



# Planning Communicator

A Publication of the Fairfax County Planning Commission

May 2007

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## Commissioner Spotlight

This issue of the *Planning Communicator* continues our series on current Commissioners. Today we focus on Hunter Mill representative and current Parliamentarian Frank A. de la Fe, who has served on the Commission since 2002.

Frank de la Fe was born in Havana, Cuba and grew up in Miami, Florida in the early 1950s. He met his wife when they both began working for the Federal Government after graduating from college. de la Fe graduated from Bowdoin College in Maine with a bachelors of arts degree in Political Science. He and his wife moved to Reston when they returned to the Washington area in 1971. Asked about being married for 42 years, de la Fe jokes, “As I tell my wife, we had 25 wonderful years of marriage and out of 42, that’s not bad.” His wife currently works as a realtor. They have two

adult daughters, Catherine and Mary. Catherine, married with three children, lives in Prince William County, and Mary, who is single, lives in Reston. de la Fe enjoys being actively involved in his grandchildren’s lives by attending their soccer games and gymnastics events.

Frank de la Fe first became interested in local land use in the early 1970s when he and his neighbors opposed a proposal to construct a gas station at a dangerous intersection near the pedestrian bridge at Wiehle Avenue, which was the first pedestrian bridge



Commissioner Frank A. de la Fe

in Fairfax County. Neighbors had conducted traffic counts at that intersection to demonstrate the need for a traffic signal, and their perseverance ultimately led to denial of the proposal and installation of the first traffic signal in Reston.

*(continued on page 4)*

## PC Ceremony For Newly-Appointed Members

On Wednesday, January 10th, the Fairfax County Planning Commission held a swearing-in ceremony for two new members and two newly-reappointed commissioners.

New appointees Earl Flanagan and Timothy Sargeant were sworn in by

Clerk of the Court John Frey in the Board Auditorium before the first scheduled meeting of the year. Flanagan represents the Mount Vernon District and Sargeant serves in an At-Large capacity for the Commission.

Current members Peter F.

Murphy Jr. and Janet Hall were also sworn in for new four-year terms at the ceremony.

Murphy, who has served on the Commission since 1983, represents the Springfield District and is the current Chairman.

*(continued on page 2)*



## Planning Commission Swears-in New & Reappointed Members

(continued from page 1)

Hall represents the Mason District and has served on the Commission since 1995.

The Board of Supervisors appointed the new Commissioners on December 4th, 2006, with Chairman Gerald E. Connolly nominating Sargeant and Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland nominating Flanagan.

Flanagan will complete the term of Commissioner John Byers, who retired in December 2006 after 21 years on the Planning Commission. Flanagan has been a resident of Fairfax County for 26 years and is currently involved in numerous local community group.

Sargeant replaces Laurie Frost Wilson who did not seek reappointment after her term expired on December 31, 2006.

Sargeant has been actively involved in Fairfax County civic and land use issues since the early 1990's, especially those pertaining to the Laurel Hill area.

Sargeant and Flanagan are both currently enrolled in the Certified Planning Commissioners program hosted by the Citizens Planning Education Association of Virginia, and are expected to finish their certification requirements by the end of May.

**For more information on these commissioners, please visit the Planning Commission website at:**  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning>



*At-Large Commissioner Tim Sargeant and family are congratulated by Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald Connolly after the swearing-in ceremony.*

## Planning Commission Roundtable Update

The Planning Commission (PC) *Roundtable* is a 30-minute televised panel discussion by various "experts" on land use related issues of interest to Fairfax County residents. Initiated in 2003, the *PC Roundtable* has covered more than 30 topics. The two programs described below were featured during the first quarter of 2007.



### **Update on Transit-Oriented Development Committee Activities**

The topic discussed during the January through March *PC Roundtable* was Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). The program included a description and analysis of the process utilized by the Commission's TOD Committee to gather community input and reach consensus

on the definition and guidelines for development in transit areas.

Roundtable host Peter Murphy (*Planning Commission Chairman*) was joined by TOD Committee Chairman Walter Alcorn (*Commissioner At-Large*), Fred Selden (Planning Division Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning), and citizen participants Michael Horwatt and Deborah Smith.

### **Final Recommendations of The Land Use Accessibility Advisory Group**

Panelists on the April and May program discuss the final recommendations of the Land Use Accessibility Advisory Group (LUAAG), describe how the County's online land use information has already been redesigned, and comment on what can be

expected in the near future to make the system more "citizen-friendly."

