

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD), in coordination with multiple agencies, the Board of Supervisors, and the Planning Commission, is working on updates to the Comprehensive Plan Policy Plan (the Policy Plan), as authorized by the Board of Supervisors in December 2022. Phase One of the project includes several elements, including the Preface/Introduction, Land Use, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Environment, Human Services; and will incorporate the themes of equity and healthy communities into the Policy Plan. The Policy Plan guides planning and development activities by describing future development patterns in Fairfax County and protecting natural and cultural resources. The Policy Plan update will help inform future planning and development decisions throughout the county.

## PROCESS TO DATE

This paper outlines the progress made on the [Policy Plan Preface and Introduction Chapter](#) and provides an updated land use vision and set of goals for consideration. The Introduction Chapter serves as the foundation of the Policy Plan, providing a narrative of Fairfax County's land use planning history and a vision and goals to guide Comprehensive Plan policy that ensures alignment with County priorities as laid out in the County's Strategic Plan. The existing goals in the Policy Plan were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1988, and while they are still generally aligned with countywide policy, Fairfax County has seen significant change since 1988 that warrant a review and update of these goals. The county has grown a great deal since 1988, and land use planning has evolved as well. There have been significant demographic, social and cultural changes, as well as an evolving economy and other considerations such as increased housing and living costs. Staff recommends establishing a land use vision and a new set of goals that reflect today's reality and anticipate the future of land use planning in Fairfax County.

Establishing a new set of goals also aligns with the adoption of the [Countywide Strategic Plan](#) ("Strategic Plan") by the Board of Supervisors in October 2021. The Strategic Plan identifies Ten Community Outcome Areas, derived from extensive community outreach, which provide the basis for a revised land use vision and goals.

Guiding the Policy Plan amendment process is a Topics Leads Committee, comprised of representatives from departments including Planning and Development, Transportation, Health and Human Services, and the Park Authority. The Topic Leads Committee conducted an audit between the current Policy Plan and the Strategic Plan, specifically reviewing the Policy Plan goals and the Strategic Plan Community Outcome Areas, to ensure the new goals align with the community's priorities. Staff emphasized the importance of a concise visionary statement and set of goals that are rooted in the Strategic Plan Ten Community Outcome Areas, yet are tailored to the county's land use planning needs. Each of the drafted goals ends with a statement specifying its

connection to one or more Community Outcome Areas from the Strategic Plan. Over the course of the last six months, the Land Use Vision and Goals draft has gone through a series of reviews and revisions based on feedback from staff and the Planning Commission liaisons for this element.

## NEXT STEPS

The idea of revising the Policy Plan goals and Introduction chapter was introduced during the first round of Policy Plan community outreach meetings during May and June of 2024. Additional community meetings are planned on October 30 and November 13 that will focus on the Introduction Chapter to the Policy Plan, to include the drafted Land Use Vision and Goals. Community input, alongside guidance from the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will inform potential revisions.

Other sections of the Introduction, such as the history of planning in Fairfax County, contextual narratives, and updates to the implementation section, are still in development. These sections will be presented to the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission in 2025.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I: Draft Land Use Vision and Goals

**DRAFT****Land Use Vision and Goals – Comprehensive Plan Policy Plan Introduction 10/18/24**

**VISION STATEMENT:** The county will plan for growth by providing diverse housing options, ample employment opportunities, and essential services for all people. Healthy environments and communities will be designed to be safe, walkable, and well-connected by multimodal transportation options, and include vibrant cultural and recreational spaces that ensure a high quality of life for everyone.

**Strategy and Goals to Achieve the Land Use Vision**

The following goals provide a strategic focus for the land use objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. These goals align with the 10 Community Outcome Areas in the Countywide Strategic Plan, which represent the issues of greatest importance to the Fairfax County community, and are tailored to support the long-range, land use planning vision for the natural and built environment. Although each goal corresponds with one or more Community Outcome Areas, they together reflect countywide land use goals. The goals will be achieved through specific objectives and policies, which align with, supplement, and elaborate on the Strategic Plan's identified Strategies to achieve the Community Outcomes.

- **Promote a dynamic, strategic, efficient, and ordered pattern of land uses.** The county will have a dynamic, strategic, efficient, and ordered pattern of land uses served by adequate public facilities, that ensures a high quality of life for residents by accommodating anticipated urban growth, promoting a vibrant mix of activities, enhancing and revitalizing community assets, preserving environmental and cultural resources, promoting the County's economic base, and appropriately responding to real estate market changes. The County's Concept for Future Development Map and the Land Classification System describe the general location and character of future land uses in the County, and are used as guidance for the review of the Area Plans. The Concept for Future Development Map and Land Classification System will be reviewed to ensure the County's land use vision, goals, and objectives are reflected in the Area Plans.
  - Related Community Outcome Areas: Housing and Neighborhood Livability, Mobility and Transportation, Safety and Security, Effective and Efficient Government
- **Advance equitable development in land use planning.** Residents of the county will thrive regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socioeconomic status, neighborhood of residence, or other socioeconomic characteristics. Fairfax County's future land use and growth will be oriented towards building and connecting residents to opportunity, and supporting equitable development by focusing on the specific needs of vulnerable communities. The County will actively engage and collaborate with communities and individuals in the land use planning process, and seek to establish and maintain long term trust with stakeholders.
  - Related Community Outcome Areas: Effective and Efficient Government, Empowerment and Support for Residents Facing Vulnerability, Healthy Communities, Safety and Security

