Preface and Introduction

PREFACE

GOALS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

On August 6, 1973, the Board of Supervisors approved sixteen interim policies designed to serve as the basic framework for developing the long-range comprehensive plan process. Following an initial series of public forums from November 1973 through January 1974 and after extensive review, the validity of these policies was reaffirmed in October 1974. They were included in the Comprehensive Plan adopted September 8, 1975, as a result of the Planning Land Use System (PLUS) process.

The policies continued to guide decision making until February 1987, when the Board of Supervisors appointed The Fairfax County Goals Advisory Commission to review the policies in terms of the County's evolution over twelve years. First, the Commission decided to use the term "goal" instead of "policy" to describe these statements of aspirations for the County. The Commission assessed the accomplishments and shortcomings of the County in terms of achieving the goals, defined current problems, and recommended courses of action. The Commission recommended eighteen new goals to guide Fairfax into the future.

The recommendations of the Goals Commission were reviewed by the community during the 1988 Policy Review Year of the Annual Plan Review cycle. Participation in the process was extensive, including district task forces, individual citizens, county staff, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. After public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board, new "Goals for Fairfax County" were adopted on October 24, 1988.

The goals are comprehensive, encompassing every aspect of County government, not limited to merely the planning function. Implementing some aspects of the goals is beyond the legislative mandate of the Planning Commission and the purview of the Comprehensive Plan. However, because the planning function is so far-reaching, it is critical to use the goals as the basis for forming countywide planning policy. Therefore, the Goals for Fairfax County have provided the strategic focus for the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

GOALS

Quality of Life - The primary goal of Fairfax County's policies and priorities is to achieve an outstanding quality of life through:

- Economic prosperity and expanding opportunity;
- Access to high quality education, public services and facilities;
- A balance between access to convenient multi-modal transportation and residential, commercial and industrial growth; and
- A pleasing physical and cultural environment in which to live and work.

Land Use - The County's land use policies should maintain an attractive and pleasant quality of life for its residents; provide for orderly and coordinated development for both public and private uses while sustaining the economic and social well-being of the County; provide for an adequate level of public services and facilities, including a system of transportation

facilities, to sustain a high quality of life; and ensure sound environmental practices in the development and redevelopment of land resources. Growth should take place in accordance with criteria and standards designed to preserve, enhance, and protect an orderly and aesthetic mix of residential, commercial/industrial facilities, and open space without compromising existing residential development. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan should set forth long-range recommendations and implementation techniques to ensure the envisioned coordination of harmonious development, while still achieving our economic goals. Densities and heights in excess of those compatible with these goals should be discouraged, nor should these policies be construed as incompatible with the County's affordable housing goal.

Transportation - Land use must be balanced with the supporting transportation infrastructure, including the regional network, and credibility must be established within the public and private sectors that the transportation program will be implemented. Fairfax County will encourage the development of accessible transportation systems designed, through advanced planning and technology, to move people and goods efficiently while minimizing environmental impact and community disruption. Regional and local efforts to achieve a balanced transportation system through the development of rapid rail, commuter rail, expanded bus service and the reduction of excessive reliance upon the automobile should be the keystone policy for future planning and facilities. Sidewalks and trails should be developed as alternate transportation facilities leading to mass transit, high density areas, public facilities and employment areas.

Environmental Protection - The amount and distribution of population density and land uses in Fairfax County should be consistent with environmental constraints inherent in the need to preserve natural resources and to meet or exceed federal, state and local standards for water quality, ambient air quality and other environmental standards. Development in Fairfax County should be sensitive to the natural setting, in order to prevent degradation of the County's natural environment.

Energy Conservation - Fairfax County should promote energy efficiency and energy conservation within the public, commercial, residential, and industrial sectors.

Growth and Adequate Public Facilities - Growth in Fairfax County should be held to a level consistent with available, accessible, and adequate public facilities as well as with rational plans to provide new public facilities and to maintain existing public facilities. The County's plans for development should take into account financial limitations associated with increased needs for public facilities.

Adequate Public Services - Fairfax County is committed to provide a high level and quality of public services to the community, within its financial limitations.

Affordable Housing - Opportunities should be available to all who live or work in Fairfax County to purchase or rent safe, decent, affordable housing within their means. Affordable housing should be located as close as possible to employment opportunities without adversely affecting quality of life standards. It should be a vital element in high density and mixed-use development projects, should be encouraged in revitalization areas, and encouraged through more flexible zoning wherever possible.

Economic Development and Employment Opportunities - Fairfax County should maintain its prosperous economic climate and varied employment opportunities by continuing to develop and pursue a broad range of actions, including public/private partnerships, designed to enhance its long-term competitive position in regional, national, and international economic development. At the same time, the County should enhance

those systems that support the employability of the population for its economic betterment.

Education - Fairfax County should provide comprehensive education, training programs, and facilities in order to ensure quality education by effectively meeting student and community needs.

Human Services - Fairfax County should provide a range of services and facilities for all residents, so that they may sustain a secure and productive lifestyle. Each individual should have the opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency and function to the limits of his or her ability, particularly in providing family stability.

Culture and Recreation - Fairfax County should provide local systems and participate in regional programs for safe, accessible and enjoyable parks (including active, passive, and historical parks); recreational programs; libraries; and cultural programs and facilities. Fairfax County should also support and encourage the identification and preservation of its heritage resources for the aesthetic, social, and educational benefits of present and future citizens.

Open Space - Fairfax County should support the conservation of appropriate land areas in a natural state to preserve, protect and enhance stream valleys, meadows, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and plant and animal life. Small areas of open space should also be preserved in already congested and developed areas for passive neighborhood uses, visual relief, scenic value, and screening and buffering purposes.

Revitalization - Fairfax County should encourage and facilitate the revitalization of older areas of the County where present conditions warrant. Revitalization should prevent the effects of encroachment and deterioration of commercial and industrial development on stable residential areas, and should not hamper community improvements in these neighborhoods.

Regional Cooperation - Fairfax County's elected officials and staff should continue to participate in leadership roles in cooperative regional activities, recognizing that the physical, economic, and social well-being of the people of Northern Virginia and the Washington Metropolitan Area is dependent upon regional cooperation.

Private Sector Facilities - Fairfax County should continue to encourage the development of appropriately scaled and clustered commercial and industrial facilities to meet the need for convenient access to needed goods and services and to employment opportunities. Particular attention should be given to the needs of small and minority businesses.

Public Participation - The Fairfax County community should be encouraged to take part in the shaping of policies and plans that will affect the environment in which they live and work. Active and timely public participation in actions involving areas of public concern in the County should be encouraged and promoted.

Financial Planning and Management - Fairfax County should support equitable systems of taxation and user charges, where appropriate, necessary to implement all its policies and to support quality public services for its residents, recognizing the County's obligations to provide services and facilities to both established and new development, and to attract quality residential projects and desirable business and industry.

Monitoring - The County's performance in achieving these goals should be regularly and rigorously monitored, and the goals themselves should be reviewed at least once every four years.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: PURPOSE, SCOPE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan consists of the Policy Plan, four Area Plans, the Plan map, and the Transportation Plan map. The Policy Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies relating to eight functional elements: Land Use, Transportation, Housing, the Environment, Heritage Resources, Public Facilities, Human Services and Parks and Recreation. The goals, objectives, and policies guide planning and development review by describing future development patterns in Fairfax County and protecting natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.

