

# Mount Vernon District Visioning Task Force Overview

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During August 2010, Mount Vernon Magisterial District Supervisor Gerald "Gerry" Hyland appointed a Mount Vernon Visioning Task Force (VTF) to develop a 25-year vision of the district by taking stock of what we have; what we need; what we should preserve; and what we should change. As Gerry stated, ". . . never before has the entire Mount Vernon District gathered to cohesively and comprehensively examine and create a unified vision of what we would like to have and how we would like to live over the next quarter century."

Like most Mount Vernon citizens, Task Force appointees care about the district, their respective communities, and stepped up to participate in this important civic commitment.

The VTF compiled ideas, insights, recommendations and next action steps needed to fulfill the Mount Vernon Vision. It is comprised of eight committees:

- Education
- Human Services
- Housing & Community Development
- Business and Economic Development
- Public Safety
- Transportation
- Environment, Parks & Recreation
- Land Use

As a first step, the 75-person Task Force met in an unconstrained 'brainstorming' exercise to encourage the identification of issues that might be worthy of analysis and exploration. Armed with the issues identified at this first Task Force meeting, the committees met independently over the next several months to develop their recommended list of issues that are contained in this report.

Each committee report contains a vision statement and a list of issues. Each issue includes a committee position, background and discussion, and recommended action steps for the future. The numbers of issues in the committee reports vary from 5 to over 40.

This report contains some issues that could be implemented in the short-term; whereas others take a long-term view. It is hoped that this report provides encouragement to the citizens of Mount Vernon District to create a vision that provides for the enhancement of our quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region. The report is not mean to be the ultimate vision for the future – it should be considered as catalyst to facilitate further creative thinking and dialogue. Further analysis, community involvement and collaboration with elected officials and various governmental staffs will be required if the vision or parts of it are to become a realistic plan.

To complete the task of reaching out to the entire Mount Vernon District, the first step accomplished thus far has been the collaboration of 75 Mount Vernon District residents. Now is the opportunity for the entire District to participate and let us know what your concerns are, what you believe are the most important priorities and/or what we may have missed.

# Mount Vernon District Visioning Task Force Overview

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Finally, members of the VTF express their sincere appreciation to Gerry and his Staff for their untiring efforts to provide assistance and encouragement in the form of administrative support, research and analysis, and overall guidance. We also express our thanks to Margo Kiely, a long-time resident of Fairfax County and retired director of a Fairfax County Government Department, who served as our superb facilitator for the Task Force at-large as well as to individual committees and the VTF co-chairs.

Here is an old proverb that we have borrowed and recommend that you keep in mind as you read this report.

*A vision without a plan is just a dream.*

*A plan without a vision is just drudgery.*

*But a vision with a plan can change the Mount Vernon District.*

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

The citizens, our elected officials and county staff will set a tone within the Mount Vernon District and the County that encourages effective economic development and champions public and private ventures. The planning process, while it should protect from over-development, should not be cumbersome. We should become a destination for visitors as well as a great place to work, live and play for our residents. We should be a community that welcomes diversity and works together to always improve our District.

## **Inventory**

### **What we have**

- History & Tourism
- Lorton Arts Foundation
- Mount Vernon Estate
- Woodlawn
- Gunston Manor
- National Museum of the United State Army
- Stable residential neighborhoods
- Government and Military Employment
- Cohesive Group of Non-Profits
- Strong Community Activism
- Parks, both developed and with open space
- Diversity – a population mix which can sustain all levels of employment and business activity
- Inova Mount Vernon Hospital
- Lorton Healthplex
- FCPS with Academies and Alternative Schools along with private institutions
- Traffic
- Access to a wide array of social and community services

### **What we need**

- Less chain restaurants and more individual quality dining establishments entertainment for all ages (live theater, movie theater)
- A center-line study of Richmond Highway
- Mass transit from PW county line to the beltway (and out to Metro, Tysons & Fairfax)
- More transit connections to historic sites which is a draw to our neighborhood quality of life
- more passive park land along Richmond Highway
- More park amenities – transition into established neighborhoods
- increased appropriate density along Richmond Highway that will blend with historical landmarks

- Need to incentive reinvestment of older commercial properties
- Need to identify Women, Minority and Small Businesses in the District
- a visitors center at the gateway to the District near WWB and Richmond Highway
- Improve marketing and branding of the area
- Need traffic counts so we know where people are going to and from
- Full Service Hotel with Conference Center
- Route 1 as a community main street feel
- Improved marketing and branding of our area to help stamp out the negative perceptions
- build to the new comp plan changes for the mixed use
- More outreach locally and nationally to promote the unique, historic character of the Mount Vernon District
- Expedite the planning/zoning process to encourage development (currently, the process is viewed as too cumbersome and time consuming by some developers and architects to be cost effective citation needed)
- Encourage venues which attract and entertain residents and tourists both during the day and in the evenings.
- Establish transportation hubs which will ease transit for residents, daily commuters and visitors.
- Open instructional space (at South County Center/ISA, etc.) for NVCC to hold classes and make training more convenient.
- Accurate and up-to-date demographic information which will reflect the changes the district will undergo as a result of BRAC and make it easy to transmit that information to high end retail interests
- Centralized information on demographics, zoning, statistics, the tax base, etc.
- Increase retail support for the office workers filling the 8/million sq ft of office space coming to Lee District

### **What we should preserve**

- Preserve the character of our area which promotes quality of life (need to list what things make up the character of our community so we can preserve them)
- Our history...help improve the visitor numbers to Woodlawn Plantation
- our diversity
- the parkland we have (but expand it)
- The character of our area which promotes the quality of life and Richmond Highway as a community serving road
- Preserve our good schools
- Preserve and leverage the assets we have to encourage more business and economic development

### **What we should change**

- The Planning Process – examine different ways to zone properties (Columbia Pike in Arlington)
- Richmond Highway as a major through-way. Make it a community main street
- Our Branding/Marketing

- The mindset that it is “us against them” community against business interests
- Change our businesses into high end retail
- Lack of entertainment opportunities
- Change Richmond Highway
- Change the image of our schools
- Change, Leverage and Use access to the Potomac River to spur more businesses and economic development

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 1**

Mass transit on Richmond Highway is Promoted and Utilized

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Establish a variety of transit options to include the use of existing rapid transit buses during rush hour.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Establish transportation hubs like those planned at Ft. Belvoir to centralize mass transit and give commuters and residents access: run local buses through neighborhoods to increase convenience, have local "buses" make drops at hubs where commuters can transfer to express "buses" to reach a final destination (i.e. Metro, shopping, schools, etc.)

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Supervisor Hyland ask Fairfax County Transportation Department to provide as honest assessment of how an interim rush hour commuter bus schedule can be established to move commuters to their work locations. Parking locations along the corridor could be established as well as HOV BUS only lanes. BOS could be asked to support this idea as a means of reducing traffic congestion.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 2**

Limited Entertainment Opportunities

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

MV District needs to improve the interaction between local historic/entertainment sites (using the GWE at Mt Vernon's Wine Festival as an example) to promote enhanced use by local residents. In addition, FCEDA/SFDC could begin to reach out to retail operations which have an entertainment component.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The MV district has few entertainment opportunities to serve our wide range of demographics. There is no longer a movie theater or professional live theater in the area.

Many of our residents feel they must drive into the District or other counties such as Arlington, to the City of Alexandria or to National Harbor to access entertainment opportunities.

The MV district is void of entertainment opportunities to serve our wide range of demographics. Our high school seniors go out of the county for their high school graduation party because there is no equivalent to Dave and Busters in our area. There is no movie theater or live theater in the area. There are no YM/WCA type facilities for our youths. We have no full service hotel with conference center. We have no higher end restaurants with great chefs.

Our youth at all ages, but especially our teens have nowhere to spend their social time. No movies, no dance spots (age appropriate).

The fact that many of our residents drive into the District, other counties such as Arlington, to the City of Alexandria or to National Harbor to take advantage of entertainment opportunities should tell us that there is a need for these facilities in our own area.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Resident education to the Ft. Hunt Park Concert Series, events at Woodlawn and Mount Vernon will make local residents of activities available, however, these activities do not make up for the current lack entertainment venues. These entertainment facilities are needed to promote our area, keep tourists entertained, and offer local residents more quality of life.

MVCCA, the Chambers of Commerce should do an assessment of entertainment opportunities currently in the Mount Vernon District. The schools should work with

businesses to encourage them to offer age appropriate entertainment at their facilities. (Example: The new chuckie cheese should be contacted about offering high school's a graduation night).

BOS should support the creation of a youth center along the corridor.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 3**

Water transit capability needed

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Support access to the Potomac River at Bell Haven Marina, Riverside Park and Mount Vernon and support the development of a water transit system from the PW county line to the District.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Potomac River offers an alternative transit route for commuters and visitors. There are potential sites along the river that could act as pick up locations. These locations need to be evaluated for their suitability.

They could offer both a transit station as well as well as mix use development.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Charlotte Hall currently runs the Potomac Riverboat Company (Dandy, Nina's Dandy and the river taxis). She has in the past put together feasibility studies to increase water transport on the Potomac. Contact the development company that has been looking in to this.

Establish the feasibility and costs as well as projected revenue of doing such a project as this.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE #4**

Richmond Highway Corridor Congestion & Divide

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Improve Richmond Highway corridor to establish sense of place and community while improving transportation flow.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Richmond Highway at certain designated areas should be diverted underground to allow for community development. This would also open up rather large new areas (the old road bed and right of way) to new development and adds significant depth to what were previously shallow lots when combined. These new areas (mixed use town centers) can dramatically change the flavor of Richmond Highway, creating living/working communities and at the same time decrease travel time for commuters.

Almost all transportation in Mt. Vernon is forced north and south along Richmond Highway and this old highway is also the main street for the Mount Vernon District. Old and aging small commercial lots and businesses dominate this main street as do the large number of cheap, affordable housing and their in concentrate demographically lower income residents. The daily north/south commute destroys the opportunity for community development to flourish and hinders growth of a sense of community. The massive width and large number of vehicles creates dangerous conditions for pedestrians and vehicles alike.

The Richmond Highway creates a "Grand Canyon effect" in that it precludes the area from being a real community. This 8 - 12 lane road cuts the community in half and makes it difficult for pedestrian activity. We end up with the density and lots of commercial / residential development but without the ability to gain advantage of that density. In normal high density locations, cars can be abandoned in favor of walking, biking, strolling etc... which creates a more desirable location and more community flavor; think Ballston, close in Arlington counties and various town centers, metro stops can be successful in these areas and walking communities begin to develop. All efforts to address the Richmond Highway development which does not remove the "Grand Canyon effect" will ultimately fail to turn this area into a desirable locale.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Request of the BOS to study opportunity and costs associated with diverting Richmond Highway underground and the benefits of creating new developable land. Engage development companies in request for proposals.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 5**

Mt. Vernon as a tourist destination has not been very well received.

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Mt. Vernon needs to be more effectively developed to become a tourist destination. Hotel, restaurant and entertainment will assist in making the new Lorton Arts Foundation and the Army Museum successful while increasing job opportunities for Mt. Vernon residents.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Mt. Vernon district has had limited success in competing for tourists and tourism development dollars. The Mt. Vernon district is off the beaten path for Washington DC tourists and with traffic problems associated with Richmond Highway, access is constrained. Secondly, there are only a couple of well-known or appropriately developed destinations for tourists in Mt. Vernon. These destinations are also in complete as far in their ability to retain tourists once they arrive. With limited access to nice hotels, restaurants and vibrant shopping/entertainment venues near these destinations, tourists that come leave quickly and without spending much in the local community.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The BOS should work with developers & community to find areas along the waterfront of Mt. Vernon district to establish waterfront mixed uses. They should be sure to provide reasonable access to other tourist destinations located in Mt. Vernon (U.S. Army Museum, Mt. Vernon, Lorton Arts, etc...) These locations should be accessible by water for taking the large number of D.C. tourists to Mt. Vernon venues.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 6**

Incentivize Developers while protecting Community

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Create a process for more public private partnerships.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Real estate taxes are the primary method of filling the county coffers. Commercial Real Estate taxes provide the county's largest revenue source while residential real estate (the persons who live in them) is a siphon of resources. Seeking proffers from developers often encourages them to build "by right" vs. rezoning. From the view point of district residents proffers often can be difficult to monitor and not always completed successful. The use of private public partnerships such as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) and a Community Development Authority (CDA) could offer an advantage to both the private development community and the public. These tools should be used more often as a means of creating revitalization and reinvestment in the Mount Vernon District.

According the EDA the BRAC changes coming to our area will bring the Southeast County area and certainly Mount Vernon District an opportunity to advance its commercial development. The recently approved special BRAC APR and South County APR nominations along Richmond Highway and Huntington Avenue are ripe for public private partnerships.

The proximity to Huntington Metro, the beltway and Ft Belvoir offers excellent transit oriented development opportunities for the following parcels identified through the BRAC and APR processes.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

BOS should agree to support considerations of TIF and CDA's for the areas listed above. Mount Vernon Supervisor should host meetings and bus tours to personally encourage developers to come to our area. SFDC should begin conversations with potential developers for these sites and work with the land owners. County Staff should begin developing a process to use TIF's and CDA's in these areas.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 7**

Congestion and lack of mass transit mobility can hamper economic development.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

A variety of transit options to include the use of existing rapid transit buses during rush hour is essential.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Interim steps to provide enhanced traffic flow are a useful first step while we wait for extensive formal transit studies and funding. Commuter rush hour bus service from the MV area to and from Tyson's can be very helpful in unclogging Rt1 and even the beltway.

Having parking lot areas and kiss and rides at various stops along the Richmond Highway corridor can also provide incentives for commuters to stop at the shopping areas where they parked before they drive home.

Having a rush hour only HOV BUS lane would do a lot to encourage commuters to get out of their cars and into the bus if it is a more relaxed direct way to get to and from work.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Supervisor Hyland ask Fairfax County Transportation Department to provide as honest assessment of how an interim rush hour commuter bus schedule can be established to move commuters to their work locations such as Tysons. Parking locations along the corridor should be established as well as HOV BUS only lanes during rush hour only. BOS be asked to support this idea as a means of reducing traffic congestion.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 8**

SFDC enhanced staffing and funding

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

SFDC was created 25+ years ago for the purpose of providing economic development focus for the Richmond Highway Corridor. Over the years they began to reshape their activities and not always in a direction that was economic development focused. Recently they have presented the Supervisors with a reorganization plan that will ensure that they are economic development task oriented and have a series of metrics with which to grade them.

However, the small staff they have cannot support larger development opportunities.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The Lee and Mount Vernon District supervisors should seek BOS support to increase the SFDC's funding in order for them to be successful in their county designated mission.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 9**

Density and Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

An excellent idea

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Currently the county uses 1/2 of a mile as the bench mark to classify a development as a TOD. Once a community is classified as a TOD it can have a higher density and other criteria for a developer to shoot for. This status will open up development opportunities sites for more revitalization. Furthermore, by increasing the authorized distance between a development site and mass transit the factors used can be beneficial in the conduct of a 527 traffic study.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The BOS should authorize a new transit oriented development study to consider increasing the distance to the metro stations.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 10**

Use Magnetic Levitation Trains to Stimulate Economic Development

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

As we are all aware traffic conditions along the Richmond Highway corridor seriously impair the ability to create a thriving business community essential to improving the neighboring "quality of life". The introduction of Light Rail (trams or street cars), and Mag-Lev technology can relief congestion and greatly assist in the creation of an improved environment. Additionally, due to additional BRAC traffic and the build out of accompanying contractor related offices along the Richmond Highway lower gate there should be consideration to use the existing rail right-of-way connecting Fort Belvoir to Springfield Metro to mitigate Richmond Highway corridor traffic.

First, a brief synopsis of the technologies and current systems instituted.

The term "light rail" was devised in 1972 by the U. S. Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) to describe new streetcar transformations that were taking place in Europe and the US. Light in this context is used in the sense of "intended for light loads and fast movement". The term LRT (light rail transit) was introduced in North America in 1972 to describe this new concept of rail transportation. Light rail has two versions one which shares space with road traffic and a more modern variation where trains tend to run along their own right-of-way and separated from road traffic. For our purposes, we would be referring to a "shared" environment which would run along the Richmond Highway corridor, the tracks are usually visually unobtrusive. In Europe, many light rails systems have a combination of the two with both on-road and off-road sections. Trams running on mixed right-of-way are not regarded as light rail, but considered distinctly as streetcars or trams.

Currently there are now at least 30 light rail systems in the United States. In Boston and San Francisco light rail lines carry 9,600 and

13,100 passengers per hour per track during rush hour. One line of light rail has a theoretical capacity of up to 8 times more than one lane of freeway (not counting buses) during peak times. As we are all too aware, roads have capacity limitations and traffic jams are experienced if they exceed about 2,000 vehicles per hour per lane.

Average car occupancy on many roads carrying commuters is only about

1.2 people per car during high-demand rush hour periods of the day.

This combination limits roads carrying only automobile commuters.

Systems outside North America often have much higher passenger volumes. The Manila Light Rail Transit System is one of the highest capacity ones, having being upgraded in a series of expansions to handle 40,000 passengers per hour per direction, and having carried as many as 582,989 passengers in a single day on its Line #1. A bus line using its own lanes can have a capacity of 7,000 per hour (30 buses per direction, 120 passengers in articulated buses). Bus traffic is the traditional alternative to light rail, at least if very high capacity is not needed. Using buses, roads can get a high transit capacity. To have 30 buses per direction and hour, they must have priority in traffic lights and have their own lanes, as must trams to reach this density. Buses can go closer to each other than rail vehicles because of better braking capability. However, each bus vehicle requires a single driver, whereas a light rail train may have three to four cars of the same capacity in one train under the control of one driver, increasing labor costs of high- traffic BRT (bus-rail transit) systems.

The cost of light rail construction varies widely, largely depending on the amount of tunneling and elevated structures required. Since our Richmond Highway corridor requires no tunneling most LRT systems range as low as \$15 million per mile. LRT cost efficiency improves dramatically as ridership increases. In Canada, Calgary's LRT operating cost per passenger was only \$163 per hour to operate, and since it averages 600 passengers per operating hour, Calgary Transit estimates that its LRT operating costs are only 27 cents per ride, versus \$1.50 per ride on its buses

The problem can be mitigated by using high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes and introducing ride-sharing programs, but in most cases the solution adopted has been to add more lanes to the roads. Since we are limited in adding more lane consideration of LR technologies is essential to the future well-being of businesses and neighboring quality of life.

MagLev (for Transport) is a system of transportation that suspends, guides and propels trains using magnetic levitation from a very large number of magnets for lift and propulsion. This method has the potential to be faster, quieter and smoother than wheeled mass transit systems. The power needed for levitation is minimal and can offer a cost efficient alternative to conventional Light Rail and a combination of automobile and bus transit. Maglev offers a faster, cleaner means of passenger transport in local communities and urban areas. These maglev technologies are among the cleanest, most efficient options for modernizing the world's transportation infrastructure, offering the potential to reduce congestion, pollution, global warming, and costly dependence on fossil fuels.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

In conclusion, the consideration for using the existing rail right-of- way connecting Fort Belvoir to Springfield Metro should be a viable opportunity to ease Richmond Highway corridor traffic. In the short term, increased parking lots convenient to the Richmond Highway corridor to promote car-pooling and ride-sharing along with improved bus transit systems (perhaps fee subsidized to increase ridership) will further mitigate traffic issues.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 11**

Marketing & Promotion

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The Mount Vernon District is missing business opportunities through not effectively marketing our assets.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Each year thousands of tourists visit George Washington's Estate at Mount Vernon, turn around and travel back down the Parkway without ever stopping at any of the other historic sites because they are unaware they are so close. Local residents will not admit to shopping on Richmond Highway because of the perception that there are no quality eateries or retail. Local organizations seeking to promote the area are unable to obtain accurate demographic statistics hindering their ability to attract high end retail. There is a perception among major developers that local community associations will demand too much and block the permitting process. Because Richmond Highway is an "old road," it faces "challenges" for re-development as well as improvement. We need to be realistic regarding depth of lots, etc. for future planning.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Ask Katy Ichter/Fairfax Department of transportation provide parcel maps of the Mount Vernon District along with ownership information so that we know what we are dealing with.

Work with Visit Fairfax to establish a satellite office (possibly in the South County Center) to bring their operation closer to our area. They are currently doing a fine job of including Mount Vernon District in their promotions; however, having someone on site (even part time) may help to increase that exposure. (Example: Along with several stakeholders, an Historic Weekend package is being put together by the Kimpton Hotels, Visit Fairfax, Woodlawn Plantation and Ft. Belvoir. This package will include stay at the Morrison House: Friday night arrival with historian to speak about local points of interest, a day tour of the Estate at Mt Vernon Saturday then back to Morrison House. On Sunday, a tour of the Woodlawn plantation with special attention to the working farm which will provide fresh vegetables & herbs to a local restaurant and the role Woodlawn played in the Civil War, followed by a windshield tour of the archeological digs at the site of Lord Fairfax's Estate Belvoir. This project enlists local businesses to participate in the promotion of the Mount Vernon District and contribute to their business at the same time.) Cooperate with "Buy Local" campaigns. Use community activists to act as cheerleaders in finding and utilizing local businesses, which already exist, to show businesses seeking to locate in our area that there is a market. Consider how Alexandria City turned its image from tire warehouses on lower King Street in 1972 to the thriving historic community it is today.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE # 12**

Developers and land owners need to be incentivized while citizens' desires, needs and wants are taken into account during planning and rezoning actions.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The committee supports the following practices.

Routine utilization of private public partnerships through such means as the use of Community Development Authorities (CDA's) and Tax Incremental Financing (TIF's) and others that may be appropriate.

A streamlined and expedited planning and zoning process using concurrent planning and zoning actions.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Real estate taxes are the primary method of filling the county coffers. Commercial Real Estate taxes provide the county's largest revenue source while residential real estate (the persons who live in them) is a siphon of resources. Seeking proffers from developers often encourages them to build "by right" vs. rezoning. From the view point of district residents proffers often can be difficult to monitor and not always completed successful. The use of private public partnerships such as Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) and a Community Development Authority (CDA) could offer an advantage to both the private development community and the public. These tools should be used more often as a means of creating revitalization and reinvestment in the Mount Vernon District.

According the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority the BRAC changes coming to our area will bring the Southeast County area and certainly Mount Vernon District an opportunity to advance its commercial development. This growth will also bring with it the need for more residential and retail development.

The recently approved BRAC APR and the South County APR nominations to the Comprehensive Plan within the Mount Vernon District and especially along Richmond Highway and Huntington Avenue are ripe for public private partnerships. The proximity to Huntington Metro, the beltway and Ft Belvoir offers excellent transit oriented development opportunities as well as revitalization opportunities for the properties identified and approved in the Comprehensive Plan. These changes have offered incentives in density to developers and land owners providing a positive step in the right direction. However, more steps need to be taken to now streamline the next steps to actual development.

Furthermore, history has shown that the long protracted planning and then rezoning processes normally used by the County are hindrances to good effective economic growth and revitalization. The Kings Crossing JPI experience is just one example of how the current

processes can negatively impact economic growth. By using a concurrent planning and zoning process, better coordination amongst staff, the developer and the community will take place in a more collaborative and timely manner.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

BOS should agree to support TIF and CDA's as well as the routine use of concurrent planning and zoning actions.

An outreach effort by staff to local residents groups and other stakeholders should start immediately to educate these groups on these processes.

Mount Vernon Supervisor should host meetings and bus tours to personally encourage developers and end users to come to our area.

SFDC and EDA should begin and/or expand conversations with potential developers and end users regarding the recently approved BRAC and South County APR nominations.

# Business and Economic Development Committee

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## **ISSUE #13**

Tourism and Entertainment in the Mount Vernon District - the possibilities

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Tourism is a fast growing and relatively stable industry and with the increase in wealth outside of the U.S. and declining value of the dollar, has a very exciting future. We are located within one of the most desirable areas in the U.S. for foreign tourists and we have much to offer tourists with a bit of effort.

The Mt. Vernon District has some of the most important historic structures and sites in both the birth and growth of the United States of America. The Mt. Vernon Estate and Gunston Hall are just two of the most notable in an area that full of rich historically laden sites. The new Army Museum and Lorton Workhouse will only add to the desirability of tourist to visit Mt. Vernon. The biggest impediments to being able to effectively leverage these sites to effect significant increases in Tourism and Tourism dollars is; relatively poor access and lack of good transportation infrastructure, extremely limited quality hotels and restaurants and a dearth of nearby quality retail/entertainment facilities. Access and transportation affects the desire to come here and the lack of good hotels, restaurants and retail/entertainment facilities ensures that tourists leave without spending significant money within Mt. Vernon. This also limits the amount of tourism employment for Mt. Vernon residents. This is especially troubling for we have a significant workforce that is otherwise not highly trained.

The solutions therefore must address those problems and the Mt. Vernon district should actively work to provide incentives and opportunities to facilitate the development of these infrastructures. First, Fairfax County and Mt. Vernon should take the lead on establishing facilities for boat and river transportation. This can be accomplished by providing the incentives necessary for construction facilities for ship dockage and infrastructure that would allow for transportation of both tourists and commuters using the Potomac River. Locating these facilities in areas that would serve Mt. Vernon Estate and the Lorton Arts Workhouse would provide a new and exciting aspect to tourists visiting our nation's capital and if we provide for hotels, restaurants and retail establishments nearby, we will be able to effectively leverage these to the benefit of all. Ft. Belvoir should be encouraged to create a similar facility in order to provide an alternative for the thousands of workers coming to work on base and to provide transportation for the hundreds of thousands of tourists expected at the new Army Museum.

Additional hotel and restaurant facilities are needed in key areas such as Lorton Road near the Interstate 95 exit which can serve the Workhouse and expansion at Ft. Belvoir and the

new Army Museum. Additionally hotel/restaurant facilities should be encouraged along Richmond Highway23 near the Workhouse. The Lorton Workhouse is in the midst of significant expansion and will include an event center, theaters and music hall venues, but has only 1 aging low end hotel within a 5 mile radius. This is a serious detriment to the success of this exciting new facility.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

These steps will allow Mt. Vernon District to first attract and then retain tourists as well as their money. Mt. Vernon residents who need to travel out of Mt. Vernon in search of employment will be able instead to find that employment in these new areas.

# Education Visioning Committee

([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning\\_task\\_force.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning_task_force.htm))

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

The Mount Vernon 25 Year Vision Taskforce's Education subcommittee was charged with viewing the changes needed and suggested for continuing to educate the citizens of the Mt. Vernon Magisterial District. The changes in education over the past 25 years have been on local, state and federal levels that have transformed to a large part the art and craft of teaching and learning. To study and recommend the next 25 years of educational needs was a daunting task in the given three months of committee meetings and discussions. It was decided at the outset to not include private schools or the home school efforts. Those programs are well documented with multiple Internet sources and the Supervisor will need to decide how best to assimilate the studies, reports and comparisons that are made in that medium as there were just too many variables to consider and make recommendations. Suffice to say, both private and home school initiatives will remain on the immediate horizon as parts of the entire educational system.

The scope of the committee's discussions went from beyond reviewing that which currently serves the district to focus more on what the district needs to accomplish through education. It was difficult initially since the first two meetings were mostly a cataloguing of what currently exists rather than a view to the future. After a reinsertion of the reason for the committee and a review of data concerning capacity and student membership, we were more able to step back from the threshold of merely commenting and move to brainstorming and crafting. The committee felt that to suggest the changes, updates and upgrades to the educational system without a mechanism to fund it was not fully meeting our charge. There was a basic review of the facilities without going individually to each school reviewing the last renovation date, capacity listing or program offerings. Selected schools and general programs were mentioned as reasons to both recreate and eliminate programs and to show creativity and resourcefulness. It is generally recommended that the Supervisor create a yearly review of schools that would be chaired by the Mt. Vernon School Board elected representative as a citizen input process to include reports on student capacity, programs and an introduction to individual school level leadership. This was something not necessarily a "vision" piece of the report, more actually it was cementing something that already exists, in parts, as part of a good communication process.

Finally, the representation on the committee included active teacher professionals, retired guidance and administrative staff, parents, citizen activists and a student currently enrolled and receiving the product we were reviewing and making recommendations. This allowed for a candid discussion on not only what exists currently, but how else it could be improved, revised or even eliminated. All levels of the citizenry were represented and their work is represented in the following recommendations. The recommendations come to you in order of the committee's discussion and agreement, although none of the recommendations comes with less than unanimous consensus in support of it. It is our hope that the staff and Supervisor take our work as a "jumping off" point and we are willing to assist with selected items in the future.

# Education Visioning Committee

([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning\\_task\\_force.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning_task_force.htm))

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## **INVENTORY**

### **What we have**

The Education Committee first had to review the “learning assets” contained in the Mt. Vernon District (MVD). One of the first settled areas of the county with some of the oldest schools due to population location, there was a need to review the facilities and enrollment patterns. The committee contacted the FCPS chief demographer, Ms. Denise James who sent us the enrollment figures and projections for many of the schools of MVD. It was here that we had to decide how best to go forward since there were a few schools who straddled the magisterial line between MVD and Lee District. Our decision was to look at all of the identified schools within MVD and those who shared enrollment and/or boundary would not be included in the final analysis. What Ms. James did confirm was that the MVD’s schools were all in an increased enrollment for the second year in a row. The projected five year future showed the enrollment continuing to increase. (Parenthetically, the area of FxCty/FCPS bounded by I-95, I-66 and I-495 is also experiencing the same enrollment pattern and has similar educational historical presence in the county).

The next review of the “learning assets” of MVD was centered on the facilities contained in the district. One half of the schools were at or above stated 2009 capacity. All but one of the Elementary Schools (ES) contains space for the School Age Child Care (SACC) programs quite prevalent in the county. All of the MVD schools will either have completed renovation, been in the renovation process or will complete renovation by the close of the 2016 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that was just approved by the FCPS School Board.

The last review of “learning assets” centered with the programs offered to students in the MVD. All programs currently offered to the entire county are offered at ES, MS and HS levels including academy programs at the West Potomac and Edison (Lee District) high schools. There is an extension of the high school experience at the Bryant Alternative HS available to residents of all ages. All Advanced Academic Programs (AAP) are offered at the ES and MS in the MVD.

### **What we need**

The MVD needs to continue to attract educators who thrive on the student population represented within the district. Leaders here should be involved in the community, knowledgeable about the history and legacy of the district. They should be interested in leading in both known and new directions and programs that will benefit the students and faculties of the MVD.

Buildings should be consistently reviewed for compliance with the highest energy saving expectations. A partnership with Homeowner Associations and /or local floral societies should be investigated to reforest the tree canopy in the MVD starting with the schools and their grounds. This would be seen as an example of cooperation and used to attract leaders interested in these kinds of arrangements.

There needs to be a recurring, concerted effort to connect all citizens electronically in all types and styles of housing. A discussion of technological realities and prototypes available within the county should be had at the earliest convenience of the county, school system and HOAs/Civic Associations/Chambers of Commerce.

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The document you are about to read should be remembered as a broad brush approach to problems and issues foreseen within the MVD. The issues are ranked in order of the fastest consensus of the committee after an exhaustive brainstorming process. The committee enjoyed the exercise of looking at what should and could be in the MVD.

# Education Visioning Committee

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## **ISSUE #1**

There is a lack of presence of post-secondary training opportunities from High school to beyond graduate school level course work. With the current transportation distances measured in minutes instead of miles, it seems both prudent and desirable for the citizenry to have a viable, local option for learning.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The committee recommends that the "old Mt. Vernon High School campus" be repurposed as a regional Route One site for education. The building is centrally located within the magisterial district and is placed on an existing transportation route for buses and cars. A committee of citizens appointed by the Supervisor and staff would be empowered to solicit from higher education entities their interest in the placement of specific programs in conjunction with and expectations for all levels of course work. From Culinary Arts training to supplement job needs in the Route One Corridor (ROC) to post graduate support for the redesigned and expanded Ft. Belvoir. To this point, we strongly recommend also Business and Industry Advisory Councils (BIACs) be recruited from ROC businesses and industries to help plan the curriculum and keep it fresh for student interest and enrollment.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The building's purpose will return as a school and restraint should be taken to not "load up" the building with other programs since it is available. There is also the opportunity to obtain additional field space for lacrosse programs on the ROC given the existing field layout and design. The real strength of this proposal is that it would house something for all levels of need. It would necessitate the creation of a "compact" where all users would agree in order to obtain space.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The lease holder should be notified, immediately, that the building is being repurposed at the close of the current lease and that there would not be any extensions.

