

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD), in collaboration with multiple agencies, the Board of Supervisors, and the Planning Commission, is updating the Comprehensive Plan Policy Plan (Policy Plan) as authorized by the Board of Supervisors in December 2022. Phase One of the project includes revisions to key elements such as the Preface and Introduction (“Preface”), Land Use, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Environment, and Human Services. It will also integrate themes of equity and healthy communities to include a new Healthy Communities element. The Policy Plan serves as a guide for planning and development in Fairfax County, shaping future growth while protecting natural and cultural resources. This update will help inform future planning and development decisions across the county.

## PROCESS TO DATE

This paper outlines the draft revisions and methodology for updating the [Policy Plan Preface Element](#). The Preface Element serves as the foundation of the Policy Plan, providing a narrative of Fairfax County’s land use planning history. It includes a land use vision and goals to guide implementation of Comprehensive Plan policy in alignment with County priorities as laid out in the Countywide Strategic Plan.

This element has undergone multiple reviews, beginning with an Introduction Sub-Committee that reported to the Topic Leads Committee, which is guiding the Policy Plan amendment process, and includes representatives from Planning and Development, Transportation, Health Department, Health and Human Services, and the Park Authority. Additionally, staff have engaged the public through two phases of community outreach to gather input. Updates on the Preface Element were presented to the [Planning Commission Policy Plan Committee](#) on October 24, 2024, and the [Board of Supervisors Land Use Policy Committee](#) on November 26, 2024, with a specific focus on the drafted Land Use Vision and Goals. Feedback from the review has informed this revised element as summarized below.

Several major goals were identified for the revision of the Preface Element, consistent with the Board of Supervisors authorization.

- **Develop a Land Use Vision and Revised Set of Goals:** Develop an overarching land use vision and updated set of goals for the Comprehensive Plan, ensuring they serve as the focal point of this element and the larger Comprehensive Plan. These revisions should integrate the Ten Community Outcome Areas of the Countywide Strategic Plan within the context of land use planning. The [draft land use vision and goals](#) were published for feedback in the fall of 2024. Provide a contextual narrative that highlights key land use challenges in the county, serving as the basis and need for the goals.

- **Clarify the Role of the Preface Element:** Clearly define the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan and explain how its components—Policy Plan, Area Plans, and Concept for Future Development—are structured and implemented.
- **Streamline the Preface Element:** Refine this element to deliver a clear and concise message, emphasizing the core purpose of establishing goals and providing essential context for the Plan's use. This includes eliminating redundancy, removing non-essential information, and reordering content for improved clarity and flow.

The revised element is proposed to be renamed *Comprehensive Plan Overview* instead of *Preface*, as it establishes the land use vision and goals, provides substantial context on how the Comprehensive Plan is used, and identifies how it is implemented and monitored, as well as opportunities for community engagement. The element has been reorganized to present the most important sections in a more cohesive and logical order. Therefore, the draft text in Attachments I and II is presented as new text with underlines and existing text as strikethroughs.

Two sections of the existing Preface have been removed. The History of Comprehensive Planning in Fairfax County has been relocated from the Preface to a new appendix. The history section outlines various planning processes over time, including the most recent Site-Specific Plan Amendment process, offering insight into how planning has evolved in Fairfax County. While important, because the history section does not speak directly to the chapter's core purpose, staff recommends moving this section as it is more appropriate as an appendix. Staff continues to refine this section based on staff's processes over the past decade.

The second section that is proposed to be removed is the Proffer Legislation section, which is recommended to be moved as an Appendix to the Land Use Element. While this is necessary to be included as it is state code enabling legislation, it detracts from the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan Overview and would be better located in the Land Use Element.

The revised element now includes the following sections, which are discussed in detail below:

- Contextual Land Use Planning Narrative
- Land Use Vision and Goals
- Legal Authority, Purpose, and Scope
- Implementation, Review, and Community Participation

#### Contextual Land Use Planning Narrative

This narrative includes a brief history of social and land use changes in Fairfax County, focusing on how population growth and development have led to suburbanization and its associated challenges. This context serves as the foundation for the Land Use Vision and Goals. Key considerations include the impact of suburbanization, the importance of strategic land use planning, and factors such as housing, the economy, transportation, the environment, equity, and healthy communities.

## Land Use Vision and Goals

The Land Use Vision and Goals section outlines the guiding vision and goals for land use planning in Fairfax County. It begins with a Land Use Vision statement, followed by a narrative of the eight goals and strategies necessary to achieve this vision.

The existing goals in the Policy Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1988, remain generally aligned with countywide policy. However, Fairfax County has experienced significant changes since that time, necessitating a review and update of the goals. Population growth, evolving land use planning practices, shifting demographics, social and cultural changes, an evolving economy, and rising housing and living costs all underscore the need for an updated land use vision, and goals that reflect today's current reality and anticipate the future of land use planning in Fairfax County.

Updating the land use vision and goals also aligns with the [Countywide Strategic Plan](#), adopted by the Board of Supervisors in October 2021. The Strategic Plan identifies Ten Community Outcome Areas, developed through extensive community outreach, which serve as a foundation for the revised land use vision and goals. To ensure alignment and integrate the community's priorities, the Topic Leads Committee conducted an audit comparing the current Policy Plan goals with the Strategic Plan Community Outcome Areas. Staff emphasized the importance of a concise visionary statement and a focused set of goals that are:

- Rooted in the Strategic Plan's Ten Community Outcome Areas;
- Tailored to Fairfax County's land use planning needs; and
- Directly connected to the issues outlined in the Contextual Land Use Planning Narrative.

Staff received comments from the public, the Planning Commission Policy Plan Committee, and the Board of Supervisors in regard to the previously published draft Land Use Vision and Goals. This section has since been revised to reflect many of those comments in discussion with the Introduction Sub-Committee, Topics Leads Committee, and Department of Planning and Development leadership. The revisions to the Land Use Vision and Goals section since the PC Policy Plan Committee on October 24, 2024, are shown in Attachment 3. The summary of edits that have been incorporated into the revised draft Land Use Vision and Goals section and larger Comprehensive Plan Overview Element includes:

- Incorporated the concept of placemaking into the land use vision.
- Added 'Business opportunities' to the land use vision.
- Revised 'real estate' market changes to 'market' changes in the first goal related to ordered pattern of land uses to reflect broader potential changes or other factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, etc.
- Added context regarding the revised set of goals and land use vision into the Comprehensive Plan Overview in the Contextual Land Use Narrative.
- Added language to establish the connection of access to multimodal transportation to the housing goal.
- Removed reference to 'especially in the County's Mixed Use Centers' in the housing goal to acknowledge affordable housing is needed countywide, and reflect the recently adopted 2023-CW-1CP Housing Policy Element Plan amendment.

- Added language to include ‘expand opportunities to increase housing supply’ in the housing goal.
- Separated the concept of the ‘built environment’ and the ‘natural environment’ in the land use vision. Added ‘ecologically’ to sustainable environments and the environmental goal.
- Added the concept of renewable energy to the environmental goal.
- Revised the economic goal to be more concise and in alignment with the other goals.
- Removed the word ‘beautiful’ from the urban design goal, as it is subjective and redundant.
- Globally replaced the word ‘resident(s)’ with ‘community member(s)’.
- Removed the Strategic Plan Ten Community Outcome Areas alignment references at the end of each goal because the alignment of the Strategic Plan is established in the introduction to the goals.

These updates will ensure Fairfax County's land use planning remains forward-thinking, adaptable, and responsive to the county's evolving needs. Of note, all comments received through February 14, 2025, in regard to the draft Land Use Vision and Goals and other elements will be summarized in the Community Feedback Report to be published in March. Many of the comments staff received will be best incorporated into other Policy Plan Elements, such as Land Use and Environment.

#### Legal Authority, Purpose, and Scope

This section establishes the legal foundation of the Comprehensive Plan under the authority of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It outlines the purpose of the Plan and explains its key components, including the Policy Plan, Concept for Future Development, and Area Plans.

The section defines the scope of the Policy Plan, detailing its functional elements and how each element contains objectives, policies, and guidelines that expand upon the broader goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Concept for Future Development Map is introduced here, as a guiding structural component of the Comprehensive Plan, supporting the recommendations in the Area Plans.

#### Implementation, Review, and Citizen Participation

This section outlines how the Comprehensive Plan is implemented through key regulatory and planning tools, including the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Regulations, Public Facilities Manual, and Capital Improvement Program. It details the process for reviewing the Plan through the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program, explaining the different types of Plan Amendments, their purpose, and the criteria for adding them to the work program.