Purpose

The purpose of the Policy Plan is to provide a concise statement of objectives, policies, and guidelines for implementing the County's Goals that apply to the future development pattern of the built environment in Fairfax County, while protecting natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. It will serve as a general guide for the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, County staff, and the citizens of Fairfax County with respect to development and redevelopment in the County. The timeframe for the Plan encompasses the anticipated changes to the County over the next twenty years. As required by Virginia Code, the County will again review its Plan for the future at least once every five years.

Scope

The Policy Plan is based on goals adopted by the Board of Supervisors on October 28, 1988. The goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines are defined as follows:

- Goals provide general direction regarding the aspirations of the community;
- Objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal;
- Policies are approaches for pursuing a given objective; providing guidance which, when pursued, will assist in implementing the objective;
- Guidelines provide more explicit guidance for achieving policies and the Policy Plan Concept.

Two major components make up the Policy Plan: 1) the County Goals; and 2) countywide objectives and policies by functional area (e.g., land use, environment, and transportation).

The Policy Plan incorporates this structure into the following sections:

The Preface presents the Board of Supervisor's Goals for Fairfax County, the basis of the Policy Plan.

The Introduction presents the purpose and scope of the Plan. It also gives an analysis of the socio-economic conditions in the County in the context of the Washington, D.C. region. This is followed by a brief history of the comprehensive planning process in Fairfax County. Finally, Plan implementation and monitoring, as well as the role of community participation, are addressed.

The Countywide Planning Objectives and Policies section addresses countywide policy by specific functional area. This contains the goals, objectives, and policies for land use, transportation, housing, environment, heritage resources, public facilities, human services, and parks and recreation. The purpose of this component is to guide decisions that affect the County's built and natural environment for the County as a whole and for specific parcels of land.

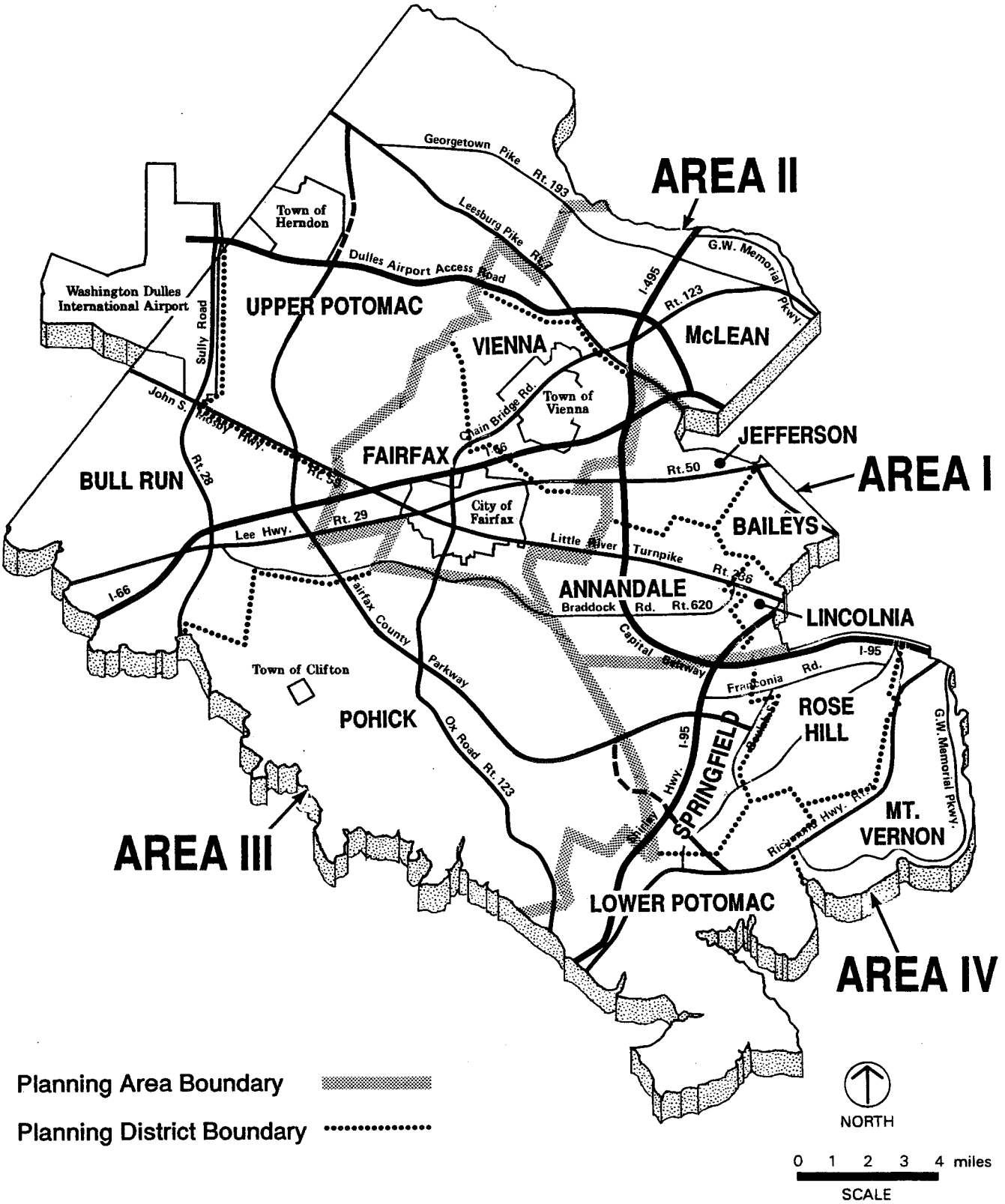
The Glossary contains an alphabetical listing of terms and their definitions as they are used in the context of this document. These are not intended to be the same definitions as used in the County's Zoning Ordinance. Rather, they are intended only to explain terms used in the Plan.

The Legal Authority of the Plan

The legal basis for this Plan is well established in the law of the Commonwealth. The *Code of Virginia* in Section 15.1-446.1 states that "the local commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction." The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to achieve "a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants."

According to the Code, the Comprehensive Plan is "general in nature" and may include, but is not limited to, the designation of land use, transportation systems, public services and facilities, historic areas, etc. The Comprehensive Plan "shall show the commission's long range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan...." The law also identifies methods of implementation such as a zoning ordinance or zoning district map, a subdivision ordinance and a capital improvements plan.

The local commission is required to review the Comprehensive Plan at least once every five years to determine whether it should be amended.



PLANNING AREAS AND DISTRICTS — FIGURE 1

FAIRFAX COUNTY IN CONTEXT

Fairfax County is one of the most dynamic jurisdictions in the Washington Metropolitan Region. (See Figure 2) It is an integral part of a region that encompasses hundreds of square miles and over four million people. In its early history, Fairfax County was a food-producer for the Nation's Capital. After World War II, the County became a suburban bedroom community on the fringe of Washington, D.C. Today the County is a multifaceted employment center, a generator of retail sales which are among the highest in the country, and an assemblage of residential communities that are home to a rapidly growing and increasingly varied population. Concentrations of employment and retail uses such as Tysons Corner, the Dulles Corridor, Fairfax Center and Springfield play regional and local roles that only a generation ago were reserved for the "downtowns" of central cities. The County's role as an agricultural producer has virtually disappeared, to the degree that preservation of remaining farm land, conservation of areas of high environmental and scenic value, and protection of open space to serve as breathing room have become high priorities.