Program participants are host Pete Murphy, Walter Alcorn (LUAAG Chairman), Gordon Jarratt (Director of the Enterprise Systems Services Division of the Department of Information Technology) and Ryan Bouma (Senior Project Manager of EDAW Inc., a local engineering firm).

The *PC Roundtable* can be viewed via live video streaming during the scheduled Channel 16 broadcast or anytime through Video on Demand at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cable/channel16/pc\\_roundtable.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cable/channel16/pc_roundtable.htm).

For more information on previous Planning Commission Roundtable programs, visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/roundtable.pdf](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/roundtable.pdf).

## Appreciation Dinner Held for John Byers and Laurie Frost Wilson

On Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>, members of the Fairfax County Planning Commission, friends, family and the public gathered at the *Waterford at Springfield* for an appreciation dinner to honor former Planning Commissioner members John R. Byers and Laurie Frost Wilson.



Commissioner Murphy and At-Large Commissioner James Hart recognize Laurie Frost Wilson's work with the Planning Commission.

John R. Byers retired from the Planning Commission in December 2006 after 20 years of service. Byers served as the commissioner of the Mount Vernon District, a place he has called home for over 30 years.

Laurie Frost Wilson stepped down in December 2006 as well, after serving as an At-Large commissioner since 1998. Wilson has been a resident of Fairfax County since 1966 and has lived in the Lorton area since 1985.

After opening remarks by Chairman Peter F. Murphy, Jr., both commissioners were introduced by former colleagues. At-Large Commissioner James Hart spoke about Wilson's tenure on the Commission and Mason District Commission Janet Hall paid tribute to Byers. Both honorees were given plaques honoring their years of service on the Planning Commission.



Former Mount Vernon Commissioner John Byers (center) is honored by Planning Commission Chairman Peter F. Murphy (left), Mason Commissioner Janet Hall (center) and Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerald Hyland (far right).

## Planning Commission Meets with Visiting Foreign Delegations

On Thursday, January 25 the Fairfax County Planning Commission hosted a visiting delegation from the Persian Gulf region. The trip was sponsored by the National Democratic Institute, a non-profit organization which is in Washington, D.C.

Representatives from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain visited the Fairfax County Government Center for an overview on citizen participation in planning. After a brief introduction by staff from the Office of the County Executive, the group met with Planning Commission Chairman Peter F. Murphy, who discussed the history of the Commission, its role within the county government and its operating procedures.

Afterwards, the group stayed to observe the Commission during its regular weeknight meeting.

This was not the first time that the Planning Commission has been called upon to speak to representatives from overseas delegations. In November 2006, Assistant Director Sara Robin Hardy was asked to speak to officials from the Guangxi Autonomous Region of China and its capital, Nanning, on the role of the public in the land use hearing process. The group was sponsored by Georgetown University's Center for Intellectual Education and Development.



Planning Commission Chairman Peter F. Murphy addresses the delegation from the Persian Gulf Region. Afterwards, the group stayed to watch the Planning Commission on their Thursday night meeting.

## Commissioner Frank A. de la Fe

*(Continued from page 1)*

de la Fe's interest in local land use expanded when he served as a district representative on the Reston Association Board of Directors for five years in the 1980s. "As with service on any volunteer board, the major satisfaction is in helping to maintain and protect your community's values. In the Reston Association, the values involved recreation, the environment and of course, property," he explained. His daughter Mary also served on the Reston Association but for only one term because her job required frequent travel.

de la Fe had represented the Reston Association as a Co-Chair of the Herndon-Reston Recreational Facilities Task Force. The joint task force was created to identify recreational facility needs in the Herndon-Reston areas. "It was that experience that shaped much of my interest in the topic. My daughters' recreational youth needs, of course, were prime movers in my getting involved," he said. Judy Downer, former Dranesville District Planning Commissioner, was also Co-Chair of the task force. de la Fe notes that all but one of the recommendations by the task force have been provided by Fairfax County and a variety of other organizations, such as the new indoor pool in Reston, which is supported by a joint partnership between YMCA and the County. The one facility that has yet to be provided is a skate park in Reston, a proposal that has generated a great deal of opposition, although the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) still has plans to build one in that area. FCPA had opened the county's first skate park next to the Audrey Moore RECenter in Wakefield Park on April 24, 2004.

"Of course, [my interest in local land use] really broadened to a countywide perspective with my service on the FCPA Board, especially during my tenure as Chairman," de la Fe noted. He served as Chairman for five years, after being appointed as an at-large

representative in 1996. Under de la Fe's leadership on the FCPA Board, the amount of open space acquired through purchases, dedications and donations had increased considerably. In recognition of his service on the FCPA Board and commitment to the community, de la Fe was designated "2001 Citizen of the Year" by the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations.

