
ANNUAL REPORT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

CHAPTER IX

**NOISE, LIGHT
POLLUTION AND
VISUAL
POLLUTION**

IX-1. NOISE

A. OVERVIEW

Noise is a byproduct of our everyday lives, and noise that one group finds tolerable may be considered noise pollution to another. To some, sounds coming from an airport are the sounds of the economy working and growing, while others feel that this noise deprives them of their privacy and quiet.

Recent studies suggest a growing intolerance among residents and communities for noise associated with airports, traffic, construction and athletic events, etc. The impacts of noise on a community include:

- Diminished privacy and quiet at home or at an outdoor recreation event, vacation or rest site (private cabin at the lake, river or beach).
- Interrupted sleep.
- Interrupted entertainment and conversation.
- Interruptions at work or school.
- Property damage such as broken windows.

Any regulation of noise pollution must be based on scientific findings and not solely on human perception. Noise is measured by scientific instruments that receive the sound and determine its location and intensity as it radiates from the source. The resulting intensity levels and locations allow for noise levels to be regulated when society calls for abatement.

In response to an EQAC recommendation for the development and distribution of educational materials to the public regarding noise issues, county staff has established a website containing information and links addressing noise issues. The site is available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/environment/noise/>. For an explanation of how sound is measured and perceived, see this website.

In the next sections of this report some key noise pollution concerns will be addressed, followed by recommendations to alleviate their impacts.

B. AIRPORT NOISE

1. Operations and Associated Noise Impacts at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport and Washington Dulles International Airport

Fairfax County is served by Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (Reagan National) and Washington Dulles International Airport (Dulles). Reagan National and Dulles are vital to the region's overall economy, connecting the Washington area with

140 domestic and international destinations. At Reagan National, most flights are short to mid-range jet aircraft flights operated by major airlines, but at Dulles, all types and sizes of aircraft are found. On a typical day, about 4,000 airplanes will fly in the skies over the Washington region. Most of these flights are to and from Reagan National, Dulles, Baltimore-Washington International Airport or Andrews Air Force Base. Many additional flight operations also occur at the many general aviation airfields in the region. In addition, it is EQAC's perception that low-flying helicopter traffic has markedly increased over Fairfax County's residential neighborhoods in the last several years.

According to the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority's website, in 2011, total operations at Dulles decreased by 9,000, dropping from 337,000 to 328,000. The drop in Dulles operations was more than offset by the 11,000 increase in operations at Reagan National, which grew from 271,000 to 282,000.

The number of daily operations at Dulles varies significantly, with weekday operations typically exceeding weekend day operations by several hundred flights. Most flights operate between 7:00 A.M. and 10:00 P.M., with many flights in some hours and a relatively small number in other hours. Peaks are typically at 7 A.M., 12 P.M., 5 P.M. and 8 P.M., with low times at 10 A.M., 2 P.M., 6 P.M. and between 10 P.M. and 6A.M.

Reagan National has fewer flight operations than Dulles, with more than 700 flights on a typical day. Weekday operations are typically greater than weekend day operations. Most flights occur between 7 A.M. and 10 P.M., with a fairly consistent number of scheduled operations for each hour within this period.

Because Reagan National is located near centers of political power and residential areas, aircraft at National are subject to several restrictions. There are four No Fly zones, which are the U.S. Capital, the National Mall, the White House and the Vice President's house at the Naval Observatory. Under the Federal Aviation Administration's High Density Rule, carriers are limited, with some exceptions, to 37 scheduled operations per hour and the commuter carriers to 13 scheduled operations per hour. In addition, Reagan National has one of the strictest noise regulations in place at any major airport in the United States. All aircraft operating between 10:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M. (with a half hour grace period) must satisfy the airport's nighttime noise limits or face monetary fines of \$5,000 maximum per violation. There are typically five to 10 noise violations each year; in 2011, there were 10.

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, which operates both Reagan National and Dulles Airports, has historically monitored aircraft and community noise around the clock at 32 locations in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area. The monitoring equipment has evaluated different sound events and has separated those events likely to have been caused by aircraft from the remaining events, which have been attributed to the community. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Aviation Policy Committee (formerly known as the Committee on Noise Abatement and Aviation at National and Dulles Airports) and the Airports Authority

selected the monitoring sites from recommendations offered by the local governments. Due to the age of the monitoring system, the system had become unreliable and has been replaced.

The new monitoring system, which includes 40 monitors, became operational at the end of 2008. The original intent was to monitor noise at 40 locations throughout the metropolitan Washington area, with 20 sites for Reagan National and 20 for Dulles, including 15 locations in Fairfax County. Five of the original 40 monitors are not currently in use, including one in Fairfax County that was decommissioned in 2011. It had been at Great Falls Elementary School and monitored primarily Reagan National Airport. The active Fairfax County monitors are listed below, with the site numbers used by MWAA to report data in the “Annual Aircraft Noise Report”:

Monitoring locations serving primarily Reagan National:

- Langley Forest, Site #3.
- Marlan Forest, Site #11.
- North Mount Vernon, Site #19.
- Springfield, Site #9.

Monitoring locations serving primarily Dulles:

- Armstrong Elementary School, Site #36.
- Crossfield Elementary School, Site #35.
- Cub Run Elementary School, Site #21.
- Chantilly Post Office, Site #25.
- Floris Elementary School, Site #24.
- London Towne Elementary School, Site #30.
- Pleasant Valley Golf Course, Site #16.
- Union Mill Elementary School, Site #29.
- Virginia Run Elementary School, Site #37.
- Westfield High School, Site #34.

Noise levels are displayed in DNL, the day-night annual average sound level, in “A” weighted decibels (dBA). This 24 hour average takes into account the maximum levels of noise, the duration of each noise event, and the time each noise event occurred. Events occurring between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am are increased by 10 dB to account for increased annoyance normally associated with night time noise.

The monitoring system evaluates sound events and separates those events likely to have been caused by an aircraft from the remaining events, which are attributed to the community, and the three DNL values are provided for each site each month:

- Total DNL.
- Aircraft DNL.
- Community DNL.

A review of the 2011 noise monitoring data published on the MWAA website shows that, of the 14 monitoring stations currently operating in Fairfax County, the highest levels of aircraft noise were recorded at the Westfield High School site, which recorded noise levels over DNL 58 dBA for three months. According to MWAA, those high levels were caused by a temporary but necessary increase in the number of aircraft flying in that area, as runway maintenance and track closures at both airports forced aircraft to reroute.

Under the former monitoring system, MWAA had provided quarterly reports to stakeholders as data became available, but under this new system, MWAA posts monthly data for each site in the “Annual Aircraft Noise Report” on its website. In addition, in response to requests, MWAA will reproduce the data into different formats. Contact Mike Jeck at 703-417-8745 or Mike.Jeck@mwa.com with requests for tailored formats.

Monthly noise data are currently posted on the Annual Report only after all 12 months have been recorded. Thus, data for 2010 and 2011 are published but no information for 2012 will be published until the end of the year. Data for 2009 are not available because the system was not yet fully operational. The Annual Report can now be accessed from the home page of the MWAA website by searching “noise” from the box at the top right of the page.

EQAC supports posting noise data on a public website in lieu of quarterly paper reports if the detailed monthly data for each quarter are posted when available. EQAC also strongly believes that MWAA should review and analyze the data to include identifying possible operational approaches that can be pursued to reduce noise. MWAA staff has suggested that at least one year of data from the new runway configuration at Dulles, with all four runways fully operational, is needed to be able to evaluate operations on the new runways as they relate to community noise impacts and whether or not such impacts would suggest the need for consideration of operational changes. Because of major runway rehabilitation projects in 2010 and 2011, there has not yet been a full year of operations on all four runways.

A second MWAA system that recently became fully operational is “Airscene,” an online noise complaint reporting system that supplements the still-existing phone complaint system.

Airscene can be accessed from the home page of the MWAA website home page by 1) selecting an airport; 2) selecting “Flight Information” from the links at the top of the page; 3) selecting “Aircraft Noise and Flight Tracking Data” from the links on the left side of the page; and 4) scrolling down to click on Airscene. Airscene has four tabs (Home, Complaint, Flight Tracking, Contact Us) found on the top portion of the screen, and each tab opens a page with instructions on how to provide or access information. While MWAA is working to resolve compatibility issues for other browsers, at this point, Internet Explorer is required to view Airscene.

To register complaints by phone, call the Noise Complaint Telephone Center at Dulles, 703-572-8215, or Reagan National, 703-417-8020.

Complaints from Airscene and the Telephone Center in 2011 totaled 161 for Dulles, a huge drop from the 636 received in 2010. For Reagan National, complaints totaled 505, up from 197 complaints in 2010. MWWA attributes the increased complaints to a major runway rehabilitation project in 2011 which redirected many flights as the major north-south artery was completely re-milled and resurfaced.

Resources: Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority website, www.mwaa.com; Federal Aviation Administration Noise Ombudsman, 202-267-3521.

