

Fairfax Center Area Suburban Center

Existing Conditions Report

September 2013



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The Fairfax County Government Center Complex is located in the approximate center of the Fairfax Center Area.



Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

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The Fairfax Center Area contains portions of four Supervisor Districts.

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General Information

Fairfax County, Virginia

Web site: www.fairfaxcounty.gov

Fairfax Forward

Track the progress of the Fairfax Forward process and review the latest information.

Web site: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxforward/

Fairfax Center Area Study

a component of Fairfax Forward

E-mail: DPZFairfaxCenter@fairfaxcounty.gov

Web site: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxcenter/>

Listserv: Look for “Fairfax Center Planning Study News” under “Land Use & Development” at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/email/lists/

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Phone: 703-324-1380, TTY 711 (Virginia Relay)

E-mail: DPZPD@fairfaxcounty.gov

The “Comprehensive Plan Announcements” E-mail Service

Subscribe to the free service on the county Web site under the Online Services/ E-mail Subscriptions link or at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/email/lists/. This service will provide timely announcements about the Comprehensive Plan, Plan Amendments, and other planning activity.



Preface

On July 9, 2013 the Board of Supervisors adopted Fairfax Forward, a new review process for the county's long-range land use plan, the Comprehensive Plan. The foundation of the new process is a Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program. The pilot work program schedules planning studies for the next three years 2013-2016. The studies are organized into countywide, activity center, or neighborhood planning studies. Countywide studies encompass the review of any plan guidance applicable to multiple areas or the entire county, including Policy Plan sections. Activity center and neighborhood planning studies are organized by the land classifications in the Concept for Future Development (Figure P.1).

The Concept geographically divides the county into different types of places. Mixed-use centers and industrial areas shown on the Concept are the county's designated node of growth or "activity centers", and are reviewed as part of activity center planning studies. The areas outside activity centers, which include the majority of the county, are defined by the Concept as Suburban Neighborhoods, Low Density Residential Areas, and Large Institutional Areas. Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas generally comprise the county's stable neighborhoods and are reviewed as part of the neighborhood planning studies on the work program. Large Institutional Areas within the county, such as Fort Belvoir, Washington Dulles International Airport, and George Mason University, maintain separate jurisdiction for planning purposes that are not eligible for the county's Plan review.

The Fairfax Center Area Study is one of the first major activity center planning studies on the pilot work program. The work program estimates that the study will be completed in approximately three years. The study area is divided into a Suburban Center, Low Density Residential Areas, and Suburban Neighborhoods on the Concept and extends over four Magisterial Districts: Sully, Providence, Braddock, and Springfield Districts. The first phase of the study will examine the "transition areas," the Low Density Residential Areas and the Suburban Neighborhoods at the periphery of the study area. The second phase of the study will examine the Suburban Center.

The following Existing Conditions Report provides background on the Fairfax Center Area intended to facilitate the evaluation and formulation of recommendations during the study. The report includes demographic information, Comprehensive Plan recommendations and history, and land use, environmental, public facilities, and infrastructure data (Chapter 1-9). Chapter 10 describes observations and conclusions based on the existing conditions that can be considered a starting point for Plan review efforts. The Appendices contain supporting data tables and maps not otherwise contained in the body of the report.

For more information on Fairfax Forward and the Fairfax Center Area Study, visit the following websites:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxforward

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxcenter

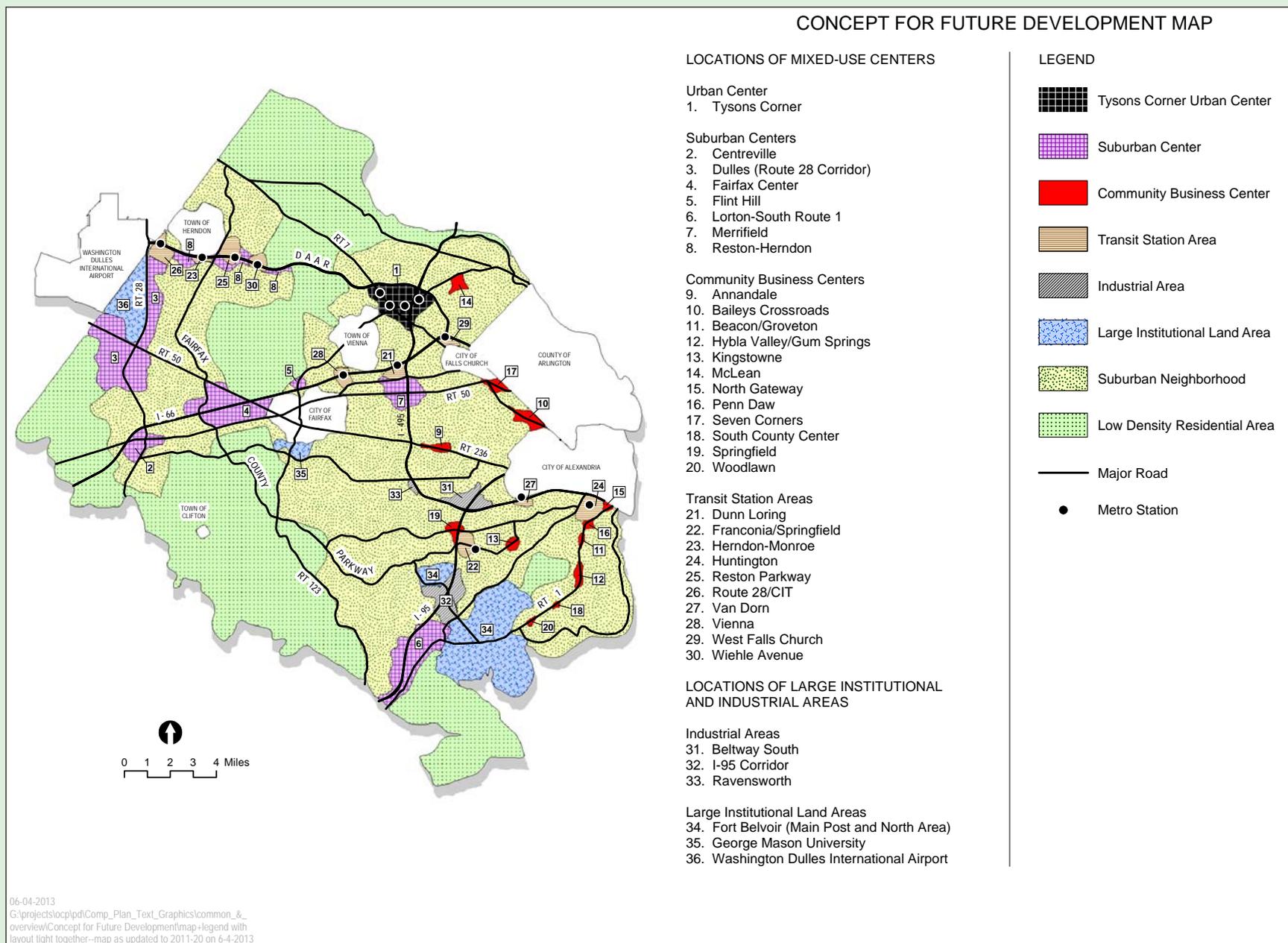


Figure P.1 Comprehensive Plan Concept for Future Development, amended through June 4, 2013.

Executive Summary

Overview

The Fairfax Center Area is one of Fairfax County's largest employment centers with over 42,000 jobs. Located in central Fairfax County, the study area consists of approximately 5,500 acres. Main thoroughfares include Lee-Jackson Memorial Highway (Route 50) to the north, Lee Highway (Route 29) to the south, Shirley Gate Road to the east, and Stringfellow Road to the west. Interstate 66 (I-66) bisects the study area, connecting the area to Arlington County, Washington D.C. and Prince William County.

Several prominent landmarks and nodes of activity are located within the Fairfax Center Area. The Fairfax County Government Center Complex is found in the study area. The study area also has several large retail and office developments within its boundaries. Fair Oaks Mall, located just north of I-66 at the intersection with Lee-Jackson Memorial Highway, is a large regional shopping center. The Fair Lakes area, located farther west along I-66, includes a mix of office, retail, and residential uses that permit residents to conveniently live, work, and shop in close proximity to one another. Other developments with a mix of uses include Fairfax Corner, located on Monument Drive and Fairfax Towne Center along West Ox Road.

Demographics

A demographic snapshot of the Fairfax Center Area illustrates a young and diverse population. A recent 2013 population estimate by Nielsen Site Reports estimates there to be approximately 42,000 residents today. Residents within Fairfax Center are younger than the county average. The median age of its residents is 33.9 years old, while the county median age is 37.3 years old. The Fairfax Center Area also has a diverse population. According to 2013 estimates, the ethnic breakdown is 53 percent white, 30 percent Asian, nine percent black or African American, and five percent are two or more races. Ten percent of the population identifies as being Hispanic or Latino. The diversity is further exemplified by the languages spoken at home. While approximately 60 percent of area residents speak only English, large portions of the population speak Asian/Pacific Islander (22 percent), an IndoEuropean language (eight percent), or Spanish (seven percent).

Planning History

In 1982, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a new Comprehensive Plan for the Fairfax Center Area that established a vision for the area to be a central node of development activity within Fairfax County. The adopted Plan was the culmination of work by the Route 50/I-66 Task Force (Task Force), which was formed to ensure the rapidly expanding area was well-planned and efficiently

used land, infrastructure, and other resources.

The Plan recommended an innovative, incentive-based implementation, with three density/intensity levels having progressively higher performance standards in exchange for greater development density/intensity. The levels offer greater flexibility for development to respond to market conditions, provide a mechanism to acquire additional public amenities, and mitigate development impacts to public facilities, infrastructure, and the environment, commensurate with increased development intensity.

Land Use

The Concept for Future Development, a countywide policy framework that classifies areas according to intended character, divides the Fairfax Center Area into a Suburban Center, Suburban Neighborhoods, and Low Density Residential Area, as shown in Figure 3.1 of the Land Use chapter. Higher density development is focused in the core of the Suburban Center, while the Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas serve as transition areas between the core area and the lower densities outside the periphery of the Fairfax Center Area.

Residential uses encompass more than one-third of the acreage in the Fairfax Center Area. The study area contains a wide variety of housing types, including single-family detached, single-family attached (townhouses), and multi-family units. Nonresidential uses occupy just under two-thirds of the land in the study area. These include office,

retail, industrial, institutional, and governmental uses, as well as open space, public parks and recreation, and vacant land.

A comparison of existing development to past and present Comprehensive Plan potential illustrates that the Fairfax Center Area has evolved with a mix of uses as initially planned, but proportions have changed over time, as amendments to the Plan and zoning cases have been approved. The number of existing dwelling units exceeds the original vision by more than 10,000 units, while existing nonresidential square footage is roughly equal to the original vision of the 1982 Plan.

Transportation

The Comprehensive Plan recommends significant transportation improvements for the study area, many of which have been completed. One of the major features is the designation of I-66 as an Enhanced Public Transportation Corridor, which indicates that transportation facilities, such as transit or high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, are planned. A unique implementation strategy for the Fairfax Center Area transportation plan is the Fairfax Center Area Road Fund, the county's first effort to structure an approach to collecting funds for transportation improvements. Through the use of this performance-based methodology, the study area's transportation network has been phased to the pace of development.

Currently, the primary mass transit options for the Fairfax Center Area are bus services provided by Fairfax Connector and Metrobus. Most service runs only during peak periods and functions as a commuter service to Metrorail and the District of Columbia. Future multi-modal transportation plans are addressed in several long-range plans, including the Transit Development Plan (TDP), which recommends increased bus service, and the Bicycle Master Plan, currently under review, which recommends additional bicycle facilities.

Affordable Housing

The Fairfax Center Area contains a range of housing options and opportunities. Within the Fairfax Center Area, 668 Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs) have been constructed and an additional 208 unbuilt ADUs have been approved through the rezoning process. Twenty-four Workforce Dwelling Units (WDUs) have been constructed since the adoption of the WDU policy in 2007, and an additional 456 unbuilt WDUs have been approved through the rezoning process.

Environment

The Fairfax Center Area contains numerous environmental resources. Several stream valleys, which are mostly forested, traverse the study area. Asbestos and shrink-swell clays are naturally occurring in portions of the Fairfax Center Area. Development has resulted in increased amounts of impervious surfaces, which in turn

has adversely impacted water quality, deteriorated stream channels, and caused erosion. The Comprehensive Plan recommends strategies to mitigate impacts to these environmental features.

Heritage Resources

The Fairfax Center Area contains three heritage resources and several cemeteries. Two historic sites are included in the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic sites: Ox Hill Battlefield Memorial Park and Woodaman House. A third historic resource is the remnants of the Manassas Gap Railroad Independent Line, a railroad that once crossed the county. Many Native American sites, including campsites, hunting stations, or stone quarries dating from the earliest known occupation of the county 12,000 years ago, are located in undeveloped park areas of the area.

Public Facilities

The Fairfax Center Area is served by 20 public schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools. Twelve of these schools are projected to be over capacity within the next six years. Modular capacity enhancements, renovations, and identifying new school sites are underway to provide additional capacity to meet the future enrollment projection demands. Several community and regional libraries are located within close proximity to the study area. There are currently no full-service libraries located within the Fairfax Center Area nor has a need for one in the future been identified. The Fairfax Center Area is served

by several public safety facilities that provide police and fire and rescue support: the Sully and Fair Oaks District police stations, a planned public safety headquarters at the Government Center complex, and Fair Oaks and Fairfax Center Fire and Rescue Stations 21 and 40.

The Fairfax Center Area receives sanitary sewer treatment from Fairfax County and water from the Fairfax County Water Authority (Fairfax Water). A majority of the study area receives public sanitary sewer treatment within the Approved Sewer Service Area (ASSA); however, small portions are outside of the ASSA.

Parks and Recreation

The Fairfax Center Area is served by a variety of park and recreation facilities. There are 14 public parks totaling 489 acres that are completely or partially within the study area and 16 additional parks totaling 3,167 acres just outside the study area. These parks include athletic fields, trails, a RECenter, and stream valley parks with a range of facilities to serve county residents. As the Fairfax Center Area continues to evolve, so will its park and recreation facility needs.

Observations and Conclusions

The Fairfax Center Area has evolved over the past thirty years from a relatively undeveloped greenfield to a center of housing, employment, and county government. The 1982 Plan for the Fairfax Center Area created a blueprint for development that, while modified over time, has

provided for the construction of roads, public facilities, and the preservation of numerous stream valleys. Going forward, consideration should be given to updating some aspects of this Plan to ensure its continued relevancy, such as certain land use recommendations, subunit boundaries, development elements, and use-specific performance criteria. Editorial updates of factual information and references should be completed, as well as determining whether the low density and suburban neighborhoods at the periphery should remain in the Fairfax Center Area.