The committee to reach out and present to the interested university and technical school decision makers should be formed in consultation with the Lee District Supervisor due to proximity. There should be training for the committee and consensus reached with interest groups like the Mt. Vernon-Lee and South Fairfax Chambers of Commerce, Southeastern Fairfax Development Authority and the Fairfax Economic Development Authority. The BIACs should be empowered to survey the above groups relative to their forecasted and real employment needs to merge with the training mission of the site. Special attention should be paid to coursework to support the Mt. Vernon Hospital / Dewitt Hospital / Proposed Lorton Medical Center needs in areas of nursing, biotechnology and technical support. The Supervisor should appoint one member of his staff to be a liaison to the Ft. Belvoir command structure to ascertain the needs of the base that will remain secure training on base and that which can be solicited for the repurposed site given the distance to and from the base. There should be an engineering study of the site commissioned as soon as possible. The study should include parking solutions and technical information on the power and structural limitations of the building.

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## **ISSUE #2**

The current structure for financing school construction and renovation solely through County bond sales does not supply adequate resources to keep up with school needs, resulting in overcrowding and long waits for needed renovation. Over the next 25 years, given enrollment increases, the need to respond to technological advances and to environmental needs, the problems will worsen and possibly endanger the County's bond rating.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

An additional and supplemental funding source for school construction, renovation and modernization is needed to relieve some pressure on County bond limitations and debt service while preserving funds available for school operations.

Although the electorate has strongly approved school bonds in referenda, the amount of bonds which the County is able to sell to provide funds in any given year is circumscribed by debt limitations needed to preserve bond ratings and to maintain fiscal responsibility. Debt service is also a significant yearly cost to both County and schools and reduces funds which might otherwise be available for operations or other County capital projects.

At present, and probably for the foreseeable future, the County is able to provide through bond sales about \$125M per year [note: the yearly maximum was temporarily increased to \$155M but is subject to revision] to apply toward projects in the school system's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which is about one-half the amount actually required to complete identified construction and renovation projects on schedule. This not only results in proliferation of "learning cottages" (trailers) but also in high maintenance costs for aging buildings, higher construction and renovation costs as projects are pushed further into the future, community disruption by continual boundary changes for capacity adjustment and, most importantly, a compromised and sometimes even dangerous learning environment for students.

This situation is likely to become more acute given a continual expected enrollment increase, an array of technology improvements continually required to prepare students for a digital world, and increasing need for schools (and other public buildings) to reduce environmental impact through utilizing "green" technologies in both new construction and renovation. Programs to reduce class size and potentially realign the present grade structure (ie add 6<sup>th</sup> grade to middle schools and/or divide elementary K-3 and 4-6, etc) will put additional pressure on available funds.

A County-wide meals tax should be considered to provide a dedicated funding stream limited to school construction, renovation and modernization, to include technology updates and environmental improvements, as a supplement to bonding. Meals tax proceeds would be applied to projects on a need basis as prioritized and designated in the CIP.

Such a tax, if properly publicized and explained, would be likely to garner County-wide support in any required referendum since the proceeds would have the specific purpose of school construction and renovation and every magisterial district has schools in need of renovation and improvement and/or needs new schools or additions to address capacity issues. The CIP is reviewed annually and provides for independent reviews of building condition thus allowing citizens opportunity to review and address specific concerns.

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The proceeds of such a tax, estimated at \$80M annually, would not replace the need for school bonds, nor fully close the "construction gap", but would relieve pressure on County bonding limits and hold debt service costs in check. It would also allow for more flexibility to address needs on an immediate basis and in the most cost effective manner. Should expected enrollment increases not materialize, or other factors change, it is possible that at some point support needed from bond sales could be reduced, freeing bonding authority for other County projects or reducing debt service costs.

While a meals tax would cost citizens a bit more to eat out in the County (and those who eat in Alexandria, DC and Prince William, Richmond, Virginia Beach etc are already supporting those jurisdictions), it would also allow the County to capture some more economic benefit from tourism, from BRAC and from out-of-County businesses and residents. This would put Fairfax in line with surrounding jurisdictions which have such a tax without any demonstrable related drop in restaurant sales or evidence that the existence of a meals tax plays any significant role in potential customers' decisions where to eat.

In the past, a meals tax referendum was defeated at least in part because of a lack of specificity on proceeds usage, poor information and lukewarm support from the Board of Supervisors which was overpowered by a strong anti-meals tax campaign by restaurants. Although it is always difficult to convince voters to support a new tax, a targeted purpose, adequate preparation and information, together with demonstrated need should provide the necessary impetus.

Additionally, schools and the County should actively seek public-private partnerships especially for technology and dual enrollment, and consider innovations such as dual use structures (County and schools) and enlarging capacity by adding floors where feasible instead of expanding the footprint.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

In order to convince the Board of Supervisors to include a meals tax referendum on a ballot, it will likely be necessary to reach out to organizations County-wide so that the proposal is seen as coming from the "grass roots". A committee or interest group could be formed to reach out to organizations such as the Fairfax County Council of PTAs, the Fairfax Federation, other District Councils, FEA, and other parent-led education groups. Restaurant groups and the local Chambers of Commerce should also be included to understand, gauge and perhaps reduce initial resistance.

This process should not be hurried; careful orchestration of information and public information is critical to assisting the Board of Supervisors and eventually the electorate to make a fully informed decision.

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## **ISSUE #3**

The course of education has been incredibly transformed by the invention and expansion of electronic communication. That being said, there is a noticeable discrepancy and hesitation in electronic communication between Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and the government of Fairfax County (FxCty) and the citizenry. There does exist a digital divide in electronic communication access as well as understanding. There needs to be a series of moves to improve the look and enhance the image and model the linkage of the two entities. The county needs to move into the preeminent position of "The Wireless County" of America to enhance educational opportunities as well as commerce and quality of life. The county is increasingly reliant on electronic conveyance of information, ideas and issue resolution in order to keep the cost of delivery (instructional and informational) reasonable for all tax payers.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The committee feels that the citizenry misses opportunities to connect to and with the staff of both FCPS and FxCty. We miss opportunities to assist the citizens, be they students, parents and non-parent citizens to find, locate, discern, trouble shoot, advise and react to the policies and practices of FCPS and FxCty. That confusion can only be exacerbated by a second language base. There should be a continuity of design from the Magisterial District (MD) concerning Transportation, Police and Fire non-emergency needs, Voting District, Park Authority, Recreation and Planning District as well as the FCPS. Citizens should be able to go to one site and obtain any information needed. Currently there are transportation offices for FCPS and Connector/Rex buses as an example. There should be discussion between the two entities that would allow for design of MD programs and FCPS in identical layout and administration.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION and NEXT ACTION STEPS**

In the position of aggressively pursuing the reputation of the "Wireless County," the Supervisor should consult with necessary FxCty and FCPS staff to craft this plan. There should be a target date created within two years to show a sample "One Unified Information Page" that would contain information relative to FCPS and FxCty. There should be a staff review of current grant opportunities at the state, federal and private industry levels for potential partnership. A commission should be created by 2011-2012 within FxCty with the prime goal of universal access for all (Mt Vernon District would volunteer to be the pilot district as a microcosm of the greater county population). Current apartment and HOA views of access differ on architectural and financial levels. Balance needs to be found in order to move instructional programs of the school into homes/apartments on an as needed basis as well as expanding economic opportunities for all citizens to access the local network sites as well as the greater Internet.

The Supervisor needs to obtain reliable, up to date information on current access within the MD. A cost out of economic impact of tax credits for apartment management/owners for retrofit should be researched done as soon as practically possible. The current county tax on phones and cell phones should be investigated to see if the income could be repurposed or streamed to pay the costs of this effort.

## **ISSUE #4**

Restructuring the delivery of education to prepare our students to be competitive in the global market.

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

- The world of the future is interconnected in terms of communications and economies. To meet this reality, Students of the Future will have to be adept at using technology to:
  - Compete in a world market
  - Communicate globally
  - Understand cultures
  - Identify resources and credible sites for information to solve complex problems

Schools of the Future will:

- Be technologically current
- Have a longer day
- Have a longer year
- Have (locally) defined ecological meaning identified and practiced at each site
- Be Cross-curricular at as many grades as possible to include integrated local historical knowledge
- Be Interdisciplinary and vertically articulated models at each level
- Be Wellness-based in terms of both nutrition and exercise
- Serve as a model for the county in terms of fluidity in completion, and in testing for state mandated and federally mandated accountability measures

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Much of our discussion drew attention to the fact that technology is creating an increasingly accessible global market. Current state evaluations comprised of multiple choice assessments intended to provide indicators of students' academic competence will be obsolete sooner than later. As reported by employers and colleges and universities, weakness of American students is the ability to problem solve and think critically. The committee thoroughly discussed how education could be transformed to still allow students

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to meet the state standards and develop the intangible skills that are critical for them to be compete in the global market.

The committee envisions a flexible school day, cross curricular project based learning that breaks the mold of the traditional classroom. Learning will be hands on and employ more application of skills to strengthen students' curricular knowledge. Assessments will be rubric based allowing for reflection and allow for students to revisit standards for mastery.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

To accomplish the above stated needs, the committee recommends a multi-year, comprehensive study and review through citizen and faculty representation. The task would be to discuss the most basic and observable segments of the current educational experience. Included in the review would be the current alignment of grade levels and program identifications i.e., K-6 & 7-12, International Baccalaureate/Advanced Placement/Dual Enrollment, etc.

- Particular attention should be given to offering both programs (IB and AP) at all schools in the system, with the Magisterial District schools being the pilot to gauge the implementation and enrollment and universal college acceptance.
- SOL based assessments should be phased into their proper perspective, ultimately being offered on a rolling basis to allow emphasis to shift to more project and reflection based learning. Instruction will be centered on issues of importance to the immediate district i.e., literacy, ecology, mental health, etc. Project based learning is defined as a systematic approach to teaching where students learn essential knowledge. Particular attention would be paid to real life applications and studies geared to a rubric locally derived as to the skills needed for success in the future.

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## **ISSUE #5**

Schools has historically been asked, tasked and assigned to perform many community need-social tasks, many of them without dollar for dollar compensation for these services. To acknowledge this facet of education, the committee proposes the schools become a clearinghouse for social and employment services as well as their continuing role in adult and community education and recreation for lifestyle wellness.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The committee felt that FCPS should lead the way in providing accessibility to the needed essential services that often times block the ability for the home to support the learning that occurs in schools. The focus should be to enhance this accessibility by both the youngest and older citizens of FxCty. There needs to be initial impetus in language acquisition, job training, cultural understanding, health/medical services that are delivered into the neighborhoods. Citizens cannot be fully integrated into the culture and economy of Fairfax County unless and until they are fully seen as enfranchised through their total experience from education to wellness to purchasing power. The current FCPS-FxCty Medical Services inoculations and vaccinations in Title One elementary schools is an excellent example of the expected cooperation.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION and NEXT ACTION STEPS**

There should be a review of current FCPS and FxCty efforts to unify social services in the MD (Mt Vernon District). To assist in the accomplishment of this effort, the committee recommends that selected FCPS and FxCty staff be reassigned, retrained and repurposed to meet the goal of the clearinghouse. There are existing models for extended contracts in FCPS (the Teacher Leadership Development Program) that can show the efficiency of additional support at the school level in meeting prescribed needs instructionally. Counselors will be replaced with Full Spectrum Counseling Specialists (FSCS). The role of the FSCS will be unified in the training on FxCty programs to support job identification and medical services. The FSCS would use the new counseling process being introduced in FCPS as a model of aligning their services and time management and issue identification. There would be a locally derived rubric to both design and evaluate the positions. The FSCS would collect the information contained within the MD to communicate to citizens from both public and private resources available to residents.

Adult and Community Education courses should be offered in proportion to population initially to draw out and solidify non student domiciled citizen populations to those programs. Currently programs are found in selected school based on availability of that building rather than geographical location.

Schools should be opened in the evening on a dual interest basis for both gymnasiums AND libraries with funding to both, or neither. With the increased emphasis on fitness, more intramural athletic and dance activities should be made available to citizens from Middle School/High Schools older adults. Unused or underused warehouse properties should be surveyed through the two Chambers of Commerce that represents the MD to determine if any are interested in hosting these kinds of activities. Through modest used fees, the owners could receive compensation for space current drawing no income and potentially there would be tax credits to assist in recruiting space.

# Environment, Parks and Recreation

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

To become a model community in Fairfax County by supporting and enhancing the quality of life of all residents of the Mount Vernon Magisterial District while sustaining a healthy, clean and environmentally friendly community for current and future generations.

The Environment, Parks and Recreation Committee (EP&R) used the best information available to compile and discuss a variety of subject areas important to Mount Vernon residents. EP&R is committed to soliciting and incorporating comments from Mount Vernon residents into its final report. To facilitate this process, special meetings have been scheduled for residents to hear from experts about parks and recreation (February 7), recycling and waste management (February 15), and planning and zoning (February 16) and to participate in conversations with committee members.

## **Inventory**

### **What we have**

- We have rich historical resources, including the Mount Vernon Estate, old Colchester and other colonial and pre-colonial settlements, the Potomac Path and historical Washington-Rochambeau trail.
- We have 9,584 acres of public parkland and preserves, more than any other supervisory district in the county.
- We have beautiful waterways and rare freshwater tidal wetlands which historically supported shad and herring runs and enormous migratory bird populations. Now, our streams are among the most degraded in the county, and poor water quality flowing into the Potomac River degrades the Chesapeake Bay and causes loss of fish and wildlife habitat. Fairfax County is not in compliance with the Clean Water Act.
- Mount Vernon has an educated and affluent population with a very high level of civic participation. However, many residents lack understanding about environmental issues; public education and outreach are needed to increase public awareness and motivate action.
- The Mount Vernon District has an aging infrastructure, particularly along Richmond Highway. The U.S. 1 corridor was developed without adequate stormwater controls and little native vegetation remains. The corridor is now replete with impervious roofs and large parking lots, and runoff damages area streams. The big box stores and strip malls that dominate the corridor cultivate dependency on automobiles and provide low wages, few employee benefits and few good-paying career opportunities.
- Like the rest of the area, Mount Vernon has bad traffic; DC metropolitan area residents spend more time in their cars than in any other metro area in the country, except LA.

# Environment, Parks and Recreation

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- While improvements have been made, Fairfax County currently does not meet the federal air quality standard for ozone. The worst levels of ozone in Northern Virginia have been reported in the Mount Vernon District. Traffic is a major contributor.
- We expect an influx of over 9,000 U.S. Department of Defense jobs at Fort Belvoir, an expanded hospital, and increases in contractors and tourists. This will strain resources, but also provides an opportunity to build on the District's natural resources, history and location to bring the U.S. 1 corridor into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through sensitively planned livable communities.

## **What we need**

- We need to take advantage of opportunities offered by the redevelopment of the Route 1 corridor and Fort Belvoir expansion, by planning for redevelopment and adopting an effective redevelopment vision and strategy. If we don't, redevelopment will likely be driven by developer profits not the interests of the greater community.
- We need to meet federal clean air standards. While we have made progress in achieving the ozone standard, a new, more stringent standard will require additional action. Other new standards may also require additional actions.
- We need to comply with the Clean Water Act, by taking urgent steps to improve stormwater controls among other actions.
- We need environmentally literate citizens who understand their connection to and impact on the environment, and who are willing to change their behavior to reduce environmental impacts of their activities.
- We need citizens and leaders with political will to make the changes that are needed to preserve our rich natural resources, and to seriously address the environmental problems that harm our health and reduce the quality of our lives.
- We need a more livable community and smart growth principles to improve the quality of life and reduce the impacts of air pollution emissions.
- We need public education campaigns to educate citizens on the benefit and value of air and water resources in our community, and the parks, greenways and recreation programs in the Mount Vernon Magisterial District.
- We need a system of parks, trails and open spaces adequate for a wide variety of active and passive leisure activities that contribute to the quality of life for all residents in the Mount Vernon Magisterial District.

## **What we should preserve**

- Our parkland
- Our streams and wetlands
- Woodlands and tree cover
- Friendly and welcoming environment
- Rich opportunities for nature-centered and recreational activities

# Environment, Parks and Recreation

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- Natural habitats to sustain bird, fish, and wildlife populations

## **What we want to change**

- We want a more livable community that has safe, walkable and bikeable neighborhoods; that includes and is enriched by open space, woodlands and natural areas; that offers close-by dining, shopping, and recreation that serves our residents and attracts others; and other features that are a part of livable communities.
- We want to live in a community in which the natural world is invited in and accommodated as a valuable, enriching, and essential component of our community.
- We want to create a new vision that will guide future development that supports a more livable, sustainable, and attractive community, rather than development that is reactive and piecemeal, with destructive effects on quality of life and the environment.
- We want everyone, especially children, to know and love and become better stewards of our streams, water, air, woodlands, wetlands, wildlife, and the natural world.
- We want the county, residents and visitors, producers of pollution, and commercial establishments to adopt an ethic of responsibility: those who produce or contribute to pollution are expected to clean it up, pay for it, or, preferably, avoid polluting in the first place.
- We want no more litter.
- We want more trees, healthier woodlands, and better preservation of existing trees, especially big ones.
- We want to breathe clean, clear air; we want to see the stars at night.
- We want to spend less time in our cars and in traffic, and rely more on healthier modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, and public transit to school, work, shops, etc.
- We want to be able to fish, swim, and boat in healthy, clean, trash-free streams with clear water supporting plenty of fish and wildlife.
- We want to visit the clear waters of a healthy Chesapeake Bay. We want to eat its oysters again, and we want to know that the bay can sustainably support its fisheries so we can eat blue crab cakes for the rest of our lives.

## **ISSUE #1 Air Quality**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The Mount Vernon District will have clean air that meets all air quality standards.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Fairfax County currently does not meet the federal air quality standard for ozone. The Mount Vernon station monitor was designated as the monitor to evaluate whether we were or were not meeting the ozone standard in Northern Virginia because it reported the highest levels on average. Moreover, the federal ozone standard is about to be further lowered, making attainment more difficult.

Attaining the ozone standard will require actions at a local, regional and possibly state level. These steps include reduced auto emissions, reformulated paints with low emissions, free rides on public transportation and many other programs that are part of the state implementation plan. The biggest opportunity for reducing emissions that contribute to ozone formation is the implementation of smart growth, which would place high density mixed use developments along transportation corridors so that people could live, work, shop, and enjoy recreational and cultural attractions in their neighborhood (see livable community issue paper).

Meeting the federal standard for ground level ozone is important because exposure has real impacts on people of the Mount Vernon District:

- Children are the most at risk because their respiratory systems are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Children who spend most of their time outside playing are at higher risk of injury.
- Individuals suffering from respiratory disease are at risk because ozone inhibits the lungs' ability to function properly.
- Healthy adults are at risk. People who exercise or participate in activities that increase their respiratory rate, respond much more severely to exposure than people at rest.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Planning efforts for the Mount Vernon District should incorporate livable community and smart growth principles to reduce the impacts of air pollution emissions.
- Smart Growth principles should guide development with Metro/light rail or rail transportation along Route 1, high-density, mixed-use development near rail stations, and safe walkable/bikeable paths. A rich diversity of shopping, entertainment, quality restaurants, and other valued amenities will improve the quality of life for businesses and people and reduce emissions that contribute to ozone formation.
- Buildings should be built and certified for energy efficiency and operated efficiently. Waste management practices should provide for recycling and composting of waste materials to the maximum extent feasible.

# Environment, Parks and Recreation

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- Take steps to increase the convenience of using buses rather than driving, for example:
  - Place benches at bus stops.
  - Improve access from local neighborhoods to bus stops by ensuring that there are connecting sidewalks or trails.
  - For neighborhoods that are more than a mile from a bus stop, locate bicycle racks near bus stops and ensure there are some parking places.
  - Experiment with some alternative bus routes that may provide more convenient pick up locations and increase ridership.
- Adopt incentives to move employees out of their cars and on to public transportation or carpools.
- Explore retaining the Mount Vernon ozone monitor.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Mount Vernon Monitor has served as the design value monitor for more than the past decade because it reported, on average, the highest values in Northern Virginia and because it was deemed to be most representative of air quality. Earlier this year, the Mount Vernon air monitor was closed because Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) plans to instead rely instead on the Lee Park monitor, which is about two miles away from the Mount Vernon monitor, and is co-located with other air quality monitors. located on land managed by the state DEQ staff asserted that the Lee Park monitor reports similar values and that the state must reduce costs associated with air quality monitoring to fund other new monitoring requirements.

## **ISSUE #2 Climate Change**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The Mount Vernon area will move to cleaner, renewable sources of energy, reduce energy use, transition away from fossil fuels and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Changes in climate are evident from measured results including: a continuing rise in the levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere (a byproduct of the combustion of fossil fuels); increases in temperature; melting of glaciers (including the extent of ice formation at the North and South poles), and a rise in sea level. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that 2010 was the warmest year on record. More extremely hot summer days are projected for every part of the United States by mid-century if no action is taken to address global warming (National Wildlife Federation and Physicians for Social Responsibility). "Summers like the current one [2010], or even worse, will become the norm by 2050 if global warming pollution continues to increase unabated," the report concluded.

Areas such as the East Coast could endure twice as many days above 90°F by 2050. This could be particularly dangerous for vulnerable populations, who would have increased risk of heart attacks, strokes and asthma attacks as air pollution in urban areas would worsen with higher temperatures.

Sea level in the Chesapeake Bay has risen approximately 30 cm (one foot) over the past century (U. S. Environmental Protection Agency). This rate is two times faster than the global average (College of William and Mary). Without action, the Potomac River could rise by two feet by 2050 or with a surge, by four feet (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). "The shorelines of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, such as the Potomac River, are among the region's most threatened resources . . .," the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) reported last year. Low-lying areas along the Potomac are at risk for flooding which will exacerbate the effects of storm-induced tides or floods, COG said.

Fairfax County staffers have reached the same conclusions. As seas rise, coastal flooding will be more frequent and , in some older communities, high tides during new and full moons will flood areas that currently do not flood. More flooding and more intense storms could overwhelm homes, businesses and stormwater facilities.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The county will –

- Adopt an emissions reduction target and monitor and evaluate progress toward meeting it.

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- Strengthen building codes to require more energy efficiency, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, require energy use tracking devices in homes.
- Request state legislation to require licensing of energy auditors.
- Support state legislation to facilitate people's access to renewable sources of energy. Increase the county's purchase of wind energy.
- Help citizens and citizen groups find sites for solar energy.
- Seek legislation to prohibit homeowner associations from imposing requirements that discourage renewable fuels and energy conservation (such as solar panels on roofs and clotheslines).
- Require disclosure of estimates of energy costs and estimate greenhouse gas emissions during real estate transactions or seek state legislation.
- Require building permit applicants to estimate energy use and greenhouse gas emissions of the planned project.
- Encourage home and building owners to have energy audits.
- Make available low-interest loans to retrofit homes and buildings to be more energy efficient.
- Expand public transit and rail down U. S. 1 while preserving mixed-income housing and jobs (see also Livable Communities issue paper).
- Encourage use of existing public transit by asking the General Assembly to increase the tax on gasoline.
- Establish a "frequent busser" program under which bus riders can accumulate credit toward free rides.
- Work with schools and parents to limit vehicle drop-offs at schools.
- Discourage the construction and use of drive-throughs at commercial establishments.
- Hold meetings in places accessible by public transit.
- Give preferential parking to bikers, carpools and vanpools at public facilities.
- Ask the General Assembly to pass legislation creating electricity pricing that encourages energy conservation.
- Create "green housing zones" under which the county will zone a community as a green housing zone and offer real estate tax refunds and/or tax credits for making green improvements to existing housing stock, such as solar panels, geothermal, solar hot water
- Include more trails and bicycle lanes in developments and redevelopments.

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- In county facilities –
  - conduct an energy audit of all facilities (county, schools, parks and Fairfax Water) and report the findings; update it annually.
  - retrofit county facilities to be more energy efficient, including on-demand lighting and efficient lighting, heating and cooling.
  - transition from use of fossil fuel-based energy to renewable energy.
  - reduce unnecessary electric lighting, especially at night, and use more natural lighting.
  - locate public facilities near public transit; hold all meetings in places accessible by public transit
  - encourage county employees to use public transit. Charge employees for parking single-occupancy vehicles.
  - continue to purchase and expand the use of hybrid vehicles.
  - use more natural landscaping to reduce use of mowers and leaf blowers. Implement the natural landscaping plan.
  - Reduce the size of parking lots to reduce driving and put them above or underground
  - Hold clean energy/climate events to educate the public and provide opportunities for clean energy businesses to promote their products and services.

## **ISSUE # 3 Cultural Resources: Overview**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Continue to identify, research and protect the historic and archaeological resources in Mount Vernon District, find sources of financial support for preservation, protect our historic communities, explore the memories of our older citizens, and create a Web site for education of our citizens and promotion of our cultural resources

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Mount Vernon District is blessed with a wealth of cultural resources, historic and archaeological, far surpassing the vast majority of jurisdictions in the country. We also have our human resources, the hearts and memories of many older citizens who have lived through vast change in Mount Vernon District and have many a story to tell us about our past.

Yet, the citizens of Mount Vernon District remain largely unaware of their district's rich history. We still have many resources that have not been recognized, documented and protected, and the vast historical wealth of the district has yet to be coherently presented to a waiting market of tourists and history buffs, or to its own citizens. Many of our historic communities are threatened by redevelopment and inappropriately designed infill construction. Historic properties are threatened by a lack of resources for maintenance or restoration. Historic communities, structures and archaeological sites need recognition, protection and financial resources to survive. Our county Cultural Resources, preservation planning and historian positions need to continue to be funded and staffed. And everyone needs information.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Build an aggressive and robust Web site for Mount Vernon District and its cultural resources with a focus on educating our citizens, including our children and new arrivals, and building tourism, providing links to research resources, historic houses and institutions, and hotels, B&B's, restaurants, etc - a hub for reporting, archiving and accessing information, and marketing, in a public format.

Maintain and staff the existing archaeologist and preservationist positions in Cultural Resources Management and Protection beyond the retirement of the current employees. Continue to fund the Historian I position in Planning and Zoning

Create a county tax base for preservation, a small tax added to a relevant transaction that would go to a fund for preservation.

Create tax relief for private citizens maintaining/restoring properties that are listed on the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites.

Work with the state to implement a Resident Curatorship program, as established by the General Assembly in 2011, comparable to the successful program in place in Maryland, in

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which historic homes are life-leased by the county or state to individuals who contract to restore and live in them.

Simplify the procedures and reduce the fees necessary for the operation of bed and breakfasts, a use that has protected many historic houses in other jurisdictions by making them economically self-supporting, and very attractive to up-scale tourism.

Encourage and promote partnerships between historic properties and businesses and institutions, to increase the viability, survivability of our treasures.

Update the 2000 infill and residential development study.

Direct county staff to prepare options for changing county policies to better protect the character of established communities. Explore the development of new forms of historic designation for properties and communities that provide greater levels of protection, acting at the state level if necessary.

Organize a coordinated program for recording of the memories of older citizens, through senior centers, churches, clubs, civic assns, schools, etc., using modern technology. Create or identify and locate a centralized system for gathering, preserving and sharing these memories, archival and virtual.

Create a curricular unit on the history of Mount Vernon District for use by the schools in the district and make it available on-line. Encourage oral history collection by students.

Encourage citizens and associations to research histories of their communities for the Mount Vernon Web site and survey their neighborhoods to recognize resources they would like to see on the county Inventory of Historic Sites.

Cell towers: Develop a strategy/plan for recognizing view sheds in which cell towers should be controlled. These would particularly include the Mount Vernon-Woodlawn views, the immediate view shed of Huntley Mansion, and much of Mason Neck. Examine deployment of DAS (Distributed Antenna Systems) in the most critical areas, as between Mt Vernon and Woodlawn.

Create a bus service or shuttle bus that connects historic sites, like Mount Vernon and Gunston Hall, parks and refuges, golf courses, sports complexes, institutions like Lorton Arts and other attractive destinations with hotels, mass transit hubs, restaurants and other tourist centers to increase the viability our institutions.

## **ISSUE # 4 Cultural Resources: Needed Assessments and Preservation**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

We have a responsibility identify, study, protect and interpret our wealth of cultural resources as the gift that they are to future generations of Mount Vernon citizens.

### **BACKGROUND**

Mount Vernon District has an extraordinary wealth of cultural resources both historic and archaeological: 12,000 years of native American resources, Tauxenent, visited by John Smith in 1608, 17<sup>th</sup> seventeenth century settlement sites such those of the second and third George Masons, the remains of colonial farms, mills, churches, cemeteries, the major roads and ferries that linked the colonies, the port town of Colchester, platted in 1753 on the Potomac Path, later the route later taken by the Washington Rochambeau Army to victory at Yorktown. We have the homes of first President George Washington and George Mason IV, author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. We have the site of a naval battle in the War of 1812, early slave and free black communities, mid 19<sup>th</sup> nineteenth anti-slavery Quaker settlements, Accotink and the Accotink Turnpike, Civil War sites, Forts Willard and Lyon, post-war communities such as Lorton, Arcuturus/Herbert Springs, Wellington Villa, New Alexandria , and planned innovative developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> twentieth century, , such as Belle Haven, Tauxemont and Hollin Hills. We have the Army forts of the World Wars, Fort Belvoir, and the future Army Museum. We have the vast remains of the progressive prison farm at Lorton that grew as a prison through the 20<sup>th</sup> twentieth century to metamorphose into a major arts center and protected redevelopment in the 21<sup>st</sup> twenty-first. This is only the short list of the historic treasures of the district.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Require an archaeological assessment before streambeds and banks are bulldozed and reconstructed in stream restoration projects. Shorelines of all streams are prime locations for prehistoric sites and should not be indiscriminately terra-formed without study. The shorelines of the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers require the same assessment.

Support the proposed conduct by the National Park Service of an archaeological assessment of Dyke Marsh, particularly of the submerged barge wrecks

Continue to protect and preserve the extraordinary historic and natural environment of Mason Neck with limited development and emphasis on promotion of environmental and historic tourism and passive recreation such as trails.

Work with the Army at Fort Belvoir to encourage development of on-site interpretation of the naval Battle of the White House in the War of 1812.

In the town of Accotink, currently the subject of a study by the county historian for Planning and Zoning and the site of proposed development, planning and zoning study, an effort should be made to preserve the identified historic sites in the town, particularly those that

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reflect the Quaker impact. There may also be colonial archaeological materials surviving at this ancient cross roads as well as remains of Quaker mills and other structures. Archaeology should be required if development is planned. BRAC and its potential related development impacts on Accotink and Route One necessitate acceleration of the formal processes for establishing protections in this area. Special protection and buffering should be provided for the Friends Meeting House in the widening of Route One.

Better recognize and assess our historic African American communities that began as early communities of freemen, such as those at Gum Springs and on Mason Neck, and their schools, churches, and other landmarks, and determine what protections may be needed for surviving structures and archaeological sites.

A study should be conducted of the old river shore communities for history and

potential nominations to the county Inventory of Historic Sites and/or National Register of Historic Places, including - communities such as the Wellington Villa, Arcturus, Herbert Springs area, as well as older Mason Neck communities such as Gunston Manor and the lodges and fisheries of Mason Neck. Many of these shore-lines still have prehistoric and colonial archaeological sites as well. Similarly study the older communities outside Alexandria, such as New Alexandria and Belle Haven.

Assess older structures along Route One and determine if any might be considered for preservation during among the redevelopment. A few funky 20<sup>th</sup> twentieth century treasures would provide many happy memories for people.

At Laurel Hill, continue to plan viable reuse of the Penitentiary site. Seek out uses that would preserve much of the unique and iconic penitentiary wall (the castle of Lorton). Consider repurposing the extraordinary interior spaces for the proposed county museum, much as the Lorton Arts Foundation has restructured their spaces.

Recognize and interpret the role of the prison ball field in the normalization of interracial interactions in Fairfax County in the 50's and 60's, with integrated games and events, and preserve it if possible. (How many communities would love to have an architecturally recognized and historically significant full size ball field!)

Find a means to restore Laurel Hill House, colonial home of the Lindsey family and adjoining 20<sup>th</sup> twentieth century terraced gardens and make them accessible to the public, if for only for a few days a year under a resident curatorship

Support the establishment of the prison museum.

Support and promote Civil War Sesquicentennial interpretive programs and events within the district.

## **ISSUE # 5 Cultural Resources: The Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail, the Potomac Path and the Accotink Turnpike**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Identify, map, research, protect, interpret and promote the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route and the W3R National Historic Trail and the Potomac Path, and map and interpret the Accotink Turnpike.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In the fall of 1781 General George Washington and French General le Comte de Rochambeau devised a plan to rapidly and secretly move their armies south 600 miles from Rhode Island to Yorktown to surprise British General Cornwallis and achieve defeat of the British army. The roads followed by the armies that moved by land have been called the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, which has now been designated by Congress as The Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (W3R), which is administered, but not owned, by the National Park Service.

The trail passes through much of the Mount Vernon District, both the original roadbeds and the modern highway routes that roughly follow them. An encampment was located in the vicinity of the town of Colchester.

The national trail offers the district a great opportunity for both historic interpretation and tourism. To quote Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail Director Joe DiBello, "They will come!" A re-enactment march is planned for the length of the trail in 2011 and will follow the trail through Fairfax County in September.