- **Prioritize access to affordable housing.** The county will have affordable housing options in connected, safe, and walkable neighborhoods that have access to facilities and amenities that benefit the community. The county will have flexible policies, especially in the County’s Mixed-Use Centers, to facilitate the development of diverse housing options throughout the county. This includes supporting individuals and households that are temporarily or chronically unhoused by providing short-term emergency shelter and long-term housing solutions.
  - Related Community Outcome Areas: Housing and Neighborhood Livability, Healthy Communities, Effective and Efficient Government
  
- **Promote health through land use planning.** The county’s land uses will contain the health infrastructure and resources necessary for residents to achieve their full potential and make healthy choices. Determinants of healthy communities, such as the location, proximity and access to healthcare and other essential services, active recreation and transportation opportunities, and sources of healthy food, will be optimized to support and empower residents and promote well-being.
  - Related Community Outcome Areas: Healthy Communities
  
- **Provide access to arts, culture, recreation, and lifelong learning.** The county will have enriching places focused on arts, culture, recreation, and lifelong learning to foster social connectivity. The County’s historic sites will be identified, honored, and preserved to promote the County’s cultural heritage for residents and visitors, make tangible connections to history, create a sense of continuity, foster a sense of belonging, and generate a commitment to a shared history and a pride of place. Such places and amenities will serve as key elements of community placemaking.
  - Related Community Outcome Areas: Cultural and Recreational Opportunities, Lifelong Education and Learning
  
- **Plan for Environmental Sustainability.** The County’s natural and built environment will be shaped by land use policies and regulations that promote environmental stewardship, conservation, restoration, and sustainable development. The county will be a leader in addressing the challenges posed by climate change and promote a more resilient future.

The county will promote healthy and sustainable living environments by protecting and preserving natural resources, including air, water, trees, and soil. Prioritizing energy efficiency and conservation across all economic sectors, including public, commercial, residential, and industrial, is essential for reducing environmental impact and mitigating the effects of climate change.

Fairfax County values its diversity of natural ecosystems, from stream corridors to urban tree canopies. Appreciating the environmental, social, and economic benefits provided by these areas, the county aims to create and preserve viable ecosystems, throughout the county, along with connections for wildlife resources, recreational uses, and/or urban areas.

Recognizing the urgent need to address climate change, Fairfax County will take steps to create resilient of natural resources and infrastructure. By preserving natural resources, investing in infrastructure improvements, implementing resiliency measures, and adopting strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the county aims to minimize the adverse effects of climate change and create a more sustainable future.

- Related Community Outcome Areas: Environment and Energy, Healthy Communities
- **Plan for Economic Opportunity and Resiliency.** Fairfax County will continue to prioritize economic growth through land use policies that direct and accommodate future employment growth in the County's Activity Centers. The county will support anchor institutions, startups and businesses of all sizes with necessary public infrastructure, investing strategically in underserved communities, and maintaining a regulatory environment that is conducive to a thriving business sector. By leveraging public/private partnerships and strategic investments, the county will bolster its competitive edge in regional, national, and international economic development. Prioritizing the full participation of all populations and areas within the county is essential for sustainable growth. Special attention will be paid to supporting small and minority-owned businesses, ensuring that they have equitable access to opportunities and resources. By pursuing these objectives, Fairfax County can create a dynamic and inclusive economic environment that benefits all its residents and strengthens its position as a desirable place to live and work.

The county will continue to prioritize planning efforts to revitalize older commercial and residential areas. By encouraging business development, attracting public and private investment, and addressing deteriorating conditions, Fairfax County can breathe new life into these areas while preserving their unique character. Collaboration with community programs and infrastructure improvements is crucial for ensuring the success of revitalization efforts and fostering a sense of place that contributes to both social and economic well-being, while mitigating issues related to residential and commercial displacement.

The county will prioritize the development of appropriately scaled and mixed use or clustered commercial and industrial uses to meet the needs of residents and businesses alike.

Meeting the housing needs and quality of life demands of the workforce will be crucial to a healthy economy and sustaining employment growth in the county. More flexible land use policies may be necessary to provide housing options, to include more affordable housing, multimodal transportation options, services, and amenities where people live and/or work. Growth should be managed responsibly, considering the availability and adequacy of public facilities and resources, while also addressing the financial implications associated with development.

Regional cooperation is vital for addressing common issues and maximizing resources. By actively participating in regional activities and leadership roles, Fairfax County can contribute to the physical, economic, and social well-being of Northern Virginia and the wider Washington metropolitan area.

- Related Community Outcome Areas: Economic Opportunity, Housing and Neighborhood Livability, Effective and Efficient Government
- **Promote Safe, Welcoming, Beautiful, and Walkable Urban Design.** Development, particularly in the County's Activity Centers, will have an urban design that is safe, welcoming, beautiful, and walkable. Enhancements to the condition and capacity of the public realm, including the integration of public facilities and utilities, open space, arts and cultural amenities, and the transportation network, in coordination with private development, will facilitate this goal. Urban design will recognize the diversity of building form architectural character and aesthetics, scale, and density across the County, and prioritize context sensitive solutions. This includes encouraging transit-oriented developments and other higher density mixed use centers that are less automobile-dependent and promote healthier, more connected neighborhoods, and prioritizing active transportation options such as pedestrian access and bike-friendly facilities that integrate with bus, bus rapid transit, and rail transit.

The county will create safe streets for all, utilizing complete streets techniques to advance safe designs for pedestrians and bicyclists while ensuring that roadways are designed, constructed, or modified to adopted roadway design standards.

- Related Community Outcome Areas: Safety and Security, Healthy Communities, Mobility and Transportation