The Comprehensive Plan Overview concludes with a discussion on community participation in the planning process. Updates to this section emphasize a modern, inclusive approach to community engagement, aligning with the Countywide Strategic Plan. It provides a list of opportunities for community members to engage at various levels of the planning process, ensuring broad and meaningful public involvement.

## NEXT STEPS

The draft text of the Comprehensive Plan Overview is included as Attachments I and II and is available for the public, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors to provide feedback. The Overview will be discussed with the Planning Commission Policy Plan Committee at their March 6, 2025, meeting. Feedback can be sent to the project email at [PlanForwardFFX@PublicInput.com](mailto:PlanForwardFFX@PublicInput.com) and may inform future revisions to this draft text in advance of a final round of community outreach before final staff recommendations this summer. Public hearings on the revised Policy Plan Elements, including the Comprehensive Plan Overview, are expected to take place in fall 2025.

Additional information on the project, meeting updates, and draft text can be found at [Plan Amendment 2022-CW-2CP | Planning Development \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#).

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I: Draft Comprehensive Plan Overview Element (Clean Version)

Attachment II: Preface Element (Strikethrough Version)

Attachment III: Draft Land Use Vision and Goals text with changes shown since PC Policy Plan Committee meeting on October 24, 2024

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW**

**CONTEXTUAL LAND USE PLANNING NARRATIVE**

Today, Fairfax County is one of the most dynamic and populous jurisdictions in the Washington metropolitan region (Figure 1). At nearly 400 square miles, it is home to over one million people, as of the 2020 census. Fairfax County is well known for its quality public schools, high median income, low unemployment rate, public safety, high concentration of both corporate headquarters and higher education institutions and other key measures of economic success. It boasts an assemblage of residential communities that are home to an ethnically and culturally diverse population. The density, intensity, and land use types are varied throughout the county to include: dense concentrations of urban land containing a mix of uses located along transportation corridors; large areas of suburban development including single family housing; and rural areas on large acres of land; all of which offer a variety of living options.

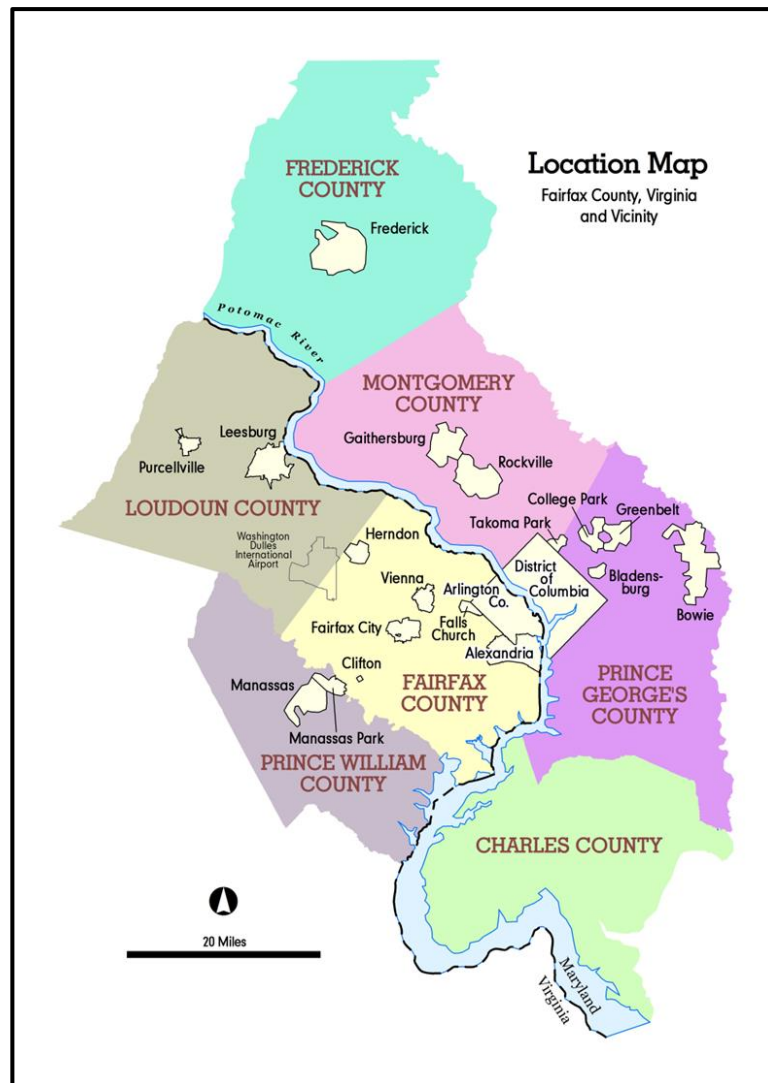


Figure 1: Location Map

For over 10,000 years, people have inhabited what is now Fairfax County. Several groups of Indigenous Peoples trace their lineages to this region, including the Dogue, who once comprised the largest concentration of Native Americans in the area. Between 1650 and 1720, the first permanent European settlements were established in what became Fairfax County. Plantations, which relied on enslaved labor, dominated the local economy and landscape in the 18th and 19th centuries, producing primarily tobacco, and eventually wheat and dairy products. The county maintained its agricultural character through the Civil War and well into the 20th century.

Transportation networks were crucial to migration patterns and population increases in Fairfax County, beginning with settlements along the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers, to early toll roads and turnpikes in the 18th and 19th centuries, followed by railroads and trolley lines in the 19th and early 20th century, and eventually state highways and federal interstates. Growth of nearby Washington D.C., and the increase in defense-related jobs after World War II, spurred the county's transformation from predominantly agricultural to a residential and commercial suburb beginning in the mid-20th century.

While suburbanization of vacant land was the key development pattern of the 20th century, the county's evolution in the 21st century is the result of urbanization and redevelopment primarily within the county's Mixed-Use Centers. The Comprehensive Plan's (Plan) Concept for Future Development encourages new employment growth to occur within designated Mixed-Use Centers and Industrial areas and guides the review of the Area Plans. With the exception of the Industrial Areas, the Plan also encourages mixed-use residential development within these areas. Encouraging a dynamic mix of uses within these centers provides an efficient land use pattern that can take advantage of existing and planned infrastructure and preserve natural and cultural resources. Many mixed-use centers in the county, including Tysons, Fairfax Center, Reston, and Merrifield, have achieved concentrations of higher intensity mixed-use development, and function as regional and local hubs that in the past would only have been found in the downtowns of central cities. As a result of this evolution, the county is home to a culturally and economically diverse business and residential community. As the county anticipates demand for new residential and employment growth, it remains a critical strategy to promote the redevelopment of these activity centers into dynamic, vibrant places with greater concentrations of urban growth.

As new housing, businesses, and infrastructure have emerged, some communities have faced increased traffic congestion, displacement of people and businesses, and strain on public services. Some areas of the county are disconnected, lacking pedestrian-friendly design, access to essential services, and limited mobility options which have contributed to car dependency. In some locations where rapid development has occurred, particularly residential development, the types of land use amenities and services that improve quality of life, such as access to parks and open space and/or high-quality pedestrian infrastructure, has not kept up with demand. These issues have implications for the provision of and access to affordable housing, public facilities, parks, recreation facilities, healthy communities, and the conservation of industrial uses, the natural environment, and heritage resources. Through strategic and coordinated planning, the county can prioritize needs and create more sustainable, livable, and well-connected communities that can support long-term growth.

As is the case in other large, urbanizing counties throughout the United States, housing affordability in Fairfax County has been a long-standing challenge. Fairfax County is significantly

less affordable than the national average, with higher home prices and rental costs. Ultimately, the price of for-sale and rental housing is a function of the housing supply provided by the market, and demand for housing by community members. Key to providing an adequate supply of housing is ensuring that land use planning and zoning strategies are sufficient to enable the delivery of a variety of unit types that encourage all who want to live in Fairfax to be able to do so. Providing a full spectrum of housing in appropriate locations that can be served by public infrastructure can build and enhance communities. By 2050, as identified in the most recent update to the Housing Element, the county is forecasted to add more than 80,000 units. While the Comprehensive Plan has the potential to accommodate this increased supply, the distribution of planned units has been predominately focused within the Tysons Urban Center and other activity centers, where density can be supported by existing infrastructure. Frequent requests to amend the Plan's land use recommendations for individual properties, including within activity centers, indicates that the planned distribution of potential units, as well as recommended forms and densities, are often not in sync with the market. In addition, modern construction methods, such as higher density townhouses, stacked townhouses, and wood-over-podium multifamily, often require greater densities than are recommended under the current Plan. This imbalance suggests that the Plan's density recommendations should be carefully considered to implement the Board's long-standing objectives of maintaining a supply of land to meet the need for housing and encouraging a diverse housing stock.

