

State of the County
Sharon Bulova, Chairman
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
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As prepared for delivery

January of 2011 marks the beginning of the last year of this Board's four year term. As we turn the page for the New Year, Fairfax County continues to face significant challenges. Our economy is on a slow road to recovery from the worst recession in decades.

While we are seeing a very modest increase in home prices, commercial real estate values are still negative. Close to a thousand homeowners in Fairfax are still struggling with foreclosures and nearly 30,000 of our residents are unable to find work.

Despite these challenges, and thanks to the creativity and innovation of our workforce and the positive engagement of our community, Fairfax County continues to be an exceptional place to live, work and play.

We have taken advantage of some of the opportunities the economic downturn has presented. With the cost of construction at a record low, we have been able to realize long term savings in our capital program for parks and schools.

We have also used this opportunity to make organizational changes, find efficiencies, and identify reductions that have lowered the cost of providing services while allowing us to keep taxes affordable for our residents and improve our quality of life.

2010 Accomplishments

We can all look back over the past few years with satisfaction on a number of accomplishments.

The **Rail to Dulles** project and the **Transformation of Tysons** both achieved significant progress in 2010.

Tysons

History is being made as what has been a sprawling (albeit highly successful) retail and commercial center, amid a sea of impervious parking lots, is being transformed into a compact, walkable, transit-oriented, mixed use urban community – a new development pattern for Fairfax County, offering a new lifestyle choice for our residents.

In December, I hosted a summit which brought together leading national experts on workforce housing to discuss the critical issue of making sure future Tysons employees will have housing near their jobs. The co-host of the summit, the ULI Terwilliger Center, has agreed to continue their supportive partnership with Fairfax County as redevelopment unfolds.

The Tysons Corner Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Board in June, has received the prestigious Daniel Burnham Award from the American Planning Association for being the best comprehensive plan in the country. This award is a real honor and a testament to the inclusive process our staff, the Planning Commission, our residents and Tysons stakeholders engaged in to bring the Plan to reality.

Rail to Dulles

Progress in Tysons extends beyond adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Anyone driving through Tysons can watch as pylons are installed and four new Metro stations are beginning to come into shape.

We are on-time and within budget for **Phase I** service on the new Silver Line to begin by the end of 2013 – a critical component for the Tysons Plan and for providing new transportation options in and around the area.

Most of the ingredients are in place for **Phase II** of the Dulles Rail Project and work is underway to develop and complete plans for the three stations serving the Reston/Herndon area. The Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority is sharing plans with both Loudoun and Fairfax regarding the location and configuration of a station at the airport. This project will be competitively bid. We are shooting for the end of 2016 for service on the Silver Line all the way to the airport.

More Transportation

In addition to Rail to Dulles, tremendous progress was made in 2010 on other projects on the **Transportation** front. Some highlights:

- In September, the final segment of the Fairfax County Parkway was completed – making it possible for motorists to travel straight through all the way from Reston to Ft. Belvoir.
- To address constant congestion and back-ups, ground was broken in November to construct a separate grade interchange at the oldest part of the Parkway where it intersects with the Fair Lakes Parkway.
- While these projects were made possible with an infusion of federal stimulus dollars, Fairfax County also invested in transportation with our local funds. In October of 2009 we allocated \$10 million for widening of and improvements to Telegraph Road and in November 2010 we approved the plans to fix this congested stretch of road.

Budget

Another accomplishment is our work on the 2011 budget.

While we are not yet out of the woods, our Board has so far survived **The Great Recession** – the most severe economic downturn in most of our lifetimes – while maintaining the quality of life we value.

We have adopted budgets during the past two years that have closed serious projected shortfalls, reduced spending in our \$3.3 billion General Fund budget by about \$200 million while remaining sensitive to the taxpayer. Several news editorials (“Fiscal Prudence in Fairfax County” and “A Tale of Two Counties”) have complimented our Board for its fiscal stewardship.

Education

Education continues to be this Board’s highest priority. Even during these challenging times, all of our **Fairfax County High Schools** remain in the top 5th percentile in the nation.

As Chairman, I attend a lot of community events. One of my favorite experiences in 2010 was a visit (with Supervisor Gerry Hyland) to the Hollin Meadows Elementary School in September. Hollin Meadows is located in the Richmond Highway area. The school population is extremely diverse with a percentage of the students from families with lower incomes. Despite what some might consider

“challenges” at the school, student achievement is *over the top*. The enthusiasm of the principal, the teachers and the dedicated volunteers has made this school a real showcase for learning.

Parks/Preservation

We can also claim some great achievements in our Parks, Public Safety and Economic Development.

Recently our **Park Authority** won the coveted Gold Medal for Parks and Recreation from the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration - edging out New York City, Miami-Dade County in Florida, and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina.

Public Safety

Despite budget reductions in **public safety**, we have been able to maintain a historic low crime rate and continue to rank among the first in the Nation in our ability to respond to critical incidents.

