

**Planning Commission Recommendation**  
**ST07-CW-1CP**  
**February 28, 2007**

**RECOMMENDED POLICY PLAN AMENDMENTS**

The Planning Commission recommends that the Land Use section and Glossary of the *Policy Plan* be revised as follows:

Text proposed to be added is shown as underlined and text proposed to be deleted is shown with a ~~strikethrough~~.

**MODIFY:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2003 Edition, *Glossary*, as amended through July 10, 2006, page 14, as follows:

“**TRANSIT:** See Mass Transit.

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

**TRANSIT STATION AREAS (TSAs):** The Land Classification System category for areas adjacent to Metrorail Stations (or other future rapid rail stations) which is directly influenced by the presence of access points to the regional rail system....”

**MODIFY:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2003 Edition, *Policy Plan*, Land Use Section, as amended through November 15, 2004, “Land Use Compatibility,” after Objective 15, page 10, as follows:

“Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Transit-oriented development (TOD) has a range of definitions, however common characteristics include compact development that contains a compatible mix of housing, employment and retail uses in a high-quality walking environment. TOD is the result of a deliberate planning strategy for reducing sprawl and automobile dependency by focusing medium to high density growth around planned and existing transit stations while protecting stable neighborhoods. Well-planned development that incorporates good design principles and includes a mix of uses around these stations can create opportunities for compact, pedestrian-friendly and vibrant neighborhood centers within walking distance of transit. TOD can leverage major investments in public transit infrastructure, contribute to environmentally sound means to accommodate new growth in the County, improve access to transit stations and enhance transportation choice in the

area. Initially, this Comprehensive Plan guidance for the development of TODs in Fairfax County is limited to existing or planned rail transit stations identified in the Area Plans for mixed-use development. While this guidance applies to all rail transit stations, the Area Plans should recognize the differences in respective service levels and capacity of heavy rail, commuter rail, and light rail transit which influence the overall density and intensity appropriate for a particular station area. Future planning efforts may expand the implementation of TOD guidelines as part of a family of guidelines for development around different types of mass transit.

**Objective 16: Fairfax County should encourage Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) with focused growth near certain planned and existing rail transit stations as a way to create opportunities for compact pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, neighborhood centers accessible to transit.**

Policy a. The TOD principles outlined in the “Guidelines for Transit-Oriented Development” section in the Land Use Appendix should be used in future planning efforts involving rail transit station sites identified for mixed-use development in the Area Plans.

Policy b. Development applications that propose a substantial change in use, intensity or density near designated rail transit stations should be consistent with the adopted TOD guidelines in the Land Use Appendix.”

**Note:** Subsequent Objectives will be renumbered.

**ADD:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2003 Edition, *Policy Plan*, Land Use Section, as amended through November 15, 2004, page 32, as follows:

## “APPENDIX 11

### GUIDELINES FOR TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Fairfax County seeks to accommodate future residential and employment growth and expand choices for residents and employees by encouraging transit-oriented development (TOD) as a means to achieve compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities focused around existing and planned rail transit stations.

The following guidelines and design principles are intended to effect well-planned transit-oriented development and should be considered in planning efforts as new station areas are identified and when an existing station area is subject to a major replanning effort. When applicable, these principles should be used in the review of major rezoning cases for development around planned and existing rail transit stations. These guidelines are intended to

provide guidance for TOD in addition to the specific guidance found in Area Plans for each station area.

**1. Transit Proximity and Station Area Boundaries:**

*Focus and concentrate the highest density or land use intensity close to the rail transit station, and where feasible, above the rail transit station.*

This TOD area may be generally defined as a ¼ mile radius from the station platform with density and intensity tapering to within a ½ mile radius from the station platform, or a 5-10 minute walk, subject to site-specific considerations. Station-specific delineations should allow for the consideration of conditions such as roads, topography, or existing development that would affect the frequency of pedestrian usage of transit and therefore affect the expected walking distance to a station within which higher intensity development may be appropriate. Higher intensities within the delineated area may be appropriate if barriers are overcome and demonstrable opportunities exist to provide pedestrians a safe, comfortable and interesting walk to transit. To protect existing stable neighborhoods in the vicinity of transit but not planned for transit-oriented development or redevelopment, and to focus density toward the station, Area Plans should include clearly delineated boundaries for transit-oriented development based upon these criteria and a recognition of the respective differences in service levels and capacity of heavy rail, commuter rail and light rail transit which influence the overall density and intensity appropriate for a particular station area.

