

Department of Planning and Zoning

Department of Planning and Zoning

► Agency Mission

To provide proposals, advice, and assistance to those who make decisions so as to enhance the County's natural and man-made environments for present and future generations.

► Trends/Issues

Trends

- There has been an increase in the level of staff turn over in the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ). In several branches, many or all of the employees have been with the County for less than three years. As a consequence of this turnover, institutional knowledge and on-point experience have been diminished significantly. Recently-hired staff generally have limited experience in the way we do business in Fairfax County or the physical layout of the County, and require intensive training and supervision.
- There has been a noticeable increase in the number of customers and clients who have English as a second language, which results in communication difficulties that will prompt the need to make changes in how information is being provided.
- Continued emphasis on maintaining neighborhoods through support of neighborhood volunteer inspection programs, support of the County's Blight Abatement Program and, where necessary, use of the legal system to resolve zoning violations.
- Continuing need to provide additional information on the County's website.
- The Department's client population includes its residents and those employed at jobs within the County, two groups that are growing and becoming more diverse and complex. This has resulted in changing demands and pressure for different and more varied planning activities.
- The level of expectation of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, citizens, and applicants regarding the staff analysis of planning studies and projects has increased significantly. More and more often, staff is called upon for technical expertise regarding issues raised during the evaluation process, which requires extensive and time-consuming research and coordination.

Department of Planning and Zoning

Key Accomplishments/Challenges/Initiatives

- Complaints Database – The DPZ requested and received funds for FY 2002 from Fund 104, Information Technology (IT), to update its Zoning Enforcement Complaints Database System. The current system, in Paradox, is experiencing problems and will not be compatible with upgrades to newer windows applications. The new system will not only be compatible with other windows applications, it will also meet Countywide IT standards and be able to enhance the work done by the Zoning Enforcement Branch, which is in the DPZ Zoning Administration Division.
- Paradox Database Conversion – In addition to the Complaints Database System conversion, the department is also converting an additional eighteen other databases from Paradox to Access2000. Five of the databases have already been converted, providing staff with enhanced capabilities to conduct their jobs and maintain and track data.
- Implemented an E-mail address for citizens to use for the filing of zoning complaints and soon will be launching an interactive form on the County's web site to facilitate the filing of complaints.
- Continued to provide staff support to a pilot Neighborhood Volunteer Inspection Program established in two communities. Zoning Enforcement Branch staff, in conjunction with Health Department staff, work with volunteers in a given neighborhood to identify potential code violations, take initial steps to seek compliance, and attempt to foster community involvement in the upkeep of their neighborhoods.
- Continued emphasis on zoning enforcement and the resolution of longstanding zoning violations such as the effort being undertaken in the Cinder Bed Road area.
- From FY 1998 to FY 2000, there was a 22.5 percent increase in the number of development permits reviewed to ensure compliance with zoning provisions. This increased workload challenge has been met with no increase in staff.
- Implemented the use of the County's GIS system and the Circuit Court's automated land record system in the development permit review process in an effort to provide more efficient and accurate reviews.
- Enhanced customer service in the Zoning Permit Review Branch by continuing to keep a third service window open, implementing an electronic numbering system for those waiting to be served, and putting an increased emphasis on staff training.
- The Land Development System (LDS) is an internet-accessible information resource, which contains information on rezonings filed with the County. A focus this year has been the completion of work required to integrate special exception, special permit, and variance applications into LDS and thus to create a more complete zoning resource for the public, officials, applicants, and the development community. Concurrently, another initiative has been the "imaging" of approved proffers and plans into LDS, making it possible for users to view and to print out those documents.
- House Bill 2476 adopted by the State in February of 2001 requires an annual reporting of certain cash proffers pledged during the fiscal year. The first reports are due in September 2001 and require data for both FY 2000 and FY 2001. This data will be used to compute a "lump sum" pledged and will form the basis for other data, which will be generated by the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), concerning the amount collected each year. It is assumed that this will be an on-going project and that staff will be required to track cash proffers and to prepare an annual report to the State each September.

