.

Housing and Households

Fairfax County’s Department of Management and Budget estimates there were 5,804 housing units in the Town in 2023. The vast majority of these—80%—are single-family detached housing units, with the remainder split between single-family attached (9%) and multifamily units (11%).

Like projected population growth, Fairfax County estimates housing unit growth will soon taper off, given historic land development trends. By 2030, the Town is estimated to peak at 5,899 units, remaining constant through at least 2050.

FIGURE 2.2: VIENNA’S HOUSING UNITS



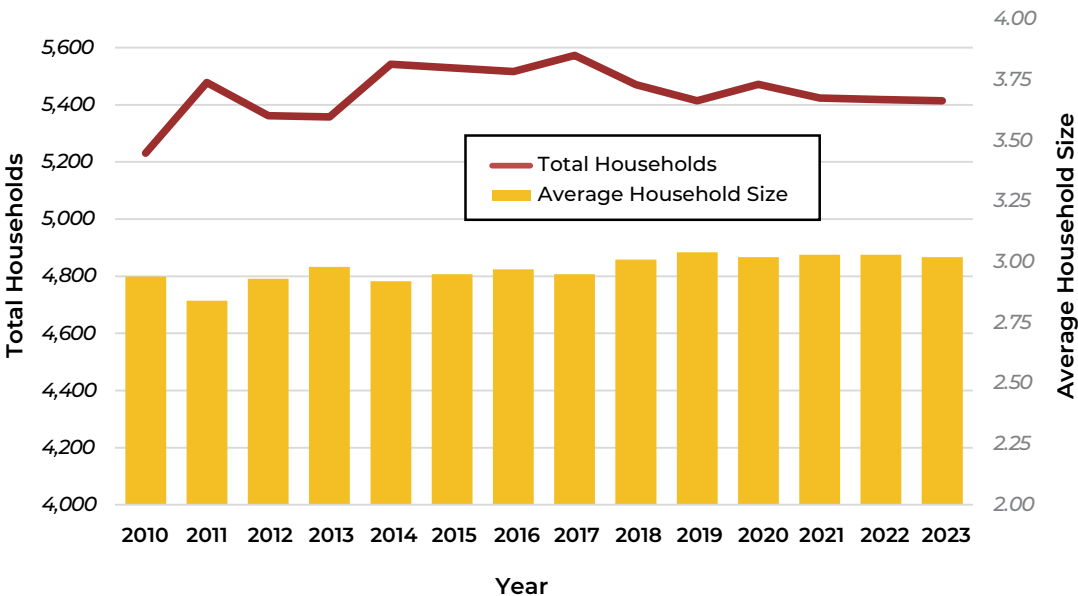
Estimated and Forecasted Housing Units, 2023-2050

2023	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
5,804	5,866	5,899	5,899	5,899	5,899	5,899