2. Construction Projects at Dulles International Airport

On October 14, 2005, the Federal Aviation Administration published a Record of Decision for the construction of new runways, terminal facilities and related facilities at Dulles Airport. The publication of this document completed the lengthy Environmental Impact Statement process for this project, providing the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority with the approval needed to proceed. Two new runways have been authorized: a north-south oriented runway to be constructed parallel to and 4,300 feet west of the westernmost of two existing north-south runways and a runway roughly oriented east-west that will be constructed parallel to and 4,300 feet south of the existing east-west runway.

The new north-south runway, a concrete strip 9,400 feet long and 150 feet wide, was opened for use in November 2008. The entire project includes the new runway, a parallel taxiway, connector taxiways and cross-field taxiways that connect to the terminal and existing airfield areas. With this new runway available to handle traffic, the middle north-south runway was taken out of operation for maintenance purposes when scheduling allowed during the second half of 2009 and on through 2010. In 2011, another major maintenance project continued the disruption, concentrating flights, and noise, on the three available runways.

Construction dates for the fifth runway will be set in the future.

There are many other projects under way at Dulles Airport, including:

- Improvements to the airport roadway system and connections to Route 28 and the Dulles Access Road.
- Rail to Dulles.
- Four new noise barriers to be constructed along residential properties adjacent to the Dulles Connector Road to mitigate traffic noise in conjunction with the Dulles Metrorail Project along the Dulles Toll Road and Dulles Airport Access Highway. Construction is scheduled to begin in FY12-13.

3. Part 150 Noise Compatibility Planning for Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport

Portions of the following discussion have been excerpted and modified slightly from the website of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

MWAA prepared a major update of the Noise Compatibility Study for Reagan National. This study, conducted in accordance with the provisions of the FAA's "Part 150" process, was designed to forecast future noise contours at Reagan National and to propose abatement and mitigation actions to reduce community noise impacts. A study report containing a series of recommended noise abatement and mitigation measures was released in September 2004. Noise abatement recommendations include, among other things, the application of improved technology to keep arriving and departing aircraft over the Potomac River up to their designated turning points, an improved distribution of turning points from the Potomac River between five and ten miles south of the river and the improvement of the airport's noise monitoring and flight tracking system. In October 2004, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors endorsed staff comments concerning these recommendations; the comments were generally supportive of the noise abatement recommendations but recommended a follow-up assessment of the effectiveness of these measures.

Because of the importance of this issue to the community, COG's Committee on Noise Abatement and Aviation at National and Dulles Airports (later known as the Aviation Policy Committee) partnered with MWAA throughout the process of development of the noise abatement and mitigation recommendations. A Part 150 Study Advisory Committee was established to assist and advise the Airport Authority in this study; indeed, the Advisory Committee's recommendations were incorporated into the Part 150 Study document. In all, the Part 150 Study recommended eight noise abatement measures (measures designed to reduce noise impacts) and six noise mitigation measures (measures taken to promote compatibility with and awareness of noise impacts). The recommended noise abatement measures were:

- Efforts supporting the use of advanced navigation technology.
- Two measures addressing the dispersal of flight paths in the area between five and ten miles south of the airport.
- Revision to the Airport Facility Directory reflecting current noise abatement procedures.
- Phasing out of "hushkitted" Stage 3 aircraft.
- Updating the airports' noise monitoring and flight tracking system.
- Establishing a system to report airline compliance with noise abatement measures
- Enhancement of the noise complaint system.

Five of the six mitigation measures were directed toward neighboring localities (e.g., disclosure of noise impacts; building code modifications; noise overlay zoning) and the sixth recommended an expanded MWAA airport noise information program.

MWAA submitted the Part 150 study to FAA, and FAA completed its review of, and issued a Record of Approval for, the Noise Compatibility Program in early 2008. Four of the eight proposed noise abatement measures were approved, and all six of the mitigation measures were approved with the acknowledgment that these measures were beyond the authority of FAA. Four noise abatement measures were disapproved for the purposes of Part 150—in disapproving these measures, FAA noted that the noise exposure model and noise compatibility program for the airport showed “no present or forecasted incompatible land uses within the DNL 65” contour. Effectively, FAA is supporting the use of agency funds only for noise abatement projects that support actions that would be applied in areas inside the DNL 65 dBA contour, with the recognition that MWAA or Air Traffic Control could pursue similar or supportive actions at their discretion (and in the case of noise monitoring and flight tracking, at MWAA’s expense). As noted in FAA’s Record of Approval, a working group has been formed to develop advanced navigation procedures for arrivals and departures and to encourage the use of this technology, and MWAA has updated the noise monitoring and flight tracking system.

Nevertheless, EQAC continues to share the concerns of communities both north and south of Reagan National regarding noise impacts associated with airport operations and holds that noise impacts do not stop at the DNL 65 dBA model contour shown in the Part 150 study. The DNL 65 dBA contour for Reagan National encompasses a relatively small area that is located largely on airport property and within the Potomac River; some commercial, industrial and governmental areas are also located within this area, as is park land. No residences are located in areas that are currently exposed to, or that are projected to be exposed to, noise impacts of DNL 65 dBA or above. However, there have been significant concerns about airport noise impacts well outside this area, and operational noise abatement procedures have been established to minimize such impacts both north and south of the airport. Deviations to noise abatement procedures north of the airport have been documented by the McLean Citizens Association in collaboration with Congressman Wolf’s office. While these impacts have occurred well beyond the DNL 65 dBA contour, they have had a significant and adverse impact to residents of the area.

4. The Aviation Policy Committee/Aviation Policy Liaison

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments’ Aviation Policy Committee was discontinued effective January 2011, and oversight for regional aviation policy has been returned to the COG board, with The Honorable Mary Hynes, Vice-Chair of the Arlington County Board, serving as Aviation Policy Liaison. Her duties include coordinating with MWAA and coordinating with COG staff in advising the board on aviation policy issues. This appointment represents the best use of limited resources and will maintain the values of the Aviation Policy Committee.

5. Helicopter Noise

Recognizing both the vital need for helicopters in the National Capitol Region and community concerns with the associated noise, COG held a “Helicopter Noise Forum” in September, 2010. The forum included presentations from officials from the FAA and the Military District of Washington and participation from local elected officials and citizens, who expressed interest in identifying improved means for community input regarding helicopter noise. In response, COG asked its Aviation Policy Liaison to work with local elected officials, citizens, and officials from the FAA, the Military District of Washington and other agencies to improve community understanding of the region’s helicopter system and flight rules and to work towards a solution that aggregates community noise concerns and is able to trouble shoot to address “hot spots.”

To that end, Aviation Policy Liaison Mary Hynes convened a second forum on helicopter noise in February 2011. Representatives from the FAA explained that helicopter flights in the Washington region are under their tight control and are provided airspace only for military, police, news media and medical missions; there are no “joy rides” in the D.C. area. While defending the value of every helicopter flight, the FAA noted that it also tries to mitigate the resulting noise by allowing higher altitude flights when possible. Noise was expected to have been reduced in March 2012, when Advanced Navigational procedures as recommended in the Part 150 Plan were scheduled to have gone into effect. Another noise mitigation policy supported by the FAA is the “Fly Neighborly” Program devised by the Helicopter Association International for all civilian, military and government flights. A community noise portal that could manage helicopter noise complaints and pinpoint ‘hot spots’ was suggested as a tool to alleviate community concerns. Liaison Hynes noted that, although funds were not currently available to purchase such a system, they are continuing to look for funding opportunities.

C. HIGHWAY NOISE

1. Background

As the Washington metropolitan area continues to grow, so does traffic and traffic-related noise, degrading quality of life, especially in residential areas adjacent to these roadways.

Noise has become an important environmental consideration for highway planners and designers. The U.S. Department of Transportation and state transportation agencies are charged with the responsibility of optimizing compatibility of highway operations with environmental concerns. Highway noise has been addressed by numerous investigations, including distinguishing among different sources of noise at receptor locations, studying noise perception by the human ear, and calculating highway noise reference energy mean emission levels. In addition, the effects of site geometry,

meteorology, ground surface conditions and barriers on noise propagation are estimated and considered. While the study of noise and its perception has become more sophisticated, there is still a need for precise, uniform noise measurement procedures for assessing impacts of traffic noise in the vicinity of roadways, as well as a need for effective cost-efficient noise barriers.

When measurements indicate that noise abatement is required, the following procedures are options:

- The construction of barriers/walls or raised berms.
- The provision of landscaping/vegetation.
- The provision of acoustical design techniques.

In densely populated areas such as Fairfax County, noise barrier walls remain one of the most reasonable and feasible measures to abate traffic noise upon adjacent residential properties.

2. State Policy

Virginia adopted its original noise abatement policy in 1989. The policy established criteria for providing noise protection in conjunction with proposed highway projects in the state. Implementation of the policy has aided in the construction, or construction approval, of more than 100 federally-funded sound barriers. Experience with this policy created considerable feedback from residents and elected officials. As a result, the Commonwealth Transportation Board decided to evaluate the policy for possible changes. The major source of information used was a survey of 15 state departments of transportation in the eastern U.S. The culmination of this process was the adoption of changes to the state policy in November 1996, which became effective in January 1997.