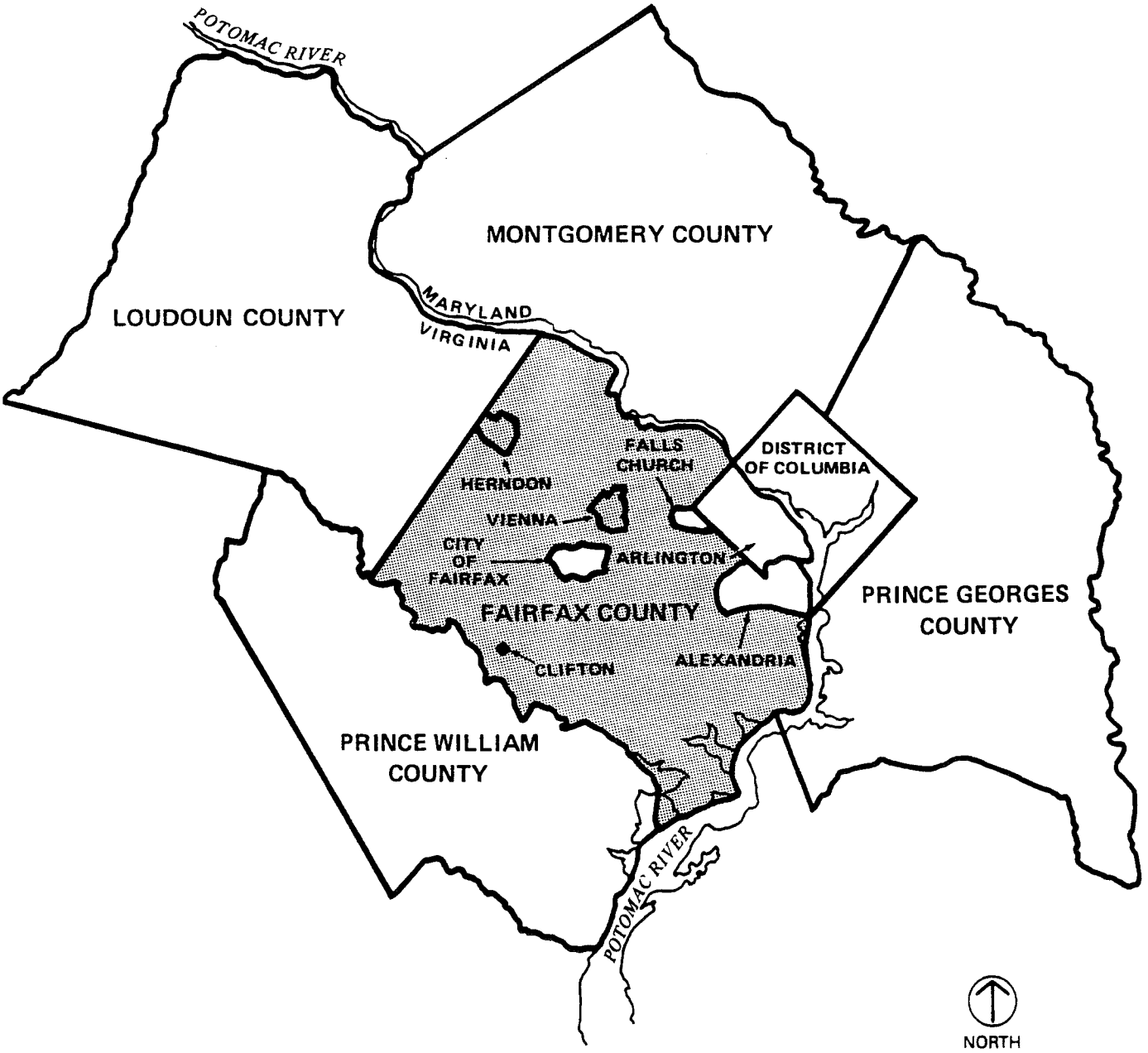
Until the mid-1960s, major roads led in a radial pattern to the District of Columbia, through the more urbanized areas of Northern Virginia (Falls Church, Arlington, Alexandria). Radial highways such as I-95, I-66, the Dulles Toll Road, and Route 50, along with the Metrorail system of high speed transit, now serve to link the various parts of the County and also link the County with Maryland and the rest of Northern Virginia. Today the Capital Beltway, a circumferential road, is the "main street" of the region, linking the inner suburbs. The Fairfax County Parkway has similarly linked the southern and western portions of the County.

In summary, Fairfax County, with 399 square miles, is both interdependent with a larger region, and the steward of the land which is home for nearly 900,000 people. The following is a depiction of Fairfax County in relation to the region as a whole, including demographics and employment statistics, with a summary of their implications for employment, transportation, housing and land use.

Population Growth and Land Availability

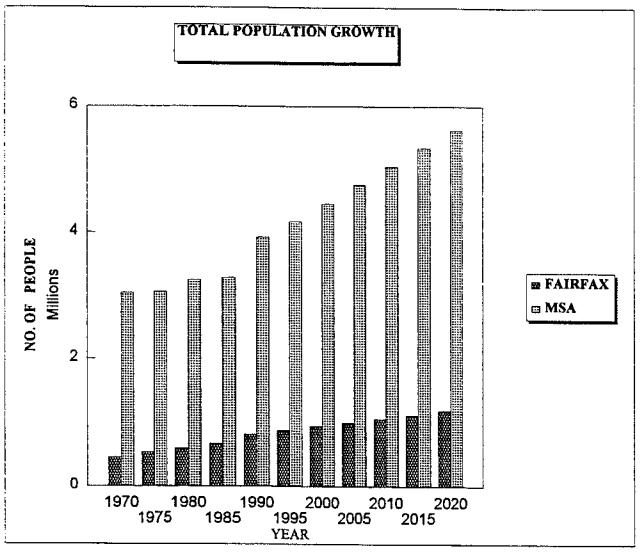
Fairfax County today is the most populous jurisdiction in the Washington Metropolitan Region. Between 1970 and 1995, the County's population almost doubled, increasing from 454,275 people (14% of the region) to 879,400 people (21% of the region). The County became the most populous jurisdiction by growing for several decades at a much faster rate than the rest of the region. In the 1970s and 1980s, the County grew between two to three times the regional growth rate. (See Figure 3)