Much of W3R follows the Potomac Path, the north-south Native American trail that crossed the streams at their fall lines, and became part of the major colonial highway that ran from Boston to Charleston. This route has been subsequently followed by the railroads, Route One and Interstate 95. Old Colchester Road follows the old Potomac Path to its ferry crossing of the Occoquan. Other traces of the Path can be found in old and modern maps of the district.

In the 1740's and '50's Quaker families from New Jersey acquired depleted agricultural lands in Woodlawn area to restore and farm without the use of slave labor. Entrepreneurial in spirit, they went into milling, timbering, and shipbuilding and expanded the town of Accotink as a center for milling and trade.

Seeing the need for better roads to the markets of Alexandria they designed and built the Accotink Turnpike, which many of our modern roads follow with little change.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The W3R National Historic Trail should be a featured item on the (proposed) Mount Vernon District Web site, with maps and interpretation, and information and links for tourists.

Identify and mark the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, its actual road path through the district, which is different from Route One. Provide interpretive signage for traces on county land, as has been done at Mason Neck West Park.

Support a combined nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the fragmentary surviving portions of the Washington Rochambeau Route, as is being done in Prince William County. (Old Colchester Road has already been declared eligible.)

Protect Old Colchester Road, declared eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, as the last intact preserved portion of the W3R Route and National Historic Trail in the district. The road is also a Virginia Scenic Byway. The road should be excluded from road widening, shoulder construction and other "improvements" currently suggested in the county Transportation Plan for the LP3-Mason Neck Planning Sector that would destroy the profile and context of the historic roadbed. The Transportation Plan should be changed regarding Old Colchester Road.

Recognize Old Mill Road as the primary driveway to Mount Vernon and part of W3R, mark it as such and nominate the road for the National Register of Historic Places

Study and map the Potomac Path and make the map available on the (proposed) Mount Vernon District Web site. Surviving roadbed traces should be preserved and recognized with interpretive signage.

Consider creating trails that roughly follow the old W3R and Potomac Path road lines, without destroying the historic integrity of surviving roadbeds.

Map, identify and mark the Accotink Turnpike, and post the map on the (proposed) Mount Vernon District Web site.

Find sources of funding for markers and interpretive signage for the W3R National Historic Trail, the Potomac Path and the Accotink Turnpike.

Recognize and encourage VDOT in their signage/markings of national trails and scenic and historic byways.

## **ISSUE # 6 Cultural Resources: The Town of Colchester**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Continue research and protection of the extensive Colchester archaeological complex and of surviving historic structures, expand the Colchester Park and Preserve to encompass major town sites, and plan it as a passive use interpretive park.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The old town of Colchester is currently the subject of a major archaeological and historic assessment being conducted by the Cultural Resources Management and Protection Section of the Fairfax County Park Authority. The Colchester

Park and Preserve encompasses over 125 acres of the platted town site and adjoining lands. Extensive historic and prehistoric archaeological sites are being researched as part of the planning process for the interpretive park.

The port town of Colchester was established by Act of Assembly in 1753 at the site of George Mason's ferry crossing of the Occoquan by the king's highway, and prospered as a center of shipping, trade and town life for about 50 years before fading with the failure of the tobacco economy and the growth of larger towns, Alexandria and the new District of Columbia. The environmentally rich area in which it was located had been the site of prehistoric settlements for thousands of years, and English settlement in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Extensive archaeological remains offer a laboratory for the study of societies and economies through time, human exploitation of the riverine environment, and life in a colonial port town associated with the nation's founding fathers.

The area was also the site of an encampment by the Washington Rochambeau Army on their journey to victory at Yorktown. Old Colchester Road is part of the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail and has been declared eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Furnace Road is also part of the W3R Trail,

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Plan for funding to extend the active archaeological research phase for the town of Colchester beyond the initial two-year survey; indications from the first months of archaeology are that the density of the settlement will support many years of archaeological excavation before the full picture is understood.

Purchase for inclusion in the park the large adjacent water front property currently for sale (1171010005). The property includes the archaeological sites of the tobacco inspection station, warehouses, the furnace for burning rejected tobacco. Here the wharf area of the

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original waterfront is buried under fill, and remains of docks and old ships are likely. This lot contained the economic engine of the town, and after archaeological assessment could become a prime site for reconstructions and educational demonstrations. Purchase of adjoining land for inclusion in the park is recommended in the county Plan. The purchase of this property is crucial for archaeological research and interpretation to the public.

Acquire for inclusion in the park the parcel on the northwest corner of the Old Colchester Road/Furnace Road intersection, which is currently available and is already surrounded by parkland. Records indicate that the intersection was a major commercial area and there are likely to be significant archaeological materials on the site.

Ultimately an interpretive center/museum should be located in the park.

Plan the park as a preserve for research and education with passive uses such as trails with interpretive displays, and possible educational reconstructions.

Support an application to the National Register of Historic Places for a National Register District for the Colchester Park and Preserve.

Identify older structures and related sites outside the platted town boundaries and park that are historic and should be on the county inventory and receive some measure of protection.

Research the Washington Rochambeau Army campsite.

Work with VDOT to reduce sound and light pollution in historic areas. Ex.: Noise pollution from the Interstate 95 Interchange throughout the Colchester site, powerful high sodium lamp glare from the interchange onto Mason Neck West Park, the Minnick House and the Washington Rochambeau Route (Old Colchester Road).

Interview and record the memories of older residents of the town, whose families have lived there from early in its history and who have extensive knowledge of the area.

Explore use of a resident curatorship to preserve the Minnick House.

Maintain the current character of Old Colchester Road and its historic roadbed, and alter the county Transportation Plan which currently calls for widening and upgrading the roadbed. The road should not be straightened or graded and shoulders should not be cut into the existing historic road banks.

## **ISSUE # 7 Environmental Education**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

In order to create meaningful and ongoing improvements to the environment, Fairfax County needs to commit to improving the environmental literacy of its residents and business owners through a variety of environmental education efforts.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Understanding is required before action can be expected. Therefore, the county needs to focus on creating environmentally literate citizens who understand their connection to the environment. Formal study of environmental education should be mandated at the elementary school level as part of public school science curriculum and should continue in life and earth science curriculums in secondary school grades. As a complement to environmental education in schools, parks and nature centers can serve as outdoor classrooms where students have opportunities to have hands on experiences and to engage with the resource.

A variety of educational strategies will also need to be developed to target adult audiences with the goal of changing behavior and understanding the importance protecting natural resources. These might include media campaigns, television programming, use of social media, creating county publications for distribution, signage and outreach to community organizations. County agencies should be compelled to talk about how citizens can work to improve the environment and to publicize the agency's efforts to be environmentally responsible. For example, the county permits office that reviews building plans before issuing permits could create fact sheets and/or web pages on practical improvements to buildings that will make them more energy efficient and should educate builders about tax credits for things like instant hot water heaters. Building to minimize storm water run-off and use of native landscaping or lawn alternatives can also be promoted. New LEED certified county buildings could also employ signage to highlight what the county did to make the building environmentally positive so that individuals will understand the techniques being used that they could adapt at their own homes or businesses.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Incorporate Environmental Education in the educational curriculum in Fairfax County Public Schools in a way that complements Virginia Standards of Learning at various grade levels.
- Connect school yards to parks where possible so that park green space can be used as an outdoor classroom.
- Create school yard habitats at all elementary schools.
- Create opportunities for student internships, participation in Youth Conservation Corps programs, and development of Green Teams to do community environmental projects and outreach to homeowners groups to encourage positive environmental practices.

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- Mandate that all county agencies promote environmental awareness and action through educational materials, creating seminars, messaging, web pages, etc... For example:
- County Water Authority should promote watershed protection for clean drinking water, encourage water saving strategies and talk about why people should conserve water.
- Animal control could tie spaying and neutering messages to the environmental benefits
- Solid waste should encourage recycling and working to reduce household trash.
- Create an annual report about county environmental efforts and successes so that citizens see the county as a model of environmental leadership/best practices. Provide links in the annual report that will help individuals or businesses get more information on how they can adopt similar practices. Modeling or allowing people to see success in action is a powerful educational tool.
- The county should establish a task force or committee to:
  - Explore incentive programs for homeowners and businesses to make their buildings or grounds more environmentally sustainable
  - Look at ways the county can honor or promote businesses or neighborhoods who are models of sustainability
  - Explore creative models such as creating neighborhood improvement grants for conservation projects or creating a "green" community or business designation for neighborhoods or businesses that make significant environmental improvements
  - Encourage promotional campaigns to promote new initiatives described above which will educate county residents on what can be done to improve the environment and sends the message that it is important to work towards sustainability and that change is possible.

## **ISSUE # 8 Flooding Risk and Shoreline and Flooding Risk Management**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Develop a Comprehensive Shoreline Resources Management Plan to protect shorelines, assess risks of flooding and identify management options to enhance ecosystem and community sustainability.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Serious flooding has occurred in several areas of the Mount Vernon District, including in Huntington along Cameron Run, in New Alexandria, and Belle View. In Huntington in June 2006, flood elevations were 2.0 feet higher than the expected county-adopted 100-year flood elevations and approximately 160 homes were flooded. At the time of the June 2006 flood, Fairfax County and FEMA were using the 1976 USGS study for floodplain management purposes. Although the study was accurate when it was completed, it was not accurate in 2006 due to significant changes in the channel and watershed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the June 2006 flooding was caused by, in order of importance, channel sedimentation (5 to 6 feet of sediment accumulated in Cameron Run between 1965 and 1999 from upstream development), temporary construction activity for the U.S. Route 1 interchange, and development within the flood plain. In 2009, the Corps prepared alternative approaches for mitigating future flooding, including a levee, dredging, buyouts, and flood proofing individual buildings. Since the costs exceeded the benefits for all the alternatives, none met the guidelines for federal funding. The Corps reported that the most cost-effective solution was construction of a levee and pumping station, at an estimated cost of \$20 million dollars. To date, funds have not been available for construction.

During Hurricane Isabel in 2003, a 9.6-foot storm surge flooded parts of Belle View and New Alexandria, an area with an average elevation of less than three feet above mean high tide. Fairfax County is considering flood damage reduction options, including a levee and floodwall along the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the western boundary of the Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve and behind the Belle View and River Towers condominiums. The levee could be 40 feet wide at its base and much of it would be on U. S. National Park Service property.

Virginia has the highest current and predicted sea level rise rates anywhere on the east coast of the United States, due to subsidence (land settling) and climate change. According to Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) research, we can expect a minimum of 2.3 feet of sea rise in the next 100 years. Building sea walls or levees to protect Huntington and Belle View against the current threat of flooding may be insufficient to protect against future floods as water levels rise and flood plains expand. Several studies predict that the Potomac River could rise by two feet by 2050, flooding riverside communities and infrastructure.

Fairfax County staff has recommended that the county's adaptation strategy be based on a year 2050 projection of a 1.0 - 1.6 foot rise in sea level. This rise will result in dramatic impacts on our homes, businesses, roads, parks, etc.

Although there are no easy solutions, one approach that holds promise is a Comprehensive Shoreline Resources Management Plan, a guidance document provided to local governments

that provides an eco-system based approach to managing shoreline resources. It draws information, strategies, and recommendations from an array of management tools and methods in order to identify areas at risk of flooding, model different sea level rise scenarios, identify ecological vulnerabilities, and develop management strategies to minimize problems. VIMS is currently assisting the city of Hampton in developing a plan at the request of the Hampton City Council. Since VIMS has just completed the shoreline inventory for Fairfax County, time is ripe for developing a shoreline management plan in the Mount Vernon District. Shoreline inventory data are used to develop a model that provides a basis for identifying areas at risk and planning how to manage both ecological risks and risks to residential areas.

Developments built in current flood plains are already at risk; as current flood plains expand, additional developed areas will be at risk of flooding. As water levels rise, wetlands will need room to migrate inland or they will drown.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Ask VIMS to work with the county and develop a Comprehensive Shoreline Management Plan for the Mount Vernon District.
- Seek the cooperation, involvement and support of the city of Alexandria and the Virginia Department of Transportation in all plans addressing Cameron Run, Hunting Creek and the Hunting Creek embayment.
- Secure support of the U. S. National Park Service in all projects affecting NPS properties.
- Require that sea level rise be included and addressed in all land use planning.
- Use up-to-date floodplain maps in making all land use decisions and granting permits.
- Hold public hearings on all U.S. Corps of Engineers' recommendations.
- Ask county staff to prepare a comprehensive report showing the impact of projected sea level rise on Mount Vernon's communities, infrastructure, businesses and natural areas.

## **ISSUE # 9 Light Pollution**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Light pollution, or excessive or obtrusive artificial light, should be reduced in residential and commercial areas and parks in a way that does not compromise safety or security.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Light pollution includes

- Unwanted light trespassing on one's property, for instance, a neighbor's floodlight shining into a window.
- Glare from light directly shining into one's eyes, e.g., from oncoming car headlights.
- Over-illumination at night, particularly upward pointing bright lights that light up the sky and reduce the visibility of the stars.
- Light clutter from excessive groupings of lights that can distract and cause fatigue and accidents.

Unnecessary light wastes energy and costs money. It can temporarily blind drivers and cause accidents. Intrusion of nighttime light, even if dim, disrupts sleep and suppresses melatonin production, and may elevate risk of breast cancer, according to several published studies. It interferes with star observation and study. Light pollution has negative impacts on plant and animal physiology and poses a threat to wildlife. It can confuse animal navigation. Lights on tall structures, especially lights inside buildings at night, can disorient migrating birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that 4 to 5 million birds per year are killed after being attracted to tall towers. In some cities (e.g., Toronto) building owners reduced bird mortality by turning out lights during migration periods.

Outdoor lighting used for security often results in bad lighting rather than real security. The few rigorous studies that have been done reveal no connection between higher lighting levels and lower crime rates. This may be because excessively bright lighting may create glare and dark shadows that actually make it easier for those with criminal intent to avoid detection.

Light pollution can be reduced or avoided by using the minimum amount of light needed for the purpose, turning off lights when they are not needed, and using shielded lighting fixtures that point downward and prevent light from escaping to the side or up. So-called "dark sky" lighting casts light that is easier on the eyes and more inviting, while still fully illuminating the area below. (Belle View Country Club's outdoor lights are an example of "full-cutoff" or fully shielded lighting.) According to the Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC), "shielded fixtures not only are safer for drivers, but, according to experts... actually make it easier for pedestrians and home owners to see their surroundings" because they cut down on glare.

In 2003, Fairfax County revised its zoning ordinance—now regarded as state of the art, and copied by many communities, according to EQAC—to set outdoor lighting standards that

would reduce light pollution. It requires fully shielded lighting, and covers new and replacement installations of outdoor lighting and fixtures in commercial and residential districts. Enforcement is complaint-driven.

A shortcoming of the ordinance is that the effects of glare into residential neighborhoods from sources such as nearby park lights and lights on nearby commercial buildings and school facilities are not fully addressed, according to EQAC. EQAC is working with the park authority on a white paper about standards for athletic field lighting.

The other problem is roadway lighting, particularly roads under VDOT jurisdiction.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Address the issue of glare, which is not adequately addressed by the revised light ordinance. When their review is complete, implement changes recommended by EQAC and FCPA to reduce glare and light intrusion from athletic fields and parks. Work with the Fairfax County Public Schools to do the same.
- Evaluate the impact of and alternatives to athletic field lights on adjacent neighborhoods.
- Educate homeowners not to burn outdoor lights all night for the purpose of improving security, but instead to install motion-detector activated lighting for this purpose.
- Evaluate by-right development plans for compliance with the light ordinance.
- Work with VDOT to get them to adopt full-cutoff lighting in their design standards for roadway lighting.
- Enact a bird-safe buildings ordinance (similar to one adopted in Cook County IL) requiring occupants of buildings to turn off building lights between midnight and dawn during spring and fall migrations, to the extent turning off lights is consistent with the normal use of the buildings.
- Use energy efficient and on-demand lights in all county buildings unless safety would be compromised.

## **ISSUE #10 Mount Vernon--a Livable Community**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The Mount Vernon District will be a beautiful, livable community that attracts visitors, residents and businesses because of its quality of life.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Partners for Livable Communities define livability as “the sum of the factors that add up to a community’s quality of life, including the built and natural environments, economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunity, and cultural, entertainment and recreation possibilities.” Amenities that make a community livable are not frills. They are essential resources that attract people of all ages because of quality schools, pedestrian and bike friendly streets, nearby restaurants and shopping, public transportation, open space, stable employment and entertainment.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

1. Especially along Route 1 where high-density developments will surround mass transit rail stations, plan for the development and redevelopment of the Mount Vernon District, including consolidation of smaller properties so they support both higher density and have sufficient acreage to provide green space. This consolidation will allow for reliable stormwater management practices, walkable and bikeable communities, with diverse shopping that supports the shopping needs of residents and visitors so that they need not travel to distant shopping centers. Higher density and convenient public transit will also be provided for other shopping areas such as Belle View, Hollin Hall and the Lorton community near the old prison. All these areas will be livable and provide rich cultural opportunities that attract all ages.
2. Secure open space during redevelopment for new parks. In particular, at the top of Beacon Hill, create neighborhood parks with shade trees. Shopping areas will be more attractive, lucrative, cool, pedestrian friendly, and, if well designed and sited, could mitigate the stormwater impacts on Paul Spring Branch. Create a park from the Fairchild property and Quander Brook that are behind the newest Walmart and recently donated to the BOS.
3. Engage residents and businesses in the planning process so there is grassroots support for investments that will be needed to make this vision a reality.
4. Initiate planning for enhanced public transit on U.S. 1 and secure financial assistance from federal and state governments. Efforts should include the contacting of elected representatives by County residents and businesses. We recommend Supervisors Hyland and McKay assemble all relevant parties to move from conversation to action in addressing sustainable urban design, affordable housing, historic preservation, and low-impact development. Involvement of stakeholders should include local, state, and federal governments (DOD, HUD, DOT, and EPA), a diverse group of people, businesses, housing and environmental advocates, and Fort Belvoir officials.

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5. Mandate the certification of all buildings and new homes for energy efficiency and operate them so they are energy efficient. Encourage retrofitting of existing homes and businesses so that they can also be certified as energy efficient and operated efficiently.
6. Establish waste management practices that provide for recycling and composting of waste materials to the maximum extent feasible.
7. Strengthen stormwater requirements for by-right development.

## **ISSUE # 11 Noise Pollution**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Residents should be free from intrusive and annoying noise, especially in their own homes and yards.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

High levels of noise from transportation, construction, and other causes are annoying and harm health. EPA cites studies showing direct links between noise and stress related illnesses, high blood pressure, speech interference, hearing loss, sleep disruption, and lost productivity.

Authority to regulate noise in local communities was stripped from EPA in 1981 and returned to states and local communities. Federal noise laws remain in force, although unfunded. Fairfax County's noise ordinance restricts hours of operation for noisy machines, sets maximum decibel limits for motor vehicles, and regulates noise from sources such as civil aircraft, public loudspeakers, and landfills.

Motorcycles have been a problem for Mount Vernon residents who live along major thoroughfares. Anecdotal reports indicate a drop in motorcycle noise near the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway in the past year or so.

EPA sets noise emissions standards for motorcycles at 80 dB(a). Motorcycle models are tested and labels are affixed on the chassis and exhaust pipe in a "readily visible position" at the factory. Riders can legally buy and install aftermarket exhaust systems, but they must meet EPA noise emissions standards to be street-legal; many do not.

EPA designed the label match-up program to allow states and municipalities to control motorcycle noise. The labels on the vehicle chassis and muffler both contain a code unique to the make and model of the motorcycle, so comparing the labels provides a way to "match up" the muffler to the motorcycle. A simple visual check for the matching code allows police to enforce the program easily. No sound level meters or special skills are required. Regulated motorcycles (some are not regulated, e.g., motorcycles for competition) with an exhaust system from a different make and model or an exhaust system installed without the correct label are in violation of federal regulations and the U.S. Noise Control Act.

Emissions equipment is sometimes tampered with to make a bike louder. A bike with its catalytic converter removed is not only louder, but emits up to ten times more smog forming pollutants as a legal bike, according to the California Air Resources Board.

Traffic. The prospect of more traffic, particularly from additional vehicle trips to and from Fort Belvoir, elevates the issue of noise pollution from traffic. Very loud car stereos are important annoyances for some. Residents close to the Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy report that a few people drive by or sit at stop lights with stereos turned so loud that the bass can be felt inside homes over 200 feet away. (A loud car stereo is prohibited by the Fairfax County Noise Ordinance if it is "plainly audible at 50 feet from such device when operated within a motor vehicle parked on a public right-of-way or in a public place," but only

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between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m.) Residents near major roads, such as Fort Hunt Road, report unacceptable noise levels from heavy trucks at times.

Airplane noise due to air traffic in and out of National and Dulles Airports has been a problem in the past, but seems abated by quieter jet engines and changes in flight paths.

Lawn equipment. In some neighborhoods, it is nearly impossible to garden or spend time outdoors in one's own yard on summer and fall days, due to the whine and roar of lawn mowers, leaf blowers, and chain saws. People at home during the day (retirees, stay-at-home moms, shift workers, and self-employed people working out of their homes) are most affected. Lawn workers are at risk of hearing loss unless they wear hearing protection. The noise ordinance provides weak protection against daytime noise; decibel restrictions do not apply to lawn equipment "if operated between the hours of 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. the same day ...so long as they do not constitute a noise disturbance<sup>2</sup>."

Helicopter noise. Some residents of Mount Vernon report frequent disturbances by helicopters flying off the designated fly zones and at lower altitudes than allowed. The former Lorton prison site has been used for training during the nighttime hours, awakening nearby residents. The helicopters fly lower near the Wilson Bridge to avoid flights in and out of Reagan Airport.

Waterfowl Hunting: People who live near the Potomac River and across from Fort Belvoir report seasonal disturbances from waterfowl hunting from blinds. One at-home tutor had to stop teaching students in her home during hunting season because of the loud blasts.

Personal Watercraft: Some residents who live near the river are disturbed by loud personal watercraft, some of which depart from Virginia homes and docks.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Compile noise complaints from Mount Vernon residents to identify problem areas and sources. Encourage citizens to contact the non-emergency police number if an issue with another person or service happens regularly. Establish a way to handle helicopter complaints so patterns of variance can be identified and reported to elected officials who often field complaints.
- Conduct a survey to determine sources and seriousness of noise pollution for residents.
- If motorcycles are a major source of intrusive noise, then seek changes in state or county law to
  - Adopt the label match up program and enforce it, and/or
  - End the exemption of motorcycles from emissions inspections. Require a retrofit when inspection reveals non-matching or illegal labels or tampering.
- If justified by the frequency of complaints in the proposed survey, strengthen the noise ordinance to protect residents from disturbing noise from landscaping services.

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<sup>2</sup> Defined as "any unnecessary sound which annoys, disturbs, or perturbs reasonable persons with normal sensitivities; or any unnecessary sound which reasonably may be perceived to injure or endanger the comfort, repose, health, peace or safety of any person."

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- Establish regular communications between military users of the airspace, FAA, and elected officials.

## **ISSUE # 12 Parks and the Environment**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Mount Vernon district park design, policies and practices should be aligned with and support environmental goals, using best management practices to better protect natural resources, including trees, wetlands, wildlife, air and water.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In addition to providing recreation and respite for residents (see Issue #8), parkland provides environmental services and should be strategically acquired and used to support environmental goals of improved air and water quality. For the Board of Supervisors and the Park Authority, conserving natural resources should be as important a goal as providing recreational and athletic facilities. Indeed, in a 2004 survey conducted for FCPA's most recent needs assessment, many more Fairfax County residents were "very supportive" of acquiring parkland to preserve open space (62%) than to build athletic fields (33%).

Much of the Mount Vernon district was developed at a time when environmental protections (such as stormwater controls) were weak or nonexistent. By contrast, much of the southern portion is now being developed, so there is a better opportunity for the County to acquire land while it is available and protect natural resources while it is still possible. The open space owned by the FCPA, some of the last remaining in the district, buffers and protects streams, improves air and water quality, absorbs carbon emissions, and provides habitat for wildlife.

Unfortunately, parkland is threatened by ever-expanding sprawl. Development removes woodlands and natural habitat and inevitably adds impervious surfaces that send polluted stormwater into streams and harm water quality. Fragmentation of open space areas reduces biodiversity and habitat value. Threats are posed by invasive exotic trees, plants and vines which out-compete and destroy woodlands and natural habitats, have low value for native wildlife and displace native plant and animal species.

FCPA policies, practices, and designs should be updated to reflect new low-impact development practices and reduce environmental harms of parks facilities and use. (Improving environmental efficiency would also reduce operating costs due to energy and water consumption.)

The environmental services (or harms) provided by FCPA-owned land and facilities should be calculated, and Fairfax County should make a portion of its parks budget dependent on the parks' contribution toward county environmental goals.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Fairfax County should:

- Increase its goal of preserving 10% of county land as park or open space.

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- Set a goal of having at least half its properties as natural habitat. Preserve some areas for limited public use.
- Acquire (and, if needed, restore) more properties for parks.
- Promote conservation easements on county and private land to preserve open space.
- Inventory natural, cultural, and historical resources on county land, including but not limited to land owned by FCPA.
- Develop, fund and implement management plans to preserve these resources (including a plan for invasive plant and animal control) and restore degraded areas to healthy, functioning ecosystems.
- Expand resources for FCPA's IMA (Invasives Management Area) volunteer-based program for invasive control, to adopt more park sites and expand coverage of county lands.
- Restore riparian buffers and streams in stream valley parks.
- Create a Youth Conservation Corps to support park maintenance and environmental projects and provide opportunities for community service.

The Fairfax County Park Authority should:

- Acquire more parkland for open space and natural habitat preservation.
- Plan and target land acquisitions in the southern portion of the district, which is rapidly developing but where there are still large parcels of undeveloped land. The first principle of green infrastructure is, "Design and plan green infrastructure *before* development."
- Create less fragmented and larger parcels with greenway and wildlife corridors between them, and give priority to acquiring land that buffers and connects local, state and federal parks.
- Target headwaters areas of degraded streams (such as Beacon Mall, which impacts Paul Spring Branch) for development of new "stormwater parks" to mitigate the effects of runoff by replacing pavement with green space and installing facilities to control stormwater. A stormwater facility designed as an attractive landscape feature would support dual use as neighborhood park and stormwater control and might be funded and maintained collaboratively with DPWES.
- Plant new native trees, preserve mature ones, and monitor their success so that every park meets or exceeds the county's tree canopy goal.
- Develop a metric to calculate and report the environmental services provided by FCPA woodlands, wetlands, streams, rivers, and open space.

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- Encourage stewardship; set an example by holding itself to higher environmental standards than required by the county for maintenance and construction projects. For example, FCPA should:
  - Develop park plans that maximize preservation of woodlands and natural areas.
  - Preserve some parkland as refuges and do not allow public access.
  - Locate park facilities that require clearing and grading only in already disturbed areas.
  - Exceed the county's stormwater control standards.
  - Use low-impact development (LID) practices to retain and treat stormwater runoff, such as permeable pavers or natural surfaces in parking lots and trails to reduce impervious surface.
  - Replace mowed lawns with native trees and plants and meadows where possible, to create habitat, reduce mowing, and cut energy use and air pollution.
  - Implement best tree-save practices to preserve and protect trees during construction.
  - Design and retrofit facilities to minimize energy and water consumption and reduce costs.
  - Modify landscaping and maintenance practices for golf courses, athletic fields, and other developed park facilities to reduce environmental impacts on air and water.
  - Plant only natives; use integrated pest management to control pests.

## **ISSUE # 13 Parks and Recreation**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Parks, recreational facilities and programs should support a high quality of life and meet the diverse needs and interests of residents and visitors. Parks should promote enjoyment, health, and appreciation and understanding of the nature, history, and culture of the area. We envision a park system in which:

- Parks, natural areas, and recreational facilities provide all people with a place to play and recreate.
- A network of multipurpose trails connects stream valley parks, upland forest, waterways, state and federal parks, and neighborhoods.
- Parks serve as community gathering places.
- Parks preserve and allow the public to experience the beauty, biodiversity, and natural history of diverse ecosystems (wetlands, meadows, forests, streams, etc.).
- Residents are good stewards, and parks and natural areas are trash-free.
- Adequate parks and recreational facilities serve the route 1 corridor; land use plans include parks.
- Allocation of park resources takes into account current and future demographics, and planning includes people for whom socio-economic, language, or cultural barriers reduce participation.

Parks also are a major land use tool for conservation of natural resources (see Issue #12).

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Mount Vernon district provides rich opportunities for nature-centered and recreational activities. Waterways surround us on three sides: Cameron Run/Hunting Creek on the north, Potomac River on the east, and Occoquan River in the south. The scenic and well-used Mount Vernon Trail runs along the Potomac River from Alexandria to the Mount Vernon Estate. Two county recreation centers (Mount Vernon and George Washington) provide a range of athletic and recreational facilities and programs. Mount Vernon Planning District has 45 public parks on 2,100 acres of land, and Lower Potomac has 22 public parks on 10,300 acres; most is owned by the state or federal governments or regional park authority. Many crown jewels of the park system—Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, Huntley Meadows, Mason Neck—are in or near our district.

Despite our rich resources, the Fairfax County Park Authority's assessment identified gaps and unmet needs. For all the waterways, public boating access to them is scarce<sup>3</sup>. The development practices in the Mount Vernon District tend to provide space for homes with small or nonexistent yards, creating a need to establish parks and other places for kids, adults and pets to play and exercise. In Mount Vernon Planning district, FCPA's analysis projects a need for 1,318 acres of district-wide parks by 2020. There were 93 acres of such parks in 2007, for a projected 1,225 acre deficit. The needs assessment identified a need for an off-leash dog park in the northern part of the district, where currently there is none. There is an absence of open space and recreational opportunities for significant areas along Richmond Highway, leaving many children with no place to play.

Since 2000, Mount Vernon magisterial district has added 1,469 acres of parkland. Of these, most (1,292 acres) resulted from the Lorton Prison transfer. Over a third (35%) of the Lower Potomac Planning district is parkland, compared with 5.5% of the Mount Vernon Planning district.

Parks and recreational facilities support the health and quality of life of residents by providing opportunities to exercise, play, participate in sports and social activities, and experience nature and the outdoors. Much research shows the mental health and stress-reducing benefits of being outdoors in nature, and exercise prevents obesity and sustains mental and physical health. Trail access supports public health by promoting walking and bicycling instead of driving. Youth participation in team sports strengthens self-esteem and deters social ills like gang involvement and teen pregnancy.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Fairfax County Park Authority (or where appropriate, the regional park authority) should

- Acquire more parkland, especially in areas lacking it. For example, transfer the Fairchild property from the Board of Supervisors for creation of a park near Route 1.
- Restore degraded areas for the purpose of creating new parks.
- Improve maintenance and resource management of parks, trails, and facilities.
  - Control exotic invasive plants.
  - Provide recycling bins at all facilities and parks in Mt. Vernon, and recycle.
  - Actively maintain health of woodlands, plant native trees in parks lacking them.
  - Preserve healthy riparian buffers in stream valley parks; restore them where necessary.
  - Provide more resources (funding, staff) for natural resources management.

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<sup>3</sup> Public boating access to the Potomac River is provided beside Belle View Marina. There is no public access for canoes, kayaks, or other boats to Little Hunting Creek; Little Hunting Creek Park is on the water but there is no public access to this "public" park. One might with difficulty launch a canoe on Dogue Creek at the Grist Mill.

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- Work with the National Park Service and local neighborhoods to identify appropriate sites for public boat access to the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers and tributaries.
  - Provide public launch facilities at sites where adverse impacts on historical or environmental resources will be minimal, and with adequate parking or public transit access.
  - Develop water trails with links to John Smith Water Trail and historical sites.
  - Ensure that waterfront parks and facilities comply with tidal wetlands laws.
- Create natural resource parks and stream valley parks.
- Improve the connectivity of trails and add new trails and greenways.
  - Create trail connections between the Mount Vernon and Cross-County Trails.
  - Create a trail along Little Hunting Creek and Paul Springs Branch.
  - Create a horse friendly connection between trails at Laurel Hill, Mason Neck.
  - In South County, create trail connections (and wildlife corridors) across I-95.
- Develop new resources and programs to serve all ages, socioeconomic groups, and areas:
  - A new recreation center in South County.
  - Athletic and multi-purpose fields, basketball courts and other sports facilities.
  - Expanded nature centers and outdoor education opportunities.
  - Community gardens and community composting sites.
  - One or more off-leash dog park(s) to serve the northern part of the district. Follow FCPA guidelines and process for establishment of dog parks.
  - Plan facilities so as to minimize destruction of healthy woodlands.
  - Teen facilities, including evening recreation and life skills training
    - Build a skate park in a new or existing park.
    - Consider a facility for social dancing by all ages, like Glen Echo.
- Extend farmers' markets throughout the year by amending the County ordinance.
- Set up a process for public notice and input for a proposed interim use of a park that has no master plan.
- Continue the public master planning process.
- When nominating members to the FCPA, the Board of Supervisors should aspire to achieve a balance on the board between advocacy of natural areas and of athletics and sports fields.

