

## Reston Land Use College Glossary of Planning Terms

*Most of the terms in this Glossary are compiled from two sources.*

*Terms shown in bold are excerpted from the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan Glossary. These terms are not intended to have the same definitions as are used in the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance but to explain terms that are used in the Plan.*

*Most of the other terms are from the Citizen Planner Glossary at <http://cponline.msu.edu/resources/Glossary.php#N> unless otherwise noted.*

*A few terms are shown twice – once with the more common definition and once with the definition as used in Fairfax County.*

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** Housing with a sales price or rental amount within the means of a household that may occupy moderate- and low-income housing. In the case of dwelling units for sale, affordable means housing in which mortgage, amortization, taxes, insurance, and condominium or association fees, if any, constitute no more than thirty percent of such gross annual household income for a household of the size that may occupy the unit in question. In the case of dwelling units for rent, affordable means housing for which the rent and utilities constitute no more than thirty percent of such gross annual household income for a household of the size that may occupy the unit in question.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** For purposes of the Policy Plan, housing that is affordable to households with incomes that are 120 percent or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Affordable housing includes units created under the Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) program that are affordable to households with incomes that are 70 percent or less of the AMI. Affordable housing also includes units produced through the Workforce Housing initiative, which is designed to encourage proffers of rental and for sale units that are affordable to households at various income limits up to 120 percent of the AMI. Affordable housing may also include other units produced through federal, state or local programs by the private, non-profit and/or public sectors. The Area Median Income for the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area is determined periodically by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**AMENITIES:** Desirable features of a neighborhood, housing development, or condominium, such as nearby parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, community centers, or other similar facilities.

**BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (BMPs):** A practice, or combination of practices, that is determined to be the most effective, practicable means of preventing or reducing the amount of pollution generated by nonpoint sources to a level compatible with water quality goals.

Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, unlike pollution from industrial and sewage treatment plants, comes from many diffuse sources. NPS pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters, and even our underground sources of drinking water. (NPS definition taken from Environmental Protection Agency's Polluted brochure EPA-841-F-94-005, 1994)

**BETTER SITE DESIGN:** Site and subdivision design techniques that minimize impacts to the natural environment, including topography, hydrology, vegetation, natural habitat, groundwater recharge, and stormwater runoff. Such a design respects these natural systems by employing practices that minimize impacts to these systems both on and off site.

**BIG-BOX RETAIL:** A singular retail or wholesale user who occupies more than 75,000 square feet of gross floor area, typically requires high parking to building area ratios, and has a regional sales market. Regional retail/wholesale sales can include, but are not limited to, membership warehouse clubs that emphasize bulk sales, discount stores, and department stores.

**BONUS:** An incentive to a developer, usually in the form of additional floor area, in exchange for an amenity or public benefit, such as affordable housing, green buildings, park land, road improvements or comparable benefits. (adapted from NYC Zoning Glossary)

**BUFFERING:** The area of open land which serves to mitigate potential conflicts between different types of land uses. Buffer zones are most commonly employed between different types of uses but, in certain circumstances, it may be appropriate to provide a buffer between high and low density residential uses.

**BUILD-OUT:** The maximum, theoretical development of land as permitted under zoning regulations. A build-out analysis determines the maximum development of a specific area of community based on current regulations.

**BY-RIGHT:** A use that complies with all zoning regulations and other applicable ordinances.

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP):** The CIP guides the development of public facilities over a five year period. It shows the arrangement of projects in a sequential order based on a schedule of priorities and assigns an estimated cost and anticipated method of funding for each project. The Capital Improvement Program provides the financial foundation necessary to implement the Comprehensive Plan and public facilities plans.

**CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT:** Development in which individual lots may be smaller than the average lot authorized by the zoning ordinance. Buildable lots are located on a portion of the land rather than the entire site so that areas may be preserved for recreation or environmental protection.

**COMPACT DESIGN:** Compact building design suggests that communities be designed in a way that permits more open space to be preserved, and that buildings be constructed in a way that uses land and resources more efficiently. By encouraging buildings to grow vertically rather than horizontally, and by incorporating structured rather than surface parking, for

example, communities can reduce the footprint of new construction, and preserve more greenspace.