The county's economic sustainability faces challenges from an evolving office and retail market. As demand shifts toward high-quality, transit-accessible office spaces, older, car-dependent buildings have struggled with high vacancy rates, reducing their economic viability and revenue. Without reinvestment or adaptive reuse, these buildings risk becoming long-term liabilities. Similarly, the retail market has shifted from what was once dominated by brick and mortar buildings to online delivery for consumer goods and food. At the same time, a housing shortage across all income levels makes it difficult for businesses to attract and retain workers. Many employees must seek housing farther from their jobs, leading to longer commutes, increased congestion, and declining productivity. This instability further hinders business growth, limits commercial tax revenue, and threatens the county's long-term economic stability. Recognizing that market conditions may change, the county will need to be flexible and adaptable to ensure economic resiliency and sustainability.

As the county grows, transportation plays a critical role in shaping land use patterns, mobility choices, and the overall connectivity of the county. Rapid growth can lead to increased congestion, strained infrastructure, and gaps in accessibility that disproportionately affect certain populations. In response, transportation policies and recommendations focus on expanding multimodal opportunities that allow community members, neighborhoods, businesses, shopping districts, and essential services to remain well-connected and adaptable to changing demands. As new developments and redevelopment emerge, the county seeks to foster equitable growth by assessing the impacts on all community members, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists. Recognizing that existing infrastructure may not always support safe and efficient travel within all modes of transportation, strategic improvements that enhance walkability, biking facilities, transit accessibility, and traffic flow are needed. Addressing these challenges requires prioritizing safety, equity, and sustainability while centering the diverse needs and voices of the community. Through continued planning, coordination, and investment, the county aims to implement innovative transportation solutions that mitigate congestion, reduce environmental



impacts, improve transportation access, and promote an inclusive, well-connected community and a sustainable environment which serves the diverse needs of its residents.

Rapid development over the years has led to environmental pressures, including decreased open space, vegetation, and pervious surface and the need for enhanced stormwater management. As development and infrastructure is planned, the county will continue to prioritize environmental sustainability and resiliency. In addition, the county is already seeing the effects of climate change, including more severe storms, increased flooding, and extreme heat. These climate hazards can pose threats to community members, businesses, infrastructure, assets, public services, and natural resources. Encouraging sustainable development in the county provides an opportunity to reduce climate related risks while also enhancing the local economy and quality of life, strengthening our infrastructure, protecting our natural environment, and addressing disproportionate vulnerabilities.

Growth and continued investments in the region have brought prosperity, opportunity and a high quality of life to members of the community, but these benefits have not been equitably realized by all. Many have had access to good jobs and have prospered from investment in home ownership. At the same time, others do not have equal access to opportunity and are limited from realizing sustained prosperity and economic mobility. Certain populations may not have access to education, jobs, real-estate investments and the services and cultural amenities that a prospering urbanizing area offers. Inequitable practices that have limited or restricted the property rights of minorities, especially African Americans, is part of the land use history of Fairfax County. This includes previous federal programs that allowed mortgage brokers to deny loans to people based on their skin color or ethnicity and privately created racial covenants that prevented the sale of homes to individuals or families based on their ethnicity. These practices were widespread throughout Fairfax County throughout the Jim Crow era and have lasting effects on the affected population today. Equitable development concepts and policies should be considered during the development review process and incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

Historically, many land use decisions were made with an intention to promote quality of life, but without considering the practical elements of what makes a community healthy. As Fairfax County continues to grow, communities need purposeful planning that supports active living, healthy eating, social connections, climate health, and access to healthcare. Such planning should take into account the needs of a more diverse population to provide access to these types of services to all people.

This Plan addresses the opportunities associated with the next stages of Fairfax County's growth and provides goals to achieve equitable development in the county by striving to promote land use decisions that will provide investment and resources to all communities. The broad implications of growth and the guidance of the Countywide Strategic Plan serve as the foundation for the following land use vision and goals and objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

## LAND USE VISION AND GOALS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY

### Vision Statement

The county will plan for growth by providing diverse housing options, ample employment and business opportunities, essential services, and preservation of the natural environment for future generations. Communities will be designed to be safe, walkable, and well-connected by multimodal transportation with cultural, recreational, and healthy spaces that foster a sense of place and ensure access to a high quality of life for all people.

### 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 Ten 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, together they 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 Ten Community Outcome Areas.

- **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 and utilities, that ensures a high quality of life for community members by accommodating anticipated urban growth, promoting a vibrant mix of uses, providing access to multimodal transportation, enhancing and revitalizing community assets, preserving environmental and cultural resources, promoting the county's economic base, and appropriately responding to 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. 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.
- **Advance equitable development in land use planning.** Fairfax County is a place where all people live in communities of opportunity with the ability to engage fully in decisions that affect their lives and neighborhoods. Community members will thrive regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, marital status, disability, socioeconomic status, neighborhood, or other socioeconomic characteristics. Fairfax County's future land use and growth will be oriented towards building and connecting the community to opportunities 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.
- **Prioritize access to affordable housing.** The county will have affordable housing options that are well connected by multimodal transportation and include safe, and walkable neighborhoods that have access to facilities and amenities that benefit the community. The

county will have flexible comprehensive plan policies to facilitate the development of diverse housing options and expand opportunities to increase housing supply 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.

- **Promote health through land use planning.** The county’s land uses will contain the health infrastructure and resources necessary for community members 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 community members and promote well-being.
- **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 community members 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.
- **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 ecologically sustainable environments and healthy communities by protecting and preserving natural resources, including air, water, trees, and soil. The county will prioritize energy efficiency through renewable and conservation of energy sources across all economic sectors, including public, commercial, residential, and industrial to reduce environmental impact and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Fairfax County values the diversity of its 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, regardless of scale, along with connections for wildlife resources, recreational uses, and/or urban areas.

Recognizing the urgent need to address climate change, Fairfax County will take proactive measures to enhance the resilience of natural resources and community 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.

- **Plan for economic opportunity and resiliency.** Fairfax County will continue to prioritize economic growth through policies that accommodate future employment growth directed to the county’s Activity Centers and revitalization areas. The county will equitably 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.

Investing in the current and future workforce is critical for a sustainable economy. This means providing opportunities to educate and train future employees as well as meeting workforce housing needs and quality of life demands. More flexible land use policies may be necessary to provide housing options, multimodal transportation, services, and amenities where people live and/or work.

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.

- **Promote safe, welcoming, and walkable urban design.** Development, particularly in the county’s Activity Centers, will have an urban design that is safe, welcoming, and walkable. Enhancements to the condition and capacity of the public realm and transportation network, in coordination with private development, will facilitate this goal. Urban design will recognize the diversity of building form, scale, and density/intensity across the county, and prioritize context sensitive solutions. This includes encouraging transit-oriented developments and other higher density/intensity mixed-use centers that are less automobile-dependent and promote healthier, more connected communities, 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.

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## **LEGAL AUTHORITY, PURPOSE, AND SCOPE**

### **Legal Authority**

The legal basis for this Plan is well established in the law of the commonwealth. The Code of Virginia in Section 15.2-2223 states that "the local commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction." The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to achieve "a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants."

According to the Code, the Comprehensive Plan is "general in nature" and may include, but is not limited to, the designation of land use, transportation systems, public services and facilities, historic areas, etc. The Comprehensive Plan "shall show the commission's long range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan. . ." The law also identifies methods of implementation such as a zoning ordinance or zoning district map, a subdivision ordinance and a capital improvements plan.

### **Purpose**

The Policy Plan is the first volume of the Comprehensive Plan, followed by the four Area Plans, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map, the Countywide Transportation Plan Map and the Countywide Trails Plan Map. The Policy Plan applies countywide and its purpose is to provide a concise statement of objectives, policies, and guidelines for implementing the county's goals about the future development pattern of the built environment and the preservation of the natural and cultural resources in Fairfax County. Both the countywide policy embodied here and the more specific guidelines in the Concept for Future Development and Land Classification System, as shown in Figure 2, are to be used together to give direction to the Area Planning process. The Area Plans give more site-specific guidance, from the Planning District down to the Community Planning Sector level.