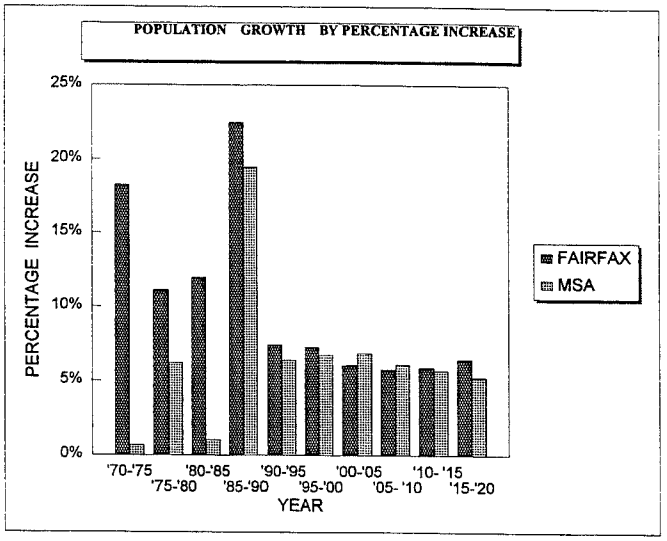
The County's absorption of a high proportion of regional growth over two decades was directly related to the abundant supply of vacant residentially zoned land and the County's ability to provide necessary public facilities and services and maintain a high quality of life. In the 1990s, the County's growth rate has decreased to be about the same as the region, with the outer-jurisdictions (i.e. Loudoun and Prince William Counties) growing at a notably faster rate. Fairfax County is now confronted with a dwindling supply of vacant residential land, and will need to make basic policy decisions concerning how and where additional residential growth can be accommodated in a fashion that ensures land use compatibility as well as the provision of the necessary infrastructure, public facilities, and services.



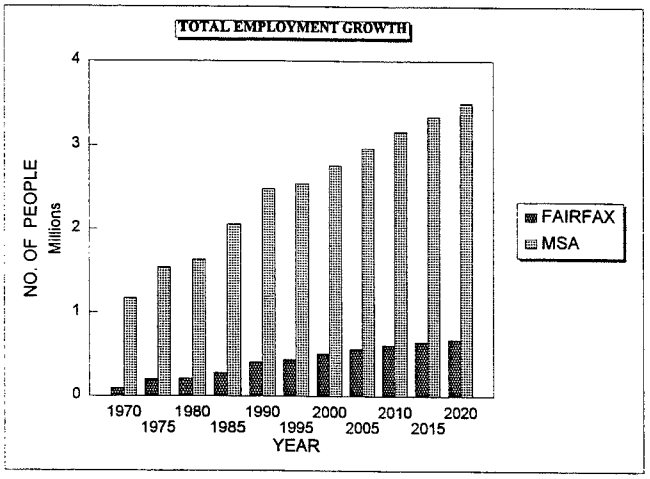
THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AREA — FIGURE 2

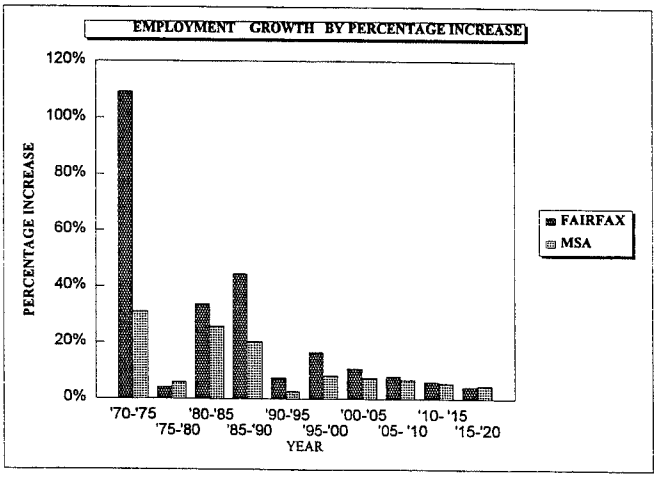
POPULATION GROWTH: FAIRFAX COUNTY AND THE REGION (1970-2020)





EMPLOYMENT GROWTH: FAIRFAX COUNTY AND THE REGION (1970-2020)





Source: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Fairfax County (OMB)

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH
FAIRFAX COUNTY AND THE REGION (1970-2020) **FIGURE 3**

Employment Growth

Fairfax County's employment between 1970 and 1995 grew at a substantially faster rate than the County's population. The employment more than quadrupled during this time period. In 1970, the County had 96,666 jobs; by 1995 this figure had grown to 438,500 jobs. During the same period, the whole of the Washington metropolitan area's employment grew rapidly, but not as rapidly as Fairfax County. The regional employment more than doubled, starting with 1,179,300 in 1970 and growing to 2,546,700 in 1995.

While, in the past, Fairfax County was only considered a bedroom community, the growth in the County's employment since 1970 has transformed the County into a community where people both live and work. In 1970, the number of persons in the Fairfax County labor force outnumbered the supply of jobs by 97%, however, by 1995 the labor force outnumbered jobs by only 19%. Because of the increase in employment opportunities in Fairfax County, a greater percentage of residents now work in the County. While in 1970 about 112,323 or 64 % of all workers commuted to other jurisdictions to work, by 1995 (i.e., twenty five years later) about 213,646 or 48.3% of all workers traveled outside of the County to jobs.

Fairfax County received a substantial share of the region's employment growth due to a number of factors. In general, the region has seen a trend toward increasing suburban employment. Fairfax County has been a particularly desirable suburban location because of its highly educated labor force, proximity to two major airports, availability of vacant land for non-residential development, and favorable business climate.

The growth in employment has expanded the County's tax base. In the late 1970s, the Board of Supervisors recommended efforts to increase the commercial/industrial share of the County tax base from 12% to a goal of 25%. By the 1990s the commercial/industrial share of the tax base had grown to between 20% and 25%. This, in turn, has helped to provide residents with many services and facilities that might have been too expensive if the County had been more dependent on a residential tax base.

The increase in employment within Fairfax County is expected to continue. Based on current trends and forecasts, Fairfax County and the entire region are expected to have employment growth at a rate faster than the growth in population. While this will clearly provide more opportunities for residents to find employment within the County, it also suggests that there will be a greater number of commuters traveling into the County from other jurisdictions. This will be especially true as the proportion of older County residents no longer in the labor force increases, and as affordable housing grows more scarce. Even an ambitious affordable housing program would not keep pace with job growth. As a result, the number of commuters coming from other jurisdictions where housing is less costly will add to current pressures on the transportation system. The County's policies regarding affordable housing and transportation infrastructure development will play a significant role in determining the effect that job growth will have on Fairfax County.

Land Use

The major demographic changes and employment growth of Fairfax County have strongly affected the existing land use pattern. Between 1970 and 1995, the number of acres in residential land use grew by 168%. While single-family detached housing continues to predominate, land use has become more diversified by the addition of significant numbers of townhouses and multi-family units.

Between 1970 and 1995, the number of acres in non-residential land uses increased by over 42.9%. Fairfax County became the region's preeminent location for new office, research, and shopping center development. In 1995, Tysons Corner alone held more office space than the central

business districts of cities, such as Baltimore, Phoenix and San Diego; and had more major department stores and retail development than all but two other suburban jurisdictions in the country. Yet Tysons Corner is but the largest of several other commercial and office concentrations in the County.

Increasing development has resulted in a diminishing supply of vacant land. Less than 40,000 acres, roughly 16% of the County's land area, remained undeveloped, in 1995. As the County's economy has matured, and the resource of vacant land dwindled, attention has begun to focus on revitalization and redevelopment.