The three key changes to the policy were to raise the cost-effectiveness ceiling from \$20,000 per protected receptor to \$30,000 per protected residential property based on other state practices, to clarify that Virginia will not participate in any retrofit project along an existing highway when not in conjunction with an improvement for that highway, and to add the possibility for third party funding of the amount above Virginia Department of Transportation's \$30,000 ceiling if the abatement measure otherwise satisfies the criteria. The State Noise Abatement Policy was revised again effective July 13, 2011 to comply with the Federal Highway Administration's noise abatement regulations. The policy now establishes a reasonableness criterion (cost effectiveness) for a sound barrier of 1,600 square feet per noise receptor (rather than a cost figure), a noise reduction design goal of at least seven decibels, consideration of balconies as an outdoor usage area and elimination of Third Party funding (except for aesthetics). The policy of not considering noise impacts beyond 500 feet from the roadway in determining the need for noise abatement will be continued. More information about the new state noise abatement policy can be viewed at the Virginia Department of Transportation website: <http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/pr-noise-walls-about.asp>.

3. State Projects in Fairfax County

The potential noise impact of the I-495 High Occupancy Toll Lanes Project, which will add a total of four new lanes for a 14-mile stretch between the Springfield interchange and the American Legion Bridge, was assessed in accordance with Federal Highway Administration and VDOT guidelines. To determine the degree of impact of highway traffic noise, traffic noise levels during the loudest hour of the day were determined for the existing (1998) conditions and the design-year (2020) no-build and build conditions. Noise levels for the design-year no-build scenario are expected to increase on average by approximately 1 dB because of an increase in projected traffic volumes and the mix of heavy trucks during the loudest hour. In comparison, noise levels for the build scenario were estimated to increase an average of approximately 4 dB, with noise impacts in some areas increasing up to 19 dB and in others actually decreasing. The majority of impacted residences would be exposed to design-year traffic noise levels that approach or exceed an average of 67 dBA during the loudest hour of the day, a level that qualifies them for noise barriers if the following conditions for feasibility and reasonableness are also met:

- Noise barriers must be physically feasible and capable of providing at least five decibels of noise reduction, and for projects considered as of July 2011, at least seven.
- The noise barriers must meet VDOT's cost-effectiveness criterion of a maximum of \$30,000 per protected or benefited dwelling unit, unless additional funding is provided by a third party. For projects being considered after July 2011, a barrier must meet a reasonableness criterion of 1,600 square feet per noise receptor (rather than a cost figure).
- Noise barriers under consideration after July 2011 may include balconies as an outdoor usage area, and Third Party funding may no longer be used, except for aesthetics

Recommendations from the study led to subsequent approval of nine new sound barrier systems, as well as the replacement/enhancement/extension of eight existing sound walls which will need to be removed in order to widen the highway. Sound walls, therefore, will protect almost all residential areas on both sides of the highway adjacent to the 14-mile stretch of the project, with gaps where walls could not be built because of terrain or access issues, or, in a few cases, where a proposed barrier was not approved because it did not meet the criterion of either sound reduction or cost-effectiveness.

The study also estimated the impact of highway traffic noise on non-residential areas such as parks, schools, places of worship and recreation areas. Reasonableness for these areas was determined during final design on a case-by-case basis with respect to the type and duration of activity, size of the affected area, severity of impact, total cost and the amount of noise reduction.

Barriers constructed by VDOT since the early 1990s in Fairfax County have consisted of a solid wall of absorptive concrete that breaks the line of sight between vehicles and homes. Although noise barriers typically have a maximum decibel reduction of 20 dBA, most only provide a reduction of 10-12 dBA. Walls for the I-495 HOT Lanes Project will look similar to those sound walls built in the past in Fairfax County. Noise barriers to be built for this project will range in height from about seven to 39 feet.

The following noise barriers for highway construction projects in Fairfax County were completed during FY11-12:

- One replacement and enhanced noise barrier system and two new sound barrier systems associated with the Interstate 95/Telegraph Road interchange improvements associated with the Woodrow Wilson Bridge Project (VDOT Project #0095-96A- 105,P101,R201,C501/UPC 18136).
- One replacement and five new noise barrier systems associated with the Interstate 95 Fourth Lane Widening Project (VDOT Project # 0095-96A,P102,R201,C501/UPC 57017).
- Two new noise barrier systems associated with Phase I and Phase III construction of the Fairfax County Parkway Extension through Fort Belvoir North Area (Engineer Proving Ground) Project (VDOT Project # 7100-029-758,C515,C517/UPCs 88556 & 88558).
- Six new noise barrier systems associated with the construction of the new Fairfax County Parkway/Fair Lakes Parkway Interchange Project (VDOT Project # 7100-029-353,P101,R201,C501/UPC 52404).
- Replacement/enhancement/extension of eight existing sound barrier systems plus construction of an additional 13 new sound barrier systems associated with the I-495 Express Lanes Project (VDOT Project # 0495-029-138,P101/UPC 68805).
- Two new noise barrier systems associated with construction of the Telegraph Road Widening Project (VDOT Project # 0611-029-303,B601,C502,P102,R202/UPC 11012).

Noise barriers have been approved for the following highway construction projects in Fairfax County that had been scheduled to begin construction in FY12-13:

- Two new noise barrier systems on I-495 at the Georgetown Pike/Route 193 interchange (VDOT Project # 0495-029-874,C501,P101/UPC (94944)).
- Four new noise barrier systems on the Dulles Connector Road (VDOT Project #0267-029-919,C501/UPC 98232). The construction of these sound walls was legislated by Chapter 874, Virginia Acts of Assembly, 2010.

Noise barriers are currently under consideration (but not approved) for the I-95 Express Lanes, the I-66 Spot Improvement and Route 1 Widening near Ft. Belvoir.

D. METRO YARD NOISE

The Metro Service and Inspection Yard, located near the West Falls Church Metro station, services trains using a short-radius loop track. As the trains move along the track, “wheel squeal” is generated, which is extremely irritating to residents in nearby neighborhoods. An expansion of this yard has been proposed by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in order to provide support for the coming Silver Line, and as part of the expansion, the Federal Transit Authority is requiring a sound box to be built over the noisiest portion of the loop track.

The sound box must meet a development condition of DNL 55 dBA as well as requirements of the county’s noise ordinance (Chapter 108.1 of the Fairfax County Code)-- a requirement of a maximum noise level of 55 dBA and also maximum noise thresholds in specific frequency-based octave bands. The sound box is still in the design phase but is expected to meet all of the required conditions. It will cover approximately 1,000 linear feet of track and should be completed by 2013.

To protect residents from wheel squeal and other noises, stringent requirements have been built into the permit, SEA 85-D-033-02. A noise study must be performed to demonstrate compliance with the Noise Ordinance before the permit will be issued, and additional studies can be requested by the Zoning Administrator when warranted by resident complaints. If a noise study does not demonstrate compliance, additional noise attenuation and mitigation measures shall be implemented in order to achieve compliance. To ensure that there is a forum for ongoing discussion with the adjacent residential community, the applicant shall meet with a Communications Committee comprised of representatives of nearby homeowners when requested, but not more than twice a year. In addition, a dedicated telephone contact number for the West Falls Church rail yard will be provided to the Dranesville District Supervisor’s office and to members of the Communications Committee to enable them to report concerns regarding the operation of the West Falls Church rail yard.

E. TYSONS CORNER NOISE STUDY

On June 22, 2010, the Board of Supervisors adopted new Comprehensive Plan guidance for Tysons Corner. This guidance recognizes that there are significant noise impacts associated with the highways that are located in this area and that there may be a potential for conflicts between the Comprehensive Plan’s policy regarding highway noise compatibility and urban design guidelines supporting the location of development close to streets. The adopted Plan summarizes the issue as follows:

Residential and Other Noise-Sensitive Uses

Significant highway noise impacts are likely in some parts of the Tysons Corner area due to the proximity of major roadways and interstate highways to planned future development. The Policy Plan indicates that new residential and other noise-sensitive uses should not develop in areas where current and future noise levels exceed 75 dBA DNL, which is a day-night weighted average noise level. As Tysons transforms into a more urban place, there is an increasing possibility that the land use recommendations for residential and hotel uses, and the urban design guidelines which seek to locate these uses closer to the street, may be in conflict with the current noise policy. Therefore an areawide study of noise levels along Tysons' major transportation corridors should be undertaken. The noise study should clearly define noise contours with current noise levels and future noise levels based on a minimum 20-year traffic volume projection for the roadway and other transportation noise sources. Once noise contours are mapped and compared with planned locations for future residential and hotel development in Tysons, the implications of applying the current noise policy can be evaluated.

The areawide study of noise levels along Tysons' major transportation corridors, as recommended in the Plan, is under way and is anticipated to be completed in 2012. EQAC will report on the results of this effort in its 2013 *Annual Report on the Environment*.