The entire Comprehensive Plan, made up of the Policy Plan and Area Plan volumes, is used during the development review process. The Plan serves as a general guide for the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, county staff, and the community members of Fairfax County with respect to development and redevelopment in the county and it is not to be applied inflexibly. The timeframe for the Plan encompasses the anticipated changes to the county over at least twenty years.

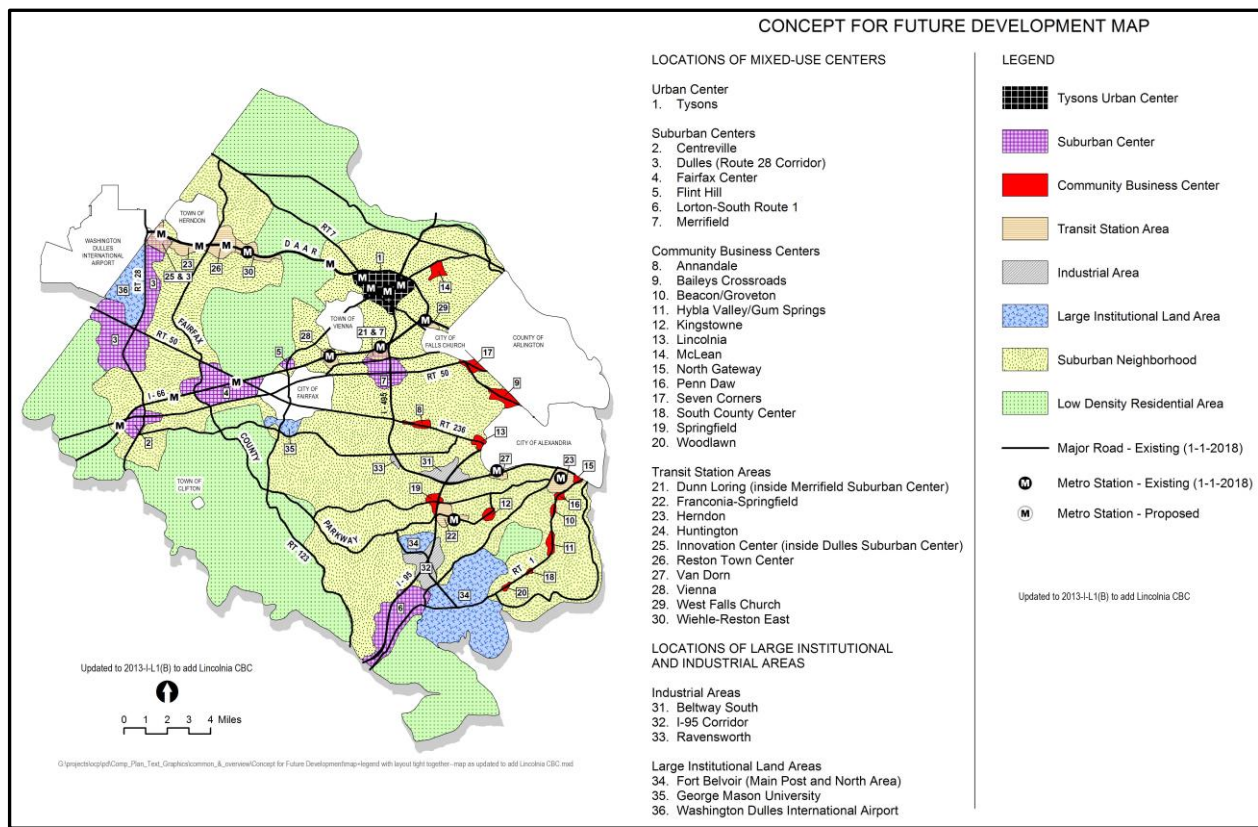


Figure 2: Concept for Future Development Map

**Scope**

The following elements of the Policy Plan contain the countywide planning objectives and policies for twelve functional areas.

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Environment
- Health
- Economic Development
- Heritage Resources
- Public Facilities
- Human Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Revitalization
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Chesapeake Bay Supplement

Each functional element expands upon the goals within the Comprehensive Plan, through objectives, policies, and guidelines to help guide decisions that affect the built and natural environment for the county as a whole and for specific parcels of land. Objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal. Policies are approaches for pursuing

a given objective, providing guidance which, when pursued, will assist in implementing the objective. Guidelines provide more explicit guidance for achieving policies consistent with the Policy Plan.

## IMPLEMENTATION, REVIEW, AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

### Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan

The Zoning Ordinance – This ordinance and its accompanying zoning map regulate land use in the county. It is intended to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the public and to implement the Comprehensive Plan for the orderly and controlled development of the county. All property in the county is mapped to a certain zoning district, and the ordinance includes standards for the development of land according to the zoning district as well as general and use-specific standards. Rezoning to a different zoning district on the map must conform with the Comprehensive Plan; rezonings may include proffers where the property owner voluntarily commits to conditions which supplement and can be enforced as part of the Zoning Ordinance.

Subdivision Regulations: This is the basic tool for controlling the subdivision of land. It contains the regulations for dividing parcels of land into lots of any size less than five acres and for the provision of public facilities, if required, to serve the subdivided lots. Lots to be developed must conform to applicable zoning regulations.

Public Facilities Manual: This document sets forth the guidelines which govern the design of all facilities which must be constructed to serve new development. Both the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Ordinance make specific reference to the requirements of this manual. The sections of the Policy Plan concerning the environment and public facilities provide guidance to implement the Public Facilities Manual requirements.

Capital Improvement Program: This document is intended to implement the public facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan, serving as a guide toward the efficient and effective provision of public facilities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is published annually and plans for the development, modernization or replacement of physical public projects over a multiyear period. By looking beyond year-to-year budgeting to project what, where, when, and how capital investments should be made, the CIP enables public officials to maintain an effective level of service for present and future generations, better use the county's limited financial resources, and assist in the coordination of public and private development.

### Review of the Comprehensive Plan

The implementation of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan is monitored regularly to ensure the county is achieving its goals. The Plan is reviewed more frequently than required by state law, which is at least once every five years, through the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program and a periodic review of the status of the Plan referred to as the 'State of the Plan'. More information on the planning history of the Comprehensive Plan be found in Appendix 1.

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program, adopted by the Board of Supervisors, authorizes current and future planning studies and amendments. The work program consists of activity center and neighborhood planning studies, site-specific (to include Board-authorized and community-initiated amendments) and countywide policy amendments. This process strives to identify the latest planning trends, engage the community in planning efforts,



and ensure that plan guidance is up to date and relevant to decision makers.

Plan amendments added to the work program should be selected using the following criteria based on Comprehensive Plan policy and the experience of past planning efforts. Plan amendments should:

- Address emerging community concerns or changes in circumstance, such as significant changes to market conditions that are discovered through studies or planning reports;
- Address identified inconsistencies and/or land use related inequities;
- Advance objectives of the county's Policy Plan, Area Plans, and/or Concept for Future Development, and not contradict adopted Comprehensive Plan policy;
- Align with the goals of the county's Strategic Plan, One Fairfax Policy, Communitywide Housing Strategic Plan, Economic Success Plan, or other Board adopted policies;
- Constitute a logical planning area;
- And/or address other guidance provided by the Board of Supervisors.

For Plan amendments added to the work program, staff conducts a review of the proposed amendment to include coordination with internal and external county stakeholders and solicits community feedback. This informs a final staff recommendation on the proposed amendment. The Planning Commission subsequently holds a public hearing and makes its recommendation to the Board. The Board of Supervisors holds a public hearing and determines if the amendment should be adopted.

### **Community Participation in the Planning Process**

Fairfax County prioritizes community engagement in the planning process to ensure all voices are represented. It is critical for the county to hear how proposed policies may affect the community in which people live and work. The county strives to improve public participation and engagement opportunities to ensure all facets of the community are represented and have the physical, technological, and language access necessary to engage and participate in community discussions and decisions.