Source: Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget

FIGURE 2.3: HOUSEHOLD TRENDS IN VIENNA, 2010-2023

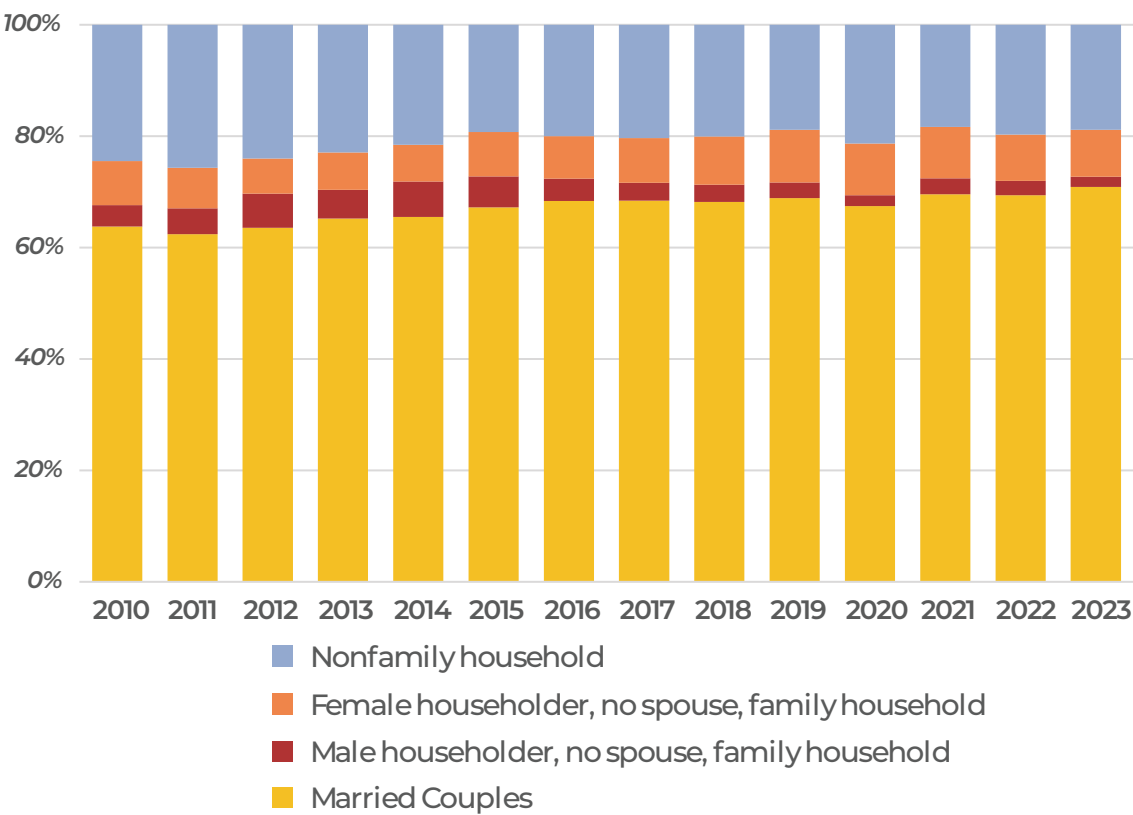
The average household size in 2020 was 2.9 persons per household, which is slightly higher than the 2.8 persons per household in 2010. In fact, the household size has largely stayed the same since 1990. This trend true of Fairfax County and the United States as well.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

As in previous years, the majority of households in Vienna are occupied by married couples , comprising 70.9% of all households in 2023. Non-family households—those who contain one or more people living in the same household who are not related to the householder by either birth, marriage, or adoption—account for 18.8% of all households, while the remaining 10.3% are either female or male householders with no spouse present.

FIGURE 2.4: VIENNA HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, 2010–2023



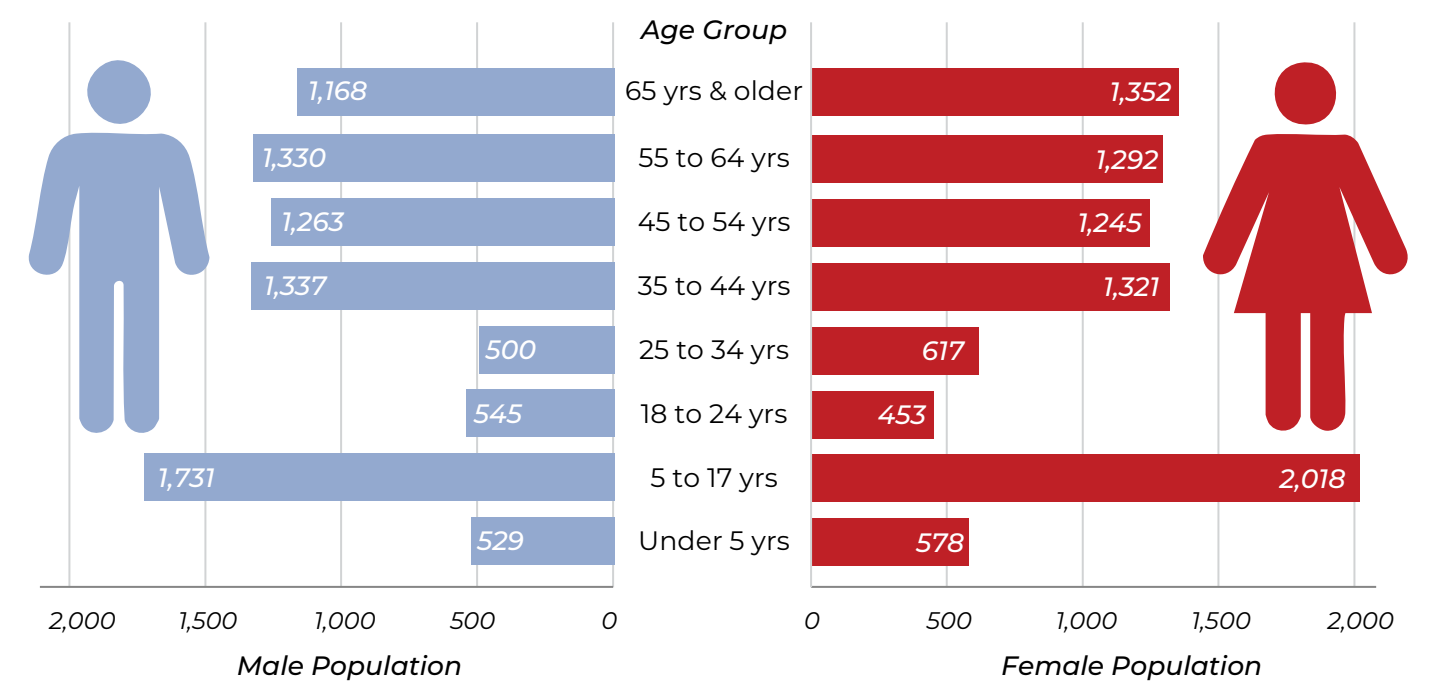
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Age and Gender Distribution