F. STEWARDSHIP

The Fairfax County Restoration Project, a public-private partnership, launched in spring 2010 with its initial focus on restoration of areas negatively impacted by the I-495 HOT Lanes Project. It is working with VDOT to modify VDOT's landscaping plans to include restoration of cloverleaf areas and areas inside and outside the sound walls. Vegetation planted inside and outside the sound walls will provide many benefits, including reduction in storm water runoff, habitat for pollinators, birds and small mammals and visual relief for both motorists and residents.

In recognition of its many projects already underway in different parts of the county, the FCRP has been awarded a 2011 Environmental Excellence Award (see Appendix C). Anyone interested in joining the efforts should contact the FCRP at info@fcrpp3.org.

G. COMMENTS AND ONGOING CONCERNS

1. Continue to support airport noise-compatible land use planning near airports in the county through the implementation of policies and regulations that reference the most current airport noise contour projections for the airports and that are at least as stringent as federal noise compatibility guidelines.
2. Staff should continue to review all airport and highway studies that require Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statements under the National Environmental Policy Act for consistency with county policies addressing transportation-related noise and mitigation and report its findings to the board. In turn, the Board of Supervisors should, when appropriate, adopt resolutions with specific requests and/or recommendations and

transmit these to the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Federal Aviation Administration, Commonwealth Transportation Board, Virginia Department of Transportation and other state and federal agencies as applicable.

3. Encourage the retention and planting of noninvasive vegetation to provide visual shielding of residents from highways. Where possible, support the provision of vegetated areas adjacent to highways that are wide enough and dense enough to provide noise reduction benefits to residential areas near the highways. Where feasible and appropriate, pursue such approaches in lieu of noise walls.
4. EQAC is pleased that a series of Web pages addressing noise issues have been established on the county's website. The county should ensure that this page is kept current through regular updates.
5. Once one year of community noise impact data from the new runway configuration at Dulles Airport, with all four runways fully operational, are available, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority should review and analyze the data to identify operations on the new runways as they relate to community noise impacts and whether or not such impacts would suggest the need for consideration of operational changes.
6. EQAC is pleased that the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority reports, on its website, results from the new noise monitoring system for Washington Dulles International and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airports, and that the Noise Reports for both airports are accessible from the MWAA homepage by searching "noise" from the box at the upper right. EQAC supports MWAA's plan to update the Noise Report on a quarterly basis and looks forward to seeing more current data.

H. RECOMMENDATION

1. The noise monitor at Great Falls Elementary, which primarily served Reagan National Airport, has been decommissioned with no plans for a replacement as there are currently few complaints about noise at that site. EQAC is concerned that that noise may become more of a concern in the future and that a monitor would then be needed. EQAC therefore recommends that the Board of Supervisors request to MWAA that a replacement site be found.

REFERENCES

Fairfax County Virginia Noise website: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/environment/noise/>

Federal Aviation Administration, 2007, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, Volume 1, FAR Part 150 Noise Exposure Maps and Noise Compatibility Program.

Federal Aviation Administration, June 15, 2012 letter from Lourdes Q. Maurice to Noel Kaplan, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning.

Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority website: www.mwaa.com

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments website: www.mwcog.org

Virginia Department of Transportation, July 11, 2012 letter from William C. Cuttler to Fred Selden, Director, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning.

IX-2. LIGHT POLLUTION

A. OVERVIEW

Light pollution is a general term used to describe light output, primarily from exterior (outdoor) sources, in commercial, residential and roadway settings that is excessive in amount and/or that causes harmful glare to be directed into the path of travel or into residential neighborhoods. Light pollution is thus both a safety issue and a quality of life issue. With the increasing urbanization of Fairfax County, exterior (outdoor) lighting and light pollution in its many forms have become pressing issues to our communities. In the past, Fairfax County had some regulations regarding exterior lighting, but they were minimal and out of date. A major effort was undertaken in 2002 to write a totally new and modern Outdoor Lighting Ordinance that took into account the numerous advances that have been made in lighting technology in recent years. This highly successful effort utilized several workshops, in which EQAC and a number of local experts participated, and came to fruition in the early summer of 2003 with the adoption of the new Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. It is regarded by experts in the outdoor lighting community as being one of the best such ordinances in the mid-Atlantic region and has been cited and largely copied by localities in Connecticut, Illinois and California. However, there are a few areas that could not be adequately addressed by the new ordinance, since suitable standards and convenient measurement technology were not available. This report will focus on these areas.

B. RESPONSE OF THE HUMAN EYE TO LIGHT

To put the following sections in proper context it is helpful to briefly review how the human eye perceives and reacts to light. The various cells of retina of the eye contain what are called visual pigments. These pigments, in the fully dark-adapted condition, are complex proteins consisting of two linked components. The pigments respond to light by “bleaching” (actually the dissociation of the two protein moieties). The brighter the light, the greater is the bleaching and the longer the regeneration time. The greater the bleaching, the lower is the sensitivity of the retinal cell. The retina contains three types of sensory cells:

- The rods which are most numerous toward the periphery of the retina and contain the visual pigment rhodopsin. They are useful primarily in low light and provide monochromatic images.
- Three types of cones, mostly concentrated in the central portion of the retina, which provide color vision. They contain respectively photopsin I (erythrolabe), photopsin II (chlorolabe), and photopsin III (cyanolabe). Their peak sensitivities are in the red, green, and blue portions of the spectrum just like the sensor chip in a digital camera. (George Wald received the 1967 Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work on the three kinds of cone photopsins.)

- The spidery retinal ganglion cells, containing the visual pigment melanopsin. These cells perform two different functions: (1) control of the size of the pupil of the eye in response to light and (2) as the control that resets the body's day-night cycle clock. Prolonged exposure of melanopsin to bright lights during normally dark periods of the evening and night can result in significant disturbances of the sleep-wake cycle.

C. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

The main issues and problems of exterior lighting and light pollution may be summarized as follows:

1. Glare

Glare, as defined by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, falls into three main categories:

- Disability glare – Disability glare (sometimes less accurately referred to as veiling luminance) is caused by overly bright light sources that shine directly into one's eyes and is dangerous because it is blinding (i.e., it totally overloads the eye's light sensor cells).
- Discomfort glare – Discomfort glare may not necessarily reduce the ability to see an object, but it produces a sensation of discomfort due to high contrast or non-uniform distribution of light in the field of view.
- Nuisance or annoyance glare – Nuisance glare is that which causes complaints such as, "The light is shining in my window."

Glare is a significant and pervasive problem that seriously impairs both safety and quality of life. Glare demands attention in that one's eyes are naturally attracted to bright light, and at night this destroys the eye's dark adaptation (the eye's sensitivity to lower light levels), which is a serious hazard for both drivers and pedestrians. Obtrusive lighting by commercial establishments to attract attention is a serious problem as is selection of inappropriate fixtures for exterior residential lighting. A major problem is the high intensity lighting of sports facilities, such as ball fields and tennis courts, adjacent to residential neighborhoods. Glare and excessive illumination (which are two separate problems) cast into surrounding residential neighborhoods not only detracts from the quality of life but can make it difficult for pedestrians and homeowners to see their surroundings.

2. Light Trespass

Light trespass is the poor control of outdoor lighting such that it crosses property lines and detracts from the property value and quality of life of those whose property is so

invaded. It is particularly common when obtrusive commercial or recreational lighting is immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods or when a homeowner uses inappropriate fixtures, light levels and lighting duration, often in the interest of “security.” It is generally categorized in two forms:

- Adjacent property is illuminated by unwanted light.
- Excessive brightness (often called “glare”) occurs in the normal field of view.

Both of these forms may be present in a given situation. Illumination, that is, the amount of light energy falling on a surface, is readily measured by simple hand held instruments and is expressed in foot candles. Light levels of 0.5 foot candles at the property line of the property producing the illumination are regarded as a reasonable limit in residential areas. Illumination levels above that are regarded as excessive light trespass onto adjacent properties.

Glare or excessive brightness is a more complex and difficult-to-measure phenomenon. It is experienced when the light producing source (the bulb) is directly visible, but also depends on the luminance of the source and on the contrast between that source and the surrounding background. For example, even a very bright light source viewed against a noonday sky doesn't seem particularly glaring or objectionable, but the same source viewed against a night sky is very objectionable and seems so bright as to be almost painful. One of the problems in addressing this kind of light trespass, or more properly glare trespass, is that there have not been good standards for acceptable limits, and instruments to measure this kind of glare are necessarily complex and difficult to operate.

3. Security

Much outdoor lighting is used in the interest of providing security. These safety concerns often result in bad lighting rather than real security. One reason often cited for today's bright lights is that high wattage is needed to deter crime. However, studies have shown that if light is overly bright with excessive glare it makes it easier for a person to hide in the deep shadows created by objects in the harsh glaring light. This might actually encourage crime rather than discourage it. The debate as to whether or not additional light provides more safety has been emotional rather than factual. The few rigorous studies that have been done reveal no connection between higher lighting levels and lower crime rates. This may be due to people with nefarious intent taking more risks in better lit areas. For example, the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice found no statistically significant evidence that lighting impacts the level of crime (Upgren, 1996). Thus, the supposed correlation between a high level of security lighting and reduced crime appears to be nothing more than a popular myth.