#### Community Participation

Fairfax County is committed to inclusive community engagement to ensure that the Plan is being implemented as intended and that the Plan reflects current needs through periodic review. The county invites participation through a variety of means – from formal public hearings and appointed boards to informal community conversations. A variety of opportunities exist for a member of the community to become active in the planning process, including the following:

- **The Plan Amendment Process:** Community members, both as individuals and as members of task forces or other land use interest groups, can review proposed amendments, make recommendations of their own, and testify at public hearings. The

- county typically holds several community engagement meetings for each Plan amendment throughout the process to ensure community feedback is collected on a regular basis. These meetings are advertised and are open to the public.
- **Magisterial District Land Use Committees:** Local planning groups monitor planning and zoning activity for their district. These groups often are involved in review of proposed Plan amendments, rezoning cases, and proposals for siting of public facilities.
  - **Community Task Forces:** When the county undertakes a special planning study of a small area, the Board of Supervisors may appoint a special task force to participate in this project. Such a task force is composed of a cross section of the community, in order to reflect a broad spectrum of views. Public meetings conducted by the Task Force may be held to involve the community.
  - **Board Appointed Committees and Commissions:** The Board appoints community members to be members of standing committees and commissions to advise them on a wide range of issues, including many that are related to countywide planning. These include the Wetlands Board, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council, and the History Commission to name just a few. The Board also periodically appoints a commission to address a specific task in a finite period of time.
  - **County Authorities:** The Board of Supervisors, with state mandate, appoints quasigovernmental authorities such as the Park Authority, Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and Economic Development Authority. Appointees from the community serve as members of these bodies. The general public can participate in their public meetings and hearings.
  - **Technology:** The county enhances public participation in the planning process through the use of online and mobile social media. These communication tools can increase access to planning information and provide opportunities for dialogue among users.
  - **The county budget process and the Capital Improvement Program:** Public hearings are held during the review of the proposed county budget and also for the Capital Improvements Program. These hearings offer an important opportunity for the community to be involved in the funding of Plan implementation.
  - The list above describes the highlights of the opportunities available to the community to become involved in the planning process. The county and community can work together, jointly to promote inclusive, equitable and authentic community engagement across Fairfax County. Even if a community member is not a member of an organized group, they can:
    - Follow local issues in the press, social media, county websites and county staff reports;
    - Attend public hearings to voice opinions on rezoning cases or Plan amendments;

- Vote on bond issues;
- Attend meetings of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and other board, authorities and commissions;
- Propose a Plan amendment through the appropriate process; and
- Be active in a neighborhood association to monitor local planning and zoning activity.

All of these aspects of public participation strengthen the planning process by tapping the community's most important resource, those who have a stake in enhancing the community's quality of life.

**ADD:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Introduction, as amended through x, x, a new Appendix as follows:

## **APPENDIX 1 – HISTORY OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

### INTRODUCTION

The history of planning in Fairfax County goes back to the mid-1950s with the adoption of the first zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. The decade of the 1970s was marked by increasing concern among citizens and public officials regarding the problems associated with rapid and generally uncontrolled growth. In February 1973, the county created the Planning Land Use System (PLUS), a major planning effort that resulted in the 1975 Comprehensive Plan. Thirteen years later, in 1988, the county undertook a major review of the 1975 Plan, during the Planning Horizons process. This process resulted in the adoption of the Policy Plan in 1990 and the adoption of the four Area Plans in July 1991. Many of the key components of the 1975 Plan remain in the current Comprehensive Plan, such as the emphasis on focusing growth in centers; decreasing automobile dependency; and protecting environmentally sensitive areas and stable neighborhoods. What has changed are some of the means to achieve these ends. The following discussion highlights the evolution of the Plan from the 1970s to the present.

### **PLUS PROGRAM (1973-1988)**

#### PLUS Components

In the fall of 1973, efforts began toward simultaneous preparation of updated countywide and area plans, components of the Comprehensive Plan. After analyses of existing conditions and countywide issues was completed, the Countywide Plan Alternatives document was published in September 1974. This reaffirmed the "interim development and redevelopment policies," later to be known as the "Board of Supervisors Policies" in the 1975 adopted Plan. These evolved into the "Goals for Fairfax County," adopted in October 1988.

The Plan updating process was structured by grouping the 14 planning districts into four planning areas. Ultimately the Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County, Virginia was adopted in five parts. These were Area I (adopted June 16, 1975); Area II (adopted August 25, 1975); Area III (adopted June 30, 1975); Area IV (adopted July 28, 1975); and Countywide (adopted September 8, 1975).

#### PLUS Principles

The Countywide Plan Alternatives document defined a specific approach to land use planning, the most important of which was the use of "planned development centers" as the focal point for future growth. Recommended as an alternative to sprawl, this development concept was designed to achieve the following:

- To increase local employment (in a period when Fairfax County was still primarily a bedroom suburb on the fringe of the urban core);
- To decrease reliance on the private automobile by reducing the length of work trips and making mass transit facilities more easily accessible;

- To reduce pressure for development in environmentally sensitive areas;
- To preserve stable neighborhoods; and
- To lower costs by more efficient provision of public services.

### **FAIRFAX PLANNING HORIZONS (1988-2013)**

Following its adoption in 1975, the Plan underwent some revision through the Annual Plan Review process and several small-area studies. However by the late 1980s, the Board of Supervisors decided that it was time to reassess the county's direction, and they appointed the Goals Advisory Commission in February 1987 to review the county's goals and progress. In addition, the Board restructured the Annual Plan Review Process to create the 1988 Policy Review Year. This decision was based on a Planning Commission recommendation that a Policy Review Year would provide a needed opportunity to closely examine the countywide policy volume that was guiding decision-making about site-specific issues. The Planning Commission asked the Office of Comprehensive Planning, known today as the Department of Planning and Zoning, to conduct the Plan review and to coordinate the effort with other county agencies. The effort was divided into Phase I, the review of the countywide policy volume, and Phase II, review of the other four volumes containing the Area Plans.

The process included examination of alternative concepts for future growth in population and employment. Six different land use concepts and three road networks were developed and tested for their potential impacts on the transportation system, the environment, water quality, sanitary sewer capacity, and fiscal implications.

The process of community participation for Planning Horizons was open to anyone wishing to participate. An extensive series of night meetings and Saturday workshops took place, as well as public meetings before the Planning Commission, a Planning Commission round table seminar, and formal public hearings. This process had widespread publicity, in order to keep the community informed. Eighteen working papers were distributed widely for community review.

The major product of Phase I of the Planning Horizons process was the Policy Plan. Adopted by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 1990, the Policy Plan contains a hierarchy of goals, objectives and policies for each functional area, such as land use, transportation, the environment and public facilities. These recommendations guide planning and development review considerations to implement county goals. The goals address the future development pattern of Fairfax County and the protection of natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. Another, separate document was the Concept for Future Development, containing both text and maps, which highlighted a generalized land use pattern to guide future development for the county. Particularly distinctive was the new Land Classification System, an element of the Concept for Future Development which identified those areas that were expected to share similar characteristics by the year 2010. The Concept and the Land Classification System were accepted by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 1990, to be used as a guide for the update of the Area Plans during Phase II of the Planning Horizons process. The Concept for Future Development was revised in 2012 to update the character descriptions and the map.

The Concept for Future Development comprises two elements: the Concept Map which shows the general location and character of future land uses and the Land Classification System which divides the county into eight broad categories that describe the desired future character for

each area.

The Concept Map shows the general character of the county with respect to the location of each area type, metro stations and major roads. The Land Classification System, when graphically illustrated by the Concept Map, presents a future policy direction for Fairfax County.

The Concept for Future Development's policy direction is that almost all employment growth should occur within designated Mixed-Use Centers and Industrial Areas. When combined, these centers and Industrial Areas encompass about 10% of the county's land area. With the exception of the Industrial Areas, some degree of mixed-use development is encouraged for activity centers. This emphasis on mixed-use development is designed to introduce a residential component into employment areas. Mixed-use development is generally defined as two or more uses designed to be functionally, economically and aesthetically integrated. The boundaries shown for these nonresidential/mixed use areas coincide with the current boundaries of commercial, industrial, and mixed-use areas as generally defined by existing nonresidential zoning and/or the nonresidential/mixed-use boundaries traditionally identified in the Area Plans.

Within some of these employment and mixed-use oriented centers and areas, limited areas have been planned as "core" or "transit development" areas. Medium to high density development intensities within these core and transit development areas are planned to take advantage of transportation and other functional opportunities and are often centered around a transit station or planned town center. Lower intensities are encouraged outside the "core" and "transit development" areas in the remaining portions of these employment and mixed-use centers. Transitions are planned between core and non-core areas. These transitions are created through the tapering down of development intensity and building heights, changes in use, and through landscaping, screening and buffering treatments.

The remainder of the county is composed of Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas. In general, nonresidential development is not encouraged within the Low Density Residential Areas; when appropriate, neighborhood-serving commercial services and institutional uses are encouraged within the Suburban Neighborhoods if compatibly scaled with surrounding neighborhoods.

In summary, the Concept for Future Development is a vision and direction for guiding Fairfax County's future growth and development. The Concept for Future Development generally describes the types of land uses that are appropriate throughout the county and the character envisioned for them. It is used in conjunction with the countywide objectives and policies contained in the adopted Policy Plan and provides a foundation and framework for the Area Planning process.