Age

Fairfax County's population is aging; between 1970 and 1995, the median age in the County rose from 25.2 to 35 years. This aging pattern, reflecting national demographic trends, can be primarily attributed to three factors: (1) aging of the baby boom generation; (2) drop in birth rate during the 1970s and 1980s; and (3) growth in the elderly population due to increased life expectancies. Whether or not County population grows at comparable rates as in the past, by the year 2020 the County can expect a dramatic increase in the number of residents 45 years or older. Therefore, the County must be positioned to provide physical and social support to older residents. The aging population will be seeking recreational and human service facilities that are readily accessible from their homes; many may desire smaller housing units close to shopping and community services.

Households

While population growth is one measure of change, the households formed by Fairfax County residents are the primary source of demand on housing, public facilities, and services. In Fairfax County, the relative growth in number of households has exceeded that of the population overall. Fairfax County's population has grown from 454,275 people in 1970 to 879,400 people in 1995, representing about a 95% increase. Whereas, Fairfax County's households have grown from 126,500 households in 1970, to 317,000 in 1995, a 150% increase. Between 1995 and the year 2020, the percentage growth in households is expected to exceed that of population growth by 4%.

Household size in Fairfax is decreasing, as it is elsewhere in the region and the nation. While average household size in the County was 3.5 persons in 1970, by the beginning of 1995 it had declined to 2.7. This trend of decreasing household size is forecast to continue into the next century but at a much slower rate. A number of factors contribute to this change: as a larger percentage of young women enter the work force, many choose to establish careers before marrying and having children; families generally have fewer children than in previous generations; and the higher divorce rate and increase in elderly have also caused a decrease in household size.

These factors become even more apparent when reviewing the changes in household types. In 1970, over 90% of Fairfax households were families (those with two or more related individuals), and by 1995 this percentage had dropped to 72%. Conversely, there was an increase in households of single persons and unrelated individuals. Households with single persons and unrelated individuals increased from 8% in 1970 to about 28% in 1990. Similar changes have occurred in the region as a whole. These trends toward smaller households and fewer family households will have an impact on the type of housing demanded by County residents in years to come. Smaller families will not require as much space, and many may need or desire multi-family and townhouses instead of traditional single-family units.

Income

The County's median household income has risen dramatically since 1970, increasing from $15,707 to $30,100 in 1980 and to an estimated $66,000 in 1995. This represents an increase of over 300% (i.e., an average annual change of about 12%) between 1970 and 1995. Over the same time period, the median household income in Virginia increased at a substantially slower rate, increasing about 100% (i.e., an average annual change of about 4%).

The disproportionate rise in Fairfax County median household incomes can be attributed to a number of factors. Most of the County's labor force growth has been associated with "white collar" jobs resulting in over half of the employed residents holding professional, managerial, or sales jobs, with another quarter in administrative support positions. Also, the percentage of the County's female labor force employed outside the home has increased from 43% in 1970 to about 71% in 1990, which is above the national average. The increase in dual income households thus has been a major factor in the rise of the County's median household income.

In 1990, only 13.5% of Fairfax County households had an annual income of less than $25,000. This percentage could increase, if, as expected, the percentage of elderly residents on fixed incomes increases in the next two decades. While the high income levels of Fairfax County residents reflect positively on its desirability, the lack of housing opportunities for lower income households could negatively impact the County's employment growth. In fact, much of the housing constructed in the County since 1980 has been relatively expensive, and resale housing prices have also increased considerably. In many cases, only those households with substantial incomes have had the means to purchase homes in Fairfax County. Many workers have to commute from other jurisdictions where housing is less expensive, thus placing further strains on the County's transportation system.

Housing Needs and Prospects

Amid the affluence of Fairfax County, many households are squeezed by the lack of affordable housing. In 1990, approximately 9.7%, or 28,460 of the County households had incomes at or below 50% of the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) median income (i.e., $27,100 for a household of four). Of these, 18,688 were renter households, of which approximately 80% paid more than 30% of their income for rent. For households with incomes below $20,000 per year, the need for affordable housing units exceeded the County's supply by almost 15,000 units. While the number of assisted housing units in the County increased by 62% between 1982 and 1994, the existing housing units receiving assistance stood at only 10,248 units at the end of 1994, with an additional 1,300 proposed. The supply of affordable housing is well below the estimated need. Meanwhile both land and housing prices in Fairfax County continue to increase.

As of 1995, the remaining potential for all types of housing at the Comprehensive Plan's base level was approximately a 15-year supply based on growth forecasts. After the year 2010, housing demand will be primarily accommodated through the Comprehensive Plan's residential options above the baseline level. However, in 1995 these options could yield only about 24,000 more units than the Plan's base level and may be fully developed by 2015. In order to maintain an adequate future housing supply, additional opportunities for housing may need to be provided through the replanning of office and industrial areas if otherwise appropriate.

Geographic Distribution of Employment

Prior to 1980 the vast majority of Fairfax County's workers commuted to jobs outside of the County. However, by 1995, the percentage of residents working in the County had risen to 52%.

The substantial increase in the number of jobs located in Fairfax County has provided an alternative to jobs in the urban core and the opportunity for many residents to work closer to their homes.

Although the percentage of residents traveling to other jurisdictions decreased, the actual number increased as a result of the rapid growth in the size of the County's labor force. The number of residents commuting to other jurisdictions has a significant impact on the regional transportation network. As the area's population increases, it will become more difficult for County residents to commute by private automobile, unless extensive improvements to the road system are made and auto dependency can be reduced.

Although recent job growth has provided greater opportunity for residents to work in the County, it has also significantly impacted commuting patterns in the Washington region. In the early 1970s, most commuters traveled from suburban locations to the regional core. By the mid-1980s, a large number of commuters were traveling from one part of the County to another, and others were traveling from other localities, particularly outlying jurisdictions, into Fairfax County. In 1995, almost 170,000 persons commuted into Fairfax County to work. Employment centers such as Tysons Corner, the Dulles Corridor and Fairfax Center, have experienced significant increases in traffic congestion as a result. Changing commuting patterns have strained the existing transportation infrastructure: employment and shopping trips are shifting from a predominately radial pattern focused on the urban core to an increasingly circumferential suburban pattern.

Unemployment Rate

Since 1970, the unemployment rate for Fairfax County has been consistently lower than the rate for the Washington Metropolitan Area and the nation as a whole. While the low unemployment rate has been beneficial for the County's residents, it has become a problem for some businesses which sometimes experience labor shortages. The labor shortages have been most prevalent among businesses that pay lower service sector wages, such as retail establishments. Most County residents who want jobs are already employed, and those that are unemployed frequently are overqualified for these service sector jobs, or find that compensation is not enough to offset the high cost of living in Fairfax County.

Fairfax County's unemployment rate has remained low, while the regional unemployment rate has been slightly higher, indicating that there may be persons in the region who could be employed in some of the positions that Fairfax businesses are having difficulty filling. The region's transportation system, however, makes commuting from other jurisdictions difficult, especially for those dependent on public transportation. At the same time, most housing in the County is too expensive for lower paid workers. Finally, working parents frequently need low cost child care, which is not always readily available.

The locational mismatch between potential employees and service sector jobs has become significant, and it could become more severe if the number of jobs in the County continues to increase substantially. Fairfax County will need to increase its supply of affordable housing and low cost day care, as well as public transportation access to its employment centers, if it expects to have the substantial service sector required to support the County's projected increases in both population and employment.