4. Urban Sky Glow

Urban sky glow is brightening of the night sky due to manmade lighting that passes upward with the light rays reflected off of submicroscopic dust and water particles in the atmosphere. Although urban sky glow was first noted as a problem by the astronomical community, it is by no means any longer solely an astronomical issue. With the increasing urbanization of many areas of the U.S., all residents in those areas are now being affected. In Fairfax County, which is now a mostly urban county, improper lighting has seriously degraded the darkness of our local night skies into a pallid luminescence that many of our residents find objectionable.

5. Energy Usage

Smart lighting techniques, which direct all of the light generated onto the target area, reduce energy consumption and hence the use of fossil fuels. Several engineering estimates suggest that at least 30 percent of outdoor lighting is being wasted through light energy spilling upward and outward rather than being directed downward onto the target area. Also, many installations are greatly over-illuminated as well as being lighted for unnecessary durations, further compounding the energy wastage. Inefficient lighting incurs both direct financial costs and hidden environmental costs. It has been estimated by national organizations studying light pollution that in excess of \$8 billion of electricity is being wasted annually on obtrusive and inefficient outdoor lighting (see data from Virginia Outdoor Lighting Task Force and the International Dark-Sky Association). Since electricity generation in the eastern part of this country is mostly from fossil fuels, every unnecessary kilowatt of electrical energy generated also produces air pollution, unnecessary greenhouse gases and acid rain.

D. CURRENT COUNTY STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

In EQAC's view, Fairfax County now has a generally excellent ordinance that prescribes limits for the maximum wattage of light sources and for the amount of illumination and glare in commercial and residential districts. However, existing installations that were noncompliant under the new ordinance are allowed under state law to continue until such time as the fixture requires replacement. Also, these standards do not cover roadways that are under the jurisdiction of the Virginia Department of Transportation, and a number of these roadway fixtures represent a continuing source of glare and light pollution.

Fairfax County's Policy Plan: The Countywide Policy Element of the Comprehensive Plan (2007 Edition) recognizes the nuisance of light emissions arising from increasing urbanization and recommends that efforts be made to avoid creating sources of glare that interfere with residents' and/or travelers' visual acuity. To put this into practice, the county's Zoning Ordinance contains standards for illumination limits. However, the issue of glare, as opposed to illumination level, has only recently been addressed adequately. EQAC has recently collaborated with the Park Authority in conducting a study of glare in

athletic field lighting and the scientific limitations on its control. That study provides a basis for addressing glare from all sources.

E. ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

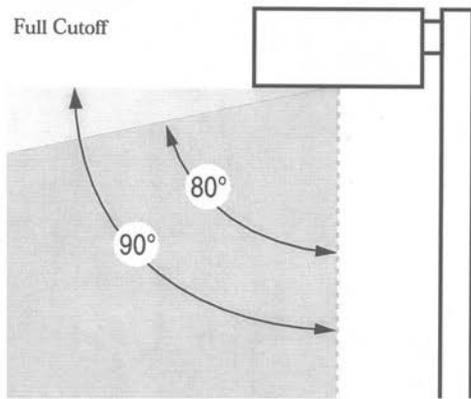
While the 2003 ordinance very adequately addresses new and replacement installations of outdoor lighting and fixtures in commercial and residential districts, much roadway lighting remains a problem because it is prescribed by VDOT, which is not subject to local control. A recently passed Virginia law and policy to use henceforth only fully shielded fixtures will eventually mitigate these problems as older fixtures are replaced. Ensuring that new residential installations meet code requirements represents a potentially significant compliance problem and will require that both review and inspection personnel be fully aware of the new code requirements and diligent in the application and enforcement of them. In addition, the 2003 ordinance is currently under review to include some modifications that will further reduce adverse effects of improper lighting.

One of the most common street lights in use, the drop-lens, cobra-head fixture, uses 150 watt bulbs. A fixture with reflective backing and shielding can direct all light below the horizontal plane with the same illumination of streets and homes and use only 100 watt bulbs. The same possibility exists with the popular 175 watt unshielded mercury vapor lamp. Both the 150-watt cobra-head fixture and the 175-watt mercury vapor lamp cast light laterally as well as down. As a result, substantial glare is often cast directly into the eyes of drivers. This glare destroys drivers' dark adaptation, creating potential safety hazards. In many cases the driver is not able to see the roadway as well as he or she would with lower-wattage properly shielded lights, and in many cases his/ her vision is made much worse. Because they cut down on glare, shielded fixtures not only are safer for drivers, but, according to experts (see references), actually make it easier for pedestrians and home owners to see their surroundings.

By redirecting this wasted energy, lower wattage lights provide the same amount of illumination in the areas where it is needed. These fixtures have reflective backing and full cut-off shielding to direct all light below the horizontal plane, with 90 percent of the light directed below an angle of 20 degrees from the horizontal. For example, a 50-watt metal halide lamp with a reflective shield will provide as much illumination below the horizontal plane as the 150-watt cobra-head fixture or the 175-watt unshielded mercury vapor lamp. These newer types of fixtures, which are recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, are widely available and direct all light below the horizontal plane, thereby eliminating lateral glare (see Figure IX-2-1). It is estimated that it takes only three years of energy savings to recoup the initial investment in these fixtures. The lower wattage fixtures provide energy savings, improved driver safety, better visibility for pedestrians and an improved ambiance and security for neighborhoods. Several municipalities, such as Tucson, Arizona, San Diego, California and Sanibel Island, Florida, have adopted street lighting ordinances requiring these newer fixtures.

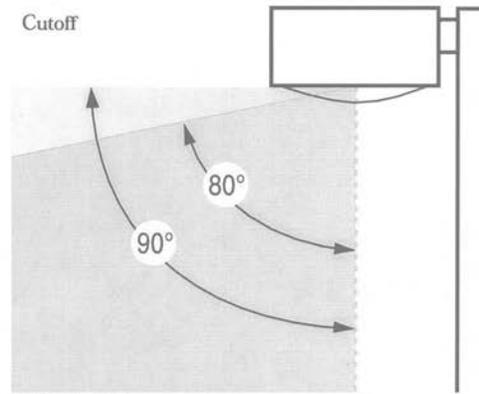
Figure IX-2-1

Effects of Cut-off and Non Cut-off Luminaires



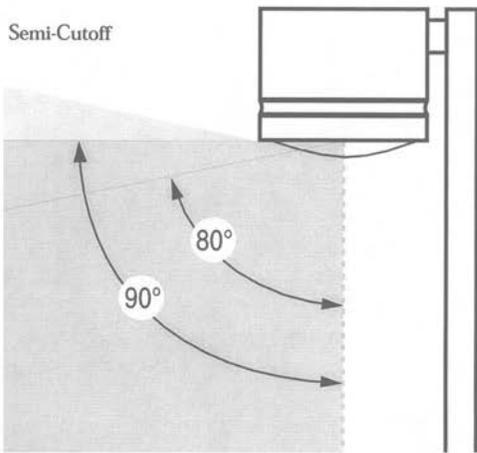
ALLOWS:

- No light at 90 degrees
- 100 cd per 1000 Lamp Lumens at 80 degrees



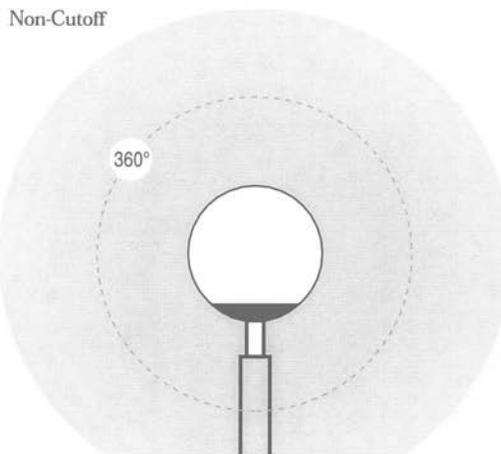
ALLOWS:

- 25 cd per 1000 Lamp Lumens at 90 degrees
- 100 cd per 1000 Lamp Lumens at 80 degrees



ALLOWS:

- 50 cd per 1000 Lamp Lumens at 90 degrees
- 200 cd per 1000 Lamp Lumens at 80 degrees



ALLOWS:

- Unrestricted distribution of light at any angle

(Sources: Paulin, Douglas, *Full Cutoff Lighting: The Benefits*, IESNA website, and Shaflik, Carl, *Environmental Effects of Roadway Lighting*, Information Sheet Number 125, International Dark-Sky Association, Tucson, Arizona, August 1997.)