Phase II of Planning Horizons included the adoption of the four Area Plans by the Board of Supervisors in 1991. These volumes of the Comprehensive Plan contain detailed recommendations for land use, transportation, housing, the environment, heritage resources, public facilities and parks and recreation. These recommendations refine the guidance provided in the Policy Plan and were developed within the framework of the Concept for Future Development.

Each Area Plan is subdivided into Planning Districts, which, in turn, are subdivided into Community Planning Sectors, the smallest geographical components of the Plan. The Community Planning Sector text provides details on existing development and planned land use. For purposes of development review and other land-use related decisions it is emphasized that the planning guidance for each Planning District is contained in the Area Plan text; on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map; in the Policy Plan; and in the land use guidelines contained in the Concept for

Future Development and Land Classification System.

The primary planning objectives in all Area Plans are to:

- Realize the objectives and policies of the Policy Plan in planning and development decisions;
- Utilize the Concept for Future Development as a guide to land use planning decisions when Plan amendments are considered; and
- Employ site-specific guidance to review and formulate recommendations for development requests in furtherance of the public health, safety and welfare as provided in the Code of Virginia.

#### The Policy Plan Action Agenda and Planning Commission ‘Super-Priorities’

The December 1989 draft version of the Policy Plan contained an ‘Action Agenda’ with over 350 items thought worthy of consideration. Given the large number of suggested actions contained in the Action Agenda, the Board of Supervisors requested that the Planning Commission consider and prioritize the Action Agenda. The Planning Commission working through its Major Plan Review Committee formed four subcommittees to examine the areas of 1) Land Use; 2) Transportation; 3) Public Facilities, Housing, Human Services and Fiscal; and 4) Environment, Parks, and Heritage Resources. County agencies provided support to the work of these committees. Six major countywide organizations concerned with the Comprehensive Plan were invited to attend and participate in the deliberations. A public workshop was held and public comments were solicited as part of the deliberations. In March of 1992, the Planning Commission presented to the Board of Supervisors a list of ten ‘super-priorities’ that included about 45 of the ‘agenda’ items. The commission felt the identified actions were important for advancing Fairfax County’s adopted Goals.

#### Monitoring and Review

In 1993, the Board of Supervisors initiated a four-year Comprehensive Plan review process. The review process supported the goal of regular review, assessment, and revision of the Comprehensive Plan. The inaugural cycle included the 1995 Plan Monitoring Year, the 1996 Policy Plan Review Year, and the 1997-1998 Area Plans Review (APR) Years. As part of the 1995 Plan Monitoring Year, a series of reports were published to describe the existing conditions and trends in the county. The reports covered socio-economic characteristics, land use/housing, transportation, the environment, public facilities, heritage resources, and parks and recreation. The final product of the Policy Review Year was the 1996 State of the Plan report, which presented the results of the evaluation and suggested potential new actions that warranted consideration. The 1996 Policy Plan Review Year involved evaluating the county’s progress on the Planning Commission’s “super priorities” and key objectives in the Policy Plan. The APR years followed the Policy Plan Review Year, evaluating proposed Plan amendments at the planning district, community planning sector, and site-specific levels. In addition to major planning studies, the APR cycles evolved to be the focus of work over the next decade.

#### Fairfax Forward

Following the 2008-2009 North County and 2009-2010 South County APR cycle, a retrospective of the APR process that included extensive public outreach indicated minor changes to the APR process would not address recurring issues, related to timeliness and the fragmented

nature of amending the Plan. The effort concluded with a recognition that a more substantial change to the Plan review process was necessary. In early 2012 at the direction of the Planning Commission, the Department of Planning and Zoning began Fairfax Forward, an effort to develop a new means to review the Comprehensive Plan. In order to develop a strategy for the future, staff evaluated recent Plan activity, the strengths and weaknesses of the current APR process, and best practices for Plan review at a local and national level. During the same period, Plan amendments between 2002 and 2010, themes resulting from the amendments, and changes to planned development potential between 2000 and 2010, were assessed. In 2012, a State of the Plan was published to summarize the results of the county's efforts to implement planning policies over the previous ten years. In addition, the Concept for Future Development and Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map were updated to reflect Area Plan recommendations. Portions of the Policy Plan and the Area Plans were also revised to reflect current land uses.

The research efforts contributed to recommendations for a major shift in the county's planning process. The proposal that emerged expanded upon the successful aspects of current planning studies, namely related to review and evaluation, and modified areas that needed improvement, including public participation and the organization of the Plan review. Extensive public outreach was conducted to confirm the recommendations. Fairfax Forward culminated in the adoption of a new Plan amendment review process and the implementation of the Pilot Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program in July 2013.

### **THE FUTURE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS (2013-Present)**

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program is the most recent approach to the planning process that emphasizes greater community engagement. Current planning processes and practices are monitored to ensure that the objectives of increased public participation and more cohesive planning are met. The recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan should continue to be assessed to gauge correlation with the county's goals and objectives. This activity is also necessary to project trends for the future and will aid the community in understanding the evolution of the county and the growth and development issues that confront it.

The county has encouraged community input to the Comprehensive Plan through a process to propose land use policy changes to the Comprehensive Plan for a site or collection of parcels. Over the years, the process for reviewing site-specific proposals, called nominations, to change the Comprehensive Plan's land use recommendations has had different names. With the property owner's consent, anyone can submit a proposal for site-specific land use changes. During this process, the Planning Commission will hold a public workshop on the nominations collected, during which staff and the nominators will provide presentations, and the public may provide comments. The Planning Commission will provide a recommendation on a revised Work Program, which may include some on the nominations. Finally, following the Planning Commission workshop, the Board of Supervisors will take action to approve a Plan Amendment Work Program.



**ADD:** Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Policy Plan, Land Use, as amended through x, x, a new Appendix as follows:

**APPENDIX XX – PROFFER LEGISLATION EXEMPT MIXED-USE SMALL AREAS**

On July 1, 2016, Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2303.4 became law. This statute applies to certain applications for rezoning and proffered condition amendments related to new residential development and uses, including those that are part of mixed-use development. Although there are recommendations and guidance for residential development and uses throughout the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan does not—and should not be read to—suggest, request, or require any proffered condition for any particular site, development, or use.

Section 15.2-2303.4 exempts new residential development or use when it occurs within a small area plan, approved as part of the Comprehensive Plan that meets certain criteria set out in the statute. The following areas meet those criteria and are exempt (See Figure 1):

1. Tysons Urban Center
2. Reston (includes the Herndon Transit Station Area, Reston Town Center Transit Station Area, and Wiehle-Reston East Transit Station Area)
3. Merrifield Suburban Center (includes the Dunn Loring Transit Station Area)
4. Franconia-Springfield Area (includes the Springfield Community Business Center and Franconia-Springfield Transit Station Area)
5. Dulles Suburban Center (includes the Innovation Center Transit Station Area)
6. Huntington Transit Station Area
7. Vienna Transit Station Area
8. Van Dorn Transit Station Area
9. West Falls Church Transit Station Area
10. Fairfax Center Area (includes Fairfax Center Suburban Center)
11. Annandale Community Business Center
12. Baileys Crossroads Community Business Center
13. Seven Corners Community Business Center
14. Richmond Highway Corridor Area (includes the Community Business Centers of North Gateway, Penn Daw, Beacon/Groveton, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, South County Center, and Woodlawn, and adjacent Suburban Neighborhoods)
15. McLean Community Business Center