Last summer I visited a training exercises conducted by our Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue Team in Lorton and in Merrifield. Last winter, we watched with pride as the federally funded Team, (“Fairfax 1”) one of only two such units in the country, responded to the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti. These individuals returned to Fairfax in time to work hand in glove with our Fairfax County police and the National Guard as they assisted our own residents during “Snowmageddon.”

Lastly, on the **economic development** front, on July 12th, Northrop Grumman signed an agreement to move their corporate headquarters to Fairfax County. They join CSC, Hilton, SAIC and Volkswagen as companies that have relocated their headquarters here since 2007.

2011 Agenda

And so, as we prepare for the months ahead, what is in store?

Four major issues are on our plate for 2011: Another challenging budget situation, redistricting, elections, and BRAC.

Budget

Once again we will face a challenging fiscal situation. We are not yet out of the woods. While we are beginning to see some improvement in residential real estate, a modest increase in value of approximately 2.4%, commercial values have continued to fall, though not as steeply as last year. Our combined revenue and disbursement projections estimate that we will once again need to close a projected shortfall for Fiscal Year 2012 (which begins in July of this year) of about \$50 million.

If we were to attempt to resume compensation increases for our employees this shortfall would increase by over \$100 million (\$33 million for County employees and \$74 million for school employees).

The County Executive's Advertised Budget will be released on February 22nd. Our Board will make changes to the Advertised Budget on April 12th, with formal adoption on April 26.

When we adopt the budget, we are adopting – and investing in – our community's priorities. It is critical to have the community at the table with us as we consider these decisions. More information about the Budget and our Community Outreach program this year can be found on the County's website. I encourage everyone to participate in this important process and to take advantage of the town meetings and forums that we will be hosting this winter and spring.

Redistricting

With new population numbers coming from the 2010 U.S. Census in February, the Board of Supervisors, through a public process, will redraw lines in order to “even up” the populations in each of our nine magisterial districts. While most districts have not experienced very much growth during the past ten years, populations in Hunter Mill, Springfield and Mount Vernon will likely need to be redistributed during the **2011 Redistricting process**.

In November, our Board approved our process and schedule for redistricting. This process includes the establishment of a Citizens' Committee to assist and advise us on changes to district boundaries. Each district supervisor has appointed one member to the committee along with County-wide organizations, including a representative from both political parties. To chair the Committee, I appointed former Board of Supervisors Chairman Katherine Hanley. As a former Secretary of

the Commonwealth and Board Chairman, Kate clearly has the knowledge and experience needed for this role. She is also a veteran of three past redistrictings.

Final census figures will not be available until February and a final redistricting plan will likely not be adopted until at least April. Information about the process can be found on the County's website. Anyone will be able to access data and can even submit their own recommendations for consideration by the Committee.

Supervisor Jeff McKay, Chair of the Board's Legislative Committee, will be coordinating the redistricting effort.

The redistricting process takes on special significance this time, since 2011 is an **election year** for the Board of Supervisors. All members of our Board will be up for re-election, as will all members of the School Board, all State Delegates and Senators, the Sheriff, Clerk to the Court and the Commonwealth Attorney.

The redistricting process this year will complicate things somewhat, as changes to district boundaries will not be adopted until spring. In order to comply with federal Voting Rights law, Primaries may have to be held as late as August or even early September. The lines will be redrawn before the elections, and Board members will run for election in the new districts.

BRAC – Implementation

Also on the horizon is the **Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC**, process. About 20,000 Department of Defense employees will move into their new spaces this coming fall. According to the schedule, 14,000 jobs will be re-located to Ft. Belvoir by **September 15th**, 8,500 of these to the new Geospatial-Intelligence Agency at Engineer Proving Grounds (now called "north post") and 5,500 employees to the main post of Fort Belvoir.

To put things in context, about 25,000 employees work at the Pentagon.

Especially challenging is the BRAC 133 site on I-395 in the City of Alexandria. Our Board opposed this site, which will bring 6,200 Washington Headquarters Service jobs to this already severely congested area. No adequate transportation improvements are in place to support traffic entering and exiting the new building.

I am working with our Federal representatives, elected leadership in Alexandria and Arlington, and my colleagues – Supervisors Gross, McKay and Hyland – to address issues associated with all of these re-locations. Our goal for the BRAC moves is to minimize the impact on Fairfax County residents and commuters and also to identify economic development opportunities these relocations will provide.

Goals & Challenges for 2011

Last fall, I met individually with each of my colleagues. The purpose of the meetings was to discuss everyone's goals, challenges and ideas for the year ahead. **It is as a cohesive Board that we are able to effect positive change and best serve our constituents.**

Some of the items we discussed include:

- Preserving the history of Fairfax County
- Meeting the environmental challenges associated with the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay and bringing the community together to address the breach of the Kingstowne dam
- Engaging the community by strengthening leadership and building capacity within our community organizations
- Fostering a stronger relationship with the School Board, in particular exploring how we might align our respective goals
- Revitalizing and redeveloping – in the Tysons, Merrifield, McLean, Springfield, Baileys Crossroads, Annandale and Richmond Highway corridors
- We also share a concern about insufficient transportation infrastructure to support Department of Defense employees as they make their shift in response to BRAC.

