

Department of Planning and Zoning

LOB #68:

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Purpose

The purpose of Environmental Planning and Development Review is to help ensure that growth and development occurs in a manner that is consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan. With respect to the environment, the objective is to protect and preserve the County's valuable environmental features. A cornerstone of DPZ's environmental planning efforts is the identification and preservation of Environmental Quality Corridors (EQC) in addition to encouraging green building commitments where appropriate as part of the development review process. This LOB encourages sound land use and environmental decisions that are in conformance and/or in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use and Environmental Policy Plans.

Description

Staff conducts environmental policy studies; participates in regional efforts to meet Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance requirements and federal standards for ozone attainment levels; and develops policies on various environmental matters such as aviation noise abatement, stream protection, and sustainable green building design and construction. Staff further provides technical and administrative expertise to the Environmental Quality Advisory Committee (EQAC), the Wetlands Board, the Airports Advisory Committee, and the Planning Commission's Environmental Committee. Staff also prepares comments on Environmental Impact Statements submitted for state and federal projects including evaluation of plans at Dulles Internationals Airport, George Mason University, Fort Belvoir and the Engineering Proving grounds, and energy and gas pipeline proposals. Selective review and comment to neighboring jurisdictions are provided as part of the Interjurisdictional Review Process. Finally, staff supports and provides service to the County Executive's Environmental Coordinating Committee and its efforts concerning the Cool County Program Initiative, Watershed Management Plans, Air Quality Management Plan, Tree Action Soil Survey update, and Ecological Data Management Plans in support of the Board of Supervisors' Environmental Agenda and Environmental Implementation Plan.

Benefits

The work provided by the Development and Environmental Review Branch directly benefits the efforts to practice environmental stewardship by promoting the protection, conservation and restoration of natural resources in the County; and by promoting development that fosters livable spaces with distinctive and accessible town centers, neighborhoods, streets, walkways and open spaces, all of which serve to maintain and promote Fairfax County as a desirable place to work and live.

The ongoing work of the Development and Environmental Review Branch also benefits efforts to maintain healthy economies through revitalization and redevelopment applications to promote community business centers and affordable and workforce housing. The goal to connect people and places is implemented through the application of the Bicycle Master Plan, the Countywide Trails program, and transit oriented design in the development review process. Outlets to promote a culture of engagement are provided with outreach to communities and peer professionals in support of the Planning Commission's Environmental Committee, the Wetlands Board, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council, the Potomac Watershed Roundtable, the Council of Governments, and Green Breakfast program, among others.

Mandates

The work and function of the Wetlands Board are mandated under Virginia Code § 28.2-1300, Chapter 13.

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Trends and Challenges

Since much of the County is largely built out, much of the development review land use and environmental analyses focuses on redevelopment in special planning areas such as Transit Station Areas (TSAs), Community Business Centers (CBCs) and Suburban Centers with consideration for increased land use options and flexibility to foster economic vitality and growth. Retrofitting the built environment to meet higher stormwater management water quality and quantity standards and public acceptance and evaluation of emerging technologies to address green building and energy conservation policies has become more challenging.

Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
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FUNDING			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$610,070	\$593,638	\$659,711
Operating Expenses	57,323	46,353	46,217
Total Expenditures	\$667,393	\$639,991	\$705,928
General Fund Revenue	\$600	\$900	\$600
Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund	\$666,793	\$639,091	\$705,328
POSITIONS			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	9 / 9	9 / 9	9 / 9
Total Positions	9 / 9	9 / 9	9 / 9

Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Number of requests for pre-application information processed	25	31	41	42	45
Number of green building commitments reviewed	36	28	25	31	35
Number of interjurisdictional and NEPA review requests reviewed	13	6	12	6	8
Number of zoning applications reviewed	NA	86	91	90	90

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Four metrics are presented for Environmental Planning and Development Review. The LOB metrics measure the evaluation of land use and environmental issues, review zoning applications and other development proposals. The purpose is to encourage sound land use and environmental decisions that are in conformance and/or in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan's land use and environmental policies.

1. **Number of requests for pre-application information processed**
This metric provides an overview of service provided in anticipation of a formal zoning request. This service is offered by the Zoning Evaluation Division. The purpose of a pre-application meeting is to familiarize applicants with the development review process and assist in issue identification and resolution prior to formal submission. For the potential applicant, this feedback provides information that can speed application submission and review as well as avoid costly application errors. For all meetings in which participation is requested, Environment and Development Review staff research applicable Comprehensive Plan guidance, create aerial and environmental assessment maps, identify potential land use and environmental issues and mitigation measures.
2. **Number of green building commitments reviewed**
Consistent with adopted Policy Plan guidance, green building commitments address policy encouraging green building certification throughout the County, especially where there is an expectation for green building commitments (LEED certification or equivalent), such as for zoning proposals for nonresidential development and for multifamily residential development of four or more stories in the Tysons Urban Center, Suburban Centers, Community Business Centers and Transit Station Areas when the zoning proposals seek one of the following: development in accordance with Plan options, development involving a change in use from what would be allowed under existing zoning, development at the Overlay Level, or development at the high end of the planned density/intensity range.
3. **Number of interjurisdictional and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) review requests**
Review of a myriad of development proposals is requested consistent with local policies, state law and the NEPA. For each proposal an assessment of impact is made and those proposals distant from county boundary or with no impacts, staff does not provide comments. Proposals not meeting this criteria are reviewed by environmental staff with consulting assistance from other agencies as appropriate. Comments on major undertakings such as the Fort Belvoir Master Plan are presented to the Board of Supervisors for review and comment.
4. **Number of zoning applications reviewed**
This metric measures the number of zoning applications for which environmental or land use comments are prepared. For each application, the assigned staff prepares relevant background information, participates in internal staff meetings, as well as meeting with the applicant. In consultation with senior staff and after review of 1) applicable Comprehensive Plan guidance, 2) land use design and environmental issues, 3) suggested mitigation measures and 4) a finding of the extent that the proposal addresses land use design and environmental issues, a memorandum is prepared. Revised reports may be necessary to adequately reflect substantive application revisions.

As these are new metrics, goals will be established when sufficient data have been collected.