## **ISSUE #14 Siting of Communication Towers**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

As the demand for more cellphone and other communications grows, communications towers' environmental impacts should be considered and environmental harm should be minimal.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In considering permits for the siting of communications towers in Mount Vernon and Virginia in general, environmental impacts appear to receive little to no consideration. The construction, presence and operation of all structures can have adverse environmental impacts in three primary ways: bird collisions with and reaction to towers, adverse impacts of towers' footprints, and locating towers in natural areas.

**Birds:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) estimates as many 50 million birds may be killed annually at communication towers nationwide and population levels for at least 231 species are impacted according to a study (American Bird Conservancy). Neotropical migrants are the largest proportion killed.

The vast majority of bird deaths occur at lighted towers over 200 feet in height during spring and fall migration seasons. The lights on the towers attract large numbers of birds and confuse their internal navigation systems. Many birds collide with the towers and the supporting guy wires and with each other. Others appear to drop from exhaustion as they continuously circle the towers, unable to find their proper course.

Scientific investigation has begun to uncover ways to protect birds from the danger posed by the growing number of communications towers. FWS has developed a useful set of guidelines for the design and construction of communication towers (see <http://www.fws.gov/habitatconservation/communicationtowers.html>). Among their recommendations are the use of towers under 200 feet, which are not required to be lighted; the use of white lights rather than red lights when towers are required to be lighted; the use of monopole towers without guy wires; and the collocation of multiple antennas on a single tower whenever possible.

David Marshall, lead staffer in the county for siting towers, wrote on August 4, 2010, "New structures [in the county] are typically 'monopoles,' single steel poles less than 150 feet in height. Few monopoles are lighted and none have guyed wires." He goes on to say that there are some taller towers with guy wires in the county. Even if most towers now being built in Fairfax County are under 200 feet, there is no way of knowing what heights or types will be sought in the future, especially as communications technology becomes increasingly sophisticated.

**Towers' Footprint:** The footprint of a tower impacts local habitat, usually adversely, through disturbances and impervious surfaces. For example, the "superstructure" for a recently proposed tower in the Mount Vernon area would require 2,588 square feet according to the Mount Vernon Council of Citizen Associations. Since the native habitats of most of Northern Virginia have been highly altered by development, more towers could mean about further destruction of natural resources by towers' total infrastructure or footprint.

Locating Towers in Natural Areas: Some seeking sites for communications towers view parks and natural areas as “easily available” sites for towers. Given the dearth of natural areas in the county and, in particular the small number of natural resource parks, towers in natural areas would further reduce what little we have. As commercial, intrusive facilities, communications towers are more appropriate in or near commercial areas that have already been developed.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The county should, in considering all permit applications for towers:

- Evaluate and consider the environmental impacts of towers, their location, lighting, height and guy wires, on wildlife and habitat before a permit is approved. Require environmental analysis by county staff or qualified consultants, not analyses by applicants or consultants hired by applicants.
- Locate towers in already disturbed areas.
- Give priority and incentives for collocation of antennas on existing towers.
- Avoid locating towers in migratory flyways of state- and federally-listed endangered and threatened birds.
- Ensure that FWS guidelines are incorporated into the design of new towers.
- Mandate alternatives and consider rejecting all proposals to place towers in all county natural resource parks, natural areas of state parks, refuges, nature preserves or other undeveloped areas.

Information: <http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions/towers.html>

## **ISSUE #15 Trash**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Mount Vernon will be trash free and a model for recycling. Mount Vernon will not build or need another landfill or trash-burning facility. Mount Vernon residents will reduce, reuse and recycle their trash.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Trash generation: Since 1960, the amount of waste each American creates has almost doubled from 2.7 to 4.5 pounds per day. Americans generate more trash than people from most other countries. The most effective way to reduce trash in the environment is to not generate it in the first place.

Trash's harm: Bottles, cans, food wrappers and containers, Styrofoam, cigarette butts and other trash are all too prevalent in our streets, parking lots, streams, wetlands and rivers. Most of it appears to be discarded by individuals. Trash pollutes natural resources, harms wildlife and is aesthetically unpleasant.

Since 1989, over three million tons of trash have been removed from the Potomac River watershed. On April 10, 2010, volunteers at 89 sites collected over 58,600 pounds of trash, including 340 tires, over 26,200 bottles and over 2,200 cigarette butts.

Recycling: The County's recycling rate is 39 percent, exceeding the state's requirement of 25 percent. Encouraging and expanding recycling can reduce the consumption of natural resources, create jobs, reduce the need for landfills and reduce energy use, emissions and water pollution and protect the natural resources upon which we all depend. While the county's rate is admirable, it can do better. The city of Austin, Texas, for example, is striving to reduce waste sent to the landfill by 90 percent by 2040.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Require all non-residential facilities to provide clearly marked containers to recycle paper, cans and bottles and collect them. Include county facilities in particular.
- Support state legislation to discourage use of disposable shopping bags. Require retailers to sell re-useable bags or request state legislation to require it.
- Expand recycling of recyclables to all public and private establishments, including hotels, restaurants, apartment buildings and schools.
- Explore with hardware stores or other retailers the collection and recycling of compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Request state legislation requiring carryout food containers to be biodegradable, recyclable or compostable.

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- Request state legislation to impose fees on metal cans and plastic bottles.
- Increase littering fines, including those for discarding cigarette butts.
- Make anti-littering signs bilingual and more graphic, especially for cigarette butts.
- (belongs in Water Quality issue paper)
- Ask local construction and lawn maintenance companies to better supervise trash disposal practices of their employees and provide trash collection bags in their company vehicles.
- Seek state legislation requiring extended producer responsibility for products such as electronics, lighting products, carpets and paint so that manufacturers are responsible for disposal of products.
- Prohibit disposal of electronics in household trash and have more electronics recycling events.
- Provide educational materials to all property owners on composting yard waste, leaves and raw food waste. Charge for the collection of yard waste.
- Design and implement? a system for local restaurants to combine food waste and compost it.
- Evaluate the policy and prepare a proposal to charge for trash by volume collected or "pay as you throw."
- Evaluate the merit and the environmental and energy impacts of the Energy Resource Recovery Center in Lorton.
- Prepare and disseminate information on places to donate unwanted items such as United Community Ministries, ReBuild Warehouse, Goodwill and Freecycle.
- In county facilities, primarily use recycled products, e.g., office paper, food containers, etc.
- Explore expanding the county's current recycling program and identify new markets for recyclables.

## **ISSUE #16 Trees and Urban Forest**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Achieve County's goal of 45% tree cover. Optimize preservation and care of existing trees and plant trees with the understanding that they are critical elements of infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Potomac Conservancy's report, "State of the Nation's River," stresses the role of nearby, healthy forests in improving the health of rivers, seek a higher level of tree cover within one-half mile of the Potomac River.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Research is showing that, in addition to environmental benefits like clean air, clean water, stream protection, carbon sequestration, and improved energy efficiency, the urban forest provides quality of life benefits such as traffic calming, increases in commercial activity, job satisfaction, residential and commercial property values, and reductions in stress, crime, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms, sick days, hospital length of stay.

During 2007 the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted the goal of 45% tree cover and the Tree Action Plan to conserve and manage the County's urban forest. The Board's Environmental Agenda addresses the critical role of trees in infrastructure. County staff is working to recommend policies and changes so the County models excellence in tree preservation and plantings on its own properties.

Tree cover goals will be met when public and private property owners, utilities, and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) plant more trees, manage existing trees, and significantly reduce lawns. This will occur when all concerned appreciate that trees are a critical element in infrastructure and that significant costs accrue when they are lost.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Update to industry standards the Architectural and Environment Guidelines used by County staff and contractors and the Program Managers' Manual. Ensure that planting requirements in the Public Facilities Manual (PFM) apply. Identify and resolve conflicts in these documents, ensuring consistency with the Tree Conservation Ordinance.
- Partner with VDOT to review "clear-zones" for streets and trails so that trees, vegetation, and green infrastructure<sup>1</sup> are preserved or restored while safety is maintained. Use natural landscaping, maintain vegetation, and reduce runoff.

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<sup>4</sup> Green infrastructure is strategically planned and managed networks of natural lands, built environments, working landscapes, and other open spaces that conserve ecosystem values and functions and provide benefits to human populations.

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- Pursue state legislation to require VDOT to plant only native or non-invasive cultivars in right-of-ways, use native ground covers, and give public notice when planning to clear-cut.
- Work with utilities to plant sustainable native species that do not interfere with utility lines and to adopt practices that discourage the growth of invasives.
- Adopt the recommendations of the Trees on County Properties Task Force so that the County becomes a model for tree preservation and plantings on its own properties.
- Work with other jurisdictions and request state legislation mandating the licensing and bonding of tree workers and/or companies and legislation mandating that only certified arborists evaluate the health and safety of trees on proposed developments.
- Mandate inclusion of tree preservation into initial designs and that Urban Forestry staff monitors tree preservation early in the design of all development and follows up.
- Amend County code to address tree maintenance for up to two years after planting and to require the replacement of trees that die due to stresses of construction.
- Request that the mission statements of all agencies of Fairfax County government include the goal of native tree and plant preservation and the importance of trees as infrastructure.
- As with requests for waivers of Chesapeake Bay rules, the BOS considers not approving waivers of tree cover, transitional screening, and tree preservation requirements.
- Maintain a qualified, resourceful, and adequate staff in Urban Forest Management, ensuring review of all development and redevelopment plans and inspection of projects before release of bonds.
- Monitor progress toward 45% tree cover by tracking objectives, identifying problems, and making corrections.
- Examine the County's commitment to growth and determine an acceptable level. Concentrate growth in already-developed areas and around mass transit. Consider down-zonings to make open space available so that Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's) could be a reality.
- Adopt policy of "smart growth" and "livable communities," linking communities by a network of wooded greenways and identifying areas for open space conservation, natural corridors of native plantings, and restoration of tree canopy and green infrastructure.

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- Through county agencies and outside partners, encourage residents and businesses to plant natural landscaping, native plants, and improved cultivars that are non-invasive and hardy. Assist and educate homeowners and maintenance staffs about the care and value of trees. Create disincentives for the removal of healthy, mature trees. Publicize costs and damages from “volcano mulching,” the mounding of unnecessary mulch.
- Extend requirements for welded wire fencing, currently required when tree preservation is proffered, to by-right development. During all construction, require chain link fencing to prevent heavy equipment from harming trees roots. Post signs in both English and Spanish.
- Manage invasive plants and other pests, particularly deer that destroy new growth. Use integrated pest management practices to minimize harm to useful native insects. Ban the sale of English ivy.
- Examine the size of fire equipment and consider reducing it so it can be accommodated in narrower roads thereby reducing tree loss.

## **ISSUE #17 US Route 1/Richmond Highway Corridor**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Fairfax County, the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Department of the Army/Fort Belvoir and the U. S. Federal Highway Administration should make every effort to minimize adverse environmental impacts if U. S. 1 is expanded and greatly enhance public transit to jobs and other activities at Belvoir's main post and the proposed U. S. Army Museum.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in collaboration with the Department of the Army, the Virginia Department of Transportation and Fairfax County have begun the Environmental Assessment process to determine the future of U. S. 1 between Telegraph Road and Mount Vernon Highway. FHWA documents say the agency will "address traffic capacity deficiencies on Route 1," including "forecast travel demand." U. S. Army studies predict that at least 1,000 new daily vehicle trips will be added to U. S. 1 north of Fort Belvoir when 3,400 new jobs move to the main post, a stretch of road that today has 37,000 to 56,000 vehicles daily and frequent gridlock. The Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process could also create more contractor and hospital traffic and County officials predict one million visitors a day to the proposed Army Museum in the area.

Potential environmental impacts of widening U. S. 1 include:

- the destruction of mature native trees and natural habitat
- further degradation of the air in an area that does not meet ozone standards
- road or other incursions into the Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge
- increased stormwater runoff
- displaced wildlife
- increased noise

Info: [www.efl.fhwa.dot.gov](http://www.efl.fhwa.dot.gov) or contact Jack Van Dop at [JackVanDope@dot.gov](mailto:JackVanDope@dot.gov).

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Fairfax County should include in its comments, if U. S. 1 is widened, strong support for protecting natural resources, including:

- no incursions into Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge;
- no increase in stormwater runoff;

# Environment, Parks and Recreation

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- no further degradation of air quality; and
- protection of mature significant trees and replacement in the area of any trees and native habitat destroyed and monitoring for up to three years.

Fairfax County should include strong support for public mass transit to accommodate a substantial number of current and new employees of Fort Belvoir, contractors and others visiting the post and visitors to the new hospital and the proposed U. S. Army Museum.

## **ISSUE #18 Water Quality**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It is urgent that the County comply with the Clean Water Act and Chesapeake Bay Act, reducing nitrogen, phosphorous, sediments, and other pollutants entering the streams, Potomac and Occoquan Rivers, and Chesapeake Bay. Start by funding and implementing watershed management plans, which are only a down payment on what will be required, and by adopting regulations to improve water quality.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Fairfax County has spent the past seven years developing watershed management plans for its 30 watersheds. A stormwater tax was adopted to fund better stormwater controls. The county has improved wastewater treatment facilities. Small steps recommended by the plans have been taken, such as a county-sponsored rain barrel distribution program and road signs identifying watershed boundaries.

Several watershed plans recommend changes in county policy, laws, and regulations. Few of these recommendations have been implemented. Funds from the stormwater tax have been offset by reductions in general funds allocations, resulting in no funds for stormwater improvements. Funds from the stormwater tax were diverted to pay the Corps of Engineers for the Huntington flood control study.

Water quality problems in Fairfax County arise from increased impervious surfaces, such as roofs, roads, parking lots, resulting from development. Impervious surfaces increase the volume and intensity of stormwater runoff. Because most development in Mount Vernon district occurred before the advent of modern stormwater controls, runoff is uncontrolled, and our watersheds are among the most damaged in the county. Stormwater is piped to the nearest stream, where the increased volume scours out the stream banks and beds, carrying sediments and pollutants downstream to the mouth of streams, the Potomac River and the Bay. Nutrients and pollutants cause dead zones that threaten the Chesapeake Bay.

The stormwater management plans call for actions such as the following:

- New facilities to reduce volume and improve quality of stormwater runoff.
- Voluntary citizen actions to retain and treat stormwater on their own properties, by installing rain barrels, rain gardens, and the like.
- Restoration of vegetated buffers along streams and stream beds.
- Wetlands restoration and preservation.
- Policy changes and incentives to reduce imperviousness (for every impervious acre that is reduced for a development project, there would be about 65% reduction in runoff, assuming the acre remains pervious.)
- Incentives for use of LID (low-impact development) practices.

Even when fully implemented, the watershed plans will not achieve the necessary reductions. Statistical modeling conducted for the Little Hunting Creek Watershed Management Plan shows that implementing all planned projects (not including policy changes) would only reduce phosphorous by 9%, nitrogen by 6%, and sediment by 11%. Rough estimates are that implementing all the watershed plans will require \$90 million per year (or an additional \$250 per year on the median value home in the county), and that implementing the plans will not get Fairfax County even half way to meeting the Chesapeake Bay TMDL (total maximum daily load) requirements. They are a necessary start, but only a start, on what is needed.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Begin serious implementation of Fairfax County's watershed plans, the first of which (Little Hunting Creek) was adopted almost six years ago.
- Use funds from the stormwater tax to improve stormwater management, not for mere maintenance.
- Increase the stormwater tax.
- Review and implement changes in county land use policy recommended by the watershed plans but not yet addressed by county staff.
- Seek improved stormwater controls on existing and new roads, esp. any road-widening in the Richmond Highway corridor. (VA Stormwater Management Regulations allow a locality that has stricter stormwater requirements or has adopted a watershed management plan to request the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation to consider its requirements when reviewing VDOT projects in that locality.)
- Take steps in addition to implementation of the watershed plans:
  - Ban the sale and application of fertilizer in the county.
  - Ban phosphorous in dishwasher detergent.
  - Require commercial and residential property owners to retain stormwater on site, including in by-right development projects. If not permissible under current law, request state legislation to allow it.
  - Require applicants for permits to build, redevelop, remodel or expand buildings, to retain stormwater runoff onsite.
  - Change building practices and requirements to reflect new technology and LID practices.
  - Require county-funded projects to retain and treat stormwater on site. The county should exemplify desired behavior by setting higher standards for itself, beyond its minimum requirements.

# Environment, Parks and Recreation

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- Create zoning and density incentives for developers to reduce imperviousness and improve stormwater controls in new development or redevelopment projects.
- Require permits and increase stormwater tax rate based on percent of imperviousness for existing commercial and residential lots, with property owners who mitigate runoff on-site paying a reduced tax rate. Use funds to improve stormwater facilities, making those who perpetuate the problem contribute more to its solution.

**Final Report on Housing and Community Development  
Mount Vernon Visioning Task Force**

**March 13, 2011**

**Committee Members**

Elisabeth Lardner, Chair  
Tuck Bowerfind  
Teresa Champion  
Jeri Fields  
John Jeszenszky  
Joan McClellan  
Robert Trimble

**Committee Participants**

Gloria Jackson  
Jacquelyn Nunez

The Committee was also the beneficiary of two work sessions, one with members from the faith and non-profit communities, and the second with members from the building industry. Separately, the draft report was thoroughly discussed in a session with the Route 1 Task Force, convened by Anne Andrews. The insights and ideas provided in each session greatly contributed to this report. The Committee is most grateful for all participants' generous sharing of their time.

# Housing and Community Development Committee

([www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning\\_task\\_force.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/visioning_task_force.htm))

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

The residents of the Mount Vernon District recognize that the provision of the full range of housing opportunities, from rental to owner occupied, from luxury to fully subsidized, is necessary for a thriving, growing and diverse community. Such opportunities are integral to the county's continued growth and healthy economic climate.

Our vision, in addition to traditional residential neighborhoods, is that housing is an integrated part of any commercial and institutional core development throughout the district, along the Richmond Highway Corridor and in smaller commercial and institutional areas located elsewhere within the Mount Vernon community.

Respectful of the area's history and environmental setting, new housing is accompanied by adequate public infrastructure improvements – schools, parks, transportation and libraries. Community support is readily available, led by a Supervisor's Advisory Committee that focuses on early and productive interaction between the development community and local citizenry, the development of incentives to add affordable housing stock to the district, and the development of incentive programs in conjunction with local businesses and institutions to better house their employees near their workplace.

## **Five Priority Issues**

- Embrace the provision of workforce and affordable housing throughout the district as a fundamental economic development tool
- Integrate housing in walkable commercial and institutional cores throughout the district, ensuring that the cores are served by public infrastructure
- Ensure that choice of housing is available for rent and purchase – for all incomes and levels of functioning from studio apartments to luxury single-family homes
- Change the game. Appoint a DISTRICT-wide Advisory Committee to focus on the incentives and tools necessary to encourage the development of new housing units
- Create new housing development that is of high quality, is well-planned and is consistent with our historic past and natural environment, paying particular attention to the Richmond Highway Corridor

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## **Inventory**

### **What we have**

- Attractive, family-friendly community that is diverse in population and income levels
- A major transportation corridor that is a potential asset, but currently is oriented towards automobile traffic, provides minimal mass transit service and inadequately serves the pedestrian or bicycle user. Development along the corridor trends toward single use, non-integrated land uses.
- Minimal undeveloped lands, forcing the district to consider 'going up' rather than 'spreading out' to accommodate new growth
- Active and involved residents committed to continued positive development of the district
- Influx of new residents and workers with the latest round of BRAC activities
- A lack of affordable housing, causing many workers, including public service workers such as teachers, fire, and police, to incur long commutes from places as far away as Pennsylvania and West Virginia, as well as counties to our south and west
- A homeless population with inadequate resources to address their needs

### **What we need**

- Additional affordable and workforce housing units
- More accepting attitude towards all members of our community, regardless of income or residence
- Better forum to work together to achieve goals related to housing

### **What we should preserve**

- Environmental and historic character of the Mount Vernon District
- Continuation of Fairfax County's Ten Year Plan to end homelessness

### **What we should change**

- Shortage of affordable and workforce housing units

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## **ISSUE # 1**

All residents of the Mount Vernon District do not recognize the connection between ready access to affordable housing and Fairfax County's economic health and the county's continued ability to provide a high standard of amenities.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Education that better conveys the connection between the provision of housing, accessible to all residents in the district, and the county's ability to continue to attract new businesses is needed.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

A community that supports the development of adequate workforce and affordable housing for its citizenry is upholding its moral and ethical responsibilities. Such a community is also working in its best self-interest.

Economic development is dependent on a community attracting new and retaining existing successful businesses. Company leaders make decisions based on the quality of life available for their employees, including the availability of housing affordable to their workforce. If a community becomes so unaffordable that mid-level and entry-level employees can no longer afford to reside near their workplace, many companies will look elsewhere.

The Urban Land Institute's study, *Priced Out: Persistence of the Workforce Housing Gap in the Washington, DC, Metro Area*; November 2009, states that 'Despite recent shifts in the regional housing market, land values and home prices in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area remain unattainable for a large portion of workforce households. While the metro area as a whole has experienced an increase in affordability over the past few years, this study finds that workforce households—those with incomes 60 - to 100 percent of area median income (AMI)—are priced out of rental and for-sale housing proximate to major employment centers.' Even with the foreclosure crisis, conditions have not improved. In a conversation on a local radio station, Dr. Stephen Fuller, the Director of the George Mason University (GMU) Center for Regional Analysis stated that 'home sales and home values aren't the problem at the moment. Not having enough housing at prices that are affordable will be the factor that causes this [region's] economy to slow down. Not having prices that are affordable means more traffic and lost taxes as new residents commute from outside the inner suburbs. I think this is a big threat. The counties themselves aren't allowing new housing to be built in sufficient numbers.' (wtopnews.com, August 25, 2010)

If adequate affordable housing is not available, people will be creative in accommodating their housing needs, from illegally carving up single family residential units and renting rooms to entire families, to doubling and tripling up families in rental apartments, to placing greater demand on local non-profits and faith communities who operate shelters for those with no housing. Citizens who are mentally ill, substance abusers, and others unable to find affordable shelter will live

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in the woods and on the street. Housing First is a new approach in Fairfax County that acknowledges that ending homelessness is much more probable if stable and supportive housing is provided first, rather than attempting to treat and solve the issues that have made a person homeless and then placing the person into housing. Home is a key concept for all.

The 2010 'fair market rent' established by HUD for a two-bedroom apartment in Fairfax County is \$1,494, which is affordable to a household earning 58 percent of the area median income. In order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent, a minimum-wage earner would need to work 159 hours per week. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment Fairfax County in 2007 was \$1,434. (National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 'Out of Reach 2010'; Fairfax County Department of Systems Management for Human Services, '2009 Rental Complex Analysis.')

According to the 2009 US Census Bureau American Community Survey, there were an estimated 71,168 households in Fairfax County earning less than \$50,000 per year, or about 48 percent of the area median income for a family of four of \$103,500. More than one-third (28,155) of these households were earning less than \$25,000 per year. There were an estimated 58,106 persons living below the poverty level in 2009 – an increase of nearly 10,000 over 2008 and larger than the entire population of Charlottesville, VA. (HCD; Census Bureau data)

For purposes of this discussion, the Housing Committee is using Fairfax County's definition for affordable and workforce housing: housing that is affordable to households with incomes that are 120 percent or less (0 percent) 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.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Create an educational campaign, based on pragmatic and self-interest serving points, to educate the citizenry of Mount Vernon on the pragmatic reasons for ensuring that adequate affordable housing is available to all.
- Explore Best Practices in other communities and how those communities engender support for increasing the supply of affordable housing – look to examples such as the City of Alexandria's grant program, businesses that write down the interest on a second mortgage for their employees, etc.

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## **ISSUE # 2**

As commercial and institutional developments become denser, they must incorporate all price ranges of housing development within these nodes of activity. Currently, land uses are very segregated in the Mount Vernon District and housing is not consistently integrated into walkable commercial and institutional nodes of activity.

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

We need to reframe our community from one that is an auto-centric suburb to a community with clusters of more densely developed activities, including housing, commercial and institutional uses, a development pattern that encourages residents to get out of their cars and walk or bike to local services. When new development is added, it must not diminish the district's historic integrity, environmental setting and strong sense of community. Affordable housing should be equally integrated throughout the district.

The past planning approach that carefully segregated land uses is not conducive to moving our community towards a more environmentally supportable and civic-minded lifestyle. Instead, densely integrated and mixed-use complexes should replace the numerous strip malls and retail centers throughout the district and be interspersed with less intensive land uses, including increased parklands.

By 2035, single use commercial retail, surface parked, one-story strip developments will be a thing of the past. Housing, in all price ranges and styles, will be thoroughly integrated in more dense commercial developments and throughout the district.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Although Mount Vernon is located within a county of over one million residents, it retains the sensibility of a small town. Housing opportunities range from extreme luxury to units that are heavily subsidized. People of all incomes levels call Mount Vernon home, making the area a true community with room for all.

Currently, Mount Vernon is largely a community composed of low-density residential subdivisions with commercial retail activities located in single story, surface parking served neighborhood strip malls. A similar retail built environment clusters along both sides of the Richmond Highway Corridor, with few office buildings larger than three stories tall lining the corridor. Sidewalks and bike paths are intermittently provided throughout the district, with no overall system or network that permits easy access from residential neighborhoods to commercial centers in any other form than by automobile.

There is a clear demand for additional housing units in all price ranges within our community. Low-density strip malls should be redeveloped to incorporate housing and increased density as mixed-use complexes. Such a focus on concentrating density and better integration of land uses will build community and make places for all people, reinforcing the social fabric of our community and enhancing pedestrian connections, reducing auto-dependency and providing the opportunity to truly mix housing types from luxury to workforce and affordable and their residents. Development of commercial nodes throughout the district should be expanded and

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intensified by the addition of second story (or higher) housing units above retail and commercial uses.

The Mount Vernon community must include a broad spectrum of residential units accommodating a variety of family sizes and income levels throughout the entire district. Unit choices must range from rental single room units to owner-occupied luxury single-family units. A healthy rental environment should compliment owner occupied neighborhoods. Integrating housing with institutional and commercial uses will offer opportunities for people to live near and walk to their job and shopping while also opening the option for shared parking uses – daytime use of parking facilities for the institutional or commercial use and evening use by the residents.

New housing construction and renovation, for affordable and higher-end units, has been extraordinarily controversial in the Mount Vernon District. Our community must encourage investment in all types of housing, including affordable and luxury high-end units. Mount Vernon is an aging community and will benefit from the renovation of its housing inventory at all levels of pricing. If done thoughtfully, and in an appropriately scaled manner, the community will benefit.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Review the existing Comprehensive Plan and make modifications that encourage the redevelopment of current one-level commercial strip centers throughout district into mixed use, multi-story integrated developments, with housing units provided in a range of unit types and for a full spectrum of income levels (the Mount Vernon District will need high income residents as much as it needs more moderate and low income residents to enhance a vibrant community) and household size, including the provision of owner occupied and rental units and housing appropriate for special needs citizens.
- Update the Comprehensive Plan to encourage the incorporation of all types and all income levels of housing in traditional retail strip centers, hospital complexes (housing on a hospital campus can provide a needed resource for employees and also create a shared use parking complex – hospital use by day and housing use by night) and institutional sites such as fire stations and libraries. Mixed use complexes that include a range of housing, from affordable to full market rate, must be included in any redevelopment plans.
- Evaluate existing commercial and institutional centers for the opportunity to incorporate new housing units. Work with county planners to define appropriate areas for affordable multi-family apartments and condominiums by identifying projects that have land and/or airspace for build-out; create a business plan that defines the cost/benefit ratios necessary to justify the addition of high density housing within existing commercial, institutional, and public areas such as fire stations or libraries.
- Require that all construction make use of as many green building techniques as feasible.

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- Review county definitions of group homes, supportive housing, senior housing and affordable and workforce housing to ensure that all housing needs are addressed.
- Consider the expansion of the number of unrelated adults who can currently legally occupy a single-family residence in Fairfax County (4); what are the unforeseen consequences; what is the benefit over placing the property as a group home (up to eight unrelated adults).
- Review the current county zoning ordinance and approval process and identify points that deter the development of affordable housing. Add more flexible county standards for the provision of desired projects – mixed-use, workforce and affordable housing, single residential units, units for the elderly and greater use of accessory dwellings, etc. Explore how zoning standards, regulations, permit fees, and other impediments to the economically viable development of affordable housing can be modified.
  - Review current zoning standards and restructure.
  - Investigate if enabling legislation is needed to allow a reduction in hook-up fees and other costly impediments to the development of affordable and workforce housing.
  - Examine the current tax regulations at the local level and identify areas where a tax credit or rebate might be appropriate as an incentive tool for the construction of additional units of affordable or workforce housing.
- Incorporate appropriately scaled luxury housing in Mount Vernon District. A healthy and vibrant community benefits from having people of all income levels as residents. As the Mount Vernon community ages, it is important to encourage reinvestment in its middle and upper middle income housing stock. Higher income residents are more able to financially support amenities desired in the Mount Vernon community, from arts complexes, to concert venues, to white tablecloth restaurants. Finding a way to encourage residents to upgrade and reinvest in an aging housing stock, whether through renovation or replacement, is important to the vitality of the community. But, these improvements must be made in a manner that does not adversely affect the surrounding the community and at a scale and style that is respectful of the surrounding neighborhood.
  - Perform a study to determine size of housing and the types of amenities preferred for families of moderate to high income and how such standards could be written to ensure that the new construction does not adversely affect neighboring properties.
- Encourage the construction of innovative multi-family units throughout the district, providing an array of housing unit sizes and values, while ensuring that such an addition does not overpower adjacent properties and is instead respectful of the scale of the surrounding neighborhood, blending with the existing style and character of the community.
- Ensure that higher density areas include housing for young people, housing for singles, housing for special needs population, group homes and supportive housing with an emphasis on accessibility and universal design for all residents, including but not limited to older and special needs residents.
- Work with the development community to identify incentives that will encourage the development of higher density housing for the general

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- population as well as incentives for units that accommodate people with special needs, including the elderly, in new and existing housing stock.
- Encourage faith-based communities to promote and support the development of affordable and workforce housing on their properties and within the larger community. Review the county's zoning process and make recommendations for modifications to make development on religious-owned property less challenging and time-consuming encouraging its use for the provision of affordable housing.
  - Form a coalition between the faith-based community and the appropriate county agencies to identify properties in the county that can be renovated to accommodate workforce, affordable and accessible housing.
  - Educate and convince large businesses and institutions located within the Mount Vernon District that it is in their own self-interest to offer subsidized housing (could be provision of land to build housing) for their employees that is close to their work sites, thus reducing their employees' housing and transportation costs.
    - The District Advisory Committee will work with existing businesses in the Mount Vernon Community such as the large hospital complexes such as Inova, the large banks such as Wachovia/Wells Fargo or PNC, large retail operators such as Walmart or Costco, Staples and Office Depot to educate and encourage these employers to become involved in providing support for their employee's housing costs, making it possible for their employees to live close to work. Possible support may include the provision of land to build new housing units, subsidizing second mortgages, writing down purchase prices or funding workforce-housing units in local developments.
    - Fairfax County will provide incentives to employers to encourage their support in supplying or supporting their employees' housing needs near their place of work.
  - Develop incentives to gain a more aggressive ratio of workforce and affordable housing to be incorporated within new developments (As at Tyson's Corner 20% vs. 12%) while avoiding the 'one size fits all' approach to supplying affordable housing.
    - Find ways to provide incentives to developers to encourage them to provide a more aggressive ratio of workforce and affordable housing.
  - Revise County standards and regulations to encourage the move towards mixed use communities – walk-able communities- residential, commercial, office, institutional; with fully integrated income levels and broad supply of unit sizes.
    - Work with designers to create green spaces, small parks or outdoor play areas within housing developments.
    - Contact and encourage small business to locate into new community centers.
    - Provide rent structures to encourage small business start-ups.
  - Consider ways to make housing subsidies available to young people to bring them back to the community or to keep them in Mount Vernon.
    - Are there any programs geared towards rebuilding a community? What have other communities done to attract young people? Look to the Midwest and other markets that have had to work over the last

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decade to attract that demographic and learn from their best and most successful practices.

