



Townhouse development in the Fair Lakes area.

2. Planning History

The Board of Supervisors adopted Comprehensive Plan guidance for the Fairfax Center Area in 1982. The plan established a vision for the approximately 5,500 acre study area to be a central node of development and activity. The plan began with the creation of the Route 50/Interstate 66 Task Force by the Board on May 19, 1980. The Board directed the Task Force, composed of county residents, to assist in the formulation of planning policy recommendations for the study area. Several elements influenced the decision to begin the effort. First was the decision of the Board to re-locate the county government offices from the Massey Building to a 183-acre plot of land near the interchange of Lee-Jackson Memorial Highway and I-66. Another influence was the opening of the Fair Oaks Regional Shopping Mall, which was one of the largest malls in the area. Moreover, associated development was anticipated to occur around the mall, creating a mall-office-hotel complex. The mall, in addition to the nearby Pender and High Ridge business parks, were early signs of the future development potential of the area.

At the time of the study, the land use and zoning plans for the area were predominantly single land use assignments, which presented a sprawling character of development that did not efficiently use land, infrastructure, or other resources. The Task Force study cites that it did not want the study area to develop in a similar fashion to Tysons Corner, which in the early 1980s was largely office buildings with minimal retail uses, poor pedestrian circulation, and few open space and mass transit options. Reacting to this conventional homogenous development, the Task Force focused on designing multiple, mixed land use arrangements within the study area.

The “planned development” zoning classifications were identified as the vehicle to achieve the vision of the plan. These zoning districts would allow for the development of residential, office, retail, and other uses and create special mixed-use village cores in strategically placed areas. The design intended to mitigate sprawl, direct and concentrate development, and reduce energy consumption. The conceptual plan laid out a framework to put place land uses and associated densities, identify major cores



Office building in the Fairfax Center Area.



Fairfax County Government Center.

“Deviating from conventional zoning practice, the Plan recommends an incentive-based rather than a control-based implementation methodology.”

of development, delineate a hierarchical road system, and incentivize strong use of buffers and amenity features. The Plan would also give residents the ability to live, work, and play in a relatively compact area. To facilitate this lifestyle, the plan stressed the importance of preserving and creating open space, protecting environmental resources, and providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The Board also adopted a new implementation strategy as part of the plan to encourage the superior quality of development envisioned for the new major focal point in the county. Deviating from conventional zoning practice, the plan recommends an incentive-based rather than a control-based implementation methodology. Since a majority of the study area was undeveloped at the time of Task Force deliberation, there were ample opportunities to create a new community based on the mixed use village concept. The proposed land use called for three density/intensity levels: baseline, intermediate, and overlay. The baseline level offered the lowest in terms of overall density/intensity. This option was based on the general overall density level in the adopted Comprehensive Plan for the study area with certain modifications in transportation, infrastructure, open space, and other land use elements. The intermediate level allowed for greater density/intensity than the baseline level and offered guidance through performance criteria in terms of controls and incentives. The overlay plan was the highest level of development density/intensity and therefore had the highest performance standards in terms of controls and incentives. The intent of offering this range of development density/intensity was to offer greater flexibility for development to adapt to changing market conditions and to provide a mechanism by which additional public amenities could be acquired with an increase in development intensity.

The total amount of areawide development at each level adopted by the Board was higher than the Task Force recommendation, recognizing that every parcel within the Fairfax Center Area would not develop to its full potential and offer greater flexibility. For example, the planned maximum development for commercial uses was increased by 25 percent above the level of development recommended by the Task Force. Residential potential as a part of mixed-use development was also increased.



Public art in the Fair Lakes area.



Outdoor dining at Fairfax Corner.



Condominiums at East Market in the Fair Lakes area.