***de la Fe finds it difficult to single out one case as the most memorable because he believes, "All of them are memorable."***

de la Fe also served as a representative of St. Thomas Catholic Church on the Reston Interfaith Board of Directors. Reston Interfaith was founded as Reston Interfaith Housing Corporation in 1970 by six Reston congregations, to encourage the development of affordable housing for families and individuals in the area, and has grown to 17 member congregations that are each represented on the board. Reston Interfaith is a nonprofit organization that promotes self-sufficiency by providing support and advocacy for those in need of food, shelter, affordable housing, quality child care and other human services in the area. "In Reston Interfaith, individual and social values are pre-eminent," de la Fe said. He is always interested when the Planning Commission reviews proposals to provide low-income housing. de la Fe had participated in an effort by Reston Interfaith to provide a modern homeless shelter in Reston, which is now known as the Embry Rucker Shelter at the Reston Town Center and has been in operation for a long time. He and his wife currently participate in Reston Interfaith's events and drives and are active

members of their church.

Although there have not been many radical changes in the Hunter Mill District, de la Fe has observed an increase in mixed-use developments, especially along the Dulles Corridor/Route 28 portion of the district, which was originally planned for office and industrial. He notes that the possibility of Metro rail being extended to that part of the county makes the whole concept of mixed uses much more desirable.

"The major change I have witnessed [countywide] is the shift from a mainly rural to an urbanizing orientation. This process will intensify in the future," de la Fe said. He has also observed "a significant increase in the willingness of applicants to proffer land for construction of public facilities such as parks and schools." To illustrate this point de la Fe recalled that in 2002, a developer had proffered land for an elementary school - Copper Mine, which is scheduled to open in 2009. He noted that this new school will not only meet the requirements of the new development, but also lessen the overcrowding in other area elementary schools.

de la Fe finds it difficult to single out one case as the most memorable because he believes, "All of them are memorable." He noted that the most significant actions he has been involved in were the development and adoption of the Transportation and Parks Policy sections of the Comprehensive Plan, which he considers his major accomplishments on the Planning Commission. The Transportation Policy Plan update required a tremendous amount of staff work, de la Fe said. He commented that the Parks Policy Plan update was the subject of extensive deliberations with an outside group of citizens helping FCPA staff to successfully address all issues.

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## Commissioner Frank A. de la Fe

*(Continued from page 4)*

de la Fe credits his familiarity with FCPA processes that now assist him in his current role as Chair of the Planning Commission's Parks Committee.

"The issues currently under discussion [by the committee] relate to the appropriate level of contributions requested from applicants who are proposing projects that will impact park facilities and also updating of the Area Plans to assure their conformance with the revised Parks Policy Plan," he explained.

de la Fe volunteered to Chair the Commission's Transportation Committee because his "personal goal is to assure that the Planning Commission takes all actions necessary to enable the most timely construction of the Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport." He notes that the project was initially planned 40 years ago and appeared very promising until a year ago due to a number of issues raised that have delayed the progress.

de la Fe said he looks forward to riding the rail to Dulles but is

***"I devote 120 percent of my time to just one issue that I'm interested in doing...you really can't, from my perspective, do a job well unless you devote your time to it"***

skeptical whether it will actually happen in his lifetime.

de la Fe was elected Parliamentarian on January 17, 2007. "The most challenging duty of being Parliamentarian will be trying to figure out when to intercede in some procedural issue," he said. "The most rewarding duty is that I probably won't have to do it very often."

de la Fe had an extensive career with the Federal Government beginning in the 1960s. He was recruited by National Aeronautics and Space Administration right out of undergraduate school, which he notes, "As a non-scientist, to be offered a job by NASA in 1963 was too good to pass up."

He left NASA two months before the moon landing to help create the Illinois State Bureau of the Budget. Unfortunately, de la Fe missed watching this historic event on television because his side of the street in a Springfield, Illinois neighborhood did not have cable at the time.

"Essentially almost every job that I had in the Federal Government was helping to create new organizations," he said. These new organizations included the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention.

de la Fe has been retired for almost 11 years and admits that the Planning Commission now takes up most of his time. "I devote 120 percent of my time to just one issue that I'm interested in doing. If you get involved, really involved in something like this, you get to participate and touch so many other issues that you really can't, from my perspective, do a job well unless you devote your time to it," he said.

## Environment Committee's "Green Building" Tour

On Saturday, April 28, the Planning Commission's Environment Committee toured the Wetlands Studies and Solutions (WSSI) office in Gainesville, VA to see its nationally- certified, environmentally-friendly, "green" building.