In 2023, the Town had a population of 17,279 residents: 8,876 women (51.4%) and 8,403 men (48.6%). As shown in Figure 2.5, the largest age group for both genders was 5 to 17 years, representing over one-fifth of the total population (21.7%). The lower numbers of young adults (18 to 34 years of age) likely reflects college-age migration and the Town's limited affordable housing or apartment options for young adults.

FIGURE 2.5: VIENNA’S AGE AND GENDER DISTRIBUTION, 2023



Source: Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget



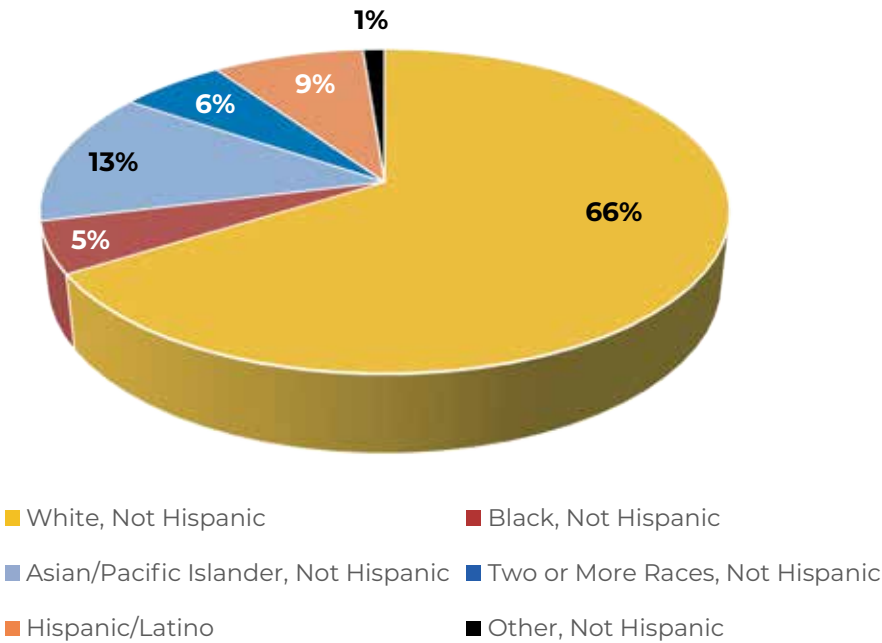
Race and Ethnicity

Vienna’s 2023 population estimate is majority White, with the “White, not Hispanic” population comprising approximately 66% of the total population. The “Asian/Pacific Islander, not Hispanic” population is the second most populous with 13% of the total population; followed by “Hispanic/Latino” at 9%; “Two or More Races, not Hispanic” at 6%; “Black, not Hispanic” at 5%; and “Other, not Hispanic” at 1%.

The percentage of Town residents who classify themselves as White has decreased from approximately 75.5% in 2010 to 67.7% in 2023. Those classifying themselves as some other race has decreased

from 6.1% in 2010 to 3.8% in 2023, while the percentage of those classifying themselves as two or more races has increased from 1.6% in 2010 to 10.0% in 2023. The percentage of Town residents classifying themselves as Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander has remained largely consistent between 2010 and 2023.