Department of Planning and Zoning

- In March of 2001, the Board of Supervisors endorsed a process for reviewing its Comprehensive Plan. This review has begun with the 2001-2002 Area Plans Reviews (APR). For purposes of APR, the County is divided along supervisor district boundaries with the northern half of the county being the subject of an APR process in 2001. The southern half will be the subject of APR in 2002. Over 120 nominations have been accepted for review in the 2001 North County Cycle. It is anticipated that a similar number of nominations will be reviewed in 2002.
- From time to time the Board of Supervisors identifies areas where the Comprehensive Plan may need to be amended. Staff works on approximately 15 to 20 of these "Out-of-Turn" Plan amendments in any give year.
- As a direct outgrowth of the "In-Fill Study", staff and a committee of the Planning Commission have initiated the revision of the "Residential Development Criteria" used to evaluate rezonings for residential development. The intent of this project is to make the criteria a more relevant and applicable tool for the evaluation of rezonings, especially as they relate to an increasing number of applications filed on "infill" sites.
- Over the years, the level of expectation of the BOS, the PC, citizens and applicants regarding the staff analysis of zoning applications has increased significantly. More and more often staff is called upon for technical expertise regarding issues raised during the evaluation process, which requires extensive and time-consuming research and coordination with other County and State agencies. The high level of expectations, coupled with the relative inexperience of recently hired staff, creates an additional challenge to maintain the Department's responsiveness.
- Enhanced use of the County Website by placing the entire Zoning Ordinance online and providing notices of pending advertised Zoning Ordinance amendments online. Additionally, the office has placed appeal applications and instructions online and will be placing home occupation and sign permit application forms online.
- Processed several major Zoning Ordinance amendments in the past several years to include establishment of the new Planned Residential Mixed Use District (PRM), conversion of certain Group 3 (Institutional) and Group 6 (Outdoor Recreation) uses to special exception uses and the revision of provisions related to places of worship, vehicle transportation establishments, and massage establishments. Continuing work on the completion of Zoning Ordinance amendments resulting from the Residential Development and Infill Study.
- In the last 5 years, there has been over a 100 percent increase in the number of requests for written responses and a 300 percent increase in the number of 2232 Review requests. While staff has responded to the increased workload demand on these time-sensitive items without the need for additional staff, it has impacted the ability to perform other tasks such as the processing of Zoning Ordinance amendments.
- Continues to provide the principal staff support to the following task forces/committees: Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) Task Force, Sign Task Force, Tree Preservation Task Force, Telecommunications Task Force, and Engineering Standards Review Committee.
- The Planning Division has continued to support major County planning initiatives for ensuring the orderly future development of the County by coordinating the preparation of studies for the Laurel Hill, Reston/Herndon Transit Station Areas, the Merrifield Suburban Center, and the Engineering Proving Grounds (EPG). The Division has also processed numerous amendments to the County's Comprehensive Plan, including a Stream Protection Amendment, provided replanning of the County's Revitalization Areas, established a Web page, and reprinted the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Department of Planning and Zoning

- The Planning Division is challenged to coordinate the review of development proposals and activities in a rapidly changing community; to fully review and comment on the land use, environmental and public facility impacts of new development; and increasingly provide coordination with other agencies and departments at the local, state, and federal level concerning growth and development in the area.
- During the past year, the Department of Planning and Zoning has initiated three teams to develop a course of action to address several of the County Executive's organizational development initiatives. These teams include:
 - The Continuous Improvement Team – The DPZ Continuous Improvement Team was established to pursue the implementation of the recommendations of the County Executive's Competitiveness Task Force, including surveying, benchmarking, process mapping, and other activities to improve the way we do business and serve our customers. The Committee has developed a plan of action for the coming year to examine a business area and review it in several different ways towards continuous improvement.
 - The Leadership and Management Development Team – The DPZ Leadership and Management Development Committee was established to pursue the implementation of the recommendations of the County Executive's Leadership and Management Development Task Force within the Department. The committee is responsible for making recommendations on expanding the Department's capacity to encourage leadership responsibility at all levels in the organization.
 - The Communications and Employee Involvement Team – The DPZ Communications and Employee Involvement Team was established to pursue the implementation of the recommendations of the County Executive's Task Forces on Communication and Employee Involvement. The Team seeks to encourage a service of ownership and pride in our working together to serve our citizens.