**COMPLETE STREETS:** A planning concept where roadways are designed to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users of all ages and abilities: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transport. It addresses the issues of sidewalk and shoulder width, bicycle lanes, well placed and designed crosswalks, special bus lanes and pullouts, traffic calming techniques, street trees, planters, and buffers to shield pedestrians from automobile traffic, etc.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:** Regional, state, or local documents that describe community visions for future growth. Comprehensive plans describe general plans and policies for how communities will grow and the tools that are used to guide land use decisions and give general, long-range recommendations for community growth. Typical elements include land use, housing, transportation, environment, economic development, and community facilities.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT:** Voluntary and legally binding agreements between landowners and local governments or private trusts that limit parcels of land or pieces of property to certain uses. Land under conservation easements remains privately owned, and most easements are permanent

**CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS (CSS):** A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist (Federal Highway Administration, FHWA).

**COUNTY 2232 REVIEW PROCESS:** A mechanism for reviewing the compatibility of proposed public facilities, pursuant to §15.2-2232 of the *Code of Virginia*, with the locational guidelines established in the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, this process is used to determine if the general or approximate location, character and extent of a proposed facility are in substantial accord with the Plan.

**DENSITY:** The number of persons or dwelling units per acre. Density is typically used in the context of residential development (e.g. one dwelling unit per acre), whereas intensity is typically used in the context of commercial and mixed-use development. (Also see Floor Area Ratio and Development Intensity).

**DENSITY BONUS:** An increase in the number of market-rate units on a site in order to provide an incentive for the construction of affordable housing under zoning ordinance specifications.

**DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY:** A quantitative measure of non-residential and mixed use development, which may include residential components, usually expressed in terms of floor area ratio; the mix and distribution of uses within a given area that determines the impact on public facility systems and transportation facilities.

**DEVELOPMENT REVIEW:** The process for determining the appropriateness of a proposed development project.

**EASEMENT:** A grant by a property owner of the use of his or her land by another party for a specific purpose.

**EUCLIDEAN ZONING:** A land use regulation method that separates land uses into zoning districts, named for Euclid, Ohio after the 1926 U. S. Supreme Court decision which legitimized zoning in the *Village of Euclid (Ohio) v. Ambler Realty Co.* (272 U.S. 365). The Supreme Court concluded that comprehensive zoning is a valid application of a community's police powers – the right to adopt regulations reasonably designed to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare.

**F.A.R. - FLOOR AREA RATIO:** An expression of the amount of development (typically non residential uses) allowed on a specific parcel of land. F.A.R. is determined by dividing the total square footage of buildings on a site by the amount of site square footage.

A one-story building that covers the entire lot has an FAR of 1.0. Similarly, a one-story building that covers 1/2 of a lot has an FAR of 0.5.

An additional example - an FAR of 2.0 on a 50,000 square foot lot would allow a building whose total floor area is 100,000 square feet (s.f.). This FAR could result in a two-story building with 50,000 s.f. per floor that covers the entire lot or a four-story building with 25,000 s.f. per floor that covers one-half of the lot or an eight-story building with 12,500 s.f. per floor that covers one-quarter of the lot. (adapted from Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan Glossary)

**FORM BASED ZONING:** Form-based zoning creates a visually based zoning code that emphasizes the form of the built environment. Traditional zoning regulates the function of land use (e.g. residential use, office use, retail use, industrial use). This prescriptive approach uses community visioning processes to create a shared physical vision for the community. The community vision is translated into straightforward diagrams that illustrate the zoning code, rather than using lengthy text. A focus on form allows diverse architectural development that can serve multiple and changing functions. (adapted from Citizen Planner Glossary)

**FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION:** A system for classifying the transportation system in terms of the character of service that individual facilities are providing or are intended to provide, ranging from travel mobility to land access. Roadway system functional classification elements include Freeways or Expressways, Other Principal (or Major) Arterials, Minor Arterials, Collector Streets, and Local Streets. Transit system elements include line-haul, collection and distribution, and specialized or community-oriented transit services.

**GREEN BUILDING:** Structures and their associated landscapes that are located, designed, constructed, operated and dismantled in an environmentally responsible manner to minimize short- and long-term negative impacts on the environment and building occupants. (Also see LEED).