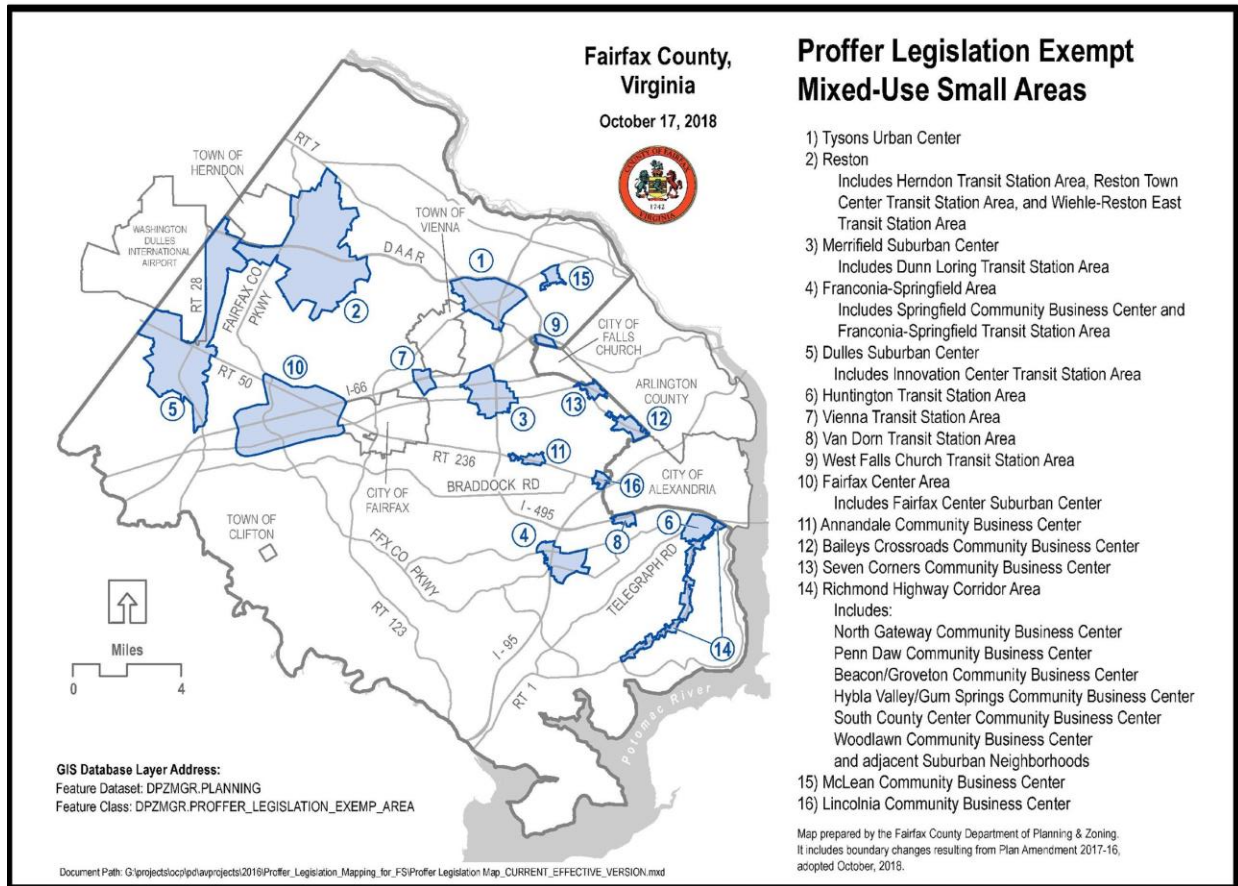


Figure 1: Proffer Legislation Map

**To identify changes, deleted text shown with strikethrough.**

**~~PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION~~**

~~Fairfax County is one of the most dynamic jurisdictions in the Washington metropolitan region (see Figure 1). It is an integral part of a region that encompasses hundreds of square miles and almost five million people, according to the 2010 Census. See Figure 1 for the location map of Fairfax County, Virginia and the surrounding region. In its early history, Fairfax County was a food producer for the nation's capital. After World War II, the county became a suburban bedroom community on the fringe of Washington, D.C. Today the county is a multifaceted employment center, a generator of retail sales that are among the highest in the country, and an assemblage of residential communities that are home to a rapidly growing and increasingly varied population. Concentrations of employment and retail uses, such as Tysons, the Dulles Corridor, Fairfax Center and Springfield, play regional and local roles that only a generation ago were reserved for the downtowns of central cities. The county's role as an agricultural producer has virtually disappeared, and preservation of remaining farmland, conservation of areas of high environmental and scenic value, and protection of open space have become high priorities.~~

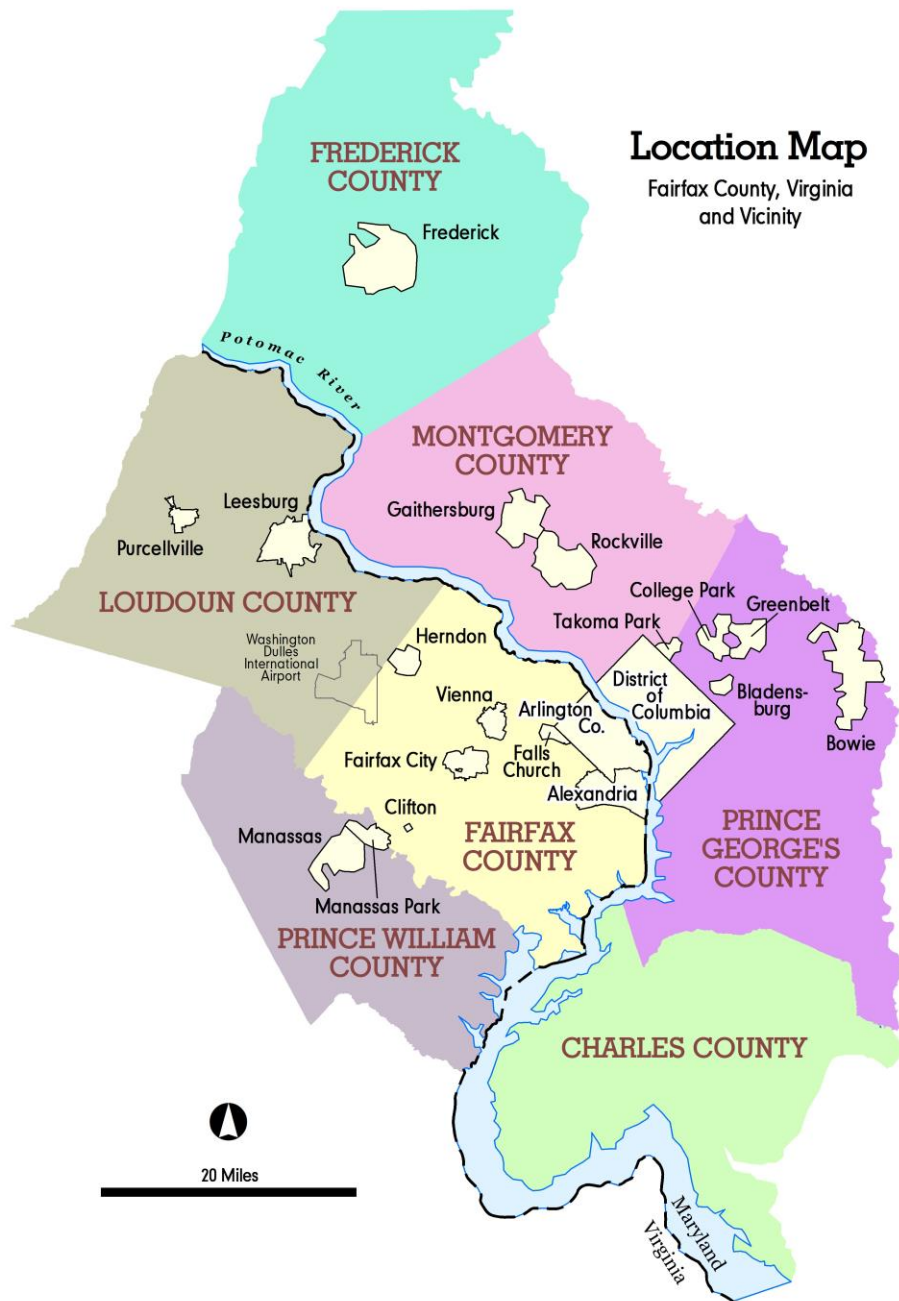
~~Until the mid-1960s, major roads led in a radial pattern to Washington, D.C., through the more urbanized areas of Northern Virginia (Falls Church, Arlington, and Alexandria). Radial highways such as Interstate 95 (I-95), Interstate 66 (I-66), the Dulles Airport Access and Dulles Toll Road (DAAR, Route 267), and the Lee Jackson Memorial Highway (Route 50) are now supplemented by the Metrorail transit system and the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) regional/commuter rail service to link the various parts of the county and also link the county with Washington, D.C., Maryland, and the rest of Northern Virginia. The Capital Beltway/ Interstate 495 (I-495) also links the inner, regional suburbs, while the Fairfax County Parkway (Route 286) links the southern and western portions of the county.~~

~~Fairfax County contains almost 400 square miles and is home to over one million people, making it the most populous jurisdiction in the Washington metropolitan region as of the 2010 Census. Due to rapid growth over the past several decades, the county is confronted with a dwindling supply of vacant land, and attention has turned to revitalization and redevelopment in the county's mixed use centers. Both residential and nonresidential development are the focus of these areas, in order to support a sustainable pattern of land use that protects stable single-family neighborhoods and preserves natural and cultural resources.~~