- Garner support for those wishing to live in place. Ensure that county regulatory standards and policies support the modification of residences to support populations who wish to age in place or need supportive housing for disabilities.
- Make housing more accessible and mandate the incorporation of universal design to ensure accessibility for those with disabilities or of large physical size (example of a 400 pound resident who needs a ground level unit or elevator served upper story unit).
- Develop a funding formula that rewards communities that provide more affordable units.
  - Complete the county study on underused public lands, making properties available for the development of affordable and workforce housing alone, or in conjunction with other public infrastructure improvements (examples: The Residences at the Fairfax County Government Center, a mixed income housing development that is privately developed on public land and the Del Ray/Potomac Yards Fire Station in Alexandria City with the fire station on the first floor and affordable housing above).
- Revisit the housing type once provided by the YMCA or YWCA, inexpensive, short-term boarding residences for young people temporarily living in the area.
- Re-establish a funding pool – and replace the discontinued Penny Fund with the Nickel Fund.
- Create a land trust that will hold or legally make note for future use as housing sites current lands owned by the county – for example – if a school site is no longer needed, housing is the first option for its redevelopment.
- Actively pursue alternative housing types for the Mount Vernon District from accessory dwelling units to co-housing units to single residential units.
- Support efforts that promote policies that better distribute and integrate very low-income housing throughout Fairfax County, and in particular, within job corridors.

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## **ISSUE # 3**

Richmond Highway is the auto-centric commercial center for the Mount Vernon community. As traffic has increased and the road has been widened, the corridor has become more of a barrier than the desired pedestrian and bicycle friendly boulevard called for in the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. The corridor is split into different magisterial districts, making it more challenging to plan comprehensively. Make the multiple representation at the local, state and federal level an asset by presenting a united front when demanding improvements to the corridor.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Due to its over-sized influence on the Mount Vernon community, the Richmond Highway Corridor requires specific attention in addition to the recommendations made elsewhere in this report. Richmond Highway must be planned comprehensively - both sides of the highway need to be addressed simultaneously and treated as single entity. Housing of all types and for all incomes should be integrated into development along both sides of the corridor. Of specific concern is the potential loss of market rate affordable housing when mass transit improvements are brought to the corridor and as redevelopment occurs. A dual-sided approach will better ensure the development of an attractive and functional place for the Mount Vernon community, providing choices in housing types and styles for people of all ages, household size and income levels.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Richmond Highway Corridor is bifurcated by separate Supervisor Districts, planning entities and processes, leading to disjointed decision-making. Housing is not incorporated in many existing strip retail centers, density is not adequate to support mass transit beyond bus service, and many of the existing residential properties are nearing the end of their life-cycle.

Much of the affordable housing on the corridor was built in the 1970s and 1980s with tax credit financing that required units to remain affordable for a specific time period. As these projects age out of the financing period (often a 30-year cycle) the loss of privately owned, affordable units is a real risk. Land values have continued to rise, and without active public intervention through financing, planning and regulatory actions, the existing stock of affordable housing will be radically diminished. Other current market-rate affordable units are also at risk, such as the manufactured home parks and garden apartment complexes because of their land value and the size of the parcel on which they sit. Large parcels that do not require consolidation are rare on the Highway. Rather than upgrading an older garden apartment complex, or refreshing a manufactured home community as is being done at the Meadows of Chantilly, the probability is great that the current type of housing will be removed and replaced with market rate housing and commercial space. Although market rate, unit pricing is significantly higher for a new unit than for a thirty-year old walk-up unit.

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As is stated within the current Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, more intense nodes along the Richmond Highway should be separated by less intensive uses, and include significant stretches of open space. The more intense nodes should be designed for and support a diverse population (income as well as age, needs, etc.) in a walkable, energy conscious and environmentally sensitive urban environment dense enough to be served by mass transit types in addition to the current bus system. The nodes must incorporate cultural activities, open space and be family friendly while establishing a clear character and identity for the Mount Vernon community.

Without further study, the highway itself will become more of a barrier, leaving each side of the highway independent of the other. Development of the highway itself must incorporate provisions for mass transit and pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. Unintended consequences of poorly thought through development will result in a proliferation of sound walls and an exacerbation of the current challenges pedestrians encounter when attempting to cross the highway. Comprehensive attention, beyond a singular focus on transportation improvements, is needed to ensure that the Richmond Highway does not emulate the worst of the nation's sections of the 'improved Route 1' but instead adds to the desirable characteristics of Mount Vernon.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Create a joint working group between the Lee District and Mount Vernon District Supervisors' offices to plan the Richmond Highway Corridor comprehensively. Target all properties that are physically connected to the corridor, with an expanded boundary where such makes sense. Use this group to create a process and public forum that will engender support for the working group's recommendations and establish the political will to ensure that the working group's proposals are enacted.
- Fine tune growth projections for Fairfax County to determine how much additional population growth is anticipated for the Mount Vernon and Lee Districts and of that growth, how much and how should such growth be housed within the Richmond Highway Corridor.
- Review the existing Comprehensive Plan and make modifications that encourage the redevelopment of current one-level commercial strip centers within the Richmond Highway Corridor into mixed use, multi-story integrated developments, with housing units provided in a range of unit types and for a full spectrum of income levels (the Mount Vernon District will need high income residents as much as it needs more moderate and low income residents to enhance a vibrant community) and household size, including the provision of owner occupied and rental units and housing appropriate for special needs citizens.
- Recognize that improvement in mass transit options such as heavy or light rail will result in increased density and new development that will almost certainly result in the displacement of current residents, many of whom are of moderate to low income. Ensure that any new development proposals include provisions for housing these citizens in the Richmond Highway Corridor. Develop policies that address the replacement or preservation needs of existing low or moderate income communities, including, but not limited to

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- workforce and affordable housing becoming a required component in new public infrastructure such as libraries, firehouses and administrative offices.
- Solicit ideas on how to preserve and enhance the variety of affordable housing types along Richmond Highway. The potential inclusion of rapid transit, light rail or subway service on Richmond Highway will put tremendous pressure on the ability to retain the existing affordable housing stock found currently in the corridor. If the retention of affordable housing is not an integral goal from day one, the units will be lost. Look to the Arlington County model along the Ballston, Clarendon and now Columbia Pike for examples of what to do and not to do.
    - The current Fairfax County Comprehensive Policy Plan calls for a one to one replacement of affordable units on-site or for a comparable payment for units not replaced made to the housing trust. This policy may not be the best way to encourage positive redevelopment of the highway and for preservation of affordable housing stock. The policy should be reviewed for unintended consequences.
    - Richmond Highway is an old corridor, with a roadway that has been widened over time, thus reducing the size of the adjacent parcels. This has created a scenario that requires parcel consolidation for most any redevelopment proposal. The parcels that are large (over 80 acres) are few and often currently covered with garden apartment complexes and manufactured housing communities – market-rate affordable housing. When, not if, those parcels are redeveloped, large amounts of affordable housing will be lost.
    - Encroachment on existing neighborhoods may be a viable option for stabilizing and improving the corridor, while enhancing the surrounding neighborhoods. This is contrary to current county policy and should be reviewed.
  - Create incentives to entice private developers to provide more than the currently required percentages of affordable units along the Richmond Highway corridor (currently 12% under some county policies).
  - Move toward mixed use communities – walk-able communities- residential, commercial, office, institutional; with mixed incomes – don't segregate housing types by income level.
  - Improve pedestrian and bicycle flow across the corridor to better link both sides while improving personal safety.
  - Solicit ideas on how to preserve and enhance a variety of innovative housing types that make use of green building techniques in areas subject to or vulnerable to redevelopment, especially with the intention of reducing operating costs for low and moderate income residents.
  - Develop incentives to preserve and enhance a variety of housing types (income level, size, type, etc.) in areas scheduled for redevelopment.
  - Design housing in the corridor to meet short-term residency needs; there is a need for temporary accommodations that are less expensive than short stay motels for young people or people in transition due to moving, etc., modeled on the old YMCA or YWCA or boarding house model.
  - Make planning for the Richmond Highway Corridor a high priority and a joint effort by the South County Federation and the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations.

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## **ISSUE # 4**

Additional housing development in the Mount Vernon District is needed. Any new development must be respectful of the area's history and environmental setting. It must be installed with adequate public infrastructure, such as schools, libraries, parks and transportation and private infrastructure such as places of worship and work sites.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

New housing development can be added to the Mount Vernon community without diminishing the positive attributes of the community IF appropriate investment is made to the public infrastructure simultaneously. New housing is and can be made consistent with Mount Vernon's historic past and natural environment, and will serve as a positive force to bring people together, providing a strong sense of community.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Mount Vernon is an historic place with unique neighborhoods that trace their origin to lands belonging to George Washington. Riddled with streams, bays and tidal creeks, much of the district is on or near a waterfront. Any new development must be respectful of the area's history and positive environmental qualities while improving upon existing poor settings.

Mount Vernon should remain a diverse community, composed of a variety of residential areas that are conveniently located to work, shopping and entertainment opportunities and supported by strong public institutions. The district needs more pedestrian, bicycle and public transit systems to supplement the existing auto-centric network. Enhancing and integrating a pedestrian, bicycle and public transit system will enhance community cohesion by better linking residents with each other.

New housing must include units that are within the county's affordable spectrum and units that are attainable for people of all income levels, age and abilities. Energy efficiency and high quality construction must be a part of any new development program.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Work to create a community where all are accepting of each other.
- Educate residents about the area's history and need to change current patterns of development to accommodate future growth and energy concerns.
- Develop a process and forum to garner support for projects that expand the stock of affordable and workforce housing throughout the district, constructed in a manner that is sensitive to the community's history and environmental riches.
- Encourage the faith community to take an active role in the advocacy for the construction of additional affordable and workforce housing units throughout the district.
- Ensure that new residential development/redevelopment includes houses for all income levels and family size.

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- Balance the number of traditional affordable homes with high-end home construction.
- Within or in conjunction with any new development, provide for “green space” such as parks, trails and recreational areas that will bring people together.
- Ensure that institutional construction is in concert with the development of new housing units, providing space for the various faith communities to build and grow.
- Provide for easier “Accessible Housing” opportunities.
- Insist on energy efficient construction. By 2035, it will be considered passé as a building practice, as integral to building as indoor plumbing is today.
- Work to preserve the historic resources of the community, recognizing ‘historic’ is a widely defined term – from our heritage of colonial landscapes to free Black communities to neighborhoods of glass houses.
- Solicit ideas on how to preserve and enhance a variety of housing types in areas subject to or that are vulnerable to redevelopment, especially for existing low and moderate-income housing communities along the Richmond Highway Corridor.
- Work with the community and the county planning staff to develop guidelines or standards to incorporate appropriately scaled high income, luxury housing within established neighborhoods.
- Provide support for residents who wish to remain in their homes as they age, and provide options for senior housing within the Mount Vernon District.

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## **ISSUE # 5**

In twenty-five years, residents of the Mt. Vernon district, no matter what their income level or functioning level, should be able to find housing within the Mount Vernon District. Housing for all who desire such is not currently available in the Mount Vernon District.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Housing for all income levels and needs, in varying sizes and styles from studio apartments to luxury single-family residential homes, will be available for rent and purchase throughout Mount Vernon in attractive, safe, family-friendly and supportive neighborhoods.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Mount Vernon is a diverse community. Part of this diversity is due to the age of its varied building stock. It is important to retain and expand the housing infrastructure to ensure that this diversity of income levels and housing choice remains. New housing should incorporate green building techniques for all types of housing, including multi-family units.

Over half of the state's moderate and upper income renters with housing problems live in the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission (PDC).<sup>1</sup> Moderate-income renters in Northern Virginia experience greater than normal renter housing problems due to the high cost of housing in the area. It is interesting to note that recent census data shows Fairfax County has a household median income of \$104,259. The nation's top three median household incomes were in Northern Virginia.<sup>2</sup>

However, the median household income is not enough to buy a median valued house in Northern Virginia. Housing prices may have declined due to fluctuations in the economy but they have not fallen far enough to close the affordability gap. Much of the northern Virginia area can be difficult for low- to moderate-income households to find decent, safe housing that they can afford.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally "the wave of aging "baby boomers" needing public health services in Northern Virginia which was once thought to be the greatest healthcare and fiscal threat facing local governments in the coming decades -- will be far outnumbered by the skyrocketing percentage of young adults with autism diagnoses."<sup>4</sup> All these adults with autism will need supported community based housing.

New and renovated units should be of varying size and physical character such as luxury housing that is respectful of its neighbors' scale; accessory dwelling units that fit into existing neighborhoods, affordable housing for young people and unrelated singles; transitional and affordable housing for community members in need of

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<sup>1</sup> Housing Needs Data for Virginia: A Guide to CHAS Data. Virginia Center for Housing Research.

<sup>2</sup> "Census data: Northern Virginia tops in median income," Washington Post, December 14, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Jobs, Transportation, and Affordable Housing: Connecting Home and Work. 2010 Southern Environmental Law Center and Housing Virginia.

<sup>4</sup> "Fairfax: Autism, not 'baby boomers,' biggest future health challenge," Washington Post, May 18, 2010.

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special support, group homes, supportive housing and housing for those who choose to age in place or in more concentrated housing.

Everyone does not need or want to own his/her housing unit. Not everyone is at a stage of his/her life so that it is useful to own a dwelling. A strong community requires a complement of high-quality affordable rental choices. The Mount Vernon community needs a healthy, affordable rental environment as well as owner occupied residential neighborhoods and complexes.

Developers should be encouraged to adopt universal design and ensure accessibility to the "differently-abled".

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Develop a change to the Comprehensive plan for the Mount Vernon District that articulates that housing for all will be available within the district and challenge citizens associations or a newly identified working group to oversee its implementation.
- Incorporate appropriately scaled luxury housing in Mount Vernon.
- Propose incentives to encourage a more aggressive ratio of workforce and affordable housing to be incorporated within new developments as was recently adopted for the Tyson Corner area 20% vs. 12%.
- Make housing accessible to all and mandate incorporation of universal design.
- Make use of identified available and unused county property for development of workforce and affordable housing.
- Educate the community about the value of a full housing spectrum that provides homes to the very work force that is needed to increase the prosperity in a geographic area. In a high-income area like Fairfax County, skilled workers need to have a choice of attractive homes that they can afford.
- Recognize and support the aggressive implementation of the Fairfax County Plan to End Homelessness and the Housing First concept.
- Encourage communities to work closely with developers to ensure a good understanding of the specific housing needs for any development project. Work on agreement for adequate affordable and workforce housing; housing for the disabled; single occupancy residents; and the elderly.
- Propose changing zoning rules to expand limits on the number of unrelated adults residing in a single family residence; simplify permits for establishing accessory dwelling units.
- Develop opportunities for respite housing.
- Promote the concept of auxiliary/accessory dwelling units and cooperative housing or co-housing.
- Pursue and encourage the private development of housing, specifically for aging populations and for all-aged populations in need of supportive housing. This housing must be well located, near medical services and hospitals, served by good to excellent public transportation and adjacent to shopping areas.
- Develop a coalition of interested parties in support of various housing types. These include, but are not limited to, professionals in the industry to investigate the growing needs of seniors

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## **ISSUE # 6**

Divisive conversation related to housing, from bitter arguments regarding the role of affordable housing in our community to outrage over tear downs and McMansions constructed in established, older neighborhoods, has adversely affected our community.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The game is changed. The process for incorporating planning and development decisions with a particular focus on housing for all income levels in the Mount Vernon District will change with the appointment of a Supervisor's Advisory Committee, focusing on early and more productive interaction between the development community and local citizenry, the development of incentives to add affordable housing stock, and incentive programs in conjunction with local businesses and institutions to better house their employees near their workplace. The Committee will include representatives from all sectors of our community and not be limited to only representatives of owner-occupied neighborhoods and the business community.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Mount Vernon District stretches from the Beltway to the Occoquan River and from the Potomac River to west of Interstate 95. As the district has grown in geographical size and population, it has become more complicated to meet and discuss proposals holistically and productively from the citizen perspective and from the developer perspective.

Data specific to Mount Vernon must be developed and distributed to further the conversation and agreement on the number of units needed for housing various subsets of populations (people with chronic, life-long disabilities, families, youth at risk, autism-related needs, etc.)

IF Mount Vernon citizens do not want the district to look the same in 25 years as it does today, the community needs to find a new way to converse and to adapt incentives to encourage positive change. The district has many active groups of citizens, business leaders, faith communities and nonprofits, many of whom are unfamiliar to each other. It includes groups that don't always play well together. Finding a way to coordinate and streamline a process for discussion regarding development is advantageous to all.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Appoint an Advisory Committee (with representation from realtors, affordable housing advocates, MVCCA, South County Federation, the faith-based community, nonprofits, SFDC, building industry representatives, Fairfax County staff, etc.) to look at alternative ways to review and discuss development proposals with representatives from all entities and from all areas within the district. This working group will actively work from the inception of any proposal to promote the mix and style of housing desired in the Mount Vernon District, with a particular focus on meeting the needs for

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affordable, workforce and housing serving special needs populations such as seniors, disabled citizens, and residents requiring supportive housing.

- Investigate and then promote how to better retain and grow a commercial sector whose leaders and owners reside in the Mount Vernon District.
- Investigate and then promote ways to broaden the citizen representatives who are actively involved in the Mount Vernon District affairs – what are impediments for young people to become involved; how better to capture the knowledge base of those who have worked for years, etc.
- Investigate and then promote how the review process can have better and more productive interaction between the development community and community associations.
- Investigate and then promote how workforce and affordable housing advocates can better team with the development community on behalf of density in projects. Build a coalition between the affordable housing community and the development community to advocate for workforce and affordable housing, encouraging higher density housing.
- Investigate and then promote the possibility of garnering tax breaks at a local level for affordable housing development (could be an incentive for adding density to a strip commercial center).

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## **ISSUE # 7**

The number of affordable and workforce housing units in Fairfax County are not sufficient to meet current and projected requirements for the large increase in the workforce that is predicted to exist in the next twenty-five years.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

A balanced, well-developed community is dependent upon the availability of affordable workforce housing for essential workers at all levels of income. If affordable and workforce housing is not sufficiently available, it will hinder economic growth, new businesses will not select to locate in the county, highways will be overloaded with commuters, and urban sprawl will continue.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The need for additional housing to meet requirements for low to middle income workers has been recognized for a number of years. Unfortunately, achievements in the development and preservation of such housing have not resulted in net increases of such housing. Deficits in terms of needs have been increasing annually. One significant factor in this deficiency is a general lack of understanding and appreciation by the public for the adverse effects on the county's future economic well being due to the deficiency of units.

The following facts are relevant:

- Fairfax County will need 63,660 net new housing units affordable for low and medium workers based on projected job growth through 2025.<sup>1</sup>
- Fairfax County's economic vitality is inextricably tied to its ability to address the issue of demand for affordable housing. Failing to plan for a balanced supply of housing in the future will reduce the county's opportunities for economic growth.<sup>1</sup>
- Workers are being pushed far away from employment centers in search of housing that they can afford and that adequately meets the needs of their families. This is adding to traffic congestion and sprawl, cutting into family time, and straining the economic and environmental well-being of our urban areas.<sup>2</sup>
- County officials, planners, developers involved in the Tysons Corner redevelopment program have formally recognized that adequate housing for all economic levels within the boundaries of the Tysons area is essential for the future success of this program.<sup>3</sup>
- Studies have shown that the building of affordable housing does not adversely affect the value of surrounding property.<sup>1</sup>
- Business firms choosing a new location use as a criteria for selection the availability of housing to meet the needs of employees.<sup>1</sup>
- Lack of affordable/workforce housing adversely affects services rendered by police, fire and emergency medical personnel. Also, highly qualified school teachers choose not to locate in areas of high cost housing.<sup>1</sup>
- The need for housing for members of our society who are in the very low-income level (generally below 30 percent of average medium income) is a problem with moral and ethical ramifications especially as it relates to

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homelessness. Fairfax County has officially recognized this problem by adopting (March 2008) a plan to end homelessness in ten years. The plan calls for access to 220 additional houses for the homeless every year. A companion plan to develop these houses is essential to the successful accomplishment of ending homelessness.<sup>4</sup>

- A requirement for additional affordable houses each year until 2025, as reported by George Mason University, amounts to 4200 housing units. The same studies by the University states that the county loses approximately 1,000 units from the affordable category annually.<sup>1</sup>
- A new approach to solving this problem is required.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Develop a program to educate the public about the housing problem/need and solicit their support. Specifically, obtain support from faith-based organizations, the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Ventures in Community, V.O.I.C.E., CFUH (Communities of Faith United for Housing), the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, and builders and developers.
- Establish an office accountable to the Fairfax County Executive that will serve as an advocate for affordable/workforce housing and will assist in a coordinated effort between government, the general public, bankers, developers and builders. (A version of this was strongly recommended by an industry panelist at the Dec 3, 2010 Summit and has been voiced by other industry groups.)
- Identify property now owned by the county and faith-based organizations that can be made available for development of workforce housing.
- Work in cooperation with activities such the Taskforce on Affordable Housing, the Northern Virginia Alliance for Affordable Housing, faith-based groups, non-profits such as New Hope Housing, Rising Hope Mission Church, Good Shepherd Housing, United Community Ministries, and RPJ to collectively utilize the strength and vision of a large number of activities that are dedicated to this important need.

## Endnotes:

1. FCHCD and FCRHA "Strategic Action Plan for FY 2011" based on data from George Mason Univ, Center for Regional Analysis.
2. J. Ronald Terwilliger, Chm of Urban Land Institute, at Fairfax County Workforce Housing Summit, December 3, 2010.
3. BOS Chairman Sharon Bulova, at the above summit.
4. Plan to End Homelessness in Fairfax County and Falls Church in Ten Years.

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

The Human Services Committee (HSC) envisions a continuous safe, prosperous and healthy community for our Mount Vernon residents. In so doing the HSC investigated and is providing pertinent information to keep the Mount Vernon area superior, over the next 25 years, to all Fairfax County areas. The HSC will address Full Funding for Health and Human Services, Affordable and Supportive Housing, Building Resilience of Children/Youth, Senior Citizens and INOVA Mount Vernon Hospital (IMVH) Center for Southeastern Fairfax County Healthcare.

## **Top 5 Issues**

### 1. Fairfax County

Expand our INOVA (MVH) campus to ensure that it can provide healthcare to the entire Southern Fairfax County area. The expansion of MVH ambulatory care, operating rooms, hospital rooms and offices for attending physicians are needed.

### 2. Veterans

Veterans (not retired or service connected disabled veterans) some of them homeless, have no health care facility in the Mount Vernon District area.

### 3. Full Funding for Health and Human Services

We need to focus on encouraging the Commonwealth of Virginia to increase the household salary level so that more residence can qualify for Medicaid type human service assistance. This will allow the Commonwealth to receive more Federal matching funds.

### 4. Senior Citizens – Allow Senior Citizens to “age in place.”

There is a need to develop a structure that will keep senior citizens in their community where they feel comfortable and secure. This structure must include service support. This service support must include deliveries and programs that support the aging and their adult family members serving as caregivers.

### 5. Affordable and Supportive Housing Programs that meet identified needs – Ways to increase the number of affordable housing.

We must explore means to help both welfare and non-welfare poor families to improve their access to affordable housing. Therefore, we should encourage our leaders to appoint someone to negotiate with builders (tax incentive) to build more affordable housing.

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## **ISSUE #1**

Fairfax County

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

In order to fulfill its leadership role as the community hospital center able to serve the entire population of Southeastern Fairfax County, Inova Mount Vernon Hospital (IMVH) as part of the Inova Health System (IHS) shall expand its Parkers Lane campus—through a major modernization and expansion of facilities—to support state-of-the-art services and receive referrals from the Inova Lorton Healthplex (with 24/7 emergency services, to open in the last quarter of 2012). This major expansion will also stimulate the entire network of community-based healthcare providers who will choose to practice throughout the Hospital's service area and who will want access to excellent hospital-based services.

### **Background/Discussion**

IMVH (as part of IHS) has been a key provider of quality health care to the residents of Southeastern Fairfax County (in Mount Vernon, including the growing Lorton area, and Lee districts) for almost 40 years, on an attractive campus close to County emergency medical transport, the southeastern center for community mental health, and other facilities. Early in the past decade, when the hospital was struggling and in need of renovation, there was a real possibility it would be closed. Instead, the physicians, the community and Supervisor Hyland have worked diligently with the IHS to assure a strong foundation for the future. Today, IMVH is experiencing renewed vitality, through recognition of its excellence in care and visible enhancements of its facilities: the Hospital (which currently has just under 315 thousand square feet of gross floor area) is now poised for major Inova commitment to its central role in healthcare delivery for the diverse, populous Southeastern area of the county.

**The Community served** is primarily the people in the entire Southeastern Fx Co. area, and nearby hospital-based care must include the needs of all ages, family cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic characteristics. Simultaneously, carefully developed Centers of Excellence attract specialist doctors and patients from an even broader area and balance the cost of emergency and other services that are not fully reimbursed.

**Services based at this community hospital** would respond to the needs of the community and evolving health care requirements, to include an expanded emergency services department, expanded space for ambulatory care services (that support out-patient focused healthcare delivery), operating room/surgery/administrative addition and expansion, additional patient rooms to support the transition to all-private rooms, physician offices on and near the IMVH campus (particularly for physicians whose practices are directly related to care of patients in the IMVH setting) and structured parking to support the campus development. Hospital-based state-of-the-art in-patient and ambulatory

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Medical/surgical, diagnostic, and emergency services—which require expensive high-tech equipped facilities, skilled teams, and high levels of patient monitoring—will extend both public and private community-based healthcare capabilities. For example, the 24/7 emergency services at the Inova Lorton Healthplex, the Gartlan Center for Community Mental Health, and private specialist physician groups in the area all may be expected to benefit from IMVH’s role as a center for community-based care.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, building on the present land leasing contract with Inova Health System, should recommend that the Inova Health System designate in early 2011, as a basis for constructive public dialogue, the goals and parameters of longer term planning (however tentative) for expanding the role, facilities and services to be available through Inova Mount Vernon Hospital by or before 2035.

Dialogue will be especially fruitful if citizens and hospital planners consider the needs and suggestions of quality healthcare providers (public and private)—especially those in varied fields such as primary care, family practice, gynecology, geriatric medicine, physical and mental illness diagnosis and therapy, early developmental disorders, and other specialist care that must be attracted to practice in the growing southeastern service area. Discussion in the public meetings of the Southeast Health Planning Task Force will help to build community understanding, participation and support **before** more detailed plans must undergo scrutiny in formal public hearings.

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## **ISSUE #2**

Veterans

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Provide a Health Care Facility for Veterans in the vicinity of Fort Belvoir.

### **Background/Discussion**

Veterans (not retired or service connected disabled veterans) some of them homeless, have no health care facility in the Mount Vernon District area.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Convince our Congressman and Senator to petition the Department of Defense to appropriate funds to provide a health care facility for veterans along the Route One corridor area.

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## **ISSUE #3**

Full Funding of Health and other Human Services

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It is the responsibility of the State to provide funding for health and other human services and past State-level decisions have resulting in limiting access to health and mental health care so that Virginia ranks near the bottom among the states in providing such care. In particular, the income level required for access to Medicaid is unrealistically low, preventing many people from qualifying for this assistance who in fact are very poor especially considering the high cost of living in this area. Failure to draw down federal funds, results in the closure of community hospitals and in underpayment of primary care physicians, further limiting access to health care. An example of the way disabled people are affected by the limited Medicaid in Virginia is that in Fairfax County alone over 1000 individuals with intellectual disabilities eligible for Medicaid are on the waiting list for services from the State.

Virginia must assume its proper share of responsibility for funding of health and other human services by accepting the full Federal funding available for state-wide and local services, especially the Federal funding offered through Medicaid, Medicare, and other programs, by adopting all the programs available, at the highest income-eligibility offered federally, and providing the necessary State matching funds. Whenever the Legislature and/or the Governor transfer costly state-mandated and other requirements from State administration to be administered/provided by local jurisdictions (e.g., by the Fairfax County Health Department or the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board), the State should provide for the full estimated public cost by direct grant and/or granting the localities additional authority to raise revenue that will enable them to fund the new mandates in their community.

### **Background/Discussion**

Medicaid funds health care including mental health services for people in particular categories (such as low income children and parents, pregnant women, older adults, and persons with disabilities). It is financed by the Federal and state governments and administered by the states. Because each dollar Virginia puts into the Medicaid program draws down a federal dollar, what Virginia will pay for Medicaid is a significant factor on total funding for human services. Currently Virginia does not draw down the full Medicaid funding available because it has either not enrolled in some programs or established lower income rates for eligibility for benefits than the Federal programs allow and manipulated this formula to limit total State cost, shifting the true cost of care to local taxes and to local care providers who choose to accept patients who have no form of insurance. In comparison to other states Virginia enjoys higher than average per capita income (ranked 8th in 2008),

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yet Virginia ranks 27th in Medicaid spending per recipient (2006) and Virginia ranks near the lowest levels nationally regarding Medicaid spending per capita (48th in 2007)

The very low income eligibility is especially unfortunate in Fairfax County with its high cost of living and impacts the County's ability to provide primary and hospital care to persons who would receive Medicaid in other States. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) feels obliged to supplement the benefits allowed by the State which results in higher local taxes although Federal funds could have been used instead.

The minimal use of Federal Medicaid will also cause difficulties in implementing the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in Virginia; for instance, the Act is going to cost much more to implement in Virginia than in Maryland which currently has much higher eligibility levels under Medicaid than Virginia does.

As Virginia is a "Dillon Rule" state, local governments have only the powers specifically granted by the State. As a result, Fairfax County's budget is based largely on real estate tax revenue. When real estate values are down even when the economy as whole, or personal incomes start recovering from the current difficulties, Fairfax County revenues will continue to be low. We will need new sources of revenue to provide the services that County residents expect for themselves and for those in need.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Residents of the Mount Vernon District should let the BOS know of our concern for adequate funding of human services, particularly health services for all our residents. The BOS should continue to include improved Federal/State Medicaid funding on their legislative program that is sent to the State Legislature and Mount Vernon residents should let the Legislators know of their support for this effort. As new funds are offered by the Federal government in the years ahead to implement the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, we should urge the State to take full advantage of these funds/programs. The BOS should also reconsider having a referendum on a restaurant tax, which surrounding jurisdictions have, especially to take advantage of our large number of tourists to diversify and increase County revenue.

# Human Services

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## **ISSUE #4**

Many older adults and individuals with disabilities choose to remain in their homes-grow old in their community – or “age in place”.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

This task force fully supports keeping our residents in their community as they age and continue to develop an accessible, affordable, high quality support structure. This includes prevention, health and mental health services along with respite opportunities for caregivers.

## **Background/Discussion**

As the baby boom generation reaches the age of retirement, the number of Americans over the age of 65 is expected to reach 71.5 million by 2030. The fastest growing segment of America’s aging population are those people over the age of 85 who are most likely to need the support of family, friends and the community to remain independent. There will be an unprecedented demand on health, social services and housing accommodations.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

In 2035 Mount Vernon will have set in place a comprehensive, holistic approach to service delivery- policies, programs and services to promote the quality of life for our aging population. These increased services will offer home chore services, home modification, senior friendly housing options, accessible public transportation assistance, and continued opportunities for the older adult to remain involved in their communities--- for **all of our diverse aging population**. Key community leaders will embrace the change, create partnerships resulting in increased services and funding.

## **We encourage and support:**

- Aging and Disability Resource Centers(ADRCs) overseen by the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging which will offer long-term care information, referral, and assistance for people of all ages and income levels.
- Family Caregiver and Support Program sites available for unpaid family caregivers. These sites will provide services, counseling, training, respite care for those that need that “break”.
- Key leaders and stakeholders embrace partnerships necessary to improve services to seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Integration of the older adults with the non-elderly community. “Neighbor Care and the Neighbors Care Alliance” becomes a success in piloted communities.
- Support builders in universal design by providing incentives for zoning. Senior housing options-shared housing, co-housing, home sharing alternative will have been part of the public education network.
- Our community will be a safe, independent, accessible network of support and include all important components of a livable community for all to age in place.

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## **ISSUE #5**

Affordable & Workforce Housing/ Provide Strategic housing programs for workforce, wait listed, special needs and homeless populations.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It is important for stakeholders to think beyond cash assistance and explore ways to help both welfare and non-welfare poor families improve their access to affordable housing.

This Task Force fully supports the *Housing First* methodology as an alternative to a system of emergency shelter/transitional housing progressions that encompasses individuals or families moving through different levels of housing with the goal of independent living. While often the result of interwoven systemic and personal problems, the primary cause of homelessness among individuals and/or families is the growing gap between housing costs and income.

## **Background/Discussion**

At present, Fairfax County has a 7% vacancy rate across homeowners and renters.

Is workforce housing sufficient to accommodate projected job growth? Is non-workforce housing sufficient to accommodate projected population growth? How do we adequately address the increase in population, vis-à-vis affordable housing?

<b>Mount Vernon District</b>			
	<b><i>Population</i></b>	<b><i>Housing Units</i></b>	<b><i>Households</i></b>
2009	124,000	46,000	44,000
2025	139,000	52,000	50,000

Affordable housing is widely recognized as a controversial reality of everyday life. Gains in affordability often result from expanding land available for housing or increasing the density of housing units in a given area. To ensure a steady supply of affordable housing Fairfax

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County must make certain that neighborhoods weigh real and perceived livability impacts against the necessity of affordability.