The WSSI building was constructed using low impact development techniques to manage its stormwater, and is certified "Gold" under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Commercial Interiors (LEED-CI) standards, set forth by the U.S. Green Building Council. This LEED program is voluntary and allows developers to be recognized as environmentally-conscious in design, engineering and construction. The WSSI building featured a rooftop rain garden (pictured at right) and underground gravel bed detention system, reflective and "green" roof, native landscaping, pervious surfaces, and downward-directed lighting into the site. The interior was also "environmentally-friendly" and featured sensors for lighting, individually-controlled thermal comfort zones, emission-free fabrics and surfaces, and individual task lighting for employees. *(continued on page 9)*



The rooftop rain garden at Wetlands Studies and Solutions in Gainesville, VA.

# Land Use Actions

## 2007 First Quarter Overview

The Planning Commission held 18 regular meetings during the first three months of 2007 – more meetings in the first quarter of the year than in the previous four years. There were fewer speakers in 2007 than the preceding year; however, public hearings on Area Plans Review nominations to amend the Comprehensive Plan resulted in a higher number of speakers in 2004 and 2006.

Planning Commission Land Use Activity 2003-2007					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Meetings	14	16	16	16	18
Speakers	122	141	106	171	130
Actions	60	73	72	70	82

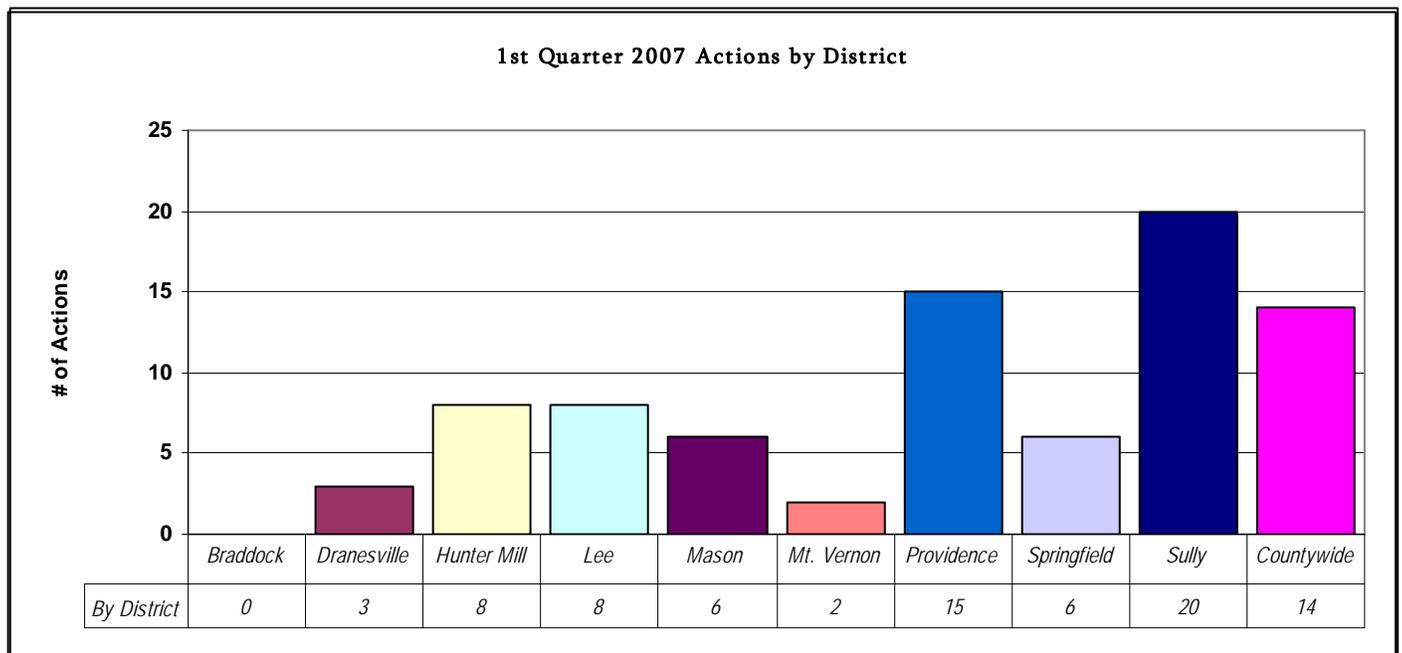
## Activity Synopsis

Of the eighteen regular meetings held during the first quarter of 2007, six were held in January, four in February and eight in March. There were seven meetings on Wednesday, eleven meetings held on Thursday; the shortest meeting lasted 20 minutes and the longest slightly more than four hours. The Commission heard testimony from 130 speakers and took action on 82 items as follows:

- 32 administrative actions not subject to a public hearing (28 feature shown applications and review of architectural renderings for two cases; the 2007 Zoning Ordinance Work Program; and the Land Use Accessibility Advisory Group recommendations)
- 23 decision-only items (public hearings held previously)
- 27 actions taken the same night as the public hearing

## District Breakdown

More than half of the land use actions taken by the Planning Commission in the first quarter of 2007 were on county-wide items (14 actions) or on applications located in the Sully (20 actions) and Providence Districts (15 actions). The least active districts during the first three months of 2007 were Braddock (no actions) and Mount Vernon (two actions). The figure below depicts the first quarter activity for each district. *(continued on page 7)*



# Land Use Actions

## Types of Applications

Of the 82 land use actions taken in the first quarter of 2007, the most prevalent type was feature shown applications (items determined by the Commission to be a “feature shown” of the Comprehensive Plan). Below is a list of actions taken by type of application.

<b>Capital Improvement Program</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Public Facility (2232) items</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Administrative actions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Special Exception applications and amendments</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Proffered Condition Amendments</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Comprehensive Plan Amendments</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Code Amendments</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Rezoning and A&amp;F applications</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Development plans, amendments and signage plans</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Feature shown applications</b>	<b>28</b>

## Committee Meetings: January-April 2007

### Schools Committee

The School Facilities Committee met in January to discuss monopoles on school properties and other unfinished business. DPZ staff and Chairman Murphy provided a brief history of the telecommunications process and the approvals at various school sites to date. Attending the meeting were representatives of the School Board and their staff. At the meeting, the Committee voted to change its name from “School Facilities Committee” to “Schools Committee.”

### Policy and Procedures Committee

The Policy & Procedures Committee met on April 4 to begin discussions evaluating the 2004-2006 Area Plans Review (APR) process and working to establish guidelines and procedures for the next APR process to amend the Comprehensive Plan. The evaluation process as well as draft procedures will be discussed at future meetings scheduled on May 24 and June 13 .

### Environment Committee

The Environment Committee met with members of EQAC (Environmental Quality Advisory Council) on January 25 to discuss stream and buffer area protection and restoration, air quality, “green buildings” and future Plan

amendments relating to these topics.

The committee met on March 29 and April 19 to hear presentations from the U.S. Green Building Council and Energy Star on environmentally-friendly standards in design and construction. Members also attended a field trip to Wetlands Studies & Solutions, Inc. in Gainesville, VA on April 28 to view construction of this “green” building.

The May 16 meeting will feature a presentation from representatives of the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association highlighting their view of “green” building processes.

### Redevelopment & Housing Committee

The Housing Committee met on March 14 and again on April 18 to discuss the High-Rise Affordability Panel recommendations and endorsed the overall concepts to the full Commission and subsequently to the Board of Supervisors. The Committee also asked that the BOS consider allowing affordable and workforce housing in commercial, industrial and mixed-use districts. The Committee will also focus future meetings on the topic of Universal Design which has been referred to the Committee and staff for study at the request of the Board of Supervisors.

### CIP Committee

The Capital Improvement Program Committee met on March 21 to formulate its recommendations which were then forwarded to the Planning Commission for approval.

### Parks Committee

The Parks Committee met on March 15 to discuss a proposed increase in park fees, the proffer formula for parks and proposed Area Plan amendments for parks. A follow-up discussion on the proposed change to the parks proffer formula is planned for May 30.

### Transportation Committee

The Transportation Committee met on April 26 to discuss the transportation technical updates and editorial changes to the Area Plans that were necessary following the approval by the Board of Supervisors of Transportation Policy Plan changes in S01-CW-17CP. The follow-up amendment, S01-CW-17CP (B) is scheduled for PC public hearing on May 30th.

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For additional information on any of the Commission Committees, including membership, visit the PC website at: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/committee.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/committee.htm)

# Planning Commission Mail Bag



This issue of the Planning Communicator offers a new feature: the Planning Commission Mail Bag. Readers will have an opportunity to submit their questions through the Planning Commission website and have staff, other departments or even the Commissioners themselves answer their query. All questions should be submitted to [plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov) or go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning>

## What is a proffer?

The Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan defines a proffer as “A development plan and/or written condition, which, when offered voluntarily by a property owner and accepted by the Board of Supervisors in a rezoning action, becomes a legally binding part of the regulations of the zoning district regulations pertaining to the subject property.” Proffers, or proffered conditions, may change during the application review and public hearing process. Final proffers must be signed by all owners and contract purchasers of the subject property and must be submitted in writing prior to the Board of Supervisors’ public hearing. Once the rezoning is approved, the proffers become a part of the zoning on the property and remain in effect unless or until a subsequent amendment to the zoning is approved.