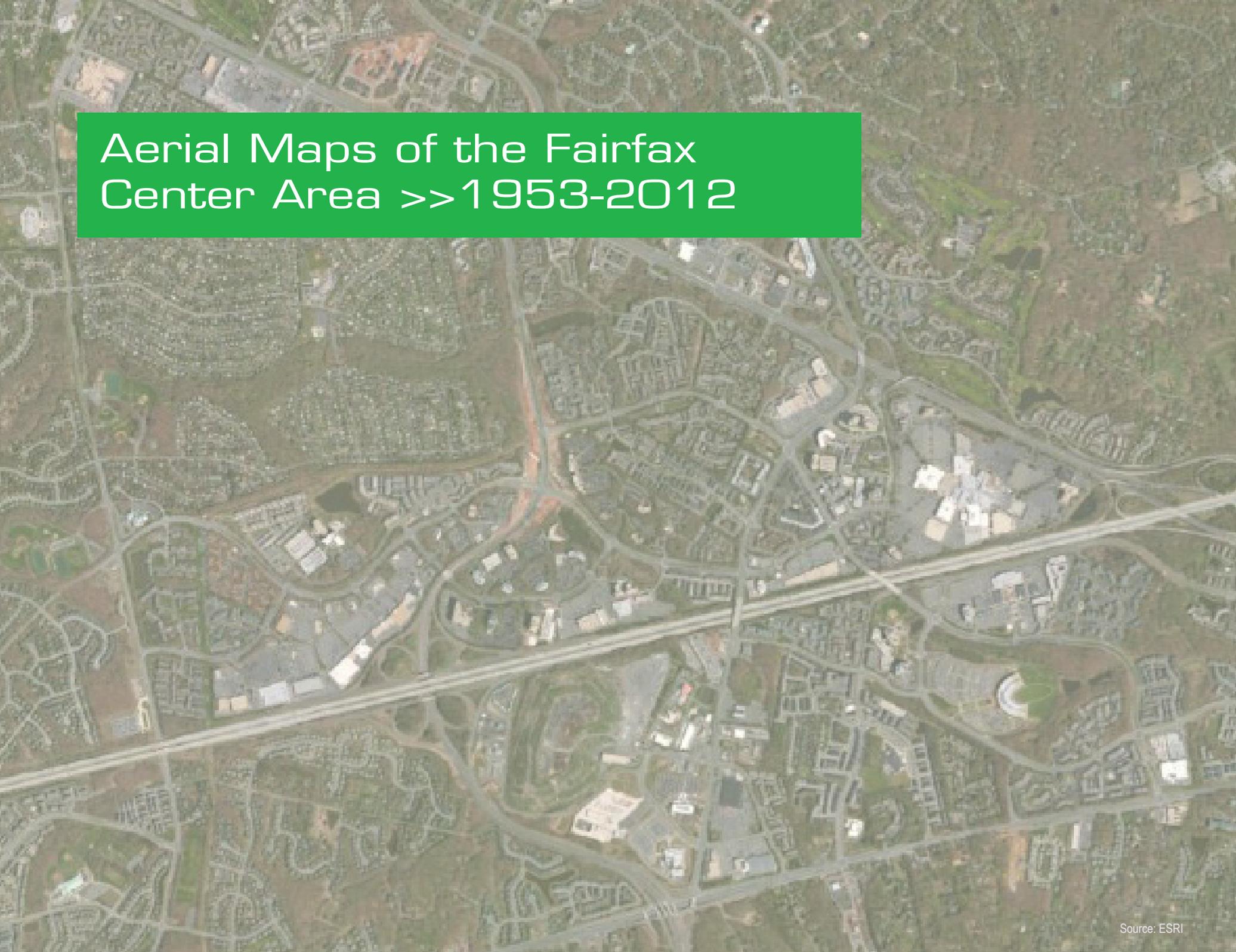
Certain uses were not replanned, such as the Fair Oaks Mall, previously developed office buildings in the eastern portion of the Fairfax Center Area, and the planned Fairfax County Government Center. The planned development levels are illustrated in Appendix A.

Since the plan was approved by the Board in 1982, there have been numerous amendments to the original plan. A review of past Comprehensive Plan amendments authorized by the Board and submitted through the Area Plans Review process reflects several development trends. In 1985, the Board commissioned a task force to explore the implications of 15 proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments for the Fairfax Center Area. Most of the nominations requested intensification of major portions of the area above the overlay level with a strong emphasis on increasing commercial office densities. The Board adopted approximately half of these amendments. Several subsequent Plan amendments added residential options to planned office uses or increased the density of planned residential uses at the intermediate and overlay levels. Several other amendments modified the Plan to recommend senior care facilities, reflecting the demand for services to serve the growing aging demographic in the county. This trend has continued. According to the Fairfax County Department of Family Services, the 50-plus and 70-plus populations are projected to increase 40 percent and 88 percent, respectively, between 2005 and 2030.