**INFILL:** Development or redevelopment of land that has been bypassed, remained vacant, and/or is underused as a result of the continuing urban development process. Generally, the areas and/or sites are not particularly of prime quality, however they are usually served by or

are readily accessible to the infrastructure services and facilities provided by the applicable local governmental entity. Use of such lands for new housing and/or other urban development is considered a more desirable alternative than to continue to extend the outer development pattern laterally and horizontally thus necessitating a higher expenditure for capital improvements than would be required for infill development. The use of infill development, among others, promotes the best use of resources and also will tend to have a positive impact upon the tax and other fiscal policies.

**INFILL:** Development on vacant or underused sites within an established development pattern.

**INFRASTRUCTURE:** The network of vital systems that comprises the improvements and publicly funded facilities added to the built environment to support new development and growth. Such systems include transportation, sanitary sewer, communications, stormwater, solid waste disposal, and water treatment and distribution.

**INTENSITY:** See Development Intensity.

**LEED - Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™** is an internationally recognized green building certification system created by the U.S. Green Building Council, providing third-party verification that a building or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at energy savings, water efficiency, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality, and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.

**LEVEL OF SERVICE:** A qualitative measure of the effect of a number of traffic factors, including speed and travel time, traffic interruptions, freedom to maneuver, safety, driving comfort and convenience, and traffic volume. These factors are used to measure the functioning of a road or intersection with traffic, and the resulting level of service is expressed by a rating of "A" (best) through "F" (worst).

**LIVE/WORK UNIT:** A work space or shop that is integrated with a dwelling unit occupied by the owner of the work space or shop. Generally, the work unit is separated from the living unit by walls or stories.

**LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT (LID):** The use of site and subdivision design techniques in coordination with stormwater management engineering to imitate the hydrologic conditions associated with an undeveloped site to the greatest extent practicable.

**METRORAIL STATION:** Facility where passengers may board Metrorail trains. Facility typically includes passenger waiting areas, ticketing and information areas, commuter parking, as connecting bus areas.

**MIXED-USE:** A designation that permits a combination of uses within a single development or district. The development may contain a mix of office buildings, retail establishments, hotels, housing, and related uses.

**MIXED-USE AREA:** A specified area which includes three or more different types of uses within its boundaries. Generally these uses are on separate but interrelated sites.

**MIXED-USE CENTERS:** Tysons Corner Urban Center, Suburban Centers, Transit Station Areas, and Community Business Centers.

**MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT:** A planning designation that permits a combination of uses within a single development or district. The development may contain a mix of office buildings, retail establishments, hotels, housing, and related uses.

**MIXED-USE PROJECT:** A development that includes two or more physically integrated uses on one site or within one structure.

**MODE:** A means of travel. Transportation modes include automobile, rail, bus, bicycle or walking.

**OPEN SPACE:** The Virginia Open Space Land Act defines "open-space land" as "any land which is provided or preserved for (i) park or recreation purposes, (ii) conservation of land or other natural resources, (iii) historic or scenic purposes, (iv) assisting in the shaping of the character, direction, and timing of community development, or (v) wetlands as defined in §28.2-1300. [The Virginia Open Space Land Act, Va. Code Ann. §§ 10.1-1700 through -1705 (Michie 1998)]

**PLANNED COMMUNITY:** A city, town, or community that was carefully planned from its inception and is typically constructed in a previously undeveloped area. This contrasts with settlements that evolve in a more ad hoc fashion. (Wikipedia definition of New Town, Planned Community or Planned City)

**PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD):** A tract of land developed as a unit under single ownership or unified control, which includes one or more principal buildings or uses, and is processed under the Planned Unit Development provisions of the [zoning] ordinance. Also, a parcel of land planned as a single unit, rather than as an aggregate of individual lots, with design flexibility from traditional siting regulations (such as side yards, setbacks, and height limitations) or land use restrictions (such as prohibitions against mixing land uses within a development). The greater flexibility in locating buildings and in combining various land uses often makes it possible to achieve certain economics in construction as well as the preservation of open space and the inclusions of many amenities. (adapted from Citizen Planner Glossary)

**PUBLIC FACILITIES:** Facilities that are required to support the services and functions provided by the County government or public utility companies. Such facilities are essential to support the community and its development and to enhance the overall quality of life. Public facilities include such necessities as water and sewer lines, drainage and stormwater management facilities, and police and fire protection, as well as educational, recreational and cultural services.

**REDEVELOPMENT:** Development activity generally characterized by clearance of existing structures and new construction. The new development may be the same type of land use, or a new type, but it is usually at a higher level of intensity or density than that it replaces.