Conclusion: Implications of Growth

Fairfax County's economic boom has brought many benefits to the community and the region. County residents enjoy both a high standard of living and fine quality of life. However, growth has brought with it not only benefits, but challenges in terms of land use, housing, and transportation. These, in turn, have serious implications for the provision of public facilities, parks, recreation facilities, and the conservation of the environment and heritage resources. The broad

implications of demographic and employment growth serve as background for countywide policy put forth in this Comprehensive Plan. Successfully addressing the problems associated with growth is necessary to maintain the quality of life for present and future generations.

HISTORY OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

The history of planning in Fairfax County goes back to the mid-1950s with the adoption of the first zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. The decade of the 1970s was marked by increasing concern among citizens and public officials regarding the problems associated with rapid and generally uncontrolled growth. In February 1973, the County created the Planning Land Use System (PLUS), a major planning effort that resulted in the 1975 Comprehensive Plan. Thirteen years later, in 1988, the County undertook a major review of the 1975 Plan, during the Planning Horizons process. This process resulted in the adoption of the Policy Plan in 1990 and the adoption of the four Area Plans in July 1991. Many of the key components of the 1975 Plan remain in the revised Plan, such as the emphasis on focusing growth in "Centers"; decreasing automobile dependency; and protecting environmentally sensitive areas and stable neighborhoods. What has changed are some of the means to achieve these ends. The following discussion highlights the evolution of the Plan from the 1970s to the present.

PLUS Components

In the fall of 1973, efforts began toward simultaneous preparation of updated countywide and area plans, components of the Comprehensive Plan. After analyses of existing conditions and countywide issues was completed, the Countywide Plan Alternatives document was published in September 1974. This reaffirmed the "interim development and redevelopment policies," later to be known as the "Board of Supervisors Policies" in the 1975 adopted Plan. These evolved into the "Goals for Fairfax County," adopted in October 1988.

The Plan updating process was structured by grouping the 14 planning districts into four planning areas. Ultimately the Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County, Virginia was adopted in five parts. These were Area I (adopted June 16, 1975); Area II (adopted August 25, 1975); Area III (adopted June 30, 1975); Area IV (adopted July 28, 1975); and Countywide (adopted September 8, 1975).

PLUS Principles

The Countywide Plan Alternatives document defined a specific approach to land use planning, the most important of which was the use of "planned development centers" as the focal point for future growth. Recommended as an alternative to sprawl, this development concept was designed to achieve the following:

- To increase local employment (in a period when Fairfax County was still primarily a bedroom suburb on the fringe of the urban core);
- To decrease reliance on the private automobile by reducing the length of work trips and making mass transit facilities more easily accessible;
- To reduce pressure for development in environmentally sensitive areas;
- To preserve stable neighborhoods; and
- To lower costs by more efficient provision of public services.

The Fairfax Planning Horizons

Since its adoption in 1975, the Plan underwent some revision through the Annual Plan Review process and several small-area studies. However by the late 1980s, the Board of Supervisors decided that it was time to reassess the County's direction, and they appointed the Goals Advisory Commission in February 1987 to review the County's goals and progress. In addition, the Board restructured the Annual Plan Review Process to create the 1988 Policy Review Year. This decision was based on a Planning Commission recommendation that a Policy Review Year would provide a needed opportunity to closely examine the countywide policy volume that was guiding decision-making about site-specific issues. The Planning Commission asked the Office of Comprehensive Planning to conduct the Plan review and to coordinate the effort with other County agencies. The effort was divided into Phase I, the review of the countywide policy volume, and Phase II, review of the other four volumes containing the Area Plans.

The process included examination of alternative concepts for future growth in population and employment. Six different land use concepts and three road networks were developed and tested for their potential impacts on the transportation system, the environment, water quality, sanitary sewer capacity, and fiscal implications.

The process of community participation for Planning Horizons was open to anyone wishing to participate. An extensive series of night meetings and Saturday workshops took place, as well as public meetings before the Planning Commission, a Planning Commission round table seminar, and formal public hearings. This process had widespread publicity, in order to keep the community informed. Eighteen working papers were distributed widely for community review.

The Policy Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 1990, replaced the Introduction/Countywide volume of the Plan. The objectives, policies, and guidelines contained in the Policy Plan guide planning and development review considerations toward implementing County goals. The goals address the future development pattern of Fairfax County, and protection of natural and cultural resources for present and future generations.

The Area Plans are key elements for implementing the Policy Plan's goals and objectives at the more detailed Planning District and Community Planning Sector levels. The Comprehensive Plan Map illustrates planned land uses, transportation improvements and public facilities. Used together, these elements comprise a dynamic document which is used by the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, County staff and the public to guide land use, transportation and public facility decision making.

The major product of Phase I of the Planning Horizons process was the Policy Plan, which contained a hierarchy of goals, objectives and policies for each functional area, such as land use, transportation, the environment and public facilities. Another, separate document was the Concept for Future Development, containing both text and maps, which highlighted a generalized land use pattern to guide future development for the County. Particularly distinctive was the new Land Classification System which identified those areas that were expected to share similar characteristics by the year 2010. The Concept and the Land Classification System were accepted by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 1990, to be used as a guide for the update of the Area Plans during Phase II of the Planning Horizons process. The Land Classification System is a revision of that used during the last major revision of the Comprehensive Plan PLUS, when the County was divided into stable areas, option areas, complex areas, planned development centers, and economic growth centers.

The Concept for Future Development comprises three elements: the Concept Map which shows the general location and character of future land uses; the Land Classification System which divides the County into eight broad categories that describe the desired future character for each area; and the Land Classification System Guidelines that give explicit direction for each land category in terms of land use, transportation, environment, public facilities, and parks and recreation.

The Concept Map shows the general character of the County with respect to the types of appropriate land uses that should be encouraged. The Land Classification System, when graphically illustrated by the Concept Map, presents a future policy direction for Fairfax County.

The Concept Map's policy direction indicates that almost all employment growth should occur within designated Development Centers, Transit Station Areas, and Industrial Areas. When combined, these centers and areas encompass less than 10% of the County's land area. With the exception of the Industrial Areas, some degree of mixed-use development is encouraged for each of these employment areas. This emphasis on mixed-use development is designed to introduce a residential component into these employment areas. Mixed-use development is generally defined as three or more uses designed to be functionally, economically and aesthetically integrated. The boundaries shown for these non-residential/mixed-use areas coincide with the current boundaries of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use areas as generally defined by existing non-residential zoning and/or the non-residential/mixed-use boundaries traditionally identified in the Area Plans.

Within some of these employment and mixed-use oriented centers and areas, limited portions have been designated as "core" or "transit development" areas. Medium to high density development intensities within these core and transit development areas may be planned to take advantage of transportation and other functional opportunities. Lower intensities are encouraged outside the "core" and "transit development" areas in the remaining portions of these employment and mixed-use centers. Transitions are planned between core and non-core areas. These transitions are created through the tapering down of development intensity and building heights, changes in use, and through landscaping, screening and buffering treatments.

The remainder of the County is composed of Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas. In general, non-residential development is not encouraged within the Low Density Residential Areas; when appropriate, neighborhood-serving commercial services are encouraged within the Suburban Neighborhoods.