Most security lighting is overdone, with high wattage lights burning from dusk to dawn. As noted earlier, constant levels of illumination tend to be largely ignored because they are commonplace, and they waste a huge amount of energy. The large amount of glare produced by high intensity sources creates shadows that provide hiding places for intruders. Moreover, the constant glare and light trespass onto adjacent properties is a major source of annoyance to their occupants. On the other hand, lights that are activated by motion within a controlled area attract immediate attention and, at the same time, use very little energy and create intrusion on adjacent properties only when such attention is desired. For example, if one is using 300 watts of security lighting for an average of 10 hours each night and converts to an infrared motion sensor control that turns on the lights only when there is motion in the controlled area, energy cost is reduced to almost nil. In addition, the cost of the added sensor-control hardware can be recovered in as little as two to four months due to the energy saving. At the same time, security is increased rather than decreased and glare and light trespass onto adjacent properties is largely eliminated.

Glare is a significant and pervasive problem, but in some cases can be solved by installing "full cut-off" (i.e., light fixtures fully enclosed on their sides) or in some cases using supplementary shielding panels, to prevent light trespass onto adjacent residential properties. Where it is not possible to completely eliminate glare through the use of shielded fixtures, inexpensive motion detector controls can limit the harsh light to only a few minutes when it is really needed. However, glare like that experienced from high-intensity sources, like those used to light athletic fields, is a result of the background contrast ratio which is not subject to human control. A light seen against a very dark sky seems very intense and intrusive, but if seen against a day time sky seems hardly noticeable. One can readily prove this by viewing a full moon at, say, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning when it appears as an intense disc so bright that it shows no features. However, the same moon viewed at, say, 9 or 10 o'clock the next morning is a very pale appearing disc with only slight contrast against the day light sky and shows an extensive array of features. This effect is due to the great difference in contrast with the background against which it is viewed. The mathematical difference between the source and the background is known as the source to background contrast ratio.

Light trespass is a term of relatively recent origin and denotes (1) glare that is generated by sources on one property that lie within the normal field of view of the occupants of another property and (2) light that spills over the boundaries of one property onto another, thereby producing unwanted illumination of it. Increasingly, such light intrusions are being regarded as trespass violations every bit as serious as physical trespass of a person onto the property of another. Such problems can now be readily avoided by the selection of proper fixtures, intensity levels and the use of timers and sensors/controllers.

Sky glow is also readily addressed by the selection of properly designed modern fixtures for new installations and phased retrofit of current inadequate installations. The cost of such retrofits is normally recoverable within a reasonable time period (usually estimated at about three years) through efficiently placing all of the light onto the desired area and the resulting lower energy usage.

Adherence to the following four principles will do much to mitigate or eliminate light pollution.

- Always illuminate with properly shielded fixtures that prevent the light source itself, and the resultant glare, from being directly visible. This is done by using cutoff fixtures or supplementary shielding that keeps all of the illumination below the horizontal plane and directed onto the target area.
- Do not over-illuminate. Never use more illumination than needed for the task at hand. Using a 400 watt floodlight to illuminate a small parking area or a flag at night is overkill and wastes a great deal of energy. A properly shielded and adjusted 250 watt luminaire (light source + fixture) can illuminate an area just as effectively as an older style 1,000 watt light source.
- Always aim lighting downward, keeping all of its distribution within the property lines and below the horizontal plane so that it is not a source of glare. Light trespass onto adjacent properties is unnecessary, inconsiderate and potentially illegal.
- Do not burn lighting all night long with the intention of improving security. Using infrared motion sensor-controlled lighting that comes on instantly when there is motion in the designated area is far more effective as a security measure. That rapid change from dark to light draws the immediate attention of everyone in the surrounding area, including security and law enforcement personnel on patrol, and may well be unsettling enough to cause illicit intruders to immediately flee. Lighting that stays on all night draws no special attention and is an enormous waste of energy.

F. PUBLIC AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibility for ensuring compliance with glare standards for residences and other private property lies primarily with the county's new Department of Code Compliance. Any enforcement activity dealing with light is complaint-driven. Typically, light-related complaints represent about 0.5 percent of total complaints. The county does not respond to anonymous complaints. Complaints are either filed directly with the Department of Code Compliance or are forwarded by the staff of a member of the Board of Supervisors. The causes of the complaints have usually been fast food establishments, security lighting for residences, athletic facilities (e.g., ball fields, driving ranges), or churches. The inspectors typically resolve violations with informal enforcement such as a verbal warning that there is a violation and how it may be remedied. A written notice of violation or civil action can be used if needed. Beyond the general glare standards, the county frequently is able to impose additional "before-the-fact" restrictions through development conditions when rezoning, special permit and special exception processes come into play.

The Fairfax County Park Authority and the Fairfax County Public Schools are the two largest users of recreational and sports field lighting in the county. Parks and schools by their very nature are usually located in the midst of residential communities where their outdoor lighting, if inadequately designed, can seriously impact the surrounding residents.

Schools, particularly high schools, often have sports practice sessions extending into the early evening hours and games that begin after the dinner hour and run into the later evening hours. In addition, schools of all categories often have “security” lights that burn from dusk to dawn, although they could perhaps be better served by motion-detector activated lights. Our park system, faced with increasing demand for team athletic facilities, will necessarily have to turn to synthetic turf and lighting during the evening to enable greater utilization of its existing fields. It is the responsibility of both organizations to utilize the best designs and equipment in addressing these needs in order to minimize adverse impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods and to ensure that lighting will not diminish either property values or quality of life. To this end, the Park Authority has recently published an extensive guidance handbook for athletic lighting design.

During the recent renovation of McLean Central Park all of the walkway and path lighting fixtures were changed to ones using LED (Light Emitting Diodes) light sources. This was done as a beta-test of this technology which should offer significant cost savings in both operation and maintenance.

One of the most onerous sources of light pollution is the obtrusive lighting of commercial and industrial facilities, particularly commercial retail and service establishments. While their desire to attract attention to themselves is understandable, abusive excesses degrade the overall ambience of our commercial areas and materially degrade the quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods. This is of particular concern in the case of “by-right” development, where there are no public hearings (e.g., Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Board of Supervisors) at which adjacent property owners and neighborhoods can register their concerns and see approval conditioned on appropriate restrictions. In such “by-right” cases, the initial responsibility would necessarily fall almost entirely upon the Land Development Services function of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, which reviews all proposed plans before a building permit is issued and subsequently conducts inspections to ensure that the work is in compliance with regulations. Evaluation of plans for compliance would add a small amount of effort to the review process but would add only a negligible amount to the inspection process.

At this time, the county has no formal policies regarding street lighting. Some neighborhoods within the county prefer to have local streets lighted, while others do not. Whether or not the county provides street lighting is often driven by budget priorities, and, unless there is a demonstrable public safety need, the priority for retrofitting an established community is usually low. More often, street lighting is addressed in the overall planning of new subdivisions. In these cases, the Land Development Services function of DPWES would have responsibilities for both reviewing the plan and inspecting the implementation of it.

Responsibility for the lighting of main roadways is under the jurisdiction of the Virginia Department of Transportation. Historically, local communities and neighborhoods have had to deal directly with VDOT or through their local Supervisor’s office over roadway lighting issues. It has proven very difficult to influence VDOT’s choice of fixtures and

technical standards, even when it can be demonstrated that their proposed implementation will result in unacceptable levels of glare and light trespass in adjacent residential neighborhoods. However, quite recently, encouraging headway has been made in getting VDOT to recognize the severity of the problem and to take some limited first steps to address it.

G. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS NEEDS

The general public needs awareness of the sources and problems of light pollution and of the methods by which these can be best addressed. The county staff has prepared an excellent and very informative 16 page booklet to explain the new Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/DPZ/Zoning/lightingbrochure.PDF). It can also be made available in printed version to individuals, homeowners groups and community associations directly through appropriate county offices and through the district offices of the members of the Board of Supervisors. The complete ordinance in convenient form is available on the Fairfax County website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/DPZ/Zoningordinance/articles/Art14.PDF. In addition, the International Dark Sky Association and the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America maintain websites with a variety of technical information on lighting issues and technology.

Our county's 16 page booklet provides much of the information that architects, contractors and electricians need to familiarize themselves with our lighting codes and specifically what is not permitted (e.g., unshielded security lights, angle-directed post or building mounted fixtures, wall packs without shielding or baffling, excessive wattage or unshielded floodlights, light-trespass onto other properties, etc.) and what practices are recommended. Our county review and inspection personnel should make sure that members of the development, contractor and building management communities with whom they deal will be fully aware from the outset of the revised standards in the new ordinance and how best to address them.

There is an excellent website (www.qualityoutdoorlighting.com) that illustrates many examples of good, bad and ill-conceived lighting practices right here in our local area. It can play a central role in education of the public.