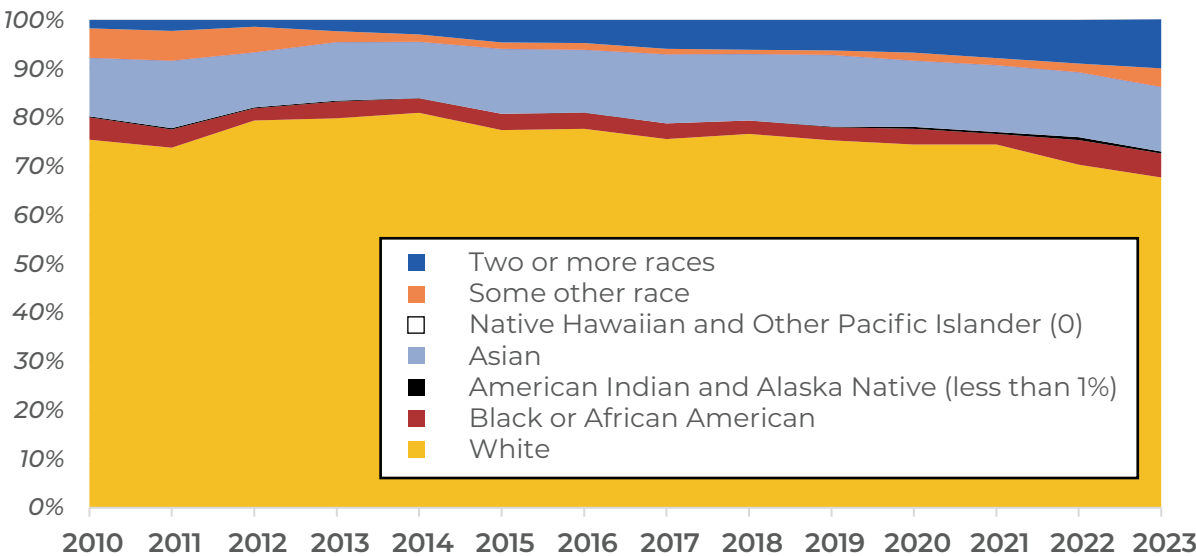
FIGURE 2.6: RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN VIENNA, 2023



Source: Fairfax County Department of Management and Budget

FIGURE 2.7: VIENNA RACIAL COMPOSITION, 2010 - 2023

Racial Distribution as Percentage of Total Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Income

Vienna's median household income in 2022 was \$215,556, a 43% real increase over the Town's inflation-adjusted median household income of \$151,118 in 2010 (the 2010 nominal median household income was \$116,470). Vienna's 2022 median household income was 48.5% higher than Fairfax County's 2022 median household income of \$145,165. As of 2023, 52.7% of the Town's households had a median household income of \$200,000 or more. While incomes for Town households and families have always been considerably higher than Fairfax County as a whole, their rates of increase since 2013 have been especially significant. Individual income for Town residents fluctuates more but has also risen at a particularly great rate since 2019.