In summary, the Concept for Future Development established a vision and direction for guiding Fairfax County's future growth and development. The Concept for Future Development generally describes the types and intensity of land uses that are appropriate throughout the County. It has been used in conjunction with the countywide objectives and policies contained in the adopted Policy Plan and provided a foundation and framework for the Area Planning process.

The four Area Plans adopted in 1991 contain detailed recommendations for land use, transportation, housing, the environment, heritage resources, public facilities and parks and recreation. These recommendations refine the guidance provided in the Policy Plan and were developed within the framework of the Concept for Future Development.

Each Area Plan is subdivided into Planning Districts, which, in turn, are subdivided into Community Planning Sectors, the smallest geographical components of the Plan. The Community Planning Sector text provides details on existing development and planned land use. For purposes of development review and other land-use related decisions it is emphasized that the planning guidance for each Planning District is contained in the Area Plan text; on the Area Plan map; in the Policy Plan; and in the land use guidelines contained in the Concept for Future Development and Land Classification System.

The primary planning objectives in all Area Plans are to:

- Realize the objectives and policies of the Policy Plan in planning and development decisions;
- Utilize the Concept for Future Development as a guide to land use planning decisions when Plan amendments are considered, and as guidance for non-residential development intensity in situations where there is no guidance in the Area Plans and;
- Employ site-specific guidance to review and formulate recommendations for development requests in furtherance of the public health, safety and welfare as provided in the *Code of Virginia*.

Plan Monitoring and Review Process

The initial stage of Fairfax Planning Horizons was completed with the adoption of the Policy Plan and the four Area Plans. This was followed by the completion of several major special studies. Recommendations for Lorton-Route One South, the Dulles Suburban Center, and the Tysons Corner Urban Center were subsequently approved in 1992 and 1993.

A schedule supporting the regular review, assessment and revision of the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1993 by the Board of Supervisors. 1994 was designated as a year for the Review of the Area Plans. This review was conducted and resulted in eighty-one amendments to the Area Plans. A subsequent four-year cycle was initiated to implement this process and was organized as follows:

1995 - Plan Monitoring
1996 - Policy Plan Review
1997 - Area Plan Review
1998 - Area Plan Review

The State of the Plan report, which provided background data and suggestions for nominations to amend the Policy Plan, was the culmination of the 1995 Plan Monitoring Year.

The Future of the Planning Process

Following the completion of the review of the Policy Plan in 1996 and the review of Area Plans in 1997 and 1998, it is expected that the current planning processes and practices will be reviewed to ensure that the County's growth and development patterns are adequately monitored. This activity is necessary to project trends and plan for the future. The community, decision-makers and the staff will continue to track the progress of Plan implementation through the Plan monitoring process, which in turn will aid all in the community in understanding the evolution of the County and the growth and development issues that confront it.

IMPLEMENTATION/PLAN MONITORING/CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan of Fairfax County is a dynamic document which is actively used by the Board of Supervisors, the Fairfax County Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, County staff, and the public to guide decisions about the built and natural environment, as well as the conservation of cultural and heritage resources. It is important to note that the Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance to both public and private initiatives.

There are a variety of ways to assure the dynamic nature of the Comprehensive Plan. One is to monitor the Plan on a frequent basis. In order to insure a thorough on-going review of the Comprehensive Plan, a goal supporting the regular review, assessment and revision of the Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors. A four-year cycle was initiated to implement this process and insure maximum citizen participation. Citizen participation is the foundation of the planning process in Fairfax County and a wide range of participation opportunities assure active involvement of the public in County planning.

Implementation, monitoring and citizen participation mechanisms for the Comprehensive Plan are elaborated in the following sections.

MECHANISMS TO IMPLEMENT COUNTY PLANNING POLICY

The Comprehensive Plan - The Plan is, in itself, a mechanism for implementing the Board of Supervisors Goals for Fairfax County. This is carried out through the Policy Plan which contains countywide objectives and policies relating to the Goals. This hierarchy of policy guides decision-making for countywide, area, and site-specific issues. The Policy Plan is used to provide direction for the Area Plans and guide existing implementation mechanisms, (i.e., provide direction for evaluation of zoning proposals).

The Area Plans are key elements for implementing the direction from the Policy Plan to the more detailed Planning Districts and Community Planning Sectors, both during the Area Plan update process and during the development review process. Also considered are existing conditions and issues applicable to the immediate area around the subject site. Community attention and participation are inherent in both the Plan update and zoning process because both directly affect residents and the business community.

The Zoning Ordinance - This ordinance and its accompanying map(s) prescribe both the size (intensity and bulk regulations) of lots and the uses which may be placed on the property. All property in the County is mapped to a certain zoning district. The Zoning Ordinance Map, therefore, is a primary means by which the use and intensity for specific land use recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented. An important component of the rezoning process is the proffer system, which enables a property owner to commit to conditions voluntarily which supplement the Zoning Ordinance and ensure conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Subdivision Regulations - This is the basic tool for controlling the subdivision of land. It contains the regulations for dividing parcels of land into lots of any size less than five acres and for the provision of public facilities, if required, to serve the lots so formed. Lots to be developed must conform to applicable zoning regulations.

Public Facilities Manual - This document sets forth the guidelines which govern the design of all facilities which must be constructed to serve new development. Both the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Ordinance make specific reference to the requirements of this manual. The sections of the Policy Plan concerning the environment and public facilities provide guidance to implement the Public Facilities Manual requirements.

Capital Improvements Program - This document is a guide toward the efficient and effective provision of public facilities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) document is published annually and proposes the development, modernization or replacement of physical public projects over a multi-year period. The CIP shows the arrangement of projects in a sequential order based on a schedule of priorities and assigns an estimated cost and anticipated method of financing for each project.

Programming capital facilities over time can promote better use of the County's limited financial resources and assist in the coordination of public and private development. In addition, the programming process is valuable as a means of coordinating among County agencies to avoid duplication of efforts and to take advantage of joint planning and development of facilities where possible. By looking beyond year to year budgeting to project what, where, when, and how capital investments should be made, capital programming enables public bodies to maintain an effective level of service to the present and future population. The CIP is intended to implement the public facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Although the Policy Plan presents a twenty-year projection of types of facilities and approximate measures to determine their numbers, timing of facility construction is dependent upon a number of variables. For example, in addition to the Capital Improvements Program, projects are evaluated on an annual basis through the County budget process, to determine viability in light of fiscal constraints. Additionally, facilities proposed now may not be necessary in the future due to any number of factors, such as the provision of services through the private sector or changes in Federal policy and funding.

Conclusion

The previously discussed implementation mechanisms are representative of the major tools that Fairfax County uses in development review. All mechanisms which reference the Comprehensive Plan as providing guidance to their function remains as implementation mechanisms even though they may not be specifically mentioned in this document.

PLAN MONITORING

Board of Supervisors Goal:

Monitoring - The County's performance in achieving these goals should be regularly and rigorously monitored, and the goals themselves reviewed at least once every four years.