H. CONCLUSIONS

The principal means to prevent poor exterior lighting practices is a comprehensive code or ordinance, because this provides well thought out standards for, and enforceable legal restrictions on, specific lighting practices that affect the community and its quality of life. Numerous jurisdictions have adopted codes and ordinances that have proven very effective in reducing light pollution and preventing light trespass. A properly conceived and well written code permits all forms of necessary illumination at reasonable intensities, but requires shielding and other measures to prevent light pollution and light trespass. A good

code applies to all forms of outdoor lighting, including streets, highways and exterior signs, as well as lighting on dwellings, parks, schools, commercial and industrial buildings, parking areas and construction sites. A good code also provides for reasonable exceptions for special uses within acceptable time periods and subject to effective standards. In EQAC's opinion, Fairfax County's recently adopted Outdoor Lighting Ordinance is an outstanding example of such a code. As the county has gained experience with application of the new ordinance, some areas have been identified where adjustments and fine-tuning are needed. A task force, under the leadership of the Department of Planning and Zoning, is currently developing specifications for the revisions needed.

The Fairfax County Park Authority has had an urgent need to increase the hours of utilization of its existing sports fields by installing lights to illuminate them. Aware of its special responsibility to ensure that such lighting systems minimize adverse impacts on adjacent residential properties, it has prepared extensive specifications for lighting of athletic fields designed to reduce spill light and glare to an absolute minimum. The results with a test rectangular field that was outfitted with lights and artificial turf have been very informative. While the illumination of the field surface is excellent and the illumination at the property line with respect to light spillover meets the Park Authority's stringent standards, the glare from the fully exposed, 1,500 watt lamps on 70 foot poles facing a residential neighborhood is intense (in the range of 12,000 lumens at 200 feet). A second field outfitted with an advanced model of fixtures of the same type shows no improvement in glare. The Park Authority has conducted a recent special study that reveals the glare problem is primarily governed by fundamental laws of nature over which man has no real control. However, the Park Authority's carefully worked out specifications minimize adverse impacts to the extent humanly possible. This same concern applies equally to the Fairfax County Public Schools, which also use lighted sports fields.

The county needs to work closely with VDOT to achieve better lighting practices on roadways within Fairfax County that are under VDOT jurisdiction. Current VDOT lighting and proposed new installations are regarded as being very intrusive by adjacent neighborhoods. However, it should be noted that a newly enacted law requiring the commonwealth to acquire only shielded fixtures should materially improve VDOT practices in this regard on new installations and as old fixtures are replaced.

Much of the security lighting, both residential and commercial, in Fairfax County is poorly conceived, excessive in intensity and improperly directed and controlled. These deficiencies could be corrected at relatively low initial costs that would be rapidly recovered through the energy savings realized. This will require considerable public education to familiarize the using public with the issues and the available technology.

Much lighting in residential neighborhoods uses old style fixtures (or new but poorly designed ones) that cause excessive glare and light trespass onto adjacent properties. The new comprehensive ordinance and an intensive public awareness campaign should be used to address correction of these problems. Single family dwellings especially need to be brought into compliance with the spirit and provisions of the revised ordinance, for that is

where the majority of us live and where our quality of life is most affected by intrusive lighting.

Poor lighting design, particularly in commercial areas, is contributing to excessive and highly objectionable sky glow. The new ordinance and retrofitting or adjustment of fixtures can eliminate the worst of this effect.

I. COMMENTS

1. In response to a recommendation in earlier EQAC Annual Reports on the Environment, the Fairfax County Park Authority commissioned several studies of sports field lighting design and technology. The Park Authority issued a set of specifications, dated November 2006, for new athletic field lighting installations that addressed all of the issues adequately except for glare. The Park Authority then commissioned a special study of the glare problem. The Park Authority Director of Planning and Development requested EQAC to collaborate with his staff to develop this study. The final document, based on the underlying science, reveals that much of the glare problem is dependent on source-to-background contrast ratio, which is a fundamental law of nature and not under the control of man.
2. The earlier EQAC Annual Report recommendation that the Department of Planning and Zoning undertake some modest but needed revisions of the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance has come to fruition in the form of current meetings of a task force of stakeholders to develop specifications for such revisions. The originally scheduled revisions have been expanded to include consideration of light emitting diode lamps. The Park Authority has recently begun to use these for walkway lighting due to their much lower operating and maintenance costs. The revisions should be in final form before the end of the current year.
3. EQAC continues to support that the Board of Supervisors work with VDOT and Virginia elected officials to eliminate unnecessary roadway lighting and whenever possible to accelerate replacement of existing poorly designed fixtures under the control of VDOT with full cut-off fixtures.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning, A guide to Fairfax County's Outdoor Lighting Standards, 16 pp.

Arthur R. Upgren, Night Blindness, The Amicus Journal, Winter 1996, page 22-25.

Examples of Good and Bad Lighting Fixtures, Information Sheet Number 122, International Dark-Sky Association, Tucson, Arizona, May 1997.

Douglas Paulin, Full Cutoff Lighting: The Benefits, (corrected version), Illuminating Engineering Society of North America website, www.iesna.org.

Shaflik, Carl, Environmental Effects of Roadway Lighting, Information Sheet Number 125, International Dark-Sky Association, Tucson, Arizona, August 1997.

Some Lighting Myths, Information Sheet Number 42, International Dark-Sky Association, Tucson, Arizona, January 1991.

Fairfax County, Virginia, Policy Plan: The Countywide Policy Element of the Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition.

Fairfax County, Virginia, Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 112 of the Fairfax County Code).

Illuminating Engineering Society of North America website, www.iesna.org (There are numerous subsidiary and related websites.

International Dark-Sky Association website, www.darksky.org/.

National Electrical Manufacturers Association website, www.nema.org/ (Particularly see their White Paper on Outdoor Lighting Code Issues.)

Virginia Outdoor Lighting Taskforce website, www.volt.org/.

Quality Outdoor Lighting website, www.qualityoutdoorlighting.com/.

IX-1. VISUAL POLLUTION

A. OVERVIEW

Historically, the term “pollution” has referred primarily to the fouling of air, water and land by wastes or from the byproducts of human activities. In recent years it has come to signify a wider range of disruptions to environmental quality. Both noise pollution and light pollution issues have been addressed earlier in this chapter. This section focuses on visual pollution/blight issues, addressing the issue of roadway signs, which has been a topic of discussion for several years within EQAC. Due to limitations with EQAC members’ availability, EQAC has chosen to focus on this one aspect of visual pollution, but also reserves the prerogative to further discuss other aspects of visual pollution at a later date, such as those associated with cigarette butts, litter, dumps, junkyards and the like, which are important components of visual pollution.

Simply stated, “blight” is something that impairs or destroys appearance and results in a deteriorated condition. In recent times, urban blight has come to include a wide range of visual pollutants that degrade the ambience of our communities, including such things as trash and litter on roadsides, unkempt properties, above-ground power and communications transmission lines, communication towers, intrusive and objectionable advertising signage and other forms of visual impairments. Without doubt, signage that is excessive in amount and inappropriate in placement is the most ubiquitous of these “pollutants.”

B. SIGNS

Unnecessary signs, almost always placed as some kind of advertising, have been called "visual pollution," "sky trash," "litter on a stick," and "the junk mail of American roadways." Nothing can destroy the distinctive character of our communities and countryside more quickly or thoroughly than uncontrolled signs.

Signs in the public rights-of-way have been around for as long as there have been public rights-of-way, but the numbers have spiraled out of control in recent years. Between fields of “popsicle-stick” signs for homebuilders and politicians and signs for weight loss, work-at-home businesses, painting, hauling and other signs plastered on every available traffic sign and utility pole, everyone in Fairfax County has something to hate about the proliferation of signs.

Communities can regain control of their visual environment, preserve their distinctive character and protect natural beauty and the environment by enacting and enforcing ordinances that control signage. Reducing sign blight helps communities reclaim local beauty and character. Excellent alternatives to large intrusive signs, such as wayfinding signs, logo signs and tourist-oriented directional

signs, can help people locate local businesses and are minimal in their visual impact.

C. ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

Creating sign regulations developed with community input encourages business owners to erect less intrusive signs that reflect an area's spirit, contributing to civic pride and helping to revitalize commercial districts. Regulations should encourage signs that quickly communicate their message, complement their surroundings and enhance the visual character of the community. Attractive on-premise signs can help encourage residents and business owners to work together to improve and revitalize local appearance.

The Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance, Article 12, deals with signs and signage regulations. It deals comprehensively and at length with permitted and non-permitted signage and what kind of sign needs a permit versus signage not requiring a permit. The ordinance appears to cover the subject thoroughly, but the fact that impermissible signage is overabundant indicates that enforcement is lacking and perhaps that county staff functions are not organized in a way that could provide cost effective enforcement. In addition, the ordinance has a significant shortcoming in Article 12, in that there is no explicit provision therein for civil penalties (i.e., fines) for failure to obey it. Rather, it relies on Article 18-903.1.H and I to deal with Infractions and Civil Penalties. However, these two provisions deal only with Sections 12-301 and parts of 12-104. Thus, the entirety of Sections 102, 103 and part of Section 104 are not addressed. This is very important, since adequate civil penalties can readily pay for an effective enforcement program.

