



OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

Virginia Law requires that each locality prepare a Comprehensive Plan to be used as a guide for future development and land use change. The Plan is used by the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, county staff and the public as a guide to planning decisions.

The plan is general and long-range in nature. The Plan provides recommendations on how land should be used, but not when development will occur. Decisions on rezoning applications and other land use changes must be consistent with the Plan.

Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan

The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan can be found at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/>

The Plan consists of the following:

- The Policy Plan which includes general countywide policies on land use, transportation, housing, the environment, heritage resources, economic development, and public facilities, including public parks, recreation and trails.
- Four Area Plan volumes representing four major geographic sections of the county and containing detailed long-range planning recommendations.
- The Plan Map which illustrates the recommended land uses, but must be used with the Plan text which is amended on a regular basis.
- A Transportation Map
- A Trails Map

The Tysons Corner Urban Center portion of the Plan is found in the Area II volume and contains both area wide recommendations and land unit specific recommendations.

What is the difference between the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance?

The Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for rezonings and other decisions on development. The Plan does not have the same status as the Zoning Ordinance, which is part of the County Code and regulates the type, scale and intensity of development that may occur in the specific zoning districts. To fully understand how a parcel of land can be used, you first need to know how the land is planned in the Comprehensive Plan, and then determine how the land is zoned. Changing the Plan for a parcel of land requires a Plan amendment, and changing the zoning for that parcel requires a rezoning application.

How can the Plan be changed?

The Code of Virginia mandates that the Comprehensive Plan be reviewed at least once every five years. Because of the dynamic growth experienced by the county over the past thirty years, the Plan has been evaluated more frequently.

The Comprehensive Plan can be amended through the Area Plan Review (APR) process which occurs on a regular basis. The Plan can also be amended by Out of Turn Plan Amendments (OTPA), which are typically for small geographic areas. When the Plan is to be amended for a large geographic area such as Tysons Corner, the County undertakes a Special Study. In the Special Study process, a Board-appointed Task Force is responsible for developing recommendations to amend the Plan. Their recommendations are then forwarded for hearings by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The Plan is not amended until Board of Supervisors approval.

How are public facilities planned and funded?

The Comprehensive Plan includes guidance about planned public facilities. The Policy Plan includes county objectives and policies which guide the development of different types of public facilities. The Area Plans give more specific information at the Planning District level about both existing and planned facilities.

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is the means for addressing the county's capital facilities requirements over the next five years.

Public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors are held to determine the compatibility of new and expanded public facilities in relation to the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. This is required under the Virginia Code, and is referred to as the 2232 Review process.

For more information, please see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/planfaq.htm/