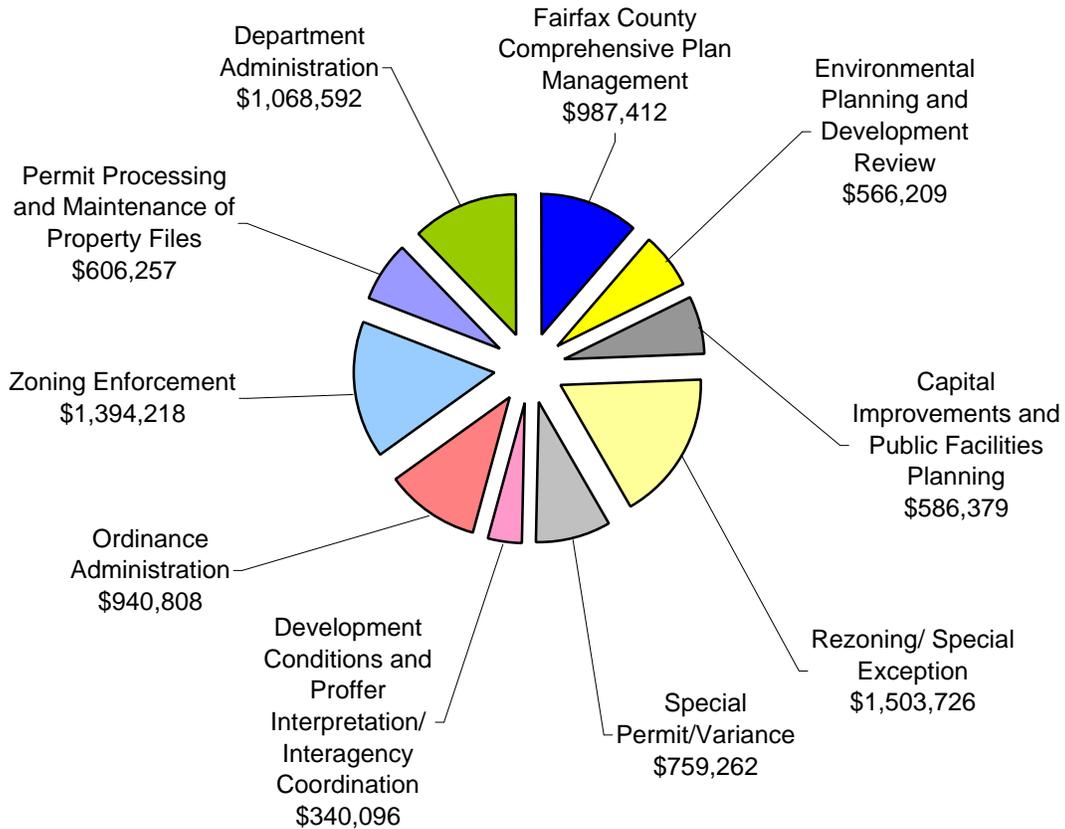
Department of Planning and Zoning

► Summary of All Agency CAPS

CAPS Number	CAPS Title	CAPS Net Cost	CAPS Number of Positions/SYE
35-01	Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan Management	\$979,948	17/16.6
35-02	Environmental Planning and Development Review	\$566,059	7/8.7
35-03	Capital Improvements and Public Facilities Planning	\$586,379	10/8.7
35-04	Rezoning/Special Exception	\$293,714	28/24
35-05	Special Permit/Variance	\$615,943	9/12.4
35-06	Development Conditions and Proffer Interpretation/Interagency Coordination	\$333,833	5/5.6
35-07	Ordinance Administration	\$940,808	17/14.6
35-08	Zoning Enforcement	\$1,310,447	26/27.2
35-09	Permit Processing and Maintenance of Property Files	\$606,257	13/14.2
35-10	Department Administration	\$1,068,592	10/10
TOTAL Agency		\$7,301,980	142/142

Department of Planning and Zoning

Department of Planning and Zoning



Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Expenditures = \$8,752,959

Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Net Cost = \$7,301,980