In Fairfax County, the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment averages \$1,324. In order to afford this level of rent and utilities, without paying in excess of 30% of income on housing, a household must earn approximately \$52,960 annually. Assuming a 40-hour workweek, 52 weeks a year, this level of income translates into a housing wage of \$25.46/hour.

Monthly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments for an individual are approximately \$637 in Fairfax County. If SSI represents an individual's sole source of income, \$191 in monthly rent is affordable, while the FMR for a one-bedroom is approximately \$1168.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Identify and negotiate purchase of abandoned/vacant building(s) and convert into affordable housing units (e.g., similar to the Sunrise facility at Rte 1 and Lorton Rd.).

Negotiate and provide builder and/or developer tax incentives in exchange for offering a pre-determined percentage of affordable housing (either for rent or for purchase).

Identify an existing church for an apartment development built on top of church sanctuary. Church apartment project will include obtaining air rights and a zoning change. (This type of project is currently underway in Arlington County).

Re-entry mapping (1/2 way homes, shelter programs, transitional housing, jails, prisons) to identify and proactively address permanent housing needs of re-entering populations.

Protect tenants from eviction from foreclosed on homes and educate public (brochures within County housing departments and information on County website).

Engage other community and faith-based organizations seeking new/innovative approaches to serving low-income populations (e.g., South County Cares, Lorton Community Action Center, or United Community Ministries).

Increase participation along the Route 1 corridor in the Mt. Vernon District for the Silver Lining Housing Program by raising the maximum allowable purchase price for housing.

Any future initiatives stemming from the Mount Vernon Visioning Task Force require Fairfax County preserve current existing federal, state, and/or county housing resources presently available and increase affordable housing opportunities for renters and homebuyers.

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## **ISSUE #6**

Building Resilience of children and youth

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

In 2035, Mount Vernon is a diverse, caring community where children and youth build sustaining connections to adult mentors in school and community activities and find readily available resources for healthy positive choices.

Mount Vernon enjoys a reputation for great schools, low crime, and vibrant culturally diversity in arts and recreation. This is in part because public and private nonprofit resources continue to be deployed strategically in human services that partner with schools and public safety in ways that stimulate youthful awareness of healthy choices and real opportunities and that prevent participation in gangs, substance abuse, crime, violence, preventable illness and injury, and waste of youthful potential through risky choices.

### **Background/Discussion**

Numerous studies, national and local, have shown the benefits of prevention and early intervention programs for children. The County's own Youth Survey, expanded to provide greater detail at the school pyramid level, makes clear that programs that connect students to adult mentors and positive perspectives on their own behavioral choices can have deep and lasting benefits for youth, family and community. Investment in programs directed at prevention and intervention in domestic violence also benefits family's communities, and the county. Fairfax County has identified areas of particular need and developed programs that have proven effective and been adopted elsewhere. Nonprofit and voluntary organizations in Mount Vernon (and Human Services Region I) have developed and provided some especially effective prevention programs in response to local needs, yet these often suffer funding reductions even as needs grow during a difficult recession. (Closing of Lorton Community Action Agencies' after-school Resource Center that provided snacks, homework assistance, and safe haven for children of working parents is a recent example.) A renewal of public support and funding for prevention programs, to leverage private contributions and voluntary efforts, will prevent both public and private costs from escalating, in health and hospitalization, in educational remediation and drop-out, and in public safety (including police and court costs).

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Effective human services must begin from response to emerging local crises to develop effective, scalable local programs and these must be sustained as they evolve to meet growth and change in the community.

- (1) Expand opportunity for early childhood education combined with quality childcare, made available for working parents at all income levels, through partially subsidized sliding scale fees.
- (2) Expand opportunities for safe supervised after-school programs, available and affordable for all families through subsidized fees and through public/private partnerships to provide facilities (esp. in middle schools) and staffing.

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- (3) Expand the Leadership and resilience model programs for high-school age youth-developed in this county and adopted by other states-to all Fairfax County high schools.
- (4) Provide Students on Suspension (SOS) programs, through expanded public/private partnerships, to provide mentoring and retain connection to education for at-risk-youth.
- (5) Develop resources centers in the Mount Vernon area for neighborhood, school and community education, information and programs that address issues of child development, mental health and mental illness in children and youth.

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## **Community investments support access to Excellent Community-based services**

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

In 2035, Mount Vernon is a lively, safe, prosperous, and healthy community – within the larger local government jurisdiction of Fairfax County and the Commonwealth of Virginia – where community living thrives on mutual *exchanges or “delivery” (giving and receiving) of services, public and private, voluntary and professional, that we all need and agree to make available for each other locally*: in other words, services that people of all ages and diverse backgrounds find here for their work or play or home-making and especially perhaps for personal and family resilience, wellness and life-long learning opportunities.

Because we are a well-connected community – with human professional and voluntary resources that make us a gem in the eyes of many- we remain confident and courteous as we participate in public planning and ongoing evaluation of the strategic delivery systems that sustain and improve over vital public services: especially, the systems of **community emergency preparedness and crisis prevention as well as response** for healthcare, public safety and education.

As the southeastern area of the County continues to grow, and neighborhoods change, we endeavor to map, develop, and interconnect our micro-villages (neighborhoods and other multi-household associations with interests in common) and micro-zones (aka “mixed-use” areas) and to include within them safe attractive multi-use public meeting palaces as well as the two-way media of communications and modes of transportation that serve *our entire community* and enable us to work together to keep it situated within a healthy, life-sustaining environment.

### **Background/Discussion**

Our ability to connect well in 2035, and to deliver essential services for young and old, will require planning steps in FY2012 that expand and improve our array of navigable local networks: especially, **multiple media of communication** (for two-way or interactive use, person-to-person and by teams or small groups) and **multiple modes of transportation** (cleaner, more energy-efficient transit choices, able to minimize local congestion and take us to meet with others or bring others to us at home, safely, at any hour of the day or night). Making available to everyone these varied media of communication and modes of transportation (an array that spans oldest and newest kinds) will transform the way we plan and zone land use, **in order to interconnect all our essential community-based services: public safety** includes interaction with courts hospitals, **education** that includes early and life-long learning opportunities, **environmental and recreation services** (too meagerly funded now and delivered piecemeal through a mix of State, Regional and County Authorities such as the Parks Authority and Health Department), and the vital **health and human services network**.

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## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

This health and human services network must coordinate major public and private providers, working in close cooperation with other essential services. To be effective in delivering services where needed, in homes and in communities, the network requires both **trained human resources** (professional and voluntary) and a local infrastructure of **safe, energy-efficient, well-equipped facilities** – centers where providers and consumers can meet person-to-person and where provider teams can be based for visits to homes in the community.

This means mapping and developing both **area wide** service centers and sites for **village or neighborhood** centers that can be reached on foot and by bicycle. It also implies that powerful two-way communication systems be developed, for example, in ways that facilitate electronic hospital-based healthcare monitoring and communication for patients discharged to their private homes and that can reach every home in the healthcare service area. For example, the **Inova Mount Vernon Hospital Center** (with its satellite Inova Lorton Healthplex) would provide nearby emergency services, advance diagnostic services, and well-equipped operating rooms, as well as other in-patient and ambulatory services, focused on a campus accessible for the entire southeastern county service area. At the same time, this Hospital Center must connect well by both transit and electronic communication to many other providers throughout the entire “Human Services Region I” for healthcare, community services, and other supportive human services. Village or neighborhood service points might be planned, for example, (1) in **local schools** where young families will find age-appropriate supervised after-school activities and also receive during evening hours information and referral services for a variety of special needs, (2) in **community centers** made accessible for walking, biking, motorized wheel chairs and neighborhood van services - equipped to facilitate voluntary community activity and to serve various ages enabled to age-in-place with supports. Remember, the nationally tested strategy for cost-effective human services delivery that also best promotes recovery is termed “Housing First”.

# Land Use

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

The vision for Land Use within the Mount Vernon District is to support the highest quality of life possible by preserving the predominantly stable residential character of the area interspersed with and supported by commercial nodes and neighborhood-serving retail centers, parkland and recreational sectors, and public services including mass transportation, while acknowledging that there may be substantial land areas of a distinctly different land use character than that envisioned. This vision seeks to achieve expanding economic opportunity through the judicious use of available land and carefully planned redevelopment programs while maintaining a balance between transportation and residential, commercial and industrial growth, growth that includes a sensible mix of uses which will promote increased pedestrian activity and economic stability.

Accordingly, the goals in support of this vision are:

- a. Preserve, capitalize on and enhance to the extent possible the great natural beauty and attractiveness of the important environmental and heritage resources of the Mount Vernon area.
- b. Promote the economic potential of the Richmond Highway Corridor as the gateway to the nation's capitol, the source of available and highly qualified professionals, the historic heart of Fairfax County, and a commercial area ripe for parcel consolidation and redevelopment.
- c. Encourage an economically balanced community with abundant high-tech, professional, and other employment opportunities.
- d. Achieve a balance between transportation, residential, commercial and industrial uses and growth.
- e. Preserve stable residential areas through infill development of a character and intensity or density that is compatible with the existing residential uses, and encourage the development of new neighborhood shopping centers within walking distance of the supported community.

## **Inventory**

### **What we have**

- Mostly stable, well maintained, single family detached residential neighborhoods interspersed with commercial centers on the primary transportation routes, e.g., Richmond Highway and Fort Hunt Road.
- A mostly financially secure, and growing but aging population overall.
- An effective public safety system (adequate police and fire stations).
- An outstanding, nationally recognized water supply system.
- Very little Class A office space, particularly in the Richmond Highway corridor.
- Difficulties in acquiring and consolidating for development the many, small, family-owned commercial lots abutting Richmond Highway.
- An overly competitive commercial environment along Richmond Highway resulting from an overabundance of neighborhood goods and services retail centers.
- No central, identifiable civic core, gathering place or "town center" to promote civic pride, plus a dearth of entertainment enterprises.

# Land Use

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- A lack of cohesive sidewalks and pedestrian access to commercial areas from parking lots and adjacent residential areas, as well as insufficient highway crosswalks and refuge areas.
- Insufficient infrastructure for effective and seamless cell phone service in or near residential neighborhoods.
- Deteriorating and degraded older neighborhoods as a result of lack of support for stabilization, and development that adversely affects their character and context.
- Insufficient industrially zoned land as a result of historic rezoning for commercial, office or residential uses, resulting in reduced County income and an inability to attract large industrial businesses.
- Insufficient storm water controls on private residential properties.
- Demand for affordable and work force housing that must be met without adversely impacting established neighborhoods.
- A proffer and development condition system with inadequate oversight and enforcement, and which is too dependent on reaction to complaints.
- Numerous historical sites, recreational spaces and modern commercial facilities that are inadequately promoted.
- Unattractive gateways to the Mount Vernon District (and to Fairfax County) that need improvement, keeping in perspective the importance of maintenance of industrially zoned land.
- Insufficient mass transit between Huntington Metro Station and the Fairfax County Parkway-Richmond Highway intersection, and the need to determine the feasibility of rail transit along that corridor.
- Several neighborhoods where residences were constructed in flood plains prior to enactment of restrictions against such uses, and the need to preserve those neighborhoods.
- Inadequately protected wetlands, especially streamline park areas and the Potomac River shoreline.
- Aging recreational facilities and a lack of present and future recreational land, especially pocket parks, within local communities.
- Land use regulation that has allowed development in a piecemeal, patchwork manner as opposed to a more comprehensive approach.

## **What we need**

- Pro-actively amend the Comprehensive Plan to attract potential developers of Class A office buildings.
- Enact transportation improvements sufficient to support Class A office developments.
- Limit proffers for Class A office space developments to those solely necessary to mitigate the developments' impact on the community.
- Relax Comprehensive Plan restrictions on commercial encroachment into stable residential neighborhoods where compelling justifications exist, e.g., expansion into a blighted area.
- Take steps to deter a piecemeal, patchwork approach to land use revisions to promote a more integrated and comprehensive approach.
- Consider public-private partnerships using public funds to acquire and consolidate substandard commercial and adjacent lots for resale to developers who commit to substantial preplanned development.
- Determine the type of rail mass transit from Huntington Metro Station to Fort Belvoir, to include issues of routing, funding, land acquisition and necessary rezoning.

# Land Use

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- Replace substandard retail centers between commercial nodes with high density market-rate housing.
- Enhance density entitlements in commercial areas to increase mixes of uses and facilitate a more urban format.
- Coordinate new higher density developments surrounding major transit stops and hubs.
- Identify uses and characteristics necessary and desirable to create a civic center similar to Reston Town Center and Shirlington, including identification and evaluation of potential sites and incentives for developers.
- Amend plans for the Richmond Highway Corridor to:
  - a. Require sidewalks contiguous to developments, additional pedestrian crossings and refuge areas.
  - b. Create a streetscape plan that contemplates safe, pedestrian-friendly areas and bike lanes.
  - c. Accommodate auto-oriented uses along with pedestrian-oriented retail, food service, and entertainment with sufficient parking.
- Promote mixes of uses in new developments to encourage connectivity between residents in surrounding neighborhoods as well as between new developments and adjacent residential areas.
- Amend County telecommunications policies to facilitate addressing resident opposition to locating cell phone towers, and to require DAS technology as an alternative to facilitate cell phone service.
- Tighten regulations and their enforcement to slow deterioration and degradation of older neighborhoods.
- Identify and apply resources to target specific neighborhoods that are in danger of degradation, and concentrate on enhancing those neighborhoods.
- Identify and upgrade aging public facilities.
- Inventory remaining parcels of industrially zoned land and make the inventory available to the public to recognize the importance of industrial uses to the County and to help attract industrial ventures.
- Determine an appropriate revenue level to the County and how much industrially zoned land must be retained or created to achieve that income level.
- Provide private property owners with incentives to retrofit their properties with storm water controls.
- Educate the public on the need to develop high-rise housing by increasing density, particularly in mixed use developments and in redevelopments for affordable and work force housing.
- Reaffirm the County policies of distributing affordable housing throughout new developments and establishing a requirement to include a substantial number of affordable and/or work force housing units in all residential revitalization projects.
- Adopt a County policy of refraining from accepting proffers unrelated to community impacts resulting from the proposed development, and ensure civic organizations are aware of the purpose of proffers and do not subject developers to unreasonable requests.
- Include the planning commissioner in the bond release process to ensure compliance with proffers and development conditions prior to bond release.
- Create a collaborative process concerning local assets such as historical sites, recreational spaces and modern commercial facilities to more effectively integrate those assets within the local community.
- Create partnerships between local businesses and schools to expose residents to local assets, and promote the benefits of those assets to increase their usage by designing better transportation routes, improving signage, and extending trails.

# Land Use

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- Coordinate and partner with historic sites to encourage them to use District services and facilities for mutual benefit, e.g., providing synergy between local assets and services such as hotels and restaurants to encourage tourists to extend their visits, enhancing local revenues.
- Encourage the County to cooperate with federal and state authorities to develop advantageous and cost-effective flood controls to safeguard older neighborhoods built in flood plains.
- Consider grants and tax credits to help property owners in flood plain areas with the additional expenses of rebuilding to meet current flood plain restrictions.
- Inventory and quantify the land area of District wetlands to help ensure no future loss of wetland area.
- Maintain and upgrade existing recreational facilities to match the quality of newer facilities.
- Ensure County recreational facilities keep pace with local demographics and increases in population, including studying required recreational needs, current utilization of existing facilities, development and prioritization of recreational concepts, and advocacy to the Park Authority.

## **What we should preserve**

- The continued support, civic pride, personal involvement, and vested interests of citizens committed to the betterment of the Mount Vernon community.
- The unique and high quality of life enjoyed by district residents.
- Our predominantly stable residential neighborhoods.
- The skilled, professional, responsive Fairfax County government structure which provides to our community some of the best services in the nation.
- The expansion of economic activity through the judicious use of available land and carefully planned redevelopment programs.
- The great natural beauty and attractiveness and the important environmental and natural heritage resources of the Mount Vernon area.
- The economic potential of the Richmond Highway Corridor as an area ripe for parcel consolidation and redevelopment.
- The close communication and coordination which currently exists between Fort Belvoir officials, the Mount Vernon District Supervisor, and the Fairfax County Government representatives.
- The encouragement of responsible infill development which complements and is compatible with the surrounding community.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #1**

The delayed revitalization of the Richmond Highway and Huntington Avenue corridors should include high quality core (Class A) office buildings. Better and more creative incentives are needed to encourage developers to commit to substantial office and commercial development.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It is a known fact that in the Richmond Highway corridor within Fairfax County there is very little Class A office space. Unfortunately, developers who might be considering construction of Class A office space along Huntington Avenue and in the Richmond Highway corridor have previously found it more economically palatable to develop such projects elsewhere.

## **Background/Discussion**

When developers consider construction of Class A office buildings in the Richmond Highway corridor, they are currently confronted with the requirement to seek out-of-turn amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, followed by the requirement to rezone the land. In order to overcome these hurdles, developers are required to make numerous presentations to County staff, the MVCCA, the South County Federation, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors, and to offer expensive proffers in order to develop. These time-consuming and costly steps have contributed to making development of Class A office space in the Richmond Highway and Huntington Avenue corridors economically unpalatable.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

To ease the way for development of Class A office space in the Huntington Avenue and Richmond Highway corridors, the County should pro-actively amend the Comprehensive Plan, particularly for areas near the Huntington Avenue-Richmond Highway intersection and on or near Richmond Highway near Fort Belvoir to attract potential developers of Class A office buildings.

Put into place transportation improvements that will be sufficient to support Class A office space developments.

Ensure the negotiation of proffers is limited to those actions necessary to mitigate the impact on the overall community of such development, and that proffers are not used to satisfy unrelated desires.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #2**

There is a lack of available commercial sites on Richmond Highway sufficiently large to accommodate revitalization efforts for redevelopment.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It has been difficult to acquire and consolidate for development the many small, family-owned commercial lots abutting Richmond Highway. These same lots have inadequate depths for current retail industry standards, and the policy of no commercial encroachment into residential neighborhoods restricts enlarging these lots. The same problem impacts any effort to widen Richmond Highway as proposed in the Comprehensive Plan for eventual rail to Fort Belvoir.

## **Background/Discussion**

The improvement of Richmond Highway and the construction of a mass transit line to Fort Belvoir are key to the economic life of Mount Vernon District. The issue has been studied and restudied numerous times over the years, but no real program has been started.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Relax the Comprehensive Plan restriction on commercial encroachment into stable residential neighborhoods when there are compelling justifications and where it is appropriate to encourage commercial development.

Consider public-private partnerships using public funds to acquire and consolidate substandard commercial and adjacent lots for resale to a developer who commits to substantial, preplanned development.

Start the planning effort now to determine exactly where a mass transit line from Huntington Station to Fort Belvoir shall be placed, how much land will be required, what private properties will be affected, and what rezoning will be required.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #3**

The overabundance of neighborhood goods and service retail centers along the Richmond Highway corridor has created an overly competitive environment that has resulted in a number of underperforming and blighted projects.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The Mount Vernon marketplace suffers from too much of the same retail with little or no hierarchy with respect to the quality of the retail offerings. This is compounded by a deficiency in the amount of better residential product along the corridor that could provide a stronger local market for the shops and restaurants which cater to the immediate trade area. Reinforcing the suggestions outlined in the current Comprehensive Plan that recommend concentrating retail in the commercial nodes and adding higher residential density zoning in the areas between the cores should continue to be recommended and encouraged

## **Background/Discussion**

The lack of denser zoning in the sites located between the business/commercial nodes, combined with a high land basis, has inhibited new development along the corridor. The issue has been raised several times over the last five years, but few changes in the zoning thresholds have occurred. Recent APR nominations have proposed greater density in certain locations and are currently in process for approval.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Selective infill and replacement of substandard retail centers between the commercial nodes with higher density, market-rate housing should be encouraged. This will result in fewer marginal retail offerings and allow the local market to upgrade the remaining tenant mix with better quality merchants and restaurants.

Increase density entitlements in the commercial areas to allow for a greater mix of uses and a more urban format. This will result in more pedestrian-oriented development, providing opportunities for fewer trips and longer stays by patrons, with the overall goal of producing less traffic-intensive infill development.

Where possible, coordinate new higher density development around major transit stops and hubs to create more commuting and mass-transit options for residents, workers and shoppers.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #4**

The lack of a central, identifiable civic core, gathering place, or “town center” to promote civic pride, coupled with a dearth of entertainment enterprises.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

In the past, comprehensive planning and zoning decisions for non-residential properties in the Mount Vernon District have been for narrowly defined institutional, industrial or commercial uses. Although many recent commercial and institutional projects have incorporated open space as a required component, this is often provided as simple non-paved, non-contiguous, landscaped areas. A central area or public use center that residents can identify and relate to as a civic center can create a sense of pride, help unify the District, and further promote cultural, entertainment and upscale dining uses that reinforce the civic center concept.

## **Background/Discussion**

A public civic center can develop on its own over time, or can be planned. Successful centers usually contain several public uses that reinforce each other, allow for large public assemblies or displays, and bolster the unique character of the region. Given that the Mount Vernon District is mostly built out, a civic center for the District would be difficult to materialize by itself. The best course would be to encourage the eventual establishment of a civic center by promoting new development that can assemble the required property to provide space for a variety of public uses for entertainment, public gathering, ceremonies and the arts, and that can provide the necessary symbiotic relationships for a successful center.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

As a planning exercise, identify general uses and characteristics necessary and desirable for a Mount Vernon District civic center similar to the Reston Town Center and Shirlington, and identify and evaluate possible locations within the District.

Develop guidelines and development incentives for providing the identified public uses and their relationships, and review/relax barriers that currently prevent such from being established.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #5**

There is a lack of cohesive sidewalk and pedestrian access to commercial areas from both parking lots and adjacent residential areas. In addition, there is a need for improved and additional highway crosswalks and refuge areas.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

There is an acute problem regarding pedestrian safety along the Richmond Highway Corridor, due to insufficient connectivity between sidewalks on either side of Route 1, and a lack of consistent planning to ensure that pedestrian refuges always intersect with crosswalks. Pedestrian access from residential neighborhoods to commercial areas also is very limited.

## **Background/Discussion**

The lack of parcel consolidation on both sides of the Richmond Highway Corridor, coupled with lower-density commercial uses and auto-oriented strip mall construction, serve as disincentives to pedestrian-friendly design and development. Insufficient funding and concerns about impeding traffic flow along the corridor have contributed to a lack of support for additional crosswalks and pedestrian refuges.

In some cases, neighborhood concerns about safety, noise, property values, etc. discourage pedestrian connectivity between residential and commercial areas.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

A Master Plan for the Richmond Highway Corridor should require sidewalks contiguous to development on both sides of Route 1 as well as additional pedestrian crossings and refuge areas.

A streetscape plan for the corridor should incorporate walkable boulevards for pedestrians and separate lanes for bicycles. Consider designs that separate bike lanes from auto traffic through the use of islands.

In order to accommodate auto-oriented retail uses, consider new development designs for the Richmond Highway Corridor such as Fairfax Corner, which mixes pedestrian-oriented retail, food service and entertainment with sufficient parking external to the commercial areas.

Promote a mix of uses in new development to encourage activity by residents in surrounding neighborhoods. Connections between new, mixed use development and adjacent residential areas should have sufficient lighting for safety.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #6**

There is a need for seamless cell phone service in or near residential neighborhoods of the Mount Vernon District.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The dichotomy of the public's desire for seamless telephonic connectivity and the antipathy of many neighborhoods to any version of cell phone towers with ground equipment enclosures, plus the unknown feasibility of installing Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) cell phone antennas without ground equipment enclosures as used in some historic districts and elsewhere in Fairfax County needs resolution.

## **Background/Discussion**

As sites for the location of cell phone antennas on commercial buildings, water towers, power transmission towers, etc., have been completed, free standing towers have recently been proposed in at least six residential areas. All have been opposed by adjacent residents. One, a proposed tree pole, resulted in a decision that upholds the need to satisfy resident opposition and consider all alternatives. Anticipating this decision, a committee of residents was proposed to identify acceptable sites or alternatives. The Planning and Zoning Committee of the MVCCA agreed to create a subcommittee to develop such advice. The subcommittee is now reviewing historic areas of Williamsburg, Reston, Hunter Mill and Great Falls that are now successfully using a towerless DAS system in residential areas.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Amend Fairfax County telecommunication policies to require DAS as an alternative if supported by served residents.

Amend Fairfax County telecommunication policies to comport to the decision - to satisfy resident opposition and consider all alternatives - mentioned above

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #7**

Deterioration and degradation of older neighborhoods by lack of support for stabilization, and by development that negatively impacts their character and context.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Stable residential neighborhoods can be negatively impacted by several factors. Incompatible development nearby or within, little or lax property and zoning code enforcement, deterioration of public infrastructure, and a lack of maintenance of public facilities can all contribute to destabilize a neighborhood. Destabilization can be evidenced through a decline in private property maintenance, increase in crime, and a lack of investment.

## **Background/Discussion**

Adjacent or nearby development can create light, noise, and air pollution, and unsafe or excessive traffic, making established residential neighborhoods less desirable. Current zoning regulations are sometimes inadequate to address these impact issues because they prescribe remedies for immediately adjacent properties only. Often new development not even close to a neighborhood can have adverse effects by altering traffic patterns on the entire street system.

Insufficient enforcement of property maintenance regulations and zoning regulations leads to a relative decline in property values and therefore a relative decline in tax revenue to the County. Often, the end result is a need for an increase in County expenditures for items such as crime prevention and law enforcement, remedial social services, and public facilities maintenance.

Deferred expenditures for aging public facilities and infrastructure in long established neighborhoods not only makes a neighborhood less attractive, but also may require more public expenditure in the long run in the form of emergency and temporary repairs.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Review property maintenance regulations and enforcement procedures, and tighten both regulations and enforcement where appropriate.

Identify and track neighborhoods that are in danger of degradation, and apply resources to target these as primary neighborhoods in need of attention, rather than treating all areas equally. Model this on current crime prevention programs that apply resources to target areas that need special attention.

Review zoning regulations and revise them as necessary to minimize impact not only on adjacent neighborhoods, but also on nearby neighborhoods. Pay special attention not only to traffic, but also to air, light and noise pollution and viewshed impacts.

## Land Use

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Provide capital expenditures to maintain and upgrade existing aging public facilities and infrastructure to be on par with new facilities that are provided.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #8**

The loss of industrially zoned land to rezoning for commercial, office or residential use. The County earns more from industrial uses than from any other zoning classification.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Over the past few years, the County has been feeling revenue pressures resulting mainly from plunging real estate values and the resultant reduction in tax revenues. As the County plans for the future, it is imperative that it takes steps to best preserve its tax base and its ability to attract new industry. An important, although small, component of that tax base is industrially zoned land.

## **Background/Discussion**

Tax revenues from industrially zoned land have formed an important component of the County's tax base for many years. However, over the years, piece by piece, the County has permitted rezoning of such parcels for other types of uses including for commercial, retail, residential and institutional purposes. Failure to take into account the big picture when such decisions have been made has been detrimental to long term planning regarding future revenue streams. Currently, industries wanting to relocate to Northern Virginia, and especially Fairfax County, have found it difficult to locate adequately sized sites that are planned or zoned for industrial uses.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The County must:

- a. Take an inventory of all 172 remaining parcels of industrially zoned land, including size, location and current uses.
- b. Determine the percentage of revenue derived from industrially zoned uses that provides an appropriate contribution to County income.
- c. Compare a and b above to calculate how much industrially zoned land is necessary to derive the desired revenue.
- d. Begin making decisions regarding industrially zoned land with greater attention to the big picture, including consideration of total County revenue from that land and locations where such uses are appropriate.

If there is currently a deficit in industrially zoned land, the County should create incentives to encourage developers to create such uses. Incentives could include tax credits, streamlining the approval process, and reductions in County fees charged.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #9**

How to create incentives for private property owners to retrofit their properties with stormwater controls.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Fairfax County is almost fully developed. As such, much of the current and future development consists of infill development of the small percentage of undeveloped land plus redevelopment. Since the amount of land being developed and redeveloped constitutes a small percentage of the total land area of Fairfax County, the best of intentions of County officials in enacting strict stormwater control ordinances can at best have only a limited enhancement of our environment and our quality of life.

## **Background/Discussion**

In existing, established neighborhoods, particularly those in which most, if not all, of the homes were built at least 10 years ago, virtually none of the homes include stormwater controls such as infiltration trenches, rain barrels, green roofs, dry ponds, etc. Thus, even if every newly developed or redeveloped property includes such stormwater controls, the fact that most developments did not incorporate similar measures limits the ability of new developments to reduce, on a large scale, pollution and environmental damage resulting from stormwater runoff in the District.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Provide private property owners with incentives to retrofit their properties with stormwater controls such as those listed above, thus enhancing our environment.

- a. Similar to the County providing each property owner with a trash dumpster, provide every home with one or more rain barrels and instructions on how to install them.
- b. Provide citizens with instructions on how to determine appropriate locations for infiltration trenches, and a list of contractors qualified to install them.
- c. Consider a tax credit or a lower real estate tax rate upon the property owner providing proof that stormwater controls have been retrofitted into a lot and are being properly maintained.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #10**

Meeting the demand/need for affordable and work force housing without creating issues in nearby established neighborhoods.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Planning and design of affordable and work force housing should be consistent with the design and aesthetic standards of local, market-rate housing. Where affordable and work force housing is part of a larger development, it should be integrated with and interspersed throughout the new development.

## **Background/Discussion**

The Mount Vernon District has very high property values and associated cost-of-living expenses. Due to these prohibitive costs, there is insufficient affordable and work force housing in the District. Many individuals, who work at essential jobs within the District, such as teachers, police, fire fighters, military personnel, clerks, and little shop owners, cannot afford to live in the area and must therefore commute long distances, increasing traffic in the region. Poor infrastructure also limits residents of the District to those who can afford a car since there is a lack of viable public transportation options.

In addition, the general population of homeowners is aging and there is no foreseeable plan to bring younger residents into the area to keep neighborhoods active. This will result in declining school enrollment and increasing demands for geriatric care facilities.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Start a program to educate the public on the need to build more housing vertically rather than add to residential sprawl and its concomitant traffic woes, acknowledging an increase in density in some areas, particularly in mixed use developments and redevelopments, in order to provide more affordable and work force housing.

Reaffirm the policy of distributing affordable housing throughout new developments.

Establish a requirement for all revitalization projects, regardless of their extent, for the inclusion of a substantial number of affordable and/or work force housing units.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #11**

The current proffer and development condition system has inadequate oversight and enforcement, depends too much on a complaint-driven system, and is frequently used for purposes unrelated to the particular development.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Proffers and development conditions should be used to mitigate the impact of a land use action on the local community and its environment. Special interest groups sometimes ask developers for proffers that are not related to the impact of that developer's land use action. This makes less money available for more relevant proffers and can put desirable proposals in jeopardy.

The enforcement of proffers and development conditions is sometimes a problem, and the bond on a land use action is sometimes released before the proffers have been completed as agreed.

## **Background/Discussion**

To ensure burdens created by land use actions are not passed on to the taxpayers, proffers and development conditions are a necessary part of the land use process. For the most part, the proffer system in Fairfax County is alive and well but would benefit from some fine tuning on the oversight and enforcement side.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

County officials and staff should adopt a policy of rejecting proffers, during the review process, that are not related to impacts on the community or its environment caused by the land use action itself.

Organizations such as the MVCCA and the South County Federation must be educated on the intent and purpose of proffers so that developers are not subjected to unreasonable and/or unpalatable proffer requests.

The local Planning Commissioner should be made part of the bond release process when there are proffers and development conditions in the action.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #12**

The District needs to promote numerous local assets such as historical sites, recreational spaces, and modern commercial facilities as benefits to the community. With their underused value, these sites should be integrated into future land use planning to capitalize on their value instead of perceiving them as traffic generators.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The committee agrees that the Mount Vernon District has many assets that have been ignored or under utilized. Popular attractions such as the Mount Vernon Estate, Woodlawn Plantation, Gunston Hall and the George Washington Memorial Parkway are very popular destinations for tourists and local residents alike to use for recreational and educational purposes. However, with the current transportation access and inadequate integration efforts, many of these sites are difficult to reach and have low visibility within the community.

## **Background/Discussion**

Currently many of the historic sites are used by tourists who come to these locations by bus or car and leave after visiting the sites. These limited trips prevent visitors from exploring the remainder of the District, and instead become a source of traffic that does not interact with other attractions or local businesses to increase revenue for the District. If other sites and attractions could be cross-promoted, it could result in greater revenues for the community.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Initiate a collaborative process with many of these locations to design a multi-pronged approach to better integrate these resources within the local community.

Start an educational campaign to promote the benefits of these locations to increase local usage.

Use partnerships between local businesses and schools to expose residents to these facilities.

Coordinate and partner with these historic sites, encouraging their activities to utilize the Mount Vernon District local services and facilities to mutually benefit both entities.