A wide range of transportation issues are on Board members' agenda – from pursuing our County-wide multi-modal transit plan, to assisting Herndon with a Kiss & Ride at the future Herndon Monroe Metro Station – to short term and longer term plans to facilitate mobility in the I-66 corridor – to pedestrian safety improvements to Franconia Road -

I am looking forward to working with my colleagues this year on all of these issues.

My Goals

In addition to the goals and work of the Board I have already discussed, there are several other areas where I plan to focus my efforts in 2011.

Fairfax County's future is in redevelopment. We must foster growth and development in ways that protect our older stable communities but address the challenges that past auto dependent development patterns have presented.

Just as growth has occurred over the past 50 years, we will continue to grow into the future. It is important that we get it right. Encouraging growth in areas that can be supported by mass transit in urban, walkable mixed use patterns will allow growth to happen in ways that protect our environment and offer a life style choice that is desirable for our residents throughout the different chapters in our lives, from young professionals to older empty-nesters (like myself).

Our most major redevelopment initiative is the Transformation of Tysons. Already six applications have been filed by Tysons landowners to rezone their properties in concert with the new plan.

Our County staff is working with these stakeholders to establish a "Tysons Partnership", the "entity" that will be "the keeper of the vision" as described in the Tysons Task Force Report.

Efforts are underway to identify public facilities such as libraries, parks, cultural amenities and schools that will be incorporated into new development as it evolves, along with transportation improvements and a grid of streets.

In 2011, I will make encouraging innovation and collaboration for Energy that is clean, efficient, sustainable, secure and reliable a priority. Energy efficiency is critical for industry to remain competitive in Fairfax County. It is also the right thing to do.

Redevelopment in Fairfax County in particular will especially offer opportunities for creativity and collaboration that we must explore. Additionally, technology is emerging that will help our residents and corporate neighbors save money and

precious natural resources as we heat and cool our homes and offices and operate machinery and tools.

In November I began plans for a **Private Sector Energy Task Force**. While the County has made impressive progress in the area of energy efficiency and environmental stewardship, real progress can only be achieved by engaging the private sector.

At a Business Roundtable in December I presented a series of educational and organizational sessions that will begin soon and conclude by the summer. Members of the Task Force will include representatives of the residential and business communities, institutional representatives such as George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College, INOVA, and utilities operating in Fairfax County.

In addition to energy efficiency, I will be working with our corporate neighbors in identifying and fostering the emergence of new industry sectors. We must continue to focus not just on remaining competitive, but being an economic leader with a diverse portfolio of industries.

Fairfax County is always in the process of reinventing itself. Originally a county of dairy farms, then a suburban bedroom community to downtown Washington D.C., we have evolved into what Time and Virginia Business magazines describe as “a job machine.”

Our success in economic development helps to drive our excellent quality of life. We are able to invest in an excellent educational system. Our children go on to higher education and can find good jobs here. As an educated community we are better equipped to make good choices and to give back to the county that has nurtured us.

We cannot stand still. Industries have their ups and downs and we will ensure our continued success by diversifying the industries that call Fairfax County home. During the next year, working with my Business Roundtable Group, I will identify and pursue new areas for economic development and growth. Some examples to explore include biotechnology and personalized medicine, tourism and the hospitality industry, and energy and green technologies. I am especially interested in working with the Chamber of Commerce and our Visit Fairfax organization to identify a location and funding strategy for a conference center in Tysons.

Together with our corporate neighbors we will identify new economic opportunities which will allow us to emerge from this Great Recession even stronger than before.

As I discussed earlier, improving mobility in Fairfax County that incorporates multi-modal options for our workers and residents will be a top priority for 2011.

Transportation is not just about roads. We must also plan for and invest in pedestrian and bike routes, light rail, Metro, the VRE and transit. And most importantly, these various modes need to be developed in a way that they connect and create an efficient system for those of us who live, work and play in Fairfax County.

During the months ahead, I will work with my colleagues, our staff and with the Commonwealth and our Federal partners to flesh out our multi-modal transportation plans. In particular, we must take advantage of the opportunity the 495 Beltway HOT Lanes project affords us to use those new lanes for express bus service.

And lastly, my goal once again, is to engage our community in the adoption of a budget for Fiscal Year 2012 that invests sufficiently in our collective priorities.

Fairfax County offers an exceptional quality of life. We are a great place to live, work, play and grow older comfortably. The most important ingredient in making that happen is the positive engagement of our community.

I encourage everyone to get involved – in the budget, in redistricting, in the election or in your neighborhood association. Your contributions have never been more important.

Thanks so much for listening. I look forward to working with you during the year ahead.