The Policy Plan Action Agenda and Planning Commission "Super-Priorities"

The first Policy Plan, which was produced as a draft document in December of 1989, contained a list of actions. The "Action Agenda" contained over 350 items thought worthy of consideration. Given the large number of suggested actions contained in the Action Agenda, the Board of Supervisors requested that the Planning Commission consider and prioritize the Action Agenda. The Planning Commission working through its Major Plan Review Committee formed four subcommittees to examine the areas of 1) Land Use; 2) Transportation; 3) Public Facilities, Housing, Human Services and Fiscal; and 4) Environment, Parks, and Heritage Resources. County agencies provided support to the work of these committees. Six major countywide organizations concerned with the Comprehensive Plan were invited to attend and participate in the deliberations. A public workshop was held and public comments were solicited as part of the deliberations.

In March of 1992, the Planning Commission presented to the Board of Supervisors a list of ten "super-priorities" that included about 45 of the "agenda" items. The Commission felt the identified actions were important for advancing Fairfax County's adopted Goals.

The County's progress on these priorities and key objectives in the Policy Plan were evaluated as part of the 1996 Plan Monitoring Year. The State of the Plan report presented the results of this evaluation and contained suggested new actions that should be pursued.

As the 1997 and 1998 Area Plan Review Years would mark the last two years of the 1995 - 1998 Plan Review cycle, the Board requested that the Planning Commission examine the process of Plan monitoring before commencement of the next four year cycle to consider whether additional focus on potential implementation methods would be useful and, if so, how best to incorporate such focus into the Plan review cycle.

Plan Monitoring and Review

The 1995 Plan Monitoring Year began with the preparation of a series of reports describing existing conditions and trends in the County. The reports addressed seven areas:

- socio-economic characteristics;
- land use/housing;
- transportation;
- environment;
- public facilities and services;
- heritage resources; and
- parks and recreation.

The State of the Plan report, which provided background data and suggestions for nominations to amend the Policy Plan, was the culmination of the 1995 Plan Monitoring Year.

Out-of-Turn Plan Amendments - Between Plan Reviews, the Board of Supervisors may consider Out-of-Turn Plan amendments, if circumstances warrant such exceptions. In order to identify those situations when an out-of-turn amendment might be considered, the Board adopted a screening criterion on December 8, 1986. It states:

"Consideration of Out-of-Turn Plan amendments will be limited in any year to those that result from emergency situations in which the public health, safety, and welfare or sound land use planning will be harmed if action were deferred until the next appropriate Plan Review Year. Issues of sound land use planning will be evaluated in terms of oversights, inconsistencies, or land use related inequities."

To initiate an Out-of-Turn Plan amendment, the applicant makes a request directly to a member of the Board of Supervisors to sponsor a motion to consider the amendment. If the member agrees to sponsor the motion, the Board must vote to proceed with an evaluation of the proposed amendment. The proposed Plan amendment is then submitted to the planning staff for evaluation and recommendation. The Planning Commission subsequently holds a public hearing and makes its recommendation to the Board. The Board of Supervisors holds a public hearing and determines if the amendment should be accepted.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Board of Supervisors Goal:

Public Participation - The Fairfax County community should be encouraged to take part in the shaping of policies and plans that will affect the environment in which they live and work. Active and timely public participation in actions involving areas of public concern in the County should be encouraged and promoted.

Community Participation Mechanisms

Community involvement is important, both to ensure that the Plan is being implemented as intended and to ensure that the Plan reflects current needs, through periodic review. A variety of opportunities exist for a member of the community to become active in the planning process, including the following:

- Plan Monitoring: The process for periodic review of the status of the Plan includes publishing a status report and holding public hearings to capture public sentiment about the achievement of Plan policy.

- The Plan Amendment Process: The Plan is subject to amendment through the Plan Review process and through the Out-of-Turn Plan amendment process for urgent cases. Citizens, both as individuals and as members of task forces, can review proposed amendments, make recommendations of their own, and testify at public hearings.

- Magisterial District Citizen Groups: Local planning groups monitor planning and zoning activity for their district. These groups often are involved in review of proposed Plan amendments, rezoning cases, and proposals for siting of public facilities.

- Special Study Task Forces: When the County undertakes a special planning study of a small area, the Board of Supervisors may appoint a special task force to participate in this project. Such a task force is composed of a cross section of the community, in order to reflect a broad spectrum of views. Public meetings conducted by the Task Force may be held to involve the community.

- Board-appointed Committees and Commissions: The Board appoints citizens to be members of standing committees and commissions to advise them on a wide range of issues, including many that are related to countywide planning. These include the

Wetlands Board, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council, and the History Commission to name just a few. The Board also periodically appoints a commission to address a specific task in a finite period of time. For example, the Board appointed the Goals Advisory Commission to review and revise the County's goals in the period of one year.

- The County Budget Process and the Capital Improvements Program: Public Hearings are held during the review of the proposed County budget and also for the Capital Improvements Program. These hearings offer an important opportunity for the community to be involved in the funding of Plan implementation.

- County Authorities: The Board of Supervisors, with State mandate, appoints quasi-governmental authorities such as the Park Authority, Housing Authority, and Economic Development Authority. Appointees from the community serve as members of these bodies. The general public can participate in their public meetings and hearings.

- The list above describes the highlights of the opportunities available to the community to become involved in the planning process. Even if a citizen is not a member of an organized group, he or she can:

- Follow local issues in the press and County staff reports;

- Attend public hearings to voice opinions on rezoning cases or Plan amendments;

- Vote on bond issues;

- Attend meetings of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and other commissions and authorities;

- Propose a Plan amendment through the appropriate process; and

- Be active in a neighborhood association to monitor local planning and zoning activity.

All of these aspects of public participation strengthen the planning process by tapping the community's most important resource, those who have a stake in enhancing the community's quality of life.

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INTRODUCTION TO FUNCTIONAL AREAS

Purpose

The countywide element, acts as a broad statement of County policy to guide decisions toward enhancing the built and natural environment for the benefit of existing and future generations. Both the countywide policy embodied here and the more specific guidelines in the *Concept for Future Development and Land Classification System*, found in a separate document, are to be used together to give direction to the Area Planning process. The Area Plans give more site-specific guidance, from the Planning District down to the Community Planning Sector level. Finally, the entire Comprehensive Plan, made up of the Policy Plan and Area Plan volumes, is used during the development review process.

Scope

This section of the Plan contains the countywide planning objectives and policies for nine functional areas.

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Environment
- Economic Development
- Heritage Resources
- Public Facilities
- Human Services
- Parks and Recreation

The functional elements share a common structure. Each begins with an introduction that contains an overview of the issues facing the County, both now and over the next twenty years. This is followed by a statement of the appropriate Board of Supervisors Goal(s). It is assumed that most or all of the goals may have some bearing on all elements; however, only the key goals that pertain to each are cited at the beginning of the corresponding element. The goals are followed by objectives, each with its own set of policies and action agenda items.

The approach used to develop the content of this document involved working through a logical progression from general goals to increasingly more specific objectives, policies and, in some cases, guidelines and/or standards. Goals are broad statements of the community's aspirations. All elements in the Policy Plan use the Board-adopted "Goals for Fairfax County" as their starting point. Objectives, the next step in the hierarchy, have been derived from key points that are stated in or implied by the goals. Thus, objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal. Policies have been derived from the objectives. These policies are approaches for pursuing a given objective. Adopted in the Plan, the policies give guidance, which when pursued, will assist in implementing the objectives. Guidelines and standards, in turn, give more detailed direction for implementing some of the policies.

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