Design better bus routes, signage, roads and trails to integrate these sites into the community and increase revenue for the District.

Highlight these numerous attractions as a combined Mount Vernon District attraction to encourage visitors to stay for more than a day and use local hotels and restaurants.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #13**

Balanced against the need for industrially zoned land is the public desire to improve the appearance of the gateways to Mount Vernon District, especially from the south where there are long established but unkempt businesses on industrial land.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It is desirable to have the gateways into Fairfax County as attractive as possible.

There is a shortage of industrially zoned land in the County.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

As one enters Fairfax County on Richmond Highway from the south, the first thing one passes is generally well constructed flex space used mostly as offices whose appearance is appropriate for a gateway. Further north, past the Interstate 95 interchange, one finds a large area of heavy industrially zoned uses that are less appropriate for a gateway. There have been two Comprehensive Plan nominations in the last 15 years that attempted to increase density if the industrial use was changed. In both cases the overwhelming majority of land owners in the area opposed the changes and the nominations failed. According to the land owners, the location is more valuable to the businesses than the price of the land. Even the extremely profitable densities proposed in the BRAC nominations that would have had a negative impact on the community were rejected.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Accept that industrial land uses in the area are here to stay and think of incentives and ways to work with businesses to make them as attractive as possible, particularly at gateway locations. Widen Richmond Highway in the area.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #14**

The misconception that light rail from the Huntington Metro station to the Fairfax County Parkway could or should be located in a Richmond Highway median.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Underground or elevated Metro rail, monorail, or light rail is the preferred vision for any rail transit between Huntington Metro station and Fort Belvoir along or near Richmond Highway.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

A 1997 Community Vision created by citizens of Mount Vernon District, Lee District and the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation calls for Richmond Highway to be redeveloped as a suburban boulevard to be renamed Woodlawn Boulevard, or another name descriptive of the historical area through which it passes. The boulevard vision is pedestrian friendly with wide safety medians planted with large, tall shade trees. There is no vision to convert the median to a dangerous transit way. The Mount Vernon Council thereafter adopted several resolutions that support rail transit alongside or near Richmond Highway. That vision was transmitted to VDOT staff for inclusion in a Richmond Highway study that was underway, but then was terminated when funds were reallocated. The MVCCA vision solves transit surface rail problems presented by the 8% road grades of Beacon Hill and Mount Vernon, problems that caused the redesign of Dulles rail.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Renew the Huntington-to-Fort Belvoir Transit Study that was previously authorized but interrupted. The renewal should include majority community organization and future user participation.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #15**

Inadequate protection of wetlands, especially stream valley park areas and along the Potomac River bank.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

It is a known fact that wetlands perform an extremely useful function in filtering stormwater runoff as well as in providing habitat and food source for wildlife. Improvement of wetlands protection will enhance the quality of life for District citizens as well as that of our local flora and fauna.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In the Mount Vernon District, the most significant percentage of wetlands fronting the Potomac River and its tributaries is under the ownership and jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Federal government. Examples of this ownership include the George Washington Memorial Parkway National Historic Park, Fort Belvoir, Pohick Bay Regional Park, and Mason Neck State Park and National Wildlife Refuge. The remainder of the existing wetlands is largely privately owned. The County does own a number of facility sites that have wetland areas, such as the Little Hunting Creek and Dogue Creek sewage pumping stations and the inactive Westgrove pumping station site. Additional examples include Huntley Meadows Park and the branches of Little Hunting Creek and Dogue Creek that are non-tidal, and stream valley parks such as Williamsburg Manor Park adjacent to Collingwood Road.

Over the past decade, the County has published Resource Protection Area (RPA) maps that are helpful in identifying wetland locations. In tidal areas, as defined by Virginia Code, Section 28.2-1300, vegetated wetlands extend from mean low water to an elevation equal to 1.5 times the tidal fluctuation above mean low water at the location in question.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The County should take all necessary steps to quantify the land area of wetlands in the District, including surveying and reviewing satellite images.

Take all necessary steps to ensure no future net loss of wetland area or, better yet, a net increase, including but not limited to:

- a. Creating a mechanism to periodically check wetlands to ensure they are maintained as approved.
- b. Encouraging the public's education concerning wetlands preservation, and the consequences of wetland loss.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #16**

Lack of present and future recreational land within the local communities to support a growing, and changing residential population and density, coupled with aging recreational facilities.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Adequate parkland, recreational sectors and facilities are key elements which are part of the unique quality of life enjoyed by Mount Vernon District residents. Future planning requires the preservation, creative use and enhancement of not only the natural beauty of our parkland and recreational areas, but also the mix, growth and use of the facilities.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Of the total 22,700 acres of Fairfax County parklands and 417 County parks, there are approximately 2,315 acres of County parkland and 45 parks in the Mount Vernon District. While the District is fortunate to have 11,230 total acres of public parkland comprising almost 18% of the District's land area, 80% of this parkland is under Federal or State control. Despite this seeming abundance of parkland, there are numerous neighborhoods in the District that do not have any parkland within walking distance.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Ensure that the mix, designation of uses, and numbers of County recreational facilities and areas (especially neighborhood parks) keep pace with an aging population, changing needs based on changing ideas of fitness and recreation, and a growing local population of over 125,000 residents.

Determine the recreational needs, desires and requirements of the general public using any appropriate measure such as a public survey.

Determine which parks are underutilized and why, and ascertain the types of uses that could be established in those parks.

Organize the community to develop and prioritize recreational concepts, and advocate them to the Park Authority.

Ensure that the existing facilities and recreation centers are maintained and upgraded to match newer facilities.

# Land Use

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## **ISSUE #17**

Land use revisions that reflect a piecemeal, patchwork approach.

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The process of amending the Comprehensive Plan is based on individual nominations for specific properties often at the behest of individual property owners and citizens with a vested interest in the amendment. This undermines the comprehensive nature that the Plan was originally meant to provide.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are allowed in four-year cycles, and only after review of nominations submitted for specific properties. While this allows for necessary change and updating, the process usually results in plans for specific properties being amended that are not in complete harmony with the spirit of the original Plan or of the surrounding properties. A process that promotes a more comprehensive, broad-based analysis and revision, based on needs, vision, and integrated planning, rather than on individual property interests, is needed.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Investigate revisions to the Comprehensive Plan amendment process to promote a more integrated and comprehensive approach to planning revisions.

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **Inventory**

### **What we have**

- A Police Department, which is the largest in Virginia and 33<sup>rd</sup> in the nation
- The lowest rate of violent crime for any jurisdiction with a population of 1 million or less
- A nationally recognized Fire and Rescue Department
- An increasing demand for services
- Increased traffic congestion
- An increase in response times
- An increasingly diverse population
- Citizens with concerns about their safety in the future

### **What we need**

- To maintain adequate and highly qualified staffing
- Continue the use of technology to enhance Police, Fire & EMS services
- Efficient use of personnel and equipment
- South County Judicial Services and a South County Police Station

### **What we should preserve**

- The sense of feeling safe at home, work and play
- Citizen participation through the Police Auxiliary, Fire Department volunteers, CERT, and Neighborhood Watch

### **What we should change**

- The process by which mental patients are confined and transported to hearings

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **ISSUE #1**

Police Services

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

As the residential population increases throughout Fairfax County, as well as the continued growth of our business and governmental communities, the Police Department needs to be sufficiently staffed and equipped in order to fulfill their mission of providing superior services for the County.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The County of Fairfax is the most populous jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area; the county's population exceeds that of seven states. The County's annual budget is four times greater than four states. In 2010, the population was reported to be 1.056 million residents; by the year 2035, it is estimated that the population will exceed 1.2 million; the population in the Mount Vernon District will be approximately 151,362.

The Fairfax County Police Department's authorized sworn strength is 1,402 officers; the police department employs an additional 368 civilians (support staff) for a total of 1,730 employees. The United States Department of Justice ranked the Fairfax County Police Department as the 38<sup>th</sup> largest municipal police department in the United States in 2003/2004.

The Fairfax County Police Department must continue recruiting superior candidates; along with providing advanced training for personnel – while focusing on the retention of veteran police officers and support staff.

The County must be able to strike a balance between the service demands and the available police resources providing the service. As a result, the County government needs to examine the authorized strength of the department; maintaining acceptable officer ratios (per capita) per one thousand residents; and decreasing response times for calls for service; especially during critical emergencies.

The Fairfax County Police Department must continue its commitment to embrace technology to further enhance police services and the prevention of crimes. Examples of evolving technology include, but are not limited to the following: in-field finger print scanners, tag readers, in-car digital video camera equipment, night vision equipment, and enhanced crime analyst tools (for not only the tracking of crimes, but for the predictability of crimes) ultimately leading to the prevention of crimes.

The police department's community outreach programs should remain in the forefront and should be sufficiently funded to meet the demands of the community. Education is a key component in the prevention of crimes. Maintaining police officers (SRO/s) in our middle schools and high schools should be a priority; restoring the School Education Officers (SEO/s) in the elementary schools should be made a reality; and the police department along with the County government needs to continue investing in Neighborhood Watch Programs as well as other community based programs that have a direct impact on the detection and prevention of crimes. Neighborhood Patrol Units, also known as Bike Teams,

## Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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should be increased throughout each district to improve safety in our business and residential areas. Bike Teams have been an effective tool not only in combating crime, but have improved police and community relations by removing artificial barriers and citizens have more direct and personal contact with Bike Team Officers.

Fairfax County Police Officers should be provided with enhanced training in the mental health arena to include issues concerning Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Elder Care, and for victims of Physical and Emotional Abuse.

Pedestrian and Bicycle safety programs need to be further enhanced. The police department along with other county agencies, including the Fairfax County Public School System, need to embark upon a vigorous partnership in reducing accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclist alike through effective educational and enforcement campaigns. A central location and/or mechanism needs to be implemented county wide for the reporting and tracking of incidents involving pedestrians and cyclists.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the Office of the County Executive and the County Attorney's Office, in consultation with the Chief of Police, should study whether or not it is necessary to create an independent review board to address any citizen allegations of police misconduct. This board, if implemented, would report its findings and recommendations to the Chief of Police for consideration.

The Board of Supervisors needs to conduct a feasibility study in constructing additional police sub-stations in the County. The continuous population growth and the expanding business opportunities, along with increased traffic congestion within the County, will create the need for additional police facilities. South-eastern Fairfax County is a prime location for the establishment of a sub-station. This will ensure the department's response times are kept to a minimum and the community is better served and protected.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Board of Supervisors and the Office of the County Executive need to examine the services that are provided by the police department to ensure the department is fully funded to meet the high expectations of our citizens. The County government must continue to place the safety and security of its citizens as one of its highest priorities and accordingly begin to deliberately and purposely implement measures to ensure these goals have been met.

Fairfax County benefits from having a highly trained, motivated police department that is able to react to the challenges brought forth by the ever changing environment that we live in, especially when dealing with the criminal element. Education and prevention programs need to remain in the forefront if the County is to enjoy its relatively low crime rates. Fairfax County, when compared to like size municipalities with similar populations and demographics, has one of the lowest crime rates in the nation. This can be attributed to the strong commitment by the governing body to adequately fund the agency's needs and the partnerships formed between the police and the community. The police department needs to continue hiring top quality candidates, provide a high level of training for its personnel, and retain veteran officers by providing competitive salaries and benefits.

The police department's officer per capita staffing requirements should be within acceptable "best practice" ranges as recommended by the United States Department of Justice, the

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission and the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **ISSUE #2**

Fire and Rescue Service / EMS Support

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Due to the increase in the residential population and the continued growth of our business and governmental communities, the Fairfax County Fire & Rescue Department needs to be sufficiently staffed and equipped in order to fulfill its mission of providing superior services to the County.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The County of Fairfax is the most populous jurisdiction in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area; the county's population exceeds that of seven states. The County's annual budget is four times greater than four states. In 2010, the population was reported to be 1.056 million residents; by the year 2035, it is estimated that the population will exceed 1.2 million; the population in the Mount Vernon District will be approximately 151,362.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department was established in 1949. It is a combination career and volunteer organization providing fire suppression, emergency medical, technical rescue, fire prevention and educational services to more than one million citizens. Fairfax County encompasses 395 land square miles of urban and suburban development; the County also has 7 square miles of waterways.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department is comprised of (37) fire stations. The department is broken down into (7) battalions and 681 fire boxes. The department employs 1,397 full-time fire fighters and is supported by 143 civilian support staff members along with 119 seasonal employees. The Fairfax County Fire Department also enjoys the support of 282 operational volunteers. The department responded to 92,088 calls for service in 2009; this includes Fire Suppression, Emergency Medical Services and Public Services.

The department must continue recruiting superior candidates; along with providing advanced training for all personnel – while focusing on the retention of veteran fire fighters and EMS Personnel.

The County must be able to strike a balance between the service demands and the available fire department resources. As a result, the County government needs to examine the authorized strength of the department; maintaining acceptable fire fighter ratios (per capita) per one thousand residents along with recommended nation response times of five to six minutes (or less) for calls of service.

The Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department must continue its commitment to embracing technology to further enhance the delivery of suppression and medical services, along with addressing hazardous material incidents.

The department needs to analyze the prospect for additional fire stations to be constructed. With the projected population growth over the next 25 years; along with the expansion of commercial developments and government enterprises, the Fire and Rescue Department will have to build additional facilities to adequately respond for calls for service within a five to six minute response time. Further, the department will have to invest in additional

## Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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specialized equipment to deal with emerging trends and demands placed on fire and rescue (EMS) services.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Board of Supervisors and the Office of the County Executive need to examine the services that are provided by the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department to ensure the department is adequately funded, staffed and equipped to meet the ever changing demands placed upon the agency. The County government must continue to place the safety and security of its citizens as one of its highest priorities, and accordingly begin to deliberately and purposely implement measures to ensure these goals have been met.

Fairfax County benefits from having a highly trained, motivated fire department – able to react to the challenges brought forth by the ever changing environment that we live in.

The fire department needs to continue hiring top quality candidates, provide a high level of training for its personnel, and retain veteran fire fighters by providing competitive salaries and benefits. The agency must continue to collaborate with the various volunteer engine companies within the County and its volunteer corps. This continuous relationship will further enhance the operational capabilities of the department and help reduce the response times throughout the county.

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **ISSUE #3**

Disaster Planning

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

As the residential population increases throughout Fairfax County, as well as the continued growth of our business and governmental communities, the County needs to ensure that a sufficient number of trained personnel and equipment are located in each district to address natural and/or manmade disasters and coordinate evacuations. Communication is a key component in disaster planning. The County must have the ability to not only communicate with its residents but with the surrounding localities.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The County of Fairfax benefits from having a highly trained, well-motivated public safety workforce, that is able to react to the challenges brought forth by the ever changing environment that we live in. We must ensure that each public safety agency is sufficiently equipped with the latest technology and equipment to ensure safe, orderly evacuations if called upon to do so.

Because the County's population is so diverse, it is imperative that our public safety agencies continue to provide regular classes (through community outreach) in dealing with emergency response situations. By doing so, communities will be better prepared in taking initial actions during crisis situations – which will not only save lives and prevent serious injuries, but save property and lessen the impact of catastrophes.

The Office of Emergency Management must continue its efforts in conjunction with the County's other public safety agencies and the Public Information Office in providing notifications, alerts and directives to the citizens of the county, especially during times of emergencies. The County needs to continue exploring existing technology to ensure the adequate and timely flow of information to its citizens.

Community Outreach by the Office of Emergency Management is paramount; adequate staffing and funding should be in place to ensure the delivery of emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations; businesses and nonprofits as well as staffing emergency preparedness exhibits at local festivals and fairs. The following topics are currently addressed by personnel from OEM:

- Emergency Management and Community Preparedness
- Personal and Family Preparedness
- Severe Weather Awareness
- Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP)
- Business Continuity Planning (BCP) for Small Businesses
- Special Needs Planning and the Special Needs Registry
- Manmade and Natural Disasters
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Emergency Preparedness for Faith-Based Organizations
- Emergency Preparedness for Special Needs Organizations

## Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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Often during times of disasters and/or incidents that severely impact a locality, surrounding jurisdictions are called upon to assist one another (mutual aid) in managing the catastrophic event in saving lives and property. The Washington Metropolitan area localities must ensure that they are able to communicate with one another seamlessly. The County must review its communication capabilities and invest in technology that allows flawless interoperability with the surrounding jurisdictions.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The County government must continue to place the safety and security of its citizens as one of its highest priorities and accordingly begin to deliberately and purposely implement measures to ensure these goals have been met. The investment in the communication capabilities of the County should be unrelenting. The continuous efforts by the County's public safety agencies in educating the citizens through community forums are a must; everyone is a stakeholder in the protection of lives and property. Therefore the governing body of Fairfax County needs to continue investing in disaster planning and preparations.

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **ISSUE #4**

Hospital / Medical Access

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The County of Fairfax, in conjunction with Mental Health Practitioners and Providers, must ensure that the County has adequate treatment facilities within our jurisdiction, as well as bed space for those who are in need of in-house treatment.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

As the population of Fairfax County continues to increase, so does the demand for specialized treatment facilities for those with mental health needs. There are a limited amount of treatment facilities and bed space located within the confines of Fairfax County. Often these facilities are at capacity and patients need to be transported to institutions and hospitals outside of Northern Virginia.

The Fairfax County Police Department is the agency designated in handling “mental transports” for those who are being detained on Temporary Detention Orders (TDO). Police Officers are required not only to transport those who are being detained on TDO/s to a designated hospital after an order is issued by a Magistrate, but they are the sole agency responsible for ensuring these individuals are safely transported to Mental Detention Hearings before a Special Justice at INOVA’s Fairfax Hospital within a specified time period by law.

Due to a shortage of bed space in the limited number of hospitals that can accommodate mental health patients, Fairfax County Police Officers are often mandated to transport individuals to treatment facilities in outlying jurisdictions several hours away. For example, officers routinely transport detained persons to Staunton, Richmond - Petersburg, and on occasion to Williamsburg, Virginia. Not only are officers required to transport them to these locations for their initial detention and treatment, but they must return these individuals to Fairfax County for detention hearings before the Special Justice at a prescribed date and time. As noted, all of these detention hearings are at INOVA’s Fairfax Hospital.

Mount Vernon Hospital is the only facility equipped in the southeastern portion of the County to accommodate those in need of mental health services, to include in-house treatment. However, the bed-space capacity for in-house treatment is limited in scope and duration. There is a need for a treatment facility in southern Fairfax County that can offer mental health treatment AND admit those in need of in-house treatment.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The Board of Supervisors in conjunction with Woodburn Mental Health Services needs to partner with area hospitals and mental health institutions located within Fairfax County for the purpose of exploring the ways and means in assuring that adequate bed space and treatment facilities are available in our jurisdiction. An approved facility in the southern Fairfax County is needed to address the growing needs of the community.

Mental Detention Hearings should not only be in one centralized location, which is currently Fairfax Hospital. Government agencies and stakeholders need to explore the feasibility of

## Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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hosting these hearings at other hospitals and institutions. Several agencies will be affected by this change and a cost will be associated with it. The Board of Supervisors needs to adequately fund this alternative and explore additional options to ease the burden on our police officers and the patients (individuals) in their protective custody. Inaction will only increase our liability and costs associated in dealing with those in need of mental health services and being lawfully detained on court orders.

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **ISSUE #5**

Judicial Services

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Expand Judicial Services to Southern Fairfax County

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The County of Fairfax has been engaged in dialogues for a number of years with the residents of southern Fairfax County to include communities within the Mount Vernon, Lee and the Springfield Districts to bring judicial services to the south east Fairfax County.

By offering Judicial Services to southeast Fairfax County, residents will not be forced to drive to the Judicial Center Complex which is located within the City of Fairfax. Currently Police Officers and Citizens alike must attend judicial proceedings at the Fairfax County Court House.

The South County Government Center was originally envisioned to house a satellite Court Room. This satellite judicial facility was intended to adjudicate traffic offenses for both adults and juveniles. This southeastern location was also intended to arbitrate hearings for the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court.

To institute Judicial Services in southeastern Fairfax County, a collaborative effort must be pursued by the Citizens of southern Fairfax County, the Fairfax County Police Department, the Fairfax County Sheriff's Office, the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, the General District Court Judges of the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, and our elected state representatives to the General Assembly.

Judicial Services in southeast Fairfax County will enable these services to be provided in a much more cost-effective manner. Citizens and Police Officers would not be required to drive to the Fairfax County Courthouse located in Fairfax for misdemeanor and traffic court proceedings, thus reducing gas consumption and the time commitment in court attendance. Police Officers and other Law Enforcement Officers attending hearings in southern Fairfax County would be kept in closer proximity to their assigned patrol areas and police districts, thus reducing their out-of-service times and increasing their abilities to respond to emergency situations.

The implementation of providing Judicial Services to Southern Fairfax County would significantly contribute to the quality of life of the Citizens of Mount Vernon District and neighboring Magisterial Districts in southeast Fairfax County by reducing travel times and the commitment required in adjudicating minor traffic and criminal matters before the court. Fewer demands on our road infrastructure, improved air quality and the increase availability of Police Officers are just a few of the benefits of providing services in Southern Fairfax County.

# Public Safety Visioning Committee Recommendations

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## **NEXT STEPS**

The Board of Supervisors should direct the County Executive to conduct a joint study with the key stakeholders and our elected state representatives to institute Judicial Services to Southern Fairfax County.

# Transportation Committee

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## **Overview Vision Statement**

To encourage the citizens of Mount Vernon District to create a vision of what should be implemented for transportation infrastructure within 25 years that enhances quality of life and promotes a strong and growing economy throughout the entire region.

The Committee strives to encourage citizens by conducting outreach activities to promote public participation. A vision without a plan is just a dream. The issues that follow are presented as the start of a plan to realize a vision; to spark interest, dialogue, and further analysis into the future as Mount Vernon District evolves. As we proceed to disseminate our vision for the Mount Vernon District, we must assure that we continue to provide an appropriate road map for implementation, adjusted to the changing circumstances which at present we cannot predict, though we know it will take a concerted and sustained effort by all of the stakeholders. "

The Committee is proposing 16 transportation oriented issues for inclusion in the overall vision for the future of the Mount Vernon District. However, these issues are clearly interrelated with aspects other than transportation. We must assure that a proper integration occurs for mutually supportive progress in the realm of planning and zoning, land-use and the environment - all supported by a synchronized development of an appropriate transportation infrastructure.

## **Inventory**

### **What we have**

- A legacy provided by past and present citizenry and elected officials who had a vision to establish a transportation template from which to build and improve. This legacy includes modes such as rail, bus, multi-lane roadways, and bicycle/pedestrian pathways.
- Citizens and elected officials who understand the importance of a highly efficient transportation system and its impact on future sustainment of our quality of life.
- Potential for solving the most difficult transportation challenges based on the demonstrated knowledge, interest and passion of an informed populace.

### **What we need**

The current practices for planning transportation infrastructure and land use must change in order to functionally develop transportation infrastructure with land use projects. In order to realize economic benefits from a well-developed corridor, retail and mixed used developers should share with citizens the cost of building transportation infrastructure as consistent traffic patterns around a business district increases patronage and traffic into these retail developments. Based on projecting current practices, the following assumptions pertaining to transportation conditions over the next 20-25 years in the future are used to propose improvements in the infrastructure. Action, diverging from current practices, must be taken soon to invalidate these assumptions.

- An outer Beltway has not been constructed and should be completed.
- Desired residential and commercial developments, which have been stymied in view of the lack of progress to expand existing transportation infrastructure, need to be built thereby resulting in a viable economic development.
- Road developments in support of BRAC and the Army Museum will be completed,

# Transportation Committee

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to include the widening of Route 1 to 6 lanes in the Fort Belvoir vicinity; however, the inconsistency in number of travel lanes, going back and forth between 4 and 6, will create bottlenecks, and expected increases in traffic from the south due to BRAC will cause an increase of Level Of Service (LOS) F intersections (LOS is a measure of a road's effectiveness to operate in an efficient manner. LOS F results in forced flow; very low speeds; volume exceeds capacity; long delays; stop and go traffic; delays at signals more than 80 seconds). All Route 1 intersections need to be operating at LOS C, at a minimum.

- The extension of rail transit from Huntington or Springfield south has not been achieved and needs to be completed.
- The pricey HOV tolls on Interstate 95 will not reduce congestion on the Interstate and thereby will not succeed in absorbing traffic from Route 1 or the George Washington Memorial Highway. Thus, a dedicated transportation infrastructure funding mechanism is needed that varies with inflation.
- VDOT's funding situation has continued to deteriorate, resulting in further pulling of transportation funding from secondary route systems and impacting the establishment of committed funding sources to support upkeep and expansion of road systems within the Mount Vernon District.
- Alternate energy sources to gasoline powered vehicles have not reduced the proportion of vehicles per household.
- The establishment of local walkable communities and the expansion of bike trails is necessary to reduce local traffic volume and mass transit options for the expansion of residential developments to our south is needed to aid the continuing commuting demands to the DC area.
- The fatality rate due to collisions between vehicles and bicycles/pedestrians/other vehicles is alarmingly high.
- Prolonged, inconsistent commuting time and frequent traffic gridlock bestows a negative perception of the Mount Vernon District. Consequently, development investors should work with citizens to solve transportation infrastructure funding so that people can get to retail developments and spend money at the new retail development projects.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #1**

Bicycle and Pedestrian Considerations

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Support safe pedestrian and bicycle transit to reduce road congestion and promote healthy living, including the planting of trees to shade sidewalks and trails. Encourage bicycling and walking to school, work, shops, and public transportation.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Creating communities conducive to walking and alternative modes of low tech, non-motorized, transportation, such as bicycling and roller-skating, especially in suburban areas like Mount Vernon that are part of a dense metropolitan area, should be an important goal of transportation policy at all levels of government. A variety of instruments can be used to advance that goal, from zoning ordinances to subdivision ordinances, protocols for local or state takeovers of privately built streets and trails, and permitting procedures to connect private facilities to public networks. Mount Vernon is home to many trails and has the potential for many more. Specific issues that need to be addressed include the following:

1. Improve and complete Historic Potomac path.
2. Install sidewalks and bicycle/pedestrian trails in areas that currently have none, with priority on providing safe pedestrian access to public transportation.
3. Install crosswalks, including pedestrian-safe islands where possible, in areas with predictable pedestrian traffic (e.g., Post Office, Shopping Center, Parks, etc...) where the absence of the crosswalk is a safety hazard.
4. Upgrade, as appropriate, pedestrian walkway lighting, especially for access to public transportation.
5. Maintain trails throughout the year to limit hazards bicyclists and pedestrians.
6. On corridors of high bicycle/pedestrian use, recommend the inclusion of separate pathways for bicycles and pedestrians.
7. Complete/connect the gaps in the current trail systems and bicycle lanes on the streets.
8. Encourage the installation of benches along walkways, especially in areas near senior residential communities and locations providing services and resources to seniors.
9. Encourage the installation of bicycle parking racks in retail areas, schools, transit centers, and other high-use destination areas.
10. Assure the retention of trees and plant trees to provide shade for bike and pedestrian paths.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Promote incentives that support low tech transportation as they are likely to be more effective than mandates in fostering changes to current policy and practice. A number of specific steps to be considered but the priority should be to always include bicycle and pedestrian routes on all new, reconstructed, or expanded roadways, along with bicycle facilities in new subdivisions.
- Urge connectivity of existing trails and sidewalks as a high priority.

## Transportation Committee

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- Promote biking to school through both local initiatives and application for grants from the FHWA Safe Routes To School program. However, safety must be the over-riding consideration. Local officials must ensure that connectivity of proper, safe bike paths exist between schools and adjacent neighborhoods within their respective area of responsibility before youth are encouraged to bike to school.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #2**

Mass Transit - Expansion of Rail Transit along US Route 1

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The need for some form of rail transit to alleviate congestion and provide transportation options along Route 1 is recognized by the residents of the Mount Vernon District, but not necessarily by VDOT. Interplay of rail and busses to form a connecting grid is deemed imperative to assure smooth traffic flow within the District and on the County's highways. The grid should consist of extended Blue and Yellow lines for North-South transportation, and with busses providing East-West connections between Metro stations and extending into western Districts. The extension of rail on Route 1 may need to project into Prince William County.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

For the past ten years efforts to secure a Mass Transit Study for Richmond Highway have been thwarted. A study had been previously funded, then funding was diverted and as of the end of 2010 it still has not been initiated. This study is needed to determine the most economical and operationally sustainable mode of rail to be constructed, as well as define its placement on Route 1 (i.e. on which side of the highway or in the center between lanes). That, in turn, will permit the proper alignment of a reconstructed Route 1 from the Beltway to the Occoquan.

The rail options which should come into consideration are:

1. An extension of Heavy Rail (Metro) from Huntington due South. This option provides the most transit capacity and also provides a seamless connection with the existing Yellow Line, minimizing the need for rail-to-rail transfers. However, a further extension of the Yellow Line, whether underground, at-grade, or elevated, is recognized as the most costly option.
2. Light Rail would be less expensive and is easier to run at-grade than heavy rail, but has a lower capacity than heavy rail and would require a rail-to-rail transfer at Huntington.
3. A third option is Monorail. This option potentially involves the least amount of right-of-way, but the elevated structure presents a large visual obstruction and costs more than a light rail at-grade option.

In any event, the Mass Transit Study should provide a firm recommendation as to which option is most appropriate.

The extension of the Yellow Line to Fort Belvoir is currently in direct competition with an extension of the Blue Line from Springfield to Fort Belvoir. This is unfortunate, since on a long-range basis, both rail lines will be needed to accommodate the residential complexes along both the Route 1 and the I-95 corridors. Additionally, on a long-term basis, the residential expansions south of Fort Belvoir and extending into Prince William County will also require supporting rail transportation.

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## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Provide priority to fund and execute the Route 1 Mass Transit Study, with an expanded mission to extend its vision further south into Prince William County.
- Develop a funding source to pay for future rail extensions, aimed at establishing a transportation grid, with North-South rail transit and East-West bus transit.
- The transportation grid will be significantly reinforced by connecting the rail lines from Huntington (the Yellow Line) and rail from Springfield (the Blue Line) at or near Fort Belvoir.
- Rail must be planned to continue due south from Fort Belvoir, where the Yellow and Blue lines meet, towards Fredericksburg and an inter-connection with VRE and AMTRAK.
- The East-West bus system needs to connect vital transportation links, to include connecting Yellow and Blue line stations and projecting due west into other Districts to include the stations of the new Silver line at Tyson Corner and beyond.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #3**

Mass Transit – Transit Centers

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Support the construction and operation of transit centers at major development nodes and at strategic locations along major commuter routes. In 20-25 years, the focus should shift away from moving vehicles to moving people from point A to point B. And, as a result, transit centers will need to be strategically located along major commuter roads.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Mass transit along US Route 1 still consists of buses to Huntington Metro Station, Fort Belvoir, the Pentagon, and Eisenhower Avenue along with the 11Y Metrobus offering express bus service along the George Washington Parkway to downtown D.C. The extension of rail transit from Huntington southward along the US Route 1 corridor has not yet been achieved. In addition, buses with routes between the Mount Vernon area and Tysons Corner may be part of the few that benefit from HOT tolls on Interstate 495 as the transit time has decreased due to the extra lanes.

Future development or redevelopment along US Route 1 should include transit centers at major mixed-use node areas where commuters can congregate in one area and several bus lines can pick-up passengers. These transit centers should be designed with ground-level retail and structured parking (either above or below ground) with bicycle and car sharing, bicycle lockers or parking racks, and electric car recharging stations. As US Route 1 is developed into a series of denser, mixed use villages, these transit centers would serve both US Route 1 corridor residents as well as residents moving into new developments along Gunston, Old Colchester and Gunston Cove Roads.

Known existing transit centers in the area, include the structured parking transit center at Herndon-Monroe Avenue that has 1,745 free parking spaces and enough bus routes to move people from east to west as well as North and South (the Herndon-Monroe transit center was originally used as a bus depot but will transition to a metrorail stop when the Silver line is completed), the Reston and Tysons Corner West transit centers each have a bus depot arrangement with a Connector store and place to get out of the rain and service hundreds of people who walk to the transit center to connect with a bus. These transit centers can help spur people out of their cars and onto public transit resulting in our area being less congested and quality development being attracted.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan should be revised to reflect the future vision of U.S. Route 1 with several transit centers and transit centers should be built at major and future node areas such as Gunston Road, Pohick Road, Fort Belvoir, Woodlawn, South County, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, Beacon Hill/Groveton, Penn Daw, and North Gateway. Specific locations and configurations of these transit centers should be studied and platted at the earliest opportunity.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #4**

Transportation Construction Funding

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Monitor and support the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition efforts to secure sufficient funding to construct new roads and highways within Fairfax County.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

On the basis of current funding arrangements, over the next six years transportation revenues are expected to be reduced by \$2.1 - \$2.6 billion based on state estimates and AASHTO federal revenue estimates. State revenue for the next six years will be reduced by \$1.5 billion. Gas tax revenues are declining because of population change, prices, the economy, and the cars that are being driven today and in the future. Motor vehicle sales and use tax collection started downward in FY 2004 and have now plummeted. Federal revenue is trending downward with its long-term future unknown. A one-time \$8 billion Congressional bailout saved the current fiscal year funding. Federal gas tax faces the same challenges at the state gas tax and is 80% of the total federal highway trust fund. The six-year federal transportation spending authorization ends this fiscal year. Federal funding is increasingly unpredictable. The Commonwealth Transportation Board will be consulting with federal and state partners to determine best approach to estimating federal revenues for next six years. Existing policy goals will be followed – to complete project phases; bridges; multimodal; congestion relief; and to maximize funding from partners. Estimated reduction in insurance premiums revenues will mean that fewer bonds can be sold which will directly impact construction projects and designated projects. This review occurs each year in November/December timeframe.

