



Frequently Asked Questions May 10, 2013

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about Fairfax Forward, the proposed process to review and amend the Comprehensive Plan.

References within the document are made to the February 20, 2013 Fairfax Forward staff report available online at

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/amendments/fairfaxforward.pdf>

and the April 3, 2013 Fairfax Forward Staff Report Addendum available online at:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/amendments/fairfaxforwardaddendum.pdf>

Questions:

- 1) Can the North-South County planning calendar be preserved, especially for proposals that affect suburban and low-density residential area?

Answer: The pilot work program encompasses approximately half of the geography of the county, like the North-South County planning calendar, as shown on the maps on pages 6-7 of the February 20, 2013 staff report. While some of the new studies are not anticipated to be completed during the first two years of the pilot work program, the schedule also incorporates needed Policy Plan and other countywide amendments that have not had the opportunity in many years to be reviewed through the North-South County calendar of the Area Plans Review.

- 2) How can the process of defining the work plan ensure enough time to accommodate meaningful citizen participation?

Answer: A timetable has been created to describe how the work program will be evaluated on page 8 of the February 20, 2013 staff report and has since been extended. As part of the April 3, 2013 Staff Report Addendum, the schedule for review incorporates a workshop held by the Planning Commission to review the public comments and the staff findings.

- 3) Can the community have the ability to submit a proposed Comprehensive Plan change?

Answer: It is anticipated that there will be an opportunity for anyone, including the community, to submit a proposed change during the initial stages of a land use study while the scope is being finalized. This opportunity is envisioned to occur most likely as part of visioning session, as described on pages 9-10 of the February 20, 2013 staff report and diagrammed on pages 4-5 of the April 3, 2013 addendum. For those who cannot attend the visioning meeting, other opportunities will be available online via an online submission form a study-specific website for a defined time period.

- 4) Can proposals for planning changes and their status be posted prominently online to prevent proposals from being discarded by staff before reaching any community consideration? Can submissions which fail to gain staff recommendation for their addition to the work program have some means of being raised to a district land use community or community task force, so that residents' perspective can be gauged?

Answer: Staff does not plan to discard any ideas, although may recommend that an idea is inconsistent with the criteria (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxforward/comp-plan-amend-work-program.htm>) and not be pursued. This question highlights the importance of documentation, as shown in Attachment IV of the Fairfax Forward staff report, which numerically lists, describes and maps all submissions received during the public comment period of the work program, as well as staff's responses to these submissions. A website that duplicates the Attachment IV table has been created to increase the accessibility of these submissions (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxforward/2012publiccomment.htm>).

Ideas raised during the scoping meeting, such as a visioning meeting, for an individual planning study, similarly can be numbered and tracked on a project-specific website. Once the new land use studies identified on the work program begin, these project specific websites can be designed to accommodate posting this information

- 5) Can a community outreach working group that invites the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations, the district councils and other interested community players to devise specific ways to engage the public on an ongoing basis, and to ensure that all web material on Comprehensive Plan proposals be maximally transparent?

Answer: Staff is organizing discussion groups to elicit suggestions to enhance community outreach, including inviting larger civic associations to join the Comprehensive Plan listserv and to post study-related information on their own websites or through email lists. Taking advantage of existing neighborhood connections to broadcast information is an exciting way to grow public outreach.

- 6) Can community organizations choose their own representatives to task forces and land use study groups to enhance and broaden community representation and bolster broad public trust in final decisions?

Answer: In the APR process, Task Force representation and composition was at the discretion of each Supervisor. Fairfax Forward recommends retaining this and collaborating between districts when an area extends over multiple districts, as described on page 9 of the February 20, 2013 staff report. New ways to gather feedback, for example website and comment forms, can be explored to solicit ideas for updates, corrections or changes.

- 7) Can a late-stage community review meeting by a broadly representative citizen body, similar to a previous Area Plans Review (APR) task force or a district land use committee,

be part of the planning process to provide “back-end” review of all proposed Comprehensive Plan changes?

Answer: Presenting draft recommendations and seeking feedback from a larger task force, District council, or other standing committee identified by the respective Supervisor will be encouraged during planning studies. The recommendations for Fairfax Forward do not preclude this body from being involved earlier in the review, if that is part of the public participation plan, as described on pages 9-10 of the February 20, 2013 staff report. This approach can help assure that the study recommendations are fairly disseminated and discussed.

- 8) Can a broad notification process for proposals that affect multiple magisterial districts be instated, so that all potentially affected stakeholders will learn in a timely manner of proposed replannings, even if they fall on the other side of a district line?

Answer: Yes. It is anticipated that some studies will affect multiple magisterial districts. Announcements in district newsletters, e-mails to Home Owners Associations and websites could be utilized as a major means of communication in all affected districts, as described in the Public Outreach, Participation, and Education Toolkit, Attachment VI of the February 20, 2013 staff report. Staff supports partnering with larger groups such as the Fairfax Federation of Civic Associations and district councils to convey notifications to their respective member groups as the distribution may be greater.

- 9) Will broad impact analyses, on traffic and other basic services such as schools and parks, be included in the studies?

Answer: Yes. Areawide studies, as opposed to review of individual, parcel-specific amendments, will consider the broader impacts to the surrounding systems, such as parks and open space, schools, and transportation, as mentioned on page 3 of the February 20, 2013 staff report. The cumulative impact analyses completed for many recent studies, including for the Merrifield area during the 2008-2009 North County APR process and the Huntington Area in the 2009-2010 South County APR process, demonstrated the benefit of grouping individual nominations to understand the total impact on the area. These types of analyses is planned to be used during future areawide studies and will be made available to help inform decisions during the evaluation.

- 10) How can the public be assured that Fairfax Forward will not open the door to disruptive, open-ended replanning proposals that do not conform with the Comprehensive Plan’s goals, particularly in stable low density residential areas and suburban neighborhoods?.

Answer: The Concept for Future Development speaks to the preservation of stable low density residential areas and suburban neighborhoods. Better implementation of the Concept for Future Development is one of the criteria for studies scheduled on the work program, and staff will promote the Concept for Development guidance when evaluating proposed changes to the work program and during planning studies.

As described on page 5 of the February 20, 2013 staff report, staff does not anticipate major plan changes during the neighborhood planning studies, with the majority of the work involving editorial updates and eliminating overlapping Plan recommendations. Few proposals that do not conform to the Concept are expected because many of these areas are developed according to the Plan, and an existing conditions report will be written to demonstrate this with recommendations affirmed through a public process, like a visioning session, at the beginning stages of a planning study.

- 11) When will the Fairfax Forward process be reevaluated? How can citizens participate in this evaluation?

Answer: Staff concurs with the Planning Commission recommendation on April 3, 2013 to:

- evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, accessibility, and impact of the new process and the Pilot Work Program after two years,
- to develop measurement criteria in concert with the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, allowing for public review and comment, and to utilize surveys, interviews, or other methods to reach all parties involved, and
- to conclude the evaluation with recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors on modifications and improvements.

Staff is organizing focus groups to discuss information dissemination and is available to discuss means of outreach for this evaluation.