FIGURE 2.8: INCOME TRENDS IN VIENNA, 2010–2022

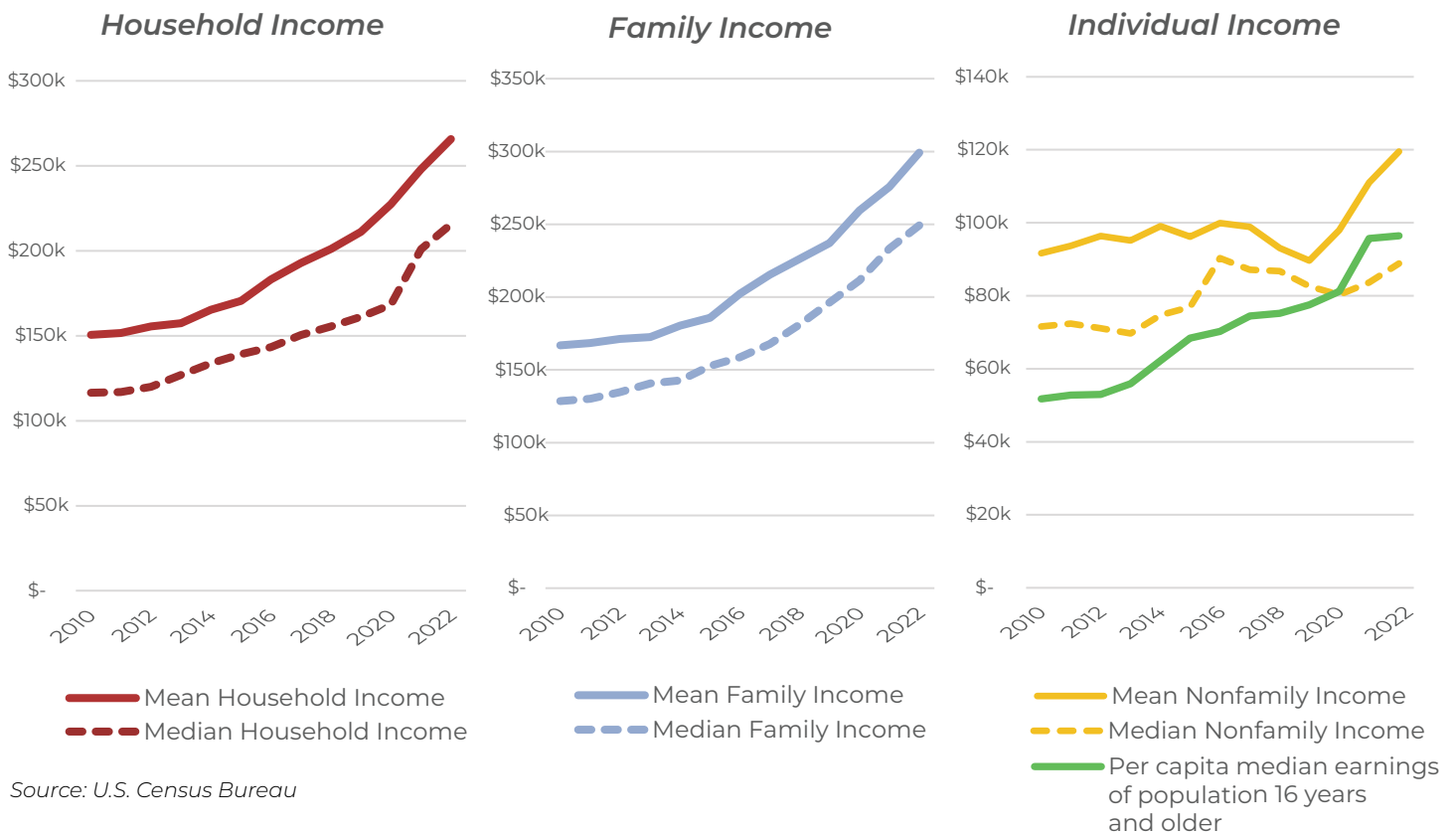
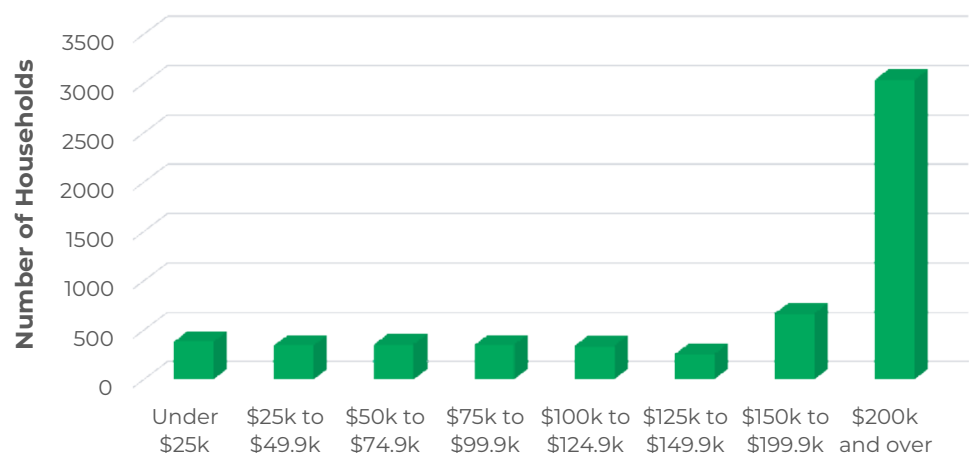