The Commonwealth of Virginia cannot afford to administer and deliver transportation-related services, programs and projects the same way. The economic outlook in Virginia, United States, and internationally has continued to decline over the past two years. The transportation revenue outlook continues to be on the decline. Virginia must make fundamental structural changes to transportation administration, services, programs, and projects to address the long-term change to the Virginia revenue base. These reductions are in addition to the \$1.1 billion reduction in state revenues last year.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Fairfax County should support the efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition as the Coalition intends to strive for:

1. Addressing the Commonwealth's \$billion surplus to close the funding gaps for new construction in Northern Virginia.
2. Engaging our elected officials to work with the Federal government to share transportation funding costs under the Base Relocation Program.
3. Withdrawing the No-tax pledges on transportation funding, by candidates for public office, which are contrary to the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future economic prosperity.

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4. Monitoring the progress of the Commonwealth of Virginia working together and doing whatever is necessary to secure significant, new, dedicated, reliable transportation revenues to erase Virginia's crippling transportation deficit, which threatens Virginia's long-term prosperity.
5. Sustaining a series of periodic Public Information meetings to keep residents of the County informed on the progress of new road construction activities in Northern Virginia.
6. Monitoring VDOT's reporting to the Governor, General Assembly, Commonwealth Transportation Board, and Fairfax County Board of Directors.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #5**

Transportation Maintenance Funding

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Monitor and support the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition efforts to secure sufficient funding to sustain the transportation network within Fairfax County.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In 2009, The Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition recognized that greater investment in transportation infrastructure is essential to short-term economic recovery and long-term economic prosperity. Transportation-dedicated taxes and fees have remained virtually unchanged in Virginia since 1987. Documented unfunded transportation requirements exceed \$100 billion, including more than \$3.7 billion in structurally deficient bridges and \$1 billion in interstate and primary highway repaving needs. Inadequate capacity and poor pavement conditions annually cost \$4.7 billion or nearly \$1,000 per licensed Virginia driver in accidents, operating costs and congestion-related delays. Virginia's Six-Year Improvement Program, which has experienced over \$4 billion in cuts in the past two years, is not an accurate reflection of the Commonwealth's acute transportation needs. \$400 million in Virginia's Transportation Trust Fund for construction is diverted annually to the Highway Maintenance and Operations Fund, and the annual growth factor for state maintenance funds to localities has been reduced from 4% to 3%, leaving fewer funds to meet growing needs. VDOT has already significantly consolidated operations and reduced personnel over the past 2 years. The revenue stream created by 2007 legislation to support \$3 billion in transportation bonds over a ten-year period is currently capable of funding only \$2 billion worth of bonds and is insufficient to support any bonds before 2010. Declining state revenues and expanding needs have increased Virginia's dependence upon federal funds at a time when the state soon will be unable to provide federal matching dollars, meaning that for every \$20 in matching dollars the Commonwealth is lacking, it forgoes \$80 in federal funding.

The federal surface transportation program is up for re-authorization this year and future allocation levels are very much in doubt. The Commonwealth lacks funds for transportation infrastructure to attract new business and supplement public-private partnership transportation investments. The Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition has previously affirmed support for a minimum of \$400 million per year in new, dedicated, sustainable transportation funds for Northern Virginia and for the position that such funds must not be viewed or used as a replacement for new or existing state transportation revenues.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The Committee supports the efforts of the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition as the Coalition intends to strive for:

1. The inclusion of bonds, public-private partnerships, General Funds, allocation formula changes, tolls and other currently used mechanisms remain part of the solution.
2. Recognition that bonds, public-private partnerships, General Funds, allocation formula changes, tolls and other currently used mechanisms are inadequate individually or collectively to address well-documented needs.

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3. Fiscal and political realities dictate that the Commonwealth's transportation needs cannot be met without new and reliable revenues in the form of dedicated taxes and/or fees.
4. No-tax pledges on transportation funding by candidates for public office are contrary to the best interests of the citizens of the Commonwealth and future economic prosperity.
5. Monitoring the progress of the Commonwealth of Virginia working together and doing whatever is necessary to secure significant, new, dedicated, reliable transportation revenues to erase Virginia's crippling transportation deficit, which threatens Virginia's long-term prosperity.
6. Sustaining a series of periodic Public Information meetings to keep residents of Northern Virginia informed on the progress of road and highway maintenance activities in Northern Virginia.
7. Monitoring VDOT's reporting to the Governor, General Assembly, Commonwealth Transportation Board, and Fairfax County Board of Directors.
8. Including two representatives from the Mount Vernon District on the Northern Virginia Transportation Coalition to keep our supervisor apprised of funding issues and discussions that could affect the Mount Vernon District, and to assure that the Mount Vernon District receives its appropriate share of the available maintenance funding.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #6**

Technology Utilization for Traffic Flow Monitoring

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Intelligent Traffic Management including Smart signal light/timing technology will improve traffic flow of primary and secondary roads.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

While road infrastructure improvements and the widening of ROUTE 1 (Richmond Highway) and key intersections have not yet been completed, so that there are 6 travel lanes and dedicated left turn lanes and deceleration lanes, currently Richmond Highway is congested with the volume of commuter vehicles, as well as local trips for residents and to the Fort Belvoir post hospital. Given the continuing importance of ROUTE 1 in future growth and economic redevelopment to the Mount Vernon magisterial district, it is especially critical that the capacity of the Richmond Highway corridor be improved in order to attract quality development. Much of the new growth along the corridor in the past two or three decades have been stretched along a suburban strip pattern that is unconnected and generally low density rather than concentrated in nodes. The multiple, individual and separate entrances of the strip developments bog down traffic resulting in increasing congestion. Pedestrian safety is also compromised.

Intelligent Traffic Management systems exist that can monitor vehicle speed and volume by using anonymous signals from cell phones in cars along heavily traveled routes. Fish eye cameras can be installed at key intersections so that traffic can be controlled based on actual information on the road and at key intersections. Advances in vehicular electronics have provided new vehicles with access to real-time operating systems (either through GPS navigational units or sending signals to satellites collecting data as to where traffic is congested). Currently, drivers can view real-time traffic volumes on their GPS units if their vehicles are so equipped. In 20-25 years, the technology should surpass where it is today and our roads should be equipped with real-time traffic light synchronization so that cars do not have to stop at every or every other traffic signal. Plus, traffic management off-peak should look to see the actual traffic volume at an intersection before stopping cars on the main road to let one car out of a development.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- The Virginia Department of Transportation should analyze the new technology and make it available as an approved VDOT traffic signal management system. Currently, VDOT has both fixed-timed and traffic responsive signals that adjust the timing of the light based on the number of vehicles detected on the intersection approach.
- In the next 20-25 years, VDOT should have all of our traffic signals in the Mount Vernon magisterial district using the currently approved traffic responsive signals.
- In order to keep traffic moving on ROUTE 1, both smart traffic signal technology and smart growth needs to be implemented. ROUTE 1 needs to have nodal developments with high density as traffic congestion is lessened with fewer entrances onto the highway.
- Jurisdictions should be encouraged to use Intelligent Traffic System that use real-time light synchronization based on actual traffic monitoring.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #7**

Adopting High Technology for Rider Convenience

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

GPS Technology opens for us a myriad of possibilities for making driving a novel and easier experience; concomitantly it will make driving safer.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

It was amazing to view a recent German invention, which permitted the steering of a driverless vehicle navigating on a regular highway. This navigation was achieved with an interplay of radar, GPS technology, cameras and computers, which enabled the vehicle to "see" and make decisions as to direction, speed, destination, lane usage, and circumventing obstacles.

While it may be a long way off, to make this sort of convenience available at a manageable price for everyday usage, parts of this technology could be adopted in the foreseeable future to provide assistance to drivers through centralized control and direct communication between a Traffic Control Center and an individual vehicle. The GPS technology can pinpoint the exact location of a vehicle on the road. The Traffic Control Center can oversee the traffic volume and advise individual drivers to take specified lanes to enable smooth progress. Specific speed can be prescribed, or it can be understood that the maximum legal speed is applied unless otherwise directed. As technology progresses, vehicles can be equipped with remote control capability, so that they are placed into specified existing lanes where control is shifted to the respective Traffic Control Center. The Center will then control all vehicles in these specified lanes, it will impose a designated speed, prescribe the interval between cars; and if road or weather conditions impact adversely, the speed will be lowered. When mishaps occur, all vehicles may have to stop until the scene is cleared. When exiting the highway, the vehicle driver reaffirms personal control over the vehicle. The technology towards centralized control of vehicle operations opens up a new page in vehicle safety. The ability to set speed and the interval between vehicles will eliminate reckless driving and force safer driving during inclement weather conditions. The accident rate can be predicted to plummet significantly. Ultimately, in the distant future, the German invention could dominate the traffic scene.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

1. The new technology must be analyzed and plans should be drafted for a communication connection between personal vehicles and a dedicated highway Traffic Control Center which, with GPS, can monitor each vehicle on a specific highway.
2. As a first operational step, vehicles monitored by the respective Traffic Control Center need to be identified and tracked, similar to aviation operations.
3. The next step is to establish communication with tracked vehicles. Installation of inter-connecting equipment should be at the option of POV operators.
4. Once tracking and communication is perfected, speed and lane designation can be directed to drivers connected with the Center.
5. Further intervention for total centralized control of vehicles in designated lanes must await progress in technology and associated cost reduction of needed equipment.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #8**

Eastern Bypass

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Construct limited access parkway between I-95 and an upgraded Maryland Route 301 or alternative parallel corridor.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

As development continues south of Lorton and more cars crowd I-95 in both directions, it is clear that new solutions or the re-energizing of past initiatives must be studied and explored in order to reduce congestion in northern Virginia and Fairfax County. Residential development and growth continues unabated in Prince William, Stafford and Spotsylvania counties as well as in Fredericksburg with more cars headed into the Northern Virginia and District of Columbia. Truck traffic continues to increase as more supplies are required for operation of the communities and their populations in the National Capitol region. Rush hour continues to expand and absorb more hours of the day. Flex- and telecommute work schedules have not helped to reduce traffic.

This issue focuses on construction of an Interstate 95 Eastern Bypass to and around the National Capitol area – referred to as “I-95E”. Background for this issue has been obtained from the Northern Virginia Transportation Alliance (NVTA) website from its list of regional priorities ([www.nvta.org](http://www.nvta.org)).

“The Eastern Bypass is part of what regional planners in the 1960s proposed as a third or outer Beltway. The Eastern Bypass' primary function is to divert north-south interstate traffic, heavy trucks in particular, moving up and down the East Coast off the Capital Beltway and Woodrow Wilson Bridge and away from and around the metropolitan core. Potential corridors, benefits and feasibility were last examined in the late 1980s in a joint Maryland-Virginia (Bellomo-McGee) Study. This Study examined six possible corridors ranging from 57 to 91 miles in length. It estimated travel demand of 60,000 vehicles per day by 2010 and costs between \$1.5 billion and \$1.8 billion (in 1988 dollars) depending upon the corridor.” (NVTA)

“The Northern Virginia 2030 Transportation Plan includes the Eastern Bypass and estimates its cost at \$1.215 billion.” (NVTA)

The construction of an Eastern Bypass would significantly contribute to increase the quality of life in the Mount Vernon District. Removing cars and trucks that are traveling north and south with no business in the Northern Virginia, District of Columbia and Maryland counties of Montgomery and Prince George will decrease the total traffic on I-95 north/south through the National Capitol region and lower the commute times for the area as well as reduce the number of cars transiting our District.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Fairfax County should endorse the concept of an Eastern Bypass and should recommend to the Governors of Maryland and Virginia to direct their Departments of Transportation to conduct a joint study and recommend the best corridor for this highway.

## Transportation Committee

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- Fairfax County should recommend to the Maryland-Virginia-District of Columbia Joint Legislative Commission on Interstate Transportation to place this issue on its agenda.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE # 9**

Vehicle Capacity in Neighborhoods

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Support the economic re-vitalization of the Mount Vernon District through traffic reduction measures and alternate accessibility means to parks, schools, shopping centers, and malls.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In many counties and cities, street design is regaining its status as a vital element of neighborhood and city planning. The reasons for this status are self-evident: people want to live on streets where there are low traffic volumes, slow speeds and minimal noise. Residents also seek proximity to parks, schools, shopping centers, and other facilities for their children. Many residents today have a newfound desire for sidewalks, bike paths, walking paths, trails, greenways and open space. However, the streets and neighborhoods built in the 80's and 90's have often created the opposite conditions: wide streets full of fast, noisy traffic, and subdivisions that encourage automobile dependence. The walk to the corner store has, for many, been replaced with a drive to the Safeway or Giant in a 2-ton vehicle. Even when stores lie close to homes, land uses are separated to such an extent that it's often impossible to reach them without a motor vehicle. This separation of uses is common in modern zoning codes. The typical layout of a conventional community locates residential, commercial and civic buildings in distinct enclaves that are often connected only through larger arterial roadways. As a result, the child living in the residential subdivision cannot visit the local park unless he or she is driven there. A child in Fairfax County cannot comfortably walk or ride a bike to the park without confronting 4- or 6-lane arterial roadways. The same is true of most other trips an individual or family wants to make. Therefore, most trips require use of a car, thereby exacerbating already congested arterial roadways.

Another problem is teenage drivers who forget that they were small children and drive recklessly through communities just to get that video or pizza they desperately need. The emphasis on motor vehicle capacity has encouraged traffic engineers to design streets with minimal obstacles for errant drivers, so trees are often set at a distance from the roadway and on-street parking is discouraged. The resulting wide streets and long blocks, then, literally encourage speeding and discourage walking and biking. The traditional neighborhood street is narrow and lined with trees that not only help calm traffic but also increase comfort for walkers and cyclists. Many residents and local officials are recognizing that these traditional streets help form more livable neighborhoods. As a result, efforts are underway to design or retrofit more streets to mirror these characteristics, including such measures as 'traffic calming.' Traffic-calming denotes a set of mostly physical treatments to roadways that help manage traffic flow and encourage safer, more civil driver behavior within districts and neighborhoods.

Studies have shown that reducing traffic noise, traffic speeds, and vehicle-generated air pollution can increase property values. One study found that a 5 to 10 mph reduction in traffic speeds increased adjacent residential property values by roughly 20%. Another study found that traffic restraints that reduced volumes on residential streets by several hundred cars per day increased home values by an average of 18%. Another study revealed that real estate values over the next 25 years will rise fastest in "smart communities" that incorporate traditional characteristics of successful cities including a mix of residential and

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commercial districts and a “pedestrian-friendly configuration.” Contemporary neighborhoods with its smaller, decentralized businesses, thrive on land use patterns that regress back to the towns of early industrial years, with city centers, corner stores and streetcar suburbs. Pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods with accessible downtowns, shopping centers, and malls with a mix of restaurants, offices, parks, and housing promote interaction. Interaction is key since the new economy for Fairfax County will thrive on accessibility, networking, and creativity. That accessibility must be safe and hazard-free in order for our resident to network and be creative.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

1. Install crosswalks, possibly with pedestrian-safe islands, in areas with predictable pedestrian traffic (e.g., Post Office, Shopping Center, Parks, etc...) where the absence of the crosswalk is a safety hazard.
2. Consider widening sidewalks in communities, bulb the curbing at intersections, and placing colorful pavement stones in new sidewalks and streets.
3. Upgrade, as appropriate, pedestrian walkway lighting, especially for access to public transportation.
4. Maintain bicycle trails to limit hazards to the cyclists. Additionally, do not permit the use of pedestrian walkways as bike trails. For the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists two separate pathways are always required.
5. Investigate other communities to see how they implemented traffic-calming techniques and projects revitalized economic growth in blighted areas.
6. Promote incentives that support low-tech transportation and convenient access to shopping centers, malls, schools, and parks. A number of specific steps should be considered; however, priority should be to always include bicycle and separate pedestrian routes on all new, reconstructed, or expanded roadways, along with bicycle facilities in new subdivisions.
7. Investigate all measures to reduce the amount of traffic flow in our communities. Provide incentives to use alternate means of accessibility than the automobile.
8. Consider the use of gateways, street trees, lighting, benches and other streetscape amenities in areas around exiting malls and shopping centers.
9. Improve and complete Historic Potomac path.
10. Install sidewalks/trails in areas that currently have none, with priority on providing safe pedestrian access to public transportation.
11. Complete/connect the gaps in the current trail systems and bicycle lanes on the streets.
12. Encourage the installation of benches along walkways, especially in areas near senior residential communities and locations providing services and resources to seniors.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE # 10**

Teleworking/Telecommuting

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Promote telecommuting as a traffic congestion mitigation tool.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

According to the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, telework is defined as “wage and salary employees who at least occasionally work at home or at a telework or satellite center during an entire workday, instead of traveling to their regular workplace.”

Telework offers great promise to ease traffic congestion and clean the air in the Mount Vernon District. Residents have access to technology and many have jobs that are telework appropriate. More and more government agencies and private companies in the commonwealth and region are embracing teleworking as a practical alternative for their employees. However, getting management buy in, developing trust with their workers and making the shift to results-based management and institutionalizing opportunities through outreach to Human Resources departments continue to be challenges for governments and private industry alike.

Fairfax County defines telework as allowing employees to work from a home-based office or local work center during normal work hours, instead of commuting. Fairfax County government began their teleworking program with 50 employees in 1995. During that first year, those teleworkers saved a total of 180,000 commuting miles and 6,000 commuting hours.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

1. Encourage all private and public employers to establish and promote specific goals for telecommuting by its own employees.
2. Support a telework audit to identify which county employee positions (at every level) are or are not applicable for telework.
3. Promote the development of clear telework policies, educational tools and sample HR manuals that can be customized and disseminated to employers of Mount Vernon residents. Use the federal [www.Telework.gov](http://www.Telework.gov) as a model.
4. Encourage the branding of telework as another piece of the multimodal “pie”—offering yet another choice for commuters. This means marketing telework as a viable sustainable solution that necessarily doesn’t have to be a full-time commitment.
5. Support legislation that provides tax incentives for companies to implement telework programs.
6. Support the dissemination of information about specific examples in the community and region of successful use of telecommuting in business/industry. This could be led by the Mount Vernon/Lee Chamber of Commerce.

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE # 11**

Potomac River Commuter Ferry Service

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Fairfax County should monitor, collaborate and coordinate with Prince William County concerning the feasibility of a Potomac River commuter ferry service between Occoquan and Washington, D.C.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

It has long been recognized that the Potomac River holds potential as a commuter route from the suburbs of Virginia and Maryland to Washington D.C. Studies from as early as 1965 have been conducted in an effort to gauge the feasibility of providing commuter ferry service on the river. Some of these studies have included the area of Virginia along the Interstate 95/U.S. Route 1 corridor.

A recent route proving study (May, 2009) sponsored by Prince William County resulted in the following finding: "... .. a public commuter ferry operation has the potential to offer a commuting option to the public that in terms of travel time and service between the area of Occoquan, VA and SE Washington D.C. would be competitive with those commuter services offered by Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) and Virginia Railway Express (VRE).

The concept of a ferry service as yet another mode of mass transportation offers the potential of reducing traffic congestion in the Mount Vernon District and Fairfax County by diverting car, bus, and rail commuters from southern counties in the corridor (Prince William, Stafford, and Spotsylvania) to an alternate form of mass transportation.

Detailed discussion and analysis of this concept is contained in the Prince William County Department of Transportation Potomac River Commuter Ferry Service Study and Route Proving Exercise Final Report of September 15, 2009.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

The Committee concurs with recommendations contained in the Ferry Service Study and recommends that Fairfax County endorse the following actions:

- "Coordination with local governments and military installations that front the Potomac River should be pursued. While commuter ferry service from Prince William County to Washington D.C. appears viable, there is great potential for a ferry operation to serve cross-river commuters between Southern MD and VA."
- "Initial investigations into an authority to oversee ferry operations should also be discussed with those counties and cities that might have an interest in commuter ferry service."

# Transportation Committee

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## **ISSUE #12**

Gas Tax

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Consider a more sustainable, fair and realistic way to tax gas and/or raise necessary revenues to invest in transportation, anticipating greater decline in gasoline usage/tax revenue. In other words, find a funding mechanism that gets the incentives right.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The gas tax is at 17.5 cents a gallon (the national average is 28.5) and is one of three sources of state funding to the VDOT (Gas tax, sales tax of vehicles and licensing fees). The gas tax has been 17.5 cents a gallon since 1986 and remains the same no matter what the price per gallon may be which makes it a somewhat predictable but declining source of revenue especially as road maintenance and construction costs increase due to inflation. Essentially, the gas tax nets 50 million dollars per penny levied or \$875 million a year, about the same cost to widen Richmond Highway to 8 lanes. The average driver (at 15,000 miles a year) pays about \$90 – 100 a year in gas taxes. A nickel increase would add \$30 a year to average driver's tax payments.

The challenge is as follows:

1. Gas tax revenues are going down due to more fuel efficient cars and increased usage of alternative modes of transportation. Automobiles have run on gasoline for 100 years. The era of the gasoline-combustion engine may be coming to a close. The decline in gasoline consumption -- and the taxes generated by it -- will be slow at first, and then precipitous. The decline is entirely foreseeable; and
2. Gas tax revenues can't keep pace with the increase in population and vehicle miles driven. According to VTrans2035 Report VDOT needs \$7 – 10 billion dollars a year over next 20 to 30 years to maintain and upgrade existing road infrastructure and metro (e.g.: new metro rail cost is estimated at around one billion dollars a mile; and, the Northern Virginia 2030 Transportation Plan estimates the cost of an Eastern Bypass at \$1.215 billion.)

The worsening situation is exacerbated by the run-up in gasoline prices in the past few years and the economic recession has dampened gasoline sales and tax revenues even more.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

- Urge adequate funding of new road construction and maintenance by re-aligning incentives for road use as the linkage of the fuel tax to users of roadways is becoming less reliable and is inadequate in revenues raised to meet funding needs.
- Encourage the General Assembly to consider creative ways in which to raise necessary revenue by levy of increased gas taxes, sales taxes and/or replace with alternative tax such as per vehicle miles traveled, or similar system that means taxing road use instead of solely basing upon fuel consumption.

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- Moreover, the new tax system must be designed to incentivize travel at different times of day so as to lessen congestion or to differentiate among types of vehicles based on wear they impose on the roads and/or their emissions performance.

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## **ISSUE # 13**

HOV Operations

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Provide HOV lanes on major North-South highways, as well as major East-West connector roads to accommodate busses, multiple travelers in privately owned vehicles and high energy efficient vehicles to reduce highway congestion, enhance group travel and promote energy savings.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In order to overcome cost shortfalls for transportation initiatives, the State government, overall responsible for the construction and upkeep of inter-state highways and primary roads, has contracted-out the widening of Inter-State 95 and the Washington Beltway to private developers. To compensate for the cost of construction, the widened roads will be designated HOV lanes, allowing the private company to charge tolls for single-occupant vehicles opting to use these lanes. Busses and multi-passenger vehicles will still be authorized toll-free usage. Profits will be shared with the State. The chargeable mileage rates will be determined and constantly varied in response to changing usage and congestion on the highway.

Although no current financial operational data is available, it appears that only wealthy motorists will be able to afford sustained single vehicle usage of these lanes. With busses and multiple passenger vehicles excused from paying, it is not confirmed that this arrangement will prove profitable to the private contractors over the long term. Tightened budgets, due to marginal profits, can result in poor maintenance, customer complaints and decreased payable usage. In turn, this arrangement may threaten to fall short of diverting sufficient traffic from general travel lanes to reduce congestion and keeping traffic off local roads. If the current arrangement is not significantly profitable, there will be resistance to expand this construction method to other roads such as Highway #1 and the Fairfax County Parkway.

Added to this problem, and perhaps aggravating the problem, is the philosophical concept for many, that HOV road usage must not favor the wealthy over all other taxpayers who had originally funded the construction of these roads. Additionally, it is dubious that high energy efficient vehicles can be included in the exemption of toll payments for HOV usage. Private ownership of HOV lanes may also have unintended side effects. For example, VDOT felt compelled to contractually require the contractor to desist from interfering with maintenance, scheduled for adjacent State roads, assuming that desired poor maintenance on side roads would attract more travelers to use HOV lanes. Other unforeseen consequences may materialize.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

1. The operation of paid HOV usage requires immediate and close monitoring by VDOT to assure required maintenance is performed and to evaluate the validity of the financial arrangement.
2. If the paid HOV operation is profitable, steps should be taken to designate additional North-South highways and State roads for HOV expansion. Ultimately HOV lanes on East-West highways can re-enforce existing bus routes.

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3. Should paid HOV operations fail to divert sufficient traffic from general highway usage and be deemed unsatisfactory in terms of maintenance and operations, the State should be prepared to buy-out the private contracts and take over the administration of HOV operations. Funding sources need to be identified to compensate the private contractors. A toll charge for general highway usage may have to be imposed which will impact equally on all travelers.
4. With State operations implemented, payment for HOV usage should be terminated. Preferred treatment for HOV usage must be bestowed only on the basis of multiple vehicular occupancy and designated green energy vehicle usage.
5. The expansion of HOV operations, as indicated in Paragraph 2 above, will be considerably slower, without private developer money, but needs to be programmed and executed on the basis of future alternate funding arrangements, to be determined by the Governor and approved by the Legislature.

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## **ISSUE #14**

Illegal Roadway Signs

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Fairfax County should resolve to aggressively pursue solutions to remove the blight of illegal roadway signs.

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

From a report on Illegal Signs in the Right-Of-Way by David Conway in September 2001: "Illegal signs in the public right-of-way probably have been around for as long as there have been public rights-of-way, but the number of signs has spiraled out of control in recent years. Between fields of popsicle stick signs for homebuilders and politicians, and signs for weight loss, work at home businesses, hauling, and other signs plastered on every available traffic sign and utility pole, everyone in Fairfax County has something to hate about illegal signs."

At the conclusion of this report of 2001, numerous recommendations were made to assist in eradicating illegal roadway signs in Fairfax County. As we approach 2011, no progress has been made in Fairfax County despite similar repeated citizen requests and requests forwarded by various civic organizations. In the meantime, Prince William County continues its program of removing roadway signs per an agreement with VDOT, a program that has been in place since 2000.

As recent as June 9, 2010, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC) submitted recommendations regarding illegal signs in highway rights-of-way to the Board of Supervisors for review.

This issue, which does not necessarily meet the criteria for what Mount Vernon District should look like in the next 25 years, is considered appropriate for Task Force submission based on:

1. The lack of progress during the last 10 years to implement a program.
2. The potential for significant improvement in the quality of life for Fairfax County citizens at very low cost to the taxpayer to implement.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should:

1. Resolve to make the illegal roadway sign issue a high priority.
2. Exploit the capabilities and endorsements of State legislators in a teaming arrangement to find a solution to roadway blight.
3. Resolve to implement an effective program within two years with a view to long term sustainment for the future.

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## **ISSUE #15**

County Transportation Plan

## **COMMITTEE POSITION**

Enhance the effectiveness and value of the Fairfax County Transportation Plan.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

The Fairfax County Transportation Plan is an excellent document that reflects great attention to detail regarding countywide objectives and policies. There are 13 objectives with numerous policy points contained within each objective. The plan also contains detailed descriptions of transportation terminology and provides complete listings of existing roadway system functional classifications.

The introduction outlines realistic challenges that must be addressed in the future regarding demographics and funding, and points to the need for reducing reliance on automobile travel.

While the Plan is sound, the purpose of this issue is to recommend two strategies that may help to increase its value as a planning document for the future. First, the plan states that "... ..many forces outside the County, which generate increasing levels of traffic demand, are out of the County's direct control. Thus, it becomes imperative to explore possible options for reducing current and future demands on the transportation system." While it is indeed important to explore options for reducing demand, it is also important for the County to look beyond its boundaries even though it does not have direct control in these areas. In order to accomplish Fairfax County goals and objectives for the future, adjacent jurisdictions should be engaged in order to establish a common vision for the entire Northern Virginia environs. Prince William County and Alexandria each have their own transportation plans. There may be efficiencies gained if local jurisdictions reach out to one another to discover potential common goals and objectives for a consistent and unified vision for transportation for Northern Virginia. Policy c of Objective 13 is: "Promote regional and subregional transportation planning by cooperating with neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate a planned network of transit routes." This policy should be exploited to the maximum extent and should be aggressively pursued.

Second, as stated, the plan contains numerous policy points and objectives for improving transportation in the future. However, the plan might be of greater value if substantive and specific projects for improvement are attached to each objective. For example, Policy h of Objective 2 is to "Improve the speed, quality, reliability, convenience, and productivity of transit service." Of course this is a sound policy, but it would have more value if there were stated metrics and methods that could be tied to the policy to explain how the policy is or is going to be implemented. Achieving a vision for improved transportation requires not only a goal but substantive measures of effectiveness as well.

## **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

To enhance the effectiveness and value of the Fairfax County Transportation Plan in achieving its stated goals and policies:

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- County transportation planners should place greater emphasis on collaboration and teaming with adjacent jurisdictions on issues that are not in direct control of Fairfax County. Planners should exploit opportunities to influence adjacent jurisdictions concerning transportation issues that impact Fairfax County.
- Policies and objectives contained in the Transportation Plan should also have metrics, measures of effectiveness and a desired end state and timeline associated listed with the respective policy.
- Continue to emphasize, as stated in the Preface of the Comprehensive Plan, that “Fairfax County's elected officials and staff should continue to participate in leadership roles in cooperative regional activities, recognizing that the physical, economic, and social well-being of the people of Northern Virginia and the Washington Metropolitan Area is dependent upon regional cooperation.”

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## **ISSUE #16**

Transportation Impact Fee

### **COMMITTEE POSITION**

The Board of Supervisors should adopt a zoning ordinance to assess and impose impact fees on new development to pay all or part of the cost of reasonable road improvements that benefit the new development as authorized by Va. Code Section 15.2-2319. And Fairfax County should assess and impose transportation fees on all new development ("a specific development or subdivision" that requires a building permit – Va. Code Section 15.2-2323).

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Desired residential and commercial development has been stymied in view of the lack of progress to expand the existing transportation infrastructure and the public's outcry due to the worsening gridlock in the Mt. Vernon Magisterial District. While road infrastructure improvements and widening on Route 1 and key intersections are ongoing (awaiting funding to complete the 6-lane section past Fort Belvoir and funding from VDOT's 25 years plan for the remaining 6-lane sections), Richmond Highway is congested with the volume of commuter vehicles, as well as local trips for residents and visitors to the Fort Belvoir post hospital. That is, those improvements to the transportation infrastructure are not sufficient to accommodate the tens of thousands of vehicles that travel the Richmond Highway corridor daily. Fort Hunt Road, the George Washington Parkway, Buckman Road, as well as Telegraph Road, Old Colchester Road, Lorton Road, Armistead Road, Pohick Road, Silverbrook Road, Rolling Road, and Ox Road are all overloaded with vehicles and their road surface is crumbling. Money is needed for these transportation infrastructure projects and the citizens of Fairfax County have been paying more than their share for decades.

In 1989, the Virginia General Assembly granted localities, such as Fairfax County (the County), the authority to impose transportation impact fees for new development in order to generate revenue for the cost of reasonable road improvements that benefit the new development. By 2010, only one locality (Stafford County) had created and imposed transportation impact fees. However, adjacent counties have established proffers per single family dwelling that exceed \$30,000 per unit (Stafford - \$38,151, Prince William - \$37,719 and Loudon - \$46,819 as of 2007) Stafford County created and established transportation impact fee districts in 2003 and 2005 (5 years after the Virginia Assembly gave them the authority), and identified specific road improvements as necessary to the new growth. Route 1 in Stafford County was widened to 6 lanes and development has not abandoned Stafford County.

### **NEXT ACTION STEPS**

1. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should adopt a zoning ordinance to assess and impose impact fees on new development to pay all or part of the cost of reasonable road improvements.
2. After adoption of the transportation impact fee zoning ordinance, Fairfax County should enforce it and collect fees from new development.
3. In the next 20-25 years, Fairfax County should be able to fund transportation infrastructure projects through impact fees and draw new development to its main economic centers.