**2. Station-specific Flexibility:**

*Examine the unique characteristics and needs of a particular station area when evaluating TOD principles to ensure the appropriate development intensity and mix of land uses relative to the existing and planned uses for the surrounding areas.*

Each of Fairfax County's planned and existing rail transit stations has a unique character in terms of surrounding land uses, transportation infrastructure and roadways, environmental and topographical characteristics, and location within the rail system. Although each individual station should balance node and place functions to some extent, the value of the system as a whole can be enhanced if there is some degree of specialization, which can enhance the goals of TOD. Implementation of TOD within Transit Station Area (TSA) boundaries established in Area Plans, should consider the characteristics of the larger area surrounding the TSA (e.g., stable residential neighborhood, revitalization area, urban center). Transit station areas within a larger mixed-use center should be integrated into the overall planning fabric of the mixed-use center.

**3. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access:**

*Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle travel to and from and within the station area.*

Non-motorized access and circulation are critical elements of successful TODs and should be encouraged. Techniques to promote maximum pedestrian and bicycle access must include an integrated pedestrian and bicycle system plan with features such as on-road bicycle lanes, walkways, trails and sidewalks, amenities such as street trees, benches, bus shelters, adequate lighting, covered walkways, pedestrian aids such as moving sidewalks and escalators, covered and secure bicycle storage facilities close to the station, shower and changing facilities, a pedestrian-friendly street network, and appropriate sidewalk width. Conflict between vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists should be minimized. This may be achieved through the appropriate location of parking facilities including kiss-and-ride facilities, and the appropriate location and design of access roads to the rail transit station. Planning for accessible trail systems should consider distances traveled by both pedestrians and cyclists and should provide usable trails and other systems beyond the Transit Station Area.

**4. Mix of Land Uses:**

*Promote a mix of uses to ensure the efficient use of transit, to promote increased ridership during peak and off-peak travel periods in all directions, and to encourage different types of activity throughout the day.*

A balanced mix of residential, office, retail, governmental, institutional, entertainment and recreational uses should be provided to encourage a critical mass of pedestrian activity as people live, work and play in these areas. The appropriate mix of uses should be determined in the Area Plans by examining the unique characteristics and needs of each station area. Specific development plans that conflict with the achievement of the mix of uses planned for that station area are discouraged.

**5. Housing Affordability:**

*Provide for a range of housing opportunities by incorporating a mix of housing types and sizes and including housing for a range of different income levels.*

Housing within TODs should be accessible to those most dependent on public transportation, including older adults, persons with disabilities and other special needs, and persons with limited income. Housing should be provided within the residential component of a TOD for low and moderate income residents. Affordable and workforce housing should be provided on-site or, if an alternative location can provide a substantially greater number of units, in adjacent areas within the TOD. Housing for seniors is encouraged to the extent feasible.

**6. Urban Design:**

*Encourage excellence in urban design, including site planning, streetscape and building design, which creates a pedestrian-focused sense of place.*

A pleasant pedestrian environment can contribute to the quality of a transit experience, which is also a pedestrian activity. Urban design elements to achieve an appropriate sense of place and a pleasant pedestrian environment may include any or all of the following: well-landscaped public spaces such as squares and plazas; urban parks; courtyards; an integrated pedestrian system; street-oriented building forms with a pedestrian focus; compact development; appropriate street width and block size; measures to mitigate the visual impact and presence of structured parking; and, high-quality architecture.

## **7. Street Design:**

*Provide a grid of safe, attractive streets for all users which provide connectivity throughout the site and to and from adjacent areas.*

The street grids around transit station areas should be designed at a scale that facilitates safe pedestrian and cyclist movement and provides for vehicular circulation and capacity. Street design should incorporate elements such as lighting, appropriate street width, sidewalk width and intersection dimensions to allow for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular use, and should be designed to provide universal access to people with a range of abilities and disabilities. The design of streets should encourage lower traffic speeds and superior pedestrian circulation through provision of on-street parking, street trees, and other features and amenities.