The other key component of an effective enforcement program is the requisite political will on the part of the Board of Supervisors. It is a given that the well-organized real estate and development industries will vigorously resist any real enforcement program that would impose limits, no matter how reasonable, on their current practice of often excessive and obtrusive signage. The many small business enterprises that litter the roadsides and telephone poles with illegally placed signs will complain that enforcement will deprive them of livelihoods. Finally, political campaign signage, in which the lawmakers themselves have a vested interest, is a sensitive issue despite recognition of the current abusive practices.

The Board of Supervisors initiated the Fairfax County Sign Task Force in August, 2000. In September 2001, the Task Force issued its report, "Illegal Signs in the Right of Way" which:

- Examined current Fairfax County practices and enforcement procedures regarding signs within and along the roadways.
- Evaluated other jurisdictions' best practices in dealing with illegal signs.
- Recommended amendments to the county's sign ordinance and suggested new legislative approaches to address this problem.

D. RECENT ACTIVITIES

In July 2010, EQAC adopted a series of recommendations regarding a number of blight/litter-related matters. That was followed up in August 2010 with two legislative proposals relating to sign enforcement. The sign proposals were discussed at the board's Legislative Committee; during that discussion, the County Executive suggested that the board not pursue EQAC's proposal and instead suggested that community efforts relating to the control of signs be encouraged through the Adopt-a-Highway program.

In November 2011, after an election, Supervisor Herrity raised concerns regarding the proliferation of political signs in rights-of-way. At the December 6, 2011 board meeting, he presented a Board Matter (jointly with Supervisor Smyth) addressing sign enforcement issues. Based on information in the Board Summary of that meeting (available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosclerk/summary/2011/11-12-06.pdf> [see item #63 beginning at the bottom of page 60, and copied below]), a key component of EQAC's sign enforcement legislative proposal was picked up in this Board Matter (removing Fairfax County-specific limitations from sign enforcement enabling language).

Information provided by the Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance for this report indicated that there were 136 sign-related zoning complaints received in 2011.

In response to a request from the Board of Supervisors at its December 6, 2011 meeting for information concerning the removal of illegal signs in VDOT's rights-of-way, former County Executive Anthony Griffin provided a response to the board dated February 17, 2012. A subsequent discussion at the board's Transportation Committee on June 12, 2012 resulted in staff developing further options for consideration. As of the date of preparation of this section of the report, the County Attorney was drafting a proposed agreement with the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner that, after a public hearing, would authorize Fairfax County to institute a sign removal program. Details about sign removal, frequency or enforcement have yet to be determined.

More recently, EQAC learned about legislation passed in April 2012 that allows the Commissioner of Highways to enter into agreements with the local governing body of Fairfax County authorizing local law-enforcement agencies or other local governmental entities to act as agents of the Commissioner for the purpose of (i) enforcing the provisions of § 33.1-373 of the Code of Virginia and (ii) collecting the penalties and costs provided for in that section. EQAC has not yet had the opportunity to fully investigate the ramifications of this legislation, or to evaluate how it is being applied in Fairfax County.

From the summary of the Board of Supervisors meeting of December 6, 2011:

THE REMOVAL OF SIGNS FROM THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (VDOT) RIGHTS-OF-WAY (7:11 p.m.)

In a joint Board Matter with Supervisor Smyth, Supervisor Herry said that the recently completed election cycle saw 99 candidates run for office in the County, and with them many thousands of campaign signs joined the bright yellow “Junk B Gone” and other advertising signs that litter County median strips and roadways. With reference to his written Board Matter, he noted four compelling reasons for the Board to take action:

- Placing signs in VDOT rights-of-way is an illegal activity.
- Fairfax County is the only county in the state that has an onerous restriction placed upon it.
- Signs in the median can be dangerous, obstruct sight distance, and distract drivers. It is also dangerous for the campaign workers who erect the signs in the middle of the road.
- Cost to VDOT and the County

Supervisor Herry said that County residents deserve an end to the popsicle sign blight. He stated his belief that with a two or three year focused effort and minimal investment, the Board can rid County communities of illegal road signs for good. Therefore, jointly with Supervisor Smyth, Supervisor Herry moved that the Board:

- Support legislation that would remove from the Virginia Code all restrictions that apply only to Fairfax County with respect to the removal of signs from VDOT rights-of-way.
- Direct the County Executive to develop and present to the Board options for the removal of signs from the right-of-way including leveraging the use existing staff, part time resources, VDOT and organizations or groups that currently remove signs - the Town of Herndon, Reston, Fair Lakes League, Burke Center Conservancy and Adopt a Highway groups, to name a few. Each option should contain an estimate of cost and the potential reduction in cost over a three-year period.
- Direct the County Attorney to draft an agreement between the Board and the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner for consideration and approval by the Board at a public hearing that would authorize the Board to remove all signs from VDOT rights-of-way.

Supervisor Smyth seconded the motion.

Supervisor Gross asked to amend the motion to add a fourth bullet to direct staff to research the opportunities for the sign bond, currently \$100 for campaign signs, to be increased to \$1000, and this was accepted.

From the summary of the Board of Supervisors meeting of December 6, 2011
(continued):

Discussion ensued about the restriction that applies to the County regarding a three-day rule for the removal of political signs after an election, with input from David P. Bobzien, County Attorney.

Discussion ensued regarding realtor signs, community event signs, and other restrictions applying only to the County, with input from R. Scott Wynn, Deputy County Attorney.

Further discussion ensued regarding limitations on the size of signs and the length of time that signs are posted, signs in the median as a State responsibility, and County limitations on the removal of illegal signs in the medians, with input from Mr. Bobzien.

Supervisor Smyth asked to amend the motion to insert the word “political” before the word “signs” in the first bullet, and this was accepted.

Additional discussion ensued regarding the Zoning Ordinance and the size of signs, enforcement, and fines, with input from Mr. Wynn.

Supervisor Herrity asked to amend the motion to:

- Keep the first bullet as amended for political signs.
- With reference to the second and third bullets, to direct the County Executive to provide options at a meeting of the Board’s Development Process Committee for further discussion.
- Retain the fourth bullet.

This was accepted.

The question was called on the motion, as amended, and it carried by a vote of nine, Supervisor Frey being out of the room.

E. CLEAN FAIRFAX

Clean Fairfax Council, now known as Clean Fairfax, is a private, nonprofit (501(c)(3)) corporation dedicated to educating residents, students and businesses in Fairfax County about litter prevention and recycling. Clean Fairfax focuses on environmental education provided to students and adults throughout the county. The council is currently working toward a less paper-intensive outreach program including e-newsletters, an environmental blog and updated website, educational videos, interactive programs for students, community service opportunities for students (i.e., support at the council's office), classroom presentations and presentations to homeowner associations and other groups.

A key effort of the council is the sponsorship of spring and fall cleanups. These cleanups rely on volunteers who desire to clean up a certain area of the county. The council asks volunteers to plan their cleanup by selecting a site, gathering volunteers and setting a date and time. Clean Fairfax supplies all the necessary tools (gloves, trash bags, recycling bags, vests and safety tips) for a successful clean up. A follow up form is available on the Clean Fairfax website to track progress, tally volunteer hours and trash pickup tonnage. Last year, Clean Fairfax worked with over 2,300 volunteers, at 67 assisted clean ups, picking up over 1,000 cubic yards of litter, on and around Fairfax County's roads, parks and side streets.

Clean Fairfax continues to organize and lead the Earth Day/Arbor Day event, in partnership with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. workshops and community service components have been incorporated within this event.

Clean Fairfax's office is embedded in DPWES and the Executive Director works directly with many county staff on litter control and recycling education issues; she also serves on the cross-agency Litter Task Force.

Clean Fairfax continued a redesign of its website at www.cleanfairfax.org, adding Facebook and Twitter to its suite of outreach materials. One of the main features of the website redesign is the ability to use the "Report a Litterer" program on-line. This program allows residents who observe someone littering from a car to report information about the vehicle to Clean Fairfax. Clean Fairfax provides this information to the Fairfax County police, which issues a letter to the vehicle owner about littering.

There are many other programs offered by the Clean Fairfax, including programs that are beyond litter prevention/control aspects. For more information, please visit the website at www.cleanfairfax.org.

F. RECOMMENDATION

1. The Environmental Quality Advisory Council supports the general concepts as discussed by the Board of Supervisors at its December 6, 2011 meeting concerning actions that the county can take regarding the removal of illegal signs in the county. This includes: support for legislation that would remove unnecessary restrictions that apply to Fairfax County (refer to discussion above about recent activities); development of options for the removal of signs (including an estimate of cost and the potential reduction in cost over a three-year period); an agreement with the Commonwealth Transportation Commissioner that would authorize the Board of Supervisors to remove all signs from VDOT rights-of-way; and research on the opportunities for the sign bond to be increased to \$1,000. EQAC requests that, within six months of receiving the Annual Report on the Environment, the results from these efforts be completed and provided to the public, or that the board identify an alternative timeline for addressing these actions.