## Can a proffer or proffers be amended after being approved by the Board of Supervisors?

Yes. Proffers may be modified by a proffered condition amendment application or other zoning action of the Board of Supervisors and must submit to a hearing process similar to that required of a rezoning application. However, Paragraph 5 under Section 18-204 of the Zoning Ordinance states, “...Minor modifications to the proffered conditions may be permitted when it is determined by the Zoning Administrator that such are in substantial conformance with the proffered conditions and that such: are in response to issues of topography, drainage, underground utilities, structural safety, layout, design, vehicular circulation, or requirements of the Virginia Department of Transportation or Fairfax County; or are accessory uses....”

## How are proffers enforced?

Paragraph 7 under Section 18-204 of the Zoning Ordinance stipulates, “The Zoning Administrator shall be vested with all necessary authority on behalf of the Board to administer and enforce proffered conditions. Such authority shall include the ability to order, in writing, the remedy of any noncompliance including injunction, abatement, or other appropriate action or proceedings....” Furthermore, Paragraph 9 states, “Failure to meet or comply with any proffered condition shall be sufficient cause to deny the issuance of any permits, Building Permits, Residential and Non-Residential Use Permits as may be deemed appropriate by the Zoning Administrator.”

## Is Fairfax County staff allowed to encourage applicants to provide proffers?

Fairfax County staff may request the applicant to submit a statement of proffered conditions regarding the location of improvements, landscaping and other features of the proposed structure or use, such as the hours of operation, number of employees and height of buildings. In addition, citizens can provide input that helps shape proffers and/or other development commitments.

## What are the most common types of proffers?

Proffers are typically submitted to help resolve identified development-related issues, such as mitigation of adverse impacts to transportation and public facilities and services, such as parks and recreation, schools, fire and police stations and libraries. Proffered transportation improvements may involve road widening, new roads, right-of-way, turn lanes, traffic signals, crosswalks, sidewalks, bus shelters and Transportation Demand Management. Proffers may also include commitments for high-quality design specifications, such as building materials, Best Management Practices, stormwater management, architecture, streetscaping, height, elevations, signage and lighting. Proffers have also contributed toward tree preservation, landscaping and open space as well as affordable and workforce housing units. Proffers may be for monetary contributions to a particular Fairfax County fund, bond, proffer account, Capital Improvement Program or other funding mechanism or non-monetary contributions, such as dedication of land for park and recreation use or trail connections.

## How are proffers different from development conditions?

The main difference between proffers and development conditions is that proffers are voluntary, whereas, development conditions are imposed by Fairfax County staff. Proffers are only submitted in rezoning applications; however, development conditions are submitted in rezoning, special exception and special permit applications. However, proffers and development conditions are generally heard concurrently.

**Do you have a question for the Planning Commission Mail Bag?**

**If so, please contact us at:**

**[plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov)**

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## Website Statistics

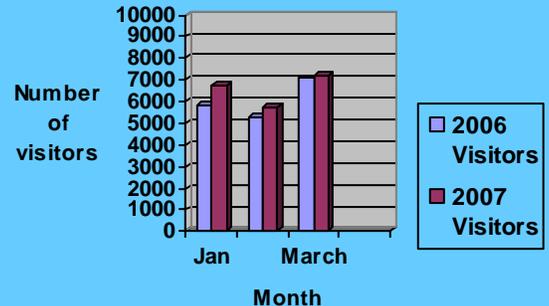
During the first three months of 2007, the Planning Commission website experienced a high volume of visitors, receiving 19,672 hits. March was the most active month overall with 7,191 views, followed by January with 6,784 and February with 5,697.

Those numbers are up slightly from the first three months of 2006, when 18,123 visitors explored various portions of the Planning Commission website.

While the majority of these visitors came from within the United States, many of them were not local. Three of the top five localities who viewed the site were not from Virginia—Marina Del Rey, CA, Redmond, WA and Las Vegas, NV.

There were also many international visitors as well. China, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia and Japan were just a few of the countries that viewed the website.