## **8. Parking:**

*Encourage the use of transit while maximizing the use of available parking throughout the day and evening and minimizing the visual impact of parking structures and surface parking lots.*

Proper size and location of parking facilities contribute to creation of a pedestrian- and transit-supportive environment. The use of maximum parking requirements, shared use parking facilities, incentive programs to reduce automobile usage, carpooling, metered parking, car-sharing programs, neighborhood parking programs, and other techniques can encourage the use of transit while also maximizing the use of parking spaces at different times of day. Efforts to provide urban design elements such as on-street parking, placement of parking structures underground and minimizing surface parking lots are encouraged. Wherever possible, ground floor uses and activities should be incorporated into structured parking, particularly where parking structures are located along streets where pedestrian activity is encouraged. Location of commuter garages should be sensitive to pedestrian and bicycle activity within and adjacent to the Transit Station Area and adjacent neighborhoods.

## **9. Transportation and Traffic:**

*Promote a balance between the intensity of TOD and the capacity of the multimodal transportation infrastructure provided and affected by TOD, and provide for and*

*accommodate high quality transit, pedestrian, and bicycle infrastructure and services and other measures to limit single occupant vehicle trips.*

A TOD should contain the following characteristics relating to transportation and traffic:

- A multimodal transportation infrastructure, with an emphasis on pedestrian facilities, that offers a choice in transportation modes providing convenient and reliable alternatives to driving to a station area, particularly those station areas without parking.
- A design that accommodates, but minimizes single occupant vehicle trips. Additional measures to minimize single occupant vehicle trips, including Transportation Demand Management measures, should be identified and applied.
- Traffic-calming measures, design techniques and road alignment that balance pedestrian accessibility and vehicular access.

The cumulative impacts of TOD on transportation infrastructure should be evaluated in the TOD area, and improvements provided where needed. *The impacts on roads:* Where applicable, a higher level of delay is acceptable for vehicular traffic within TOD areas. A non-degradation policy should be applied to areas immediately adjacent to a TOD area and to arterials serving the TOD area. This policy requires that traffic flow in these adjacent areas and on arterials serving the TOD area perform no worse after development of a TOD takes place. Where it is not possible or appropriate to maintain a non-degradation policy, in lieu of additional road capacity, there can be improvements, measures and/or monetary contributions to a fund to enable the application of techniques to reduce vehicle trips by an appropriate amount in and around the TOD area. *The impacts on transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities:* A high level of service should be maintained for transit users that minimizes delay, the need for transfers, and transfer delay. Where it is not possible to maintain a high level of transit service because of extraordinarily high costs, monetary contributions to a fund for the eventual improvement of transit service can be provided in lieu of the maintenance of a high quality transit service. An acceptable level of transit service nevertheless should be maintained during TOD development. A high level of service should be maintained for pedestrians and cyclists, including safety and security, direct pathways, reasonable grades, and minimized delays at intersections.

## **10. Vision for the Community:**

*Strive to achieve a broadly inclusive, collaborative, community participation process when evaluating TOD plans that propose substantial changes in use, intensity or density for existing or new transit station areas planning efforts.*

Broad-based support and collaboration can be achieved through planning processes that encourage involvement and participation. These processes should utilize a range of tools and techniques for engaging the community and other interested stakeholders. While the particulars of the process should relate to each station, planning processes should include the use of citizen task forces, the Area Plans Review process and other means to result in the following: (1) a collaborative and interactive formulation of a cohesive vision for the

transit station area before specific development proposals are formally considered; (2) a TOD vision that is integrated with and complements surrounding neighborhoods; (3) incorporation of a broad range of aspirations and needs of those communities; (4) active participation by county planning officials, supervisors, community groups and developers to identify, and encourage broad-based involvement and participation by, a wide range of stakeholders, including all interested citizens' associations; and (5) continuing stakeholder involvement on a collaborative basis in framing development proposals ultimately considered for specific parcels.