**REVITALIZATION:** The renewal and improvement of older commercial and residential areas through any of a series of actions or programs that encourage and facilitate private and public

investment. Community investment can include (but is not limited to) activities and programs designed to improve neighborhoods; strengthen existing businesses; attract new businesses; encourage quality renovation and new construction; enhance public spaces and pedestrian amenities; ensure safe, efficient and convenient traffic flow; and contribute to the social and economic vitality of the area.

**SMART GROWTH:** An approach to land use planning and growth management that recognizes the connections between development, sustainability, and quality of life. Smart Growth stresses guidelines and incentives for growth instead of regulations, to encourage development that is sensitive to quality of life factors.

**SPECIAL EXCEPTION/SPECIAL PERMIT USES:** Uses, which by their nature, can have an undue impact upon or can be incompatible with other uses. Such uses may be allowed to locate within given designated zoning districts only under special controls and limitations, and regulations.

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:** A mechanism for controlling stormwater runoff for the purposes of reducing downstream erosion, water quality degradation, and flooding and mitigating the adverse effects of changes in land use on the aquatic environment.

**SUBURBAN CENTERS:** The Land Classification System category for Centers that contain a complementary mixture of office, retail, residential uses and parks (including Urban Parks and active recreation facilities) in a cohesive, moderate-intensity setting.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** Development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD):** Transit-oriented development (TOD) in Fairfax County is defined as compact, pedestrian- and biking-friendly, mixed-use development containing medium to high density residential, office and retail uses within walking distance of certain rail transit stations identified in the Area Plans. Well-planned TOD should incorporate good design principles and an appropriate mix of uses around rail transit stations to promote transit usage and create vibrant neighborhood centers at these locations.

**TRANSIT STATION AREAS (TSAs):** The Land Classification System category for areas adjacent to Metrorail Stations (or other future rapid rail stations) which are directly influenced by the presence of access points to the regional rail system. Generally, Transit Station Areas constitute those lands within a primary and a secondary development area. The primary development area is approximately a 5-7 minute walk of a station entrance. The secondary development area is approximately a 15 minute walk of a station entrance. In addition to these general guidelines, Transit Station Area boundaries are strongly influenced by the area's access characteristics and the relationship of the station to surrounding stable neighborhoods.

**TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM):** Actions taken to reduce single occupant vehicle automobile trips or actions taken to manage or reduce overall transportation demand.

Examples include: shuttle buses, company Vanpools, telecommuting, HOV lanes, flexible work hours, mixed-use development, car sharing, car pools, road/congestion pricing programs, transit allowances, etc.

**TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS (TMAs):** Groups of employers uniting together to work collectively to manage transportation demand in a particular area.

**UNIVERSAL DESIGN:** The design of products and environments to be usable by people of all ages and abilities, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for significant adaptation or specialized design.

**URBAN DESIGN:** An aspect of urban or suburban planning that focuses on creating a desirable environment in which to live, work and play. Design analysis includes the relationship between buildings, streets, land use, open space, circulation, height, natural features and human activity. A well-designed urban or suburban environment demonstrates the four generally accepted principles of urban design: clearly identifiable function for the area; easily understood order; distinctive identity; and visual appeal.

**URBAN PARKS:** Public spaces in densely developed areas that offer the opportunity for passive and active recreation.

**URBAN PLANNING:** The discipline of dealing with the design and organization of urban space and activities. This includes the physical facilities or improvements to the land which are made to accommodate these activity patterns. Urban or suburban functions addressed in planning are broad, encompassing land use; transportation; housing; open space and recreation; public and human services; and conservation of environmental and heritage resources.

**WORKFORCE HOUSING:** Rental or for-sale housing units that are affordable to households with maximum income limits up to and including 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area, as determined periodically by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The intent of the Workforce housing initiative is to encourage this and other types of affordable housing in the County's planned Mixed-Use Centers. Workforce Housing should be provided in accordance with the guidelines specified in Appendix 1 of the Housing Section of the Policy Plan. In return for proffered Workforce housing units, additional development density or intensity will be made available. Workforce housing should be subject to administrative requirements that are set forth in the Zoning Ordinance and are similar to those of the Affordable Dwelling Unit program.

**ZONING:** The classification of land in a community into different areas and districts, generally to separate land uses into appropriate locations. Zoning is a legislative process that regulates building dimensions, density, design, placement and use within each zoning district.