### 2006-2007 Website Visitor Comparison

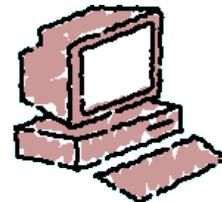


### Top Five Pages Viewed on the Planning Commission Website

1. The Planning Commission Homepage  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/>
2. Calendar and Agenda  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/meetingcalendar.htm>
3. Transit-Oriented Development Committee Page  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/tod.htm>
4. Committees  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/committee.htm>
5. Minutes  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning/minutes.htm>

### Top Five Visitor Locations

1. Marina Del Rey, California
2. Redmond, Washington
3. Herndon, Virginia
4. Las Vegas, Nevada
5. Washington, D.C.



## Environment Committee's "Green Building" Tour



*Pictured on the WSSI rooftop rain garden (clockwise): Commissioners James Hart, Nancy Hopkins and Ken Lawrence; Bill Nell & Mike Rolband from WSSI; Noel Kaplan from DPZ; and PC Executive Director Barbara Lipka. Not pictured: Commissioner Earl Flanagan, Pam Nee from DPZ, and PC Assistant Director Robin Hardy.*

(continued from page 5)

The Environment Committee has already heard presentations on "green" buildings by the U.S. Green Building Council and Energy Star at its meetings in March and April. In May, the Committee will continue its focus on this issue with a presentation from the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association.

The Board of Supervisors has also continued its interest in environmental matters. In March, Chairman Gerald Connolly announced a "cool counties" initiative with the Sierra Club. Part of this initiative will be the promotion of "green" buildings for public and private use.

To catch up with all of the Committee's activities for January through April, check out the "Committee Update" section on page seven.

## Trend of the Future: Universal Design

In the near future, many new and existing residents of Northern Virginia may be presented with a housing term that they have never encountered before:

### *Universal Design.*

According to the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University, the definition for universal design is: “to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost.” In other words, housing built with future owners in mind—designed to host them from childhood to retirement years and to address the common needs of all ages.

Marketed toward middle-aged buyers, it’s easy to see why this style of home is becoming more popular. Consider some of the growing demographic trends identified by the Universal Design Alliance:

- The greatest wealth is owned by the 50+ age group
- One in four adults is over the age of 50 and those in the 85 and older age group are the fastest growing segment of the population
- Most people want to age in their homes, not in an institution
- The average person can expect to experience a disability at some point in their lives
- Multigenerational family living is on the rise, and adult children are living at home longer

Inspired by the impending retirements of the baby-boomer generation, a residence which is constructed in this manner can provide common-sense enhancements and features for an occupant who is growing older or may be disabled. Slanted walkways, wider doorways and entry points that are step-less (“zero-step”) are wheelchair and walker-friendly. Sinks and countertops can be built lower to the ground and can accommodate both old and young alike. Some other architectural features of a universal design home may include:

- Placing the master bedroom, living area and bath on the first level floor
- Reinforcing walls to allow for the installation of grab bars around the toilet, tub and shower
- Curbless showers
- Using lever handles on the interior and exterior doors
- Installing hardwood stairs with colored lips to assist the visually impaired

A Universal Design home does not need to be a single-floor dwelling unit either. A residence that is built with two or more levels can feature “stacked closets,” with an upstairs closet in the same footprint as one below it. This would allow that closet space to be converted to an elevator shaft, should the need arise.

Universal Design extends past the realm of architecture as well. Products and appliances which fill homes could be selected for their convenience and ease of use for people of all abilities. Appliances like washing machines and dryers can be raised and front-mounted to provide easy access for a disabled occupant. In the kitchen, high contrast graphics can be utilized on appliances and something as simple as providing color contrast between the sink and countertops can help someone who is visually-impaired.

There are also steps that can be taken to help offset sensory loss due to age or disability. Hearing problems can be helped by visual cues (flashing lights) and visual problems can be assisted by enhanced lighting (task lighting, glow in the dark switches). Sense of touch can be enhanced by using different textures and visual aids.

In terms of cost, a Universal Design home usually runs zero to five percent more to build than the average house. If these design features are built into a home during its construction, it’s worth noting that it would probably be more cost-effective than adding years later when the need arises.

Although no communities in Fairfax County currently feature these design concepts, it has become a topic of interest within the county. On February 26 the Board of Supervisors referred the Universal Design topic to staff for evaluation and also to the Planning Commission.

Locally, these designs are already being implemented in nearby Prince William County, Virginia and Howard County, Maryland. Chairman Peter F. Murphy has referred this topic to the Redevelopment and Housing Committee.

### [For More Information](#)

**Center for Universal Design, North Carolina State University**

*[www.design.ncsu.edu/cud](http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud)*

**Universal Design Alliance**

*[www.universaldesign.org](http://www.universaldesign.org)*

## Comprehensive Plan Review Comparisons

Section 15.1-446.1 of the *Code of Virginia* requires all local governments to prepare and adopt a Comprehensive Plan and Section 15.1-454 requires review of those plans every five years. Below is a comparison of Comprehensive Plan Review procedures used in Fairfax County and other Northern Virginia regional jurisdictions.

Name of Jurisdiction	Description of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process. Frequency of reviews or amendments	Ad hoc amendments: Extent of separation between the Comp. Plan amendment and land use application.	Comp Plan process divided by topic or geographic area?	Key issues confronted on this topic in the last two years. Current problems with regard to growth and Comprehensive Plan.
<b>Fairfax County</b>	Four-year cycle: - Plan monitoring - Policy Plan - Area Plans Review - Area Plans Review	Many out of turn amendments are initiated w/ zoning applications. Activities are processed on a coordinated schedule w/ Board action on Plan amendments prior to the PC public hearing.	Area plans are organized by a geographic hierarchy. Policy Plan is organized by topic.	Traffic Environmental Mass-transit Affordable Housing
<b>Prince William County</b>	Within a five-year time-frame	Applications for amendments reviewed annually but must be turned in by the first Friday of January. Applicant must have amendment request initiated by Board of Supervisors or PC.	Has 19 land use categories and divides the county into two geographic areas: Development Area and Rural Area	Traffic, Housing density, School Improvements
<b>Loudoun County</b>	Can be initiated by the Board of Supervisors or by property owners. Can be accepted twice per year in Mar. & Sept.	Centers on Comprehensive Plan conformance, though the Board has latitude for interpreting the Plan.	Issue specific, not related to any geographic location.	Development, Historic Preservation, Rural Economy, Rural Residential and Transition Areas are just a few of the topics.
<b>City of Fairfax</b>	Property owners, staff, Council and Planning Commission can initiate amendments as part of a five year review process	Potential amendments can be submitted by Planning Commission, staff or City Stakeholders; undertaken twice per year, with deadlines of Mar. & Sept. 1 <sup>st</sup> .	By topic	Changing demographics, Traffic
<b>City of Alexandria</b>	Plan can be amended any time the Planning Commission and City Council are in session	Updated on as-need basis; can be initiated by the Council or neighborhood initiated studies	Plan is divided into 15 small area plans	Historic Preservation, Urban Design and Open Space.
<b>County of Arlington</b>	Ongoing review takes the place of five-year review	Anyone can make amendment request; there is no formal application.	By topic	Preservation of single family neighborhoods, mixed use Metro Station areas
<b>Town of Herndon</b>	Initiated on a "as needed" basis	Applications must be in conformance with the Plan, which is quite flexible.	By topic	Traffic, historic preservation



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## Employees Recognized for Performance

Congratulations to the following Office of the County Attorney and Department of Planning and Zoning recipients who merited recent Outstanding Performance Awards:

- ☞ Joseph Bakos, Jr., Chief Zoning Inspector
- ☞ Bette Crane, Paralegal
- ☞ David Jillson, Planner III
- ☞ Noel Kaplan, Planner III
- ☞ Marie Langhorne, Planning Technician II
- ☞ Virginia Ruffner, Planner III



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## Promotions

Congratulations to Barbara Byron, Director of Zoning Evaluation Division, Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), on her promotion as the Director of the newly-created Community Revitalization and Reinvestment Office, effective July 1.



Congratulations to Regina Coyle on her new appointment as the Director of the Zoning Evaluation Division, effective July 1. Regina is currently a branch chief, overseeing rezoning and special exception applications review.

## Departures

- ☞ Windy Rowland, former Associate Clerk, resigned from the Commission staff on February 16th for personal reasons. "I have enjoyed working with all of you and wish you all nothing but the best," she said.
- ☞ Mike Kane, Fairfax County Park Authority Director, retired on April 13th after 30 years of dedicated service. Kane accepted a position with the Ashburn-based National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), to serve as Director of Education and Knowledge. The Board of Supervisors recognized Kane for his years of service at the April 19 meeting.

### Do you have a great story idea for the Planning Communicator?

If so, please send your ideas to Kara DeArrastia at [kara.dearrastia@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:kara.dearrastia@fairfaxcounty.gov), or to Christopher Remer at [christopher.remer@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:christopher.remer@fairfaxcounty.gov).

### The following staff contributed to this issue of the *Planning Communicator*:

- ☒ Kara DeArrastia
- ☒ Sara Robin Hardy
- ☒ Barbara Lippa
- ☒ Christopher Remer



This publication will be made available in alternative formats upon request. Please call 703-324-2865 (V), 703-324-7951 (TTY). Please allow seven days for the preparation of material.