## **11. Regional Framework:**

*Provide a more efficient land use pattern by concentrating growth around existing and planned transit station areas.*

Maximizing development around transit can provide a regional benefit by accommodating some of the region's projected employment and residential growth, as well as making jobs accessible by transit. In instances where substantial changes in use, density or intensity are being considered as part of station area planning, the implications and impacts on the transit system should be considered. Cumulative impacts on transit service and capacity as well as on traffic capacity should be evaluated in a transit-oriented development, and improvements evaluated where needed. These planning efforts should include coordination and cooperation with adjacent jurisdictions, regional organizations, and transit providers, such as WMATA and VRE. The use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's) should be examined as a technique to relocate zoned density to TOD areas if it results in future development that agrees with Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

## **12. Environmental Considerations:**

*Seek opportunities for mitigating environmental impacts of development.*

The environmental benefits of compact, mixed use development focused around transit stations can include improved air quality and water quality through the reduction of land consumption for development in other areas. The utilization of land near transit and the existing infrastructure allows the County to accommodate increasing growth pressures in a smaller area served by infrastructure. Improvements in air quality due to reduced vehicle miles traveled and reduced automobile emissions can also be viewed as a benefit of TOD. Environmental impacts (such as impacts on mature trees and stormwater runoff) of proposed development should be examined and mitigated to minimize potential negative impacts. Low Impact Development Techniques, such as rain gardens and green roofs, should be incorporated into proposed developments to reduce potential impacts of stormwater runoff from these areas. Development in TODs should be designed in a manner that conserves natural resources; the application of energy and water conservation measures should be encouraged. Sites undergoing redevelopment should optimize stormwater management and water quality controls and practices for redevelopment consistent with revitalization goals.

**13. Economic Benefits:**

*Create an employment base and encourage commercial revitalization adjacent to transit facilities.*

Development around transit stations can help to address housing and transportation costs in the County by providing opportunities to balance these costs in TODs. Employment uses near transit can provide opportunities for lowered transportation costs for employees. Additionally, housing near transit offers similar transportation savings and opportunities for housing near employment. Opportunities to create new small business opportunities as well as assist in the retention of existing small businesses should be evaluated as part of TOD planning.

**14. Open Space:**

*Provide publicly-accessible, high-quality, usable open space.*

Urban parks and open space contribute to a development's sense of place and are integral amenities offered to residents, workers and shoppers. Transit-oriented development plans should provide amenities such as public gathering spaces, civic focal points, plazas and open green space and offer a variety of activities such as dining, casual games and recreation, performances, visual arts and special events. These spaces should be accessible to the larger community as well as the immediate transit-oriented development area. Development plans should also incorporate open space preservation, such as stream valleys, where appropriate, and provide access to the County's network of parks and trails.

**15. Public Facilities and Infrastructure:**

*Evaluate opportunities to include public facility improvements and services within the TOD area.*

TOD may provide opportunities to improve public facilities. Locating public facilities in station areas provides important public services in areas accessible to public transportation and can increase activity within the TOD. Cumulative impacts of development in a TOD on public facilities and transit access facilities should be identified and offset. Such impacts include those on schools, parks, libraries, police, fire and rescue, water and sewer, stormwater management and other publicly owned community facilities. Current data on station access facilities and demand should be used as available, to assess needs for replacement or enhancement of facilities such as bus bays, taxi access, substations and parking.

**16. Phasing of Development:**

*Ensure that projects are phased in such a way as to include an appropriate mix of uses in each phase of the development.*

A balanced mix of residential and non-residential uses should be provided to encourage a critical mass of pedestrian activity. However, concurrent development of all uses may not be feasible due to market conditions. In instances where a certain mix of uses is critical to the success of the TOD, the development should include a commitment to phase the project in such a way as to include an appropriate mix of uses in each phase to help ensure the long-term success of the mixed-use development. It may also be appropriate, when a project's overall success depends on certain specific elements, to make later phases contingent on completion of those elements. Phasing the development can minimize the potential impacts on the surrounding community and increase amenities for residents, employees, and visitors within the transit-oriented development area. Phasing plans should include pedestrian and bicycle access plans to allow proper non-motorized access throughout the development phases. Provision of open space and recreational amenities should be phased as well so that provision of these facilities is not postponed until final phasing of a development.”