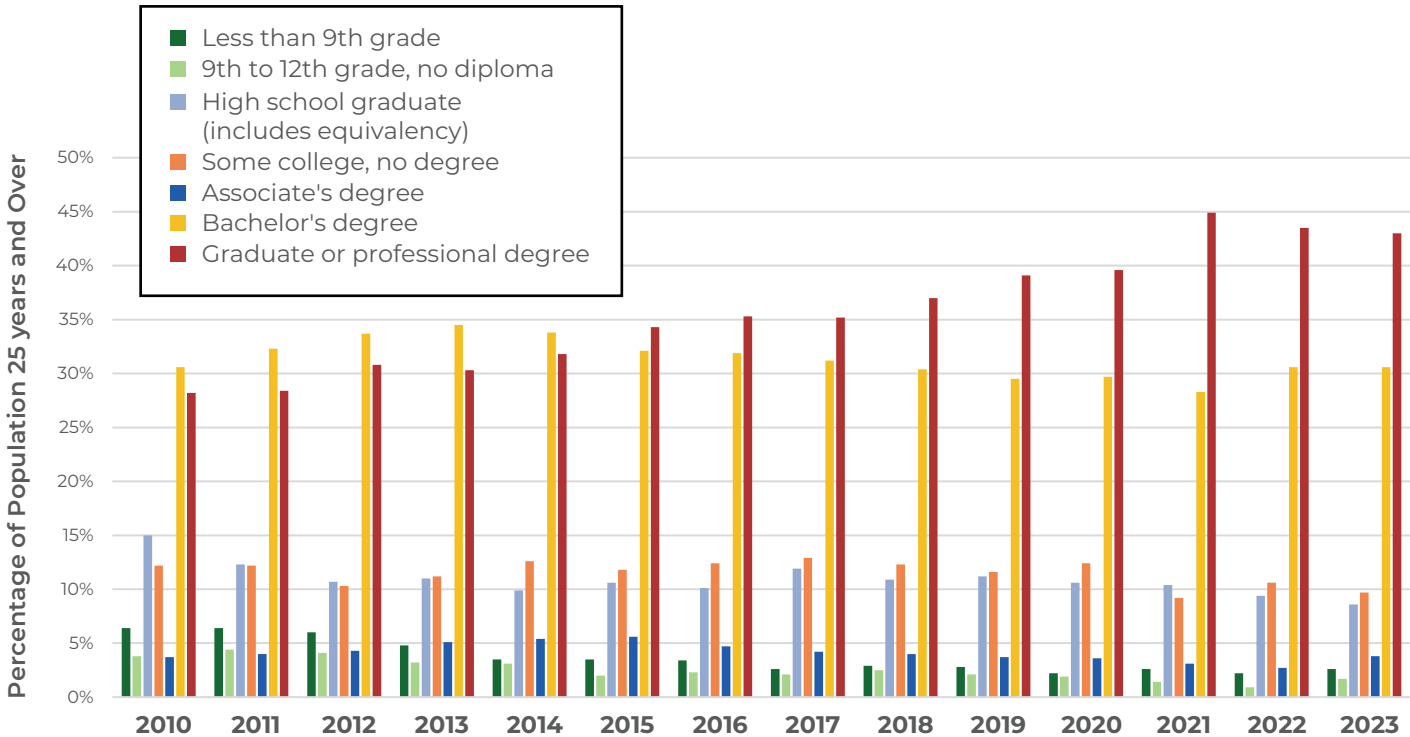
FIGURE 2.9: HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION IN VIENNA, 2023



Educational Attainment

The Town has consistently had a well-educated populace. Prior to 2015, the most common education attainment for residents 25 and over was a bachelor’s degree. However, in 2025, the most common education attainment became a graduate or professional degree. In 2023, 43.% of Town residents over 25 had a graduate or professional degree while 30.6% had a bachelor's degree; these were 28.2% and 30.6%, respectively, in 2010. The percentage of residents over 25 with a high school diploma or less decreased dramatically from 25.2% in 2010 to 12.9% in 2023. Those attending some college with no degree dropped from 12.2% in 2010 to 9.7% in 2023.

FIGURE 2.10: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN VIENNA, 2010 - 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau