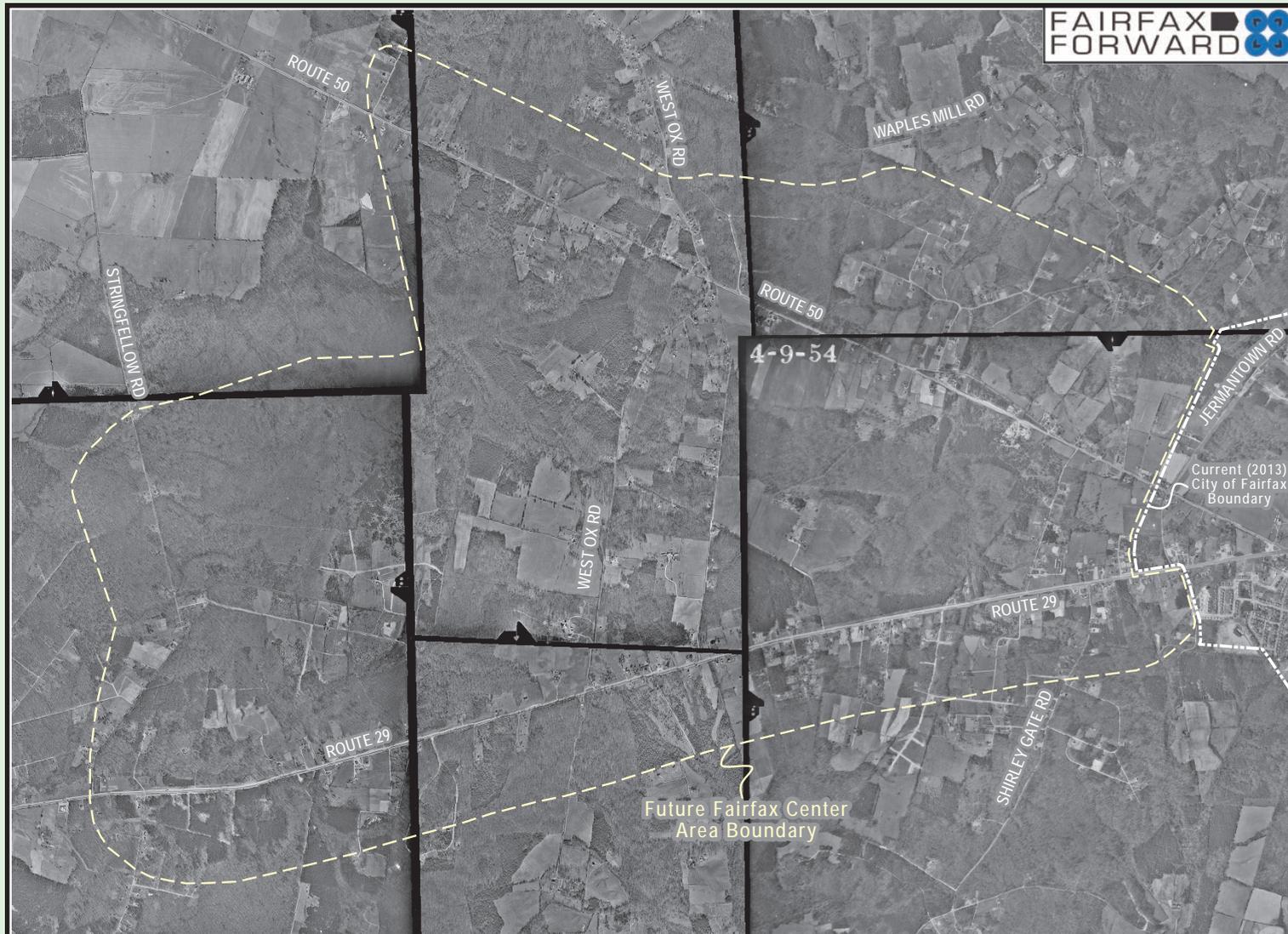
Planned for office mixed-use with housing as a secondary land use, the Fair Lakes area on the northwestern edge of the Fairfax Center Area has generally developed as a commercial shopping center with several stand-alone retail uses along the periphery. Residential uses are present in the area as well. The originally proposed vision has been modified over time, as several zoning applications gradually replaced office and residential uses with additional retail use space. Fairfax Towne Center, located west of the intersection of West Ox Road and Lee-Jackson Memorial Highway, was envisioned as a mixed-use center to include office, residential, and retail uses. In 2002, the Plan was amended to allow an option at the overlay level for additional hotel and/or multi-family residential uses.

Plan amendments adopted in the last ten years continue the trend of increased mixed-use development planned in the Fairfax Center Area. In 2006, a Plan amendment was adopted by the Board for Fairfax Corner, located at the intersection Government Center Parkway and Monument Drive. This amendment added a second mixed-use option to the Plan, recommending additional intensity with access to potential future Metrorail serving the area. In 2011, the Board adopted an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan for the Fair Oaks Shopping Mall for urban, mixed-use development. In addition to increasing intensity on the mall property, the amendment included two development options above the overlay level to reflect the potential for either Bus Rapid Transit or Metrorail serving the area. The amended Plan fosters a transformation of the mall into a transit-oriented, walkable environment. These options recommend meeting performance criteria above and beyond the overlay level to achieve more intense levels of development.

The history of the Fairfax Center Area is one marked by growth, exemplifying performance-based planning and implementation. As reflected in the following aerial maps, since the inception of the Plan in 1982, the Fairfax Center Area has transformed from generally undeveloped open space into one of Fairfax County's major activity centers with a diverse community.



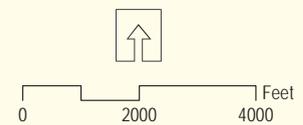
Aerial Maps of the Fairfax Center Area >>1953-2012

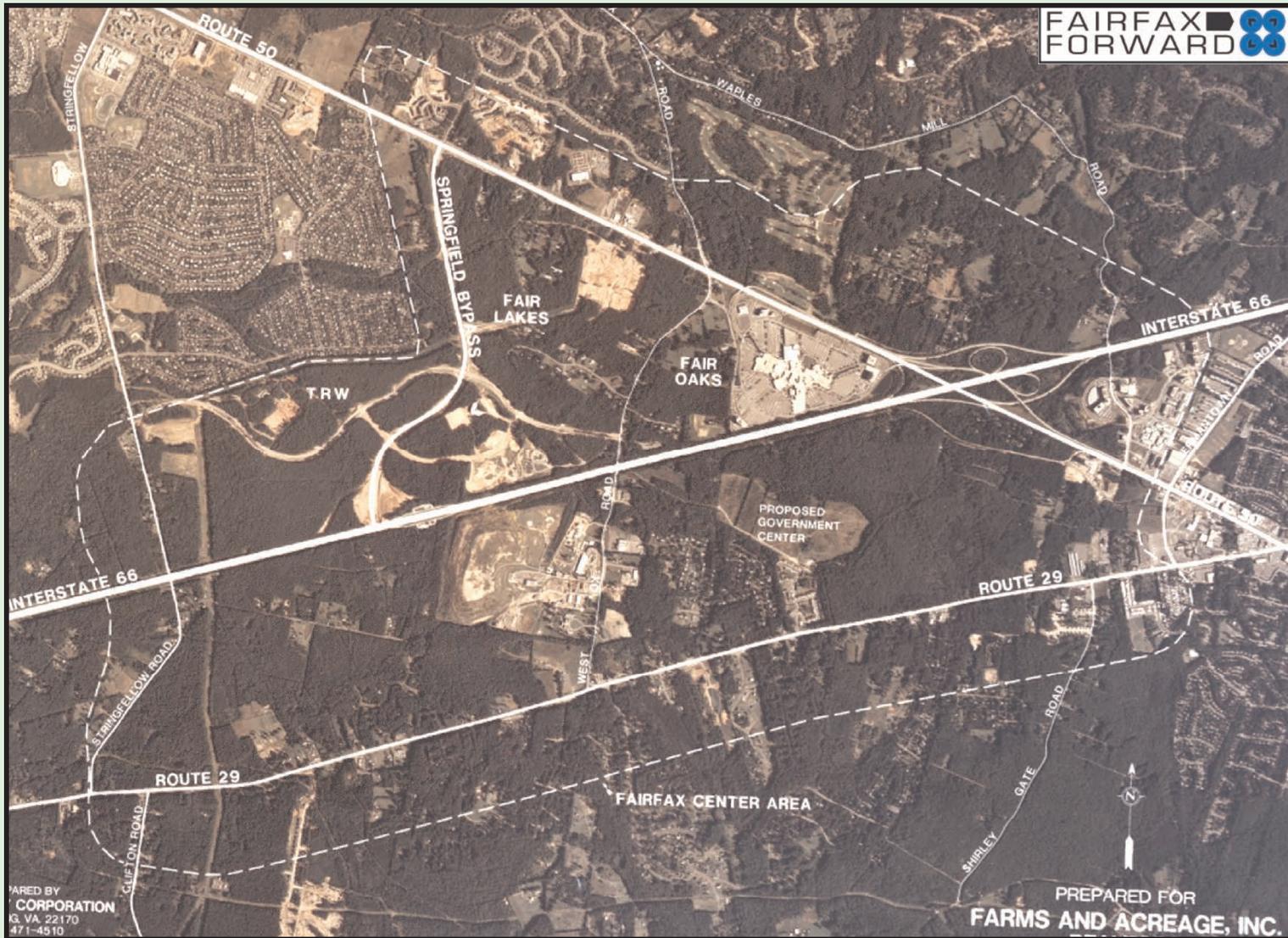


Aerial Map 1953 & 1954

Fairfax Center Area

Prepared by DPZ, July 2013
Flight Dates 1953 and 1954

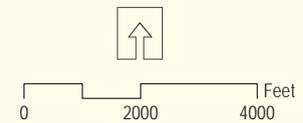




Aerial Map 1985

Fairfax Center Area

Prepared by DPZ, July 2013
Flight Date September 1985





Aerial Map 1990

Fairfax Center Area

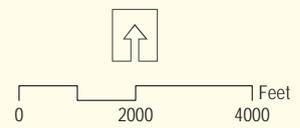
Prepared by DPZ, July 2013
Flight Date May 1990



Aerial Map 2002

Fairfax Center Area

Prepared by DPZ, July 2013
Flight Date March 2002





Aerial Map 2012

Fairfax Center Area

Prepared by DPZ, July 2013
Flight Date 2012