~~Growth has brought many benefits to Fairfax County and the region. County residents enjoy a fine quality of life. However, growth has also brought challenges in terms of land use, housing, and transportation. These challenges have implications for the provision of public facilities, parks, recreation facilities, and the conservation of the environment and heritage resources. The broad implications of growth serve as background for countywide policy put forth in this Comprehensive Plan. Successfully addressing the challenges associated with growth is necessary to maintain the quality of life for present and future generations. The Policy Plan provides guidance about addressing these challenges.~~

~~The Policy Plan is the first volume of the Comprehensive Plan, in addition to the four Area Plans, the Comprehensive Land Use Plan map, and the Countywide Transportation Plan Map and Countywide Trails Plan Map. The Policy Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies relating to eleven functional elements: Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Environment, Economic Development, Heritage Resources, Public Facilities, Human Services, Parks and Recreation, Revitalization, and Visual and Performing Arts. The goals, objectives, and policies guide planning and development review by describing future development patterns in Fairfax County.~~

| ~~and protecting natural and cultural resources.~~



LOCATION MAP

FIGURE 1

The Policy Plan includes the following sections:

~~The Goals for Fairfax County are used as the basis for forming countywide planning policy. This section describes the process through which the goals were adopted. It also enumerates and describes the goals, which range from Land Use and Transportation to Environmental Protection and Affordable Housing.~~

~~The Countywide Planning Objectives and Policies section addresses countywide policy by specific functional area. This section expands upon the goals, through objectives and policies, to help guide decisions that affect the built and natural environment for the county as a whole and for specific parcels of land.~~

~~The Glossary contains an alphabetical listing of terms and their definitions as they are used in the context of this document. These are not intended to be the same definitions as used in the county's Zoning Ordinance. Rather, they are intended only to explain terms used in the Plan.~~

#### Purpose, Scope and Legal Authority

~~The purpose of the Policy Plan is to provide a concise statement of objectives, policies, and guidelines for implementing the county's goals about the future development pattern of the built environment and the preservation of the natural and cultural resources in Fairfax County. The Plan serves as a general guide for the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, county staff, and the citizens of Fairfax County with respect to development and redevelopment in the county and it is not to be applied inflexibly. The timeframe for the Plan encompasses the anticipated changes to the county over at least twenty years. As required by Virginia Code, the county will review the Plan for the future at least once every five years.~~

~~The Policy Plan is based on goals adopted by the Board of Supervisors on October 28, 1988. The goals, objectives, policies, and guidelines are defined as follows:~~

- ~~• Goals provide general direction regarding the aspirations of the community;~~
- ~~• Objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal;~~
- ~~• Policies are approaches for pursuing a given objective, providing guidance which, when pursued, will assist in implementing the objective;~~
- ~~• Guidelines provide more explicit guidance for achieving policies and the Policy~~

~~The legal basis for this Plan is well established in the law of the Commonwealth. The Code of Virginia in Section 15.2-2223 states that "the local commission shall prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction." The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to achieve "a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.~~

~~According to the Code, the Comprehensive Plan is "general in nature" and may include, but is not limited to, the designation of land use, transportation systems, public services and facilities, historic areas, etc. The Comprehensive Plan "shall show the commission's long range recommendations for the general development of the territory covered by the plan. . ." The~~

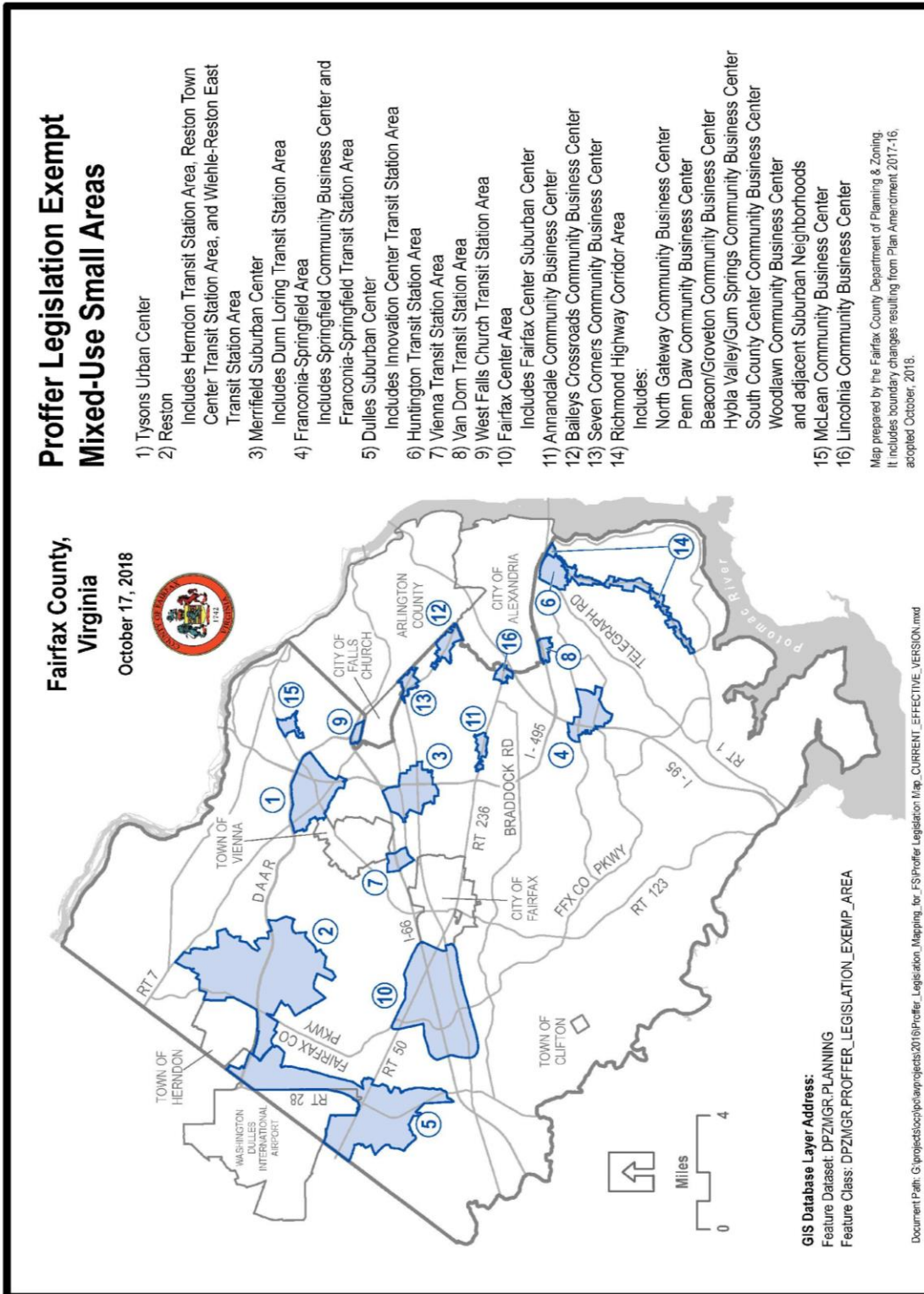
law also identifies methods of implementation such as a zoning ordinance or zoning district map, a subdivision ordinance and a capital improvements plan.

On July 1, 2016, Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2303.4 became law. This statute applies to certain applications for rezoning and proffered condition amendments related to new residential development and uses, including those that are part of mixed use development. Although there are recommendations and guidance for residential development and uses throughout the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan does not and should not be read to suggest, request, or require any proffered condition for any particular site, development, or use.

Section 15.2-2303.4 exempts new residential development or use when it occurs within a small area plan, approved as part of the Comprehensive Plan that meets certain criteria set out in the statute. The following areas meet those criteria and are exempt (See Figure 2):

1. Tysons Urban Center
2. Reston (includes the Herndon Transit Station Area, Reston Town Center Transit Station Area, and Wiehle Reston East Transit Station Area)
3. Merrifield Suburban Center (includes the Dunn Loring Transit Station Area)
4. Franconia Springfield Area (includes the Springfield Community Business Center and Franconia Springfield Transit Station Area)
5. Dulles Suburban Center (includes the Innovation Center Transit Station Area)
6. Huntington Transit Station Area
7. Vienna Transit Station Area
8. Van Dorn Transit Station Area
9. West Falls Church Transit Station Area
10. Fairfax Center Area (includes Fairfax Center Suburban Center)
11. Annandale Community Business Center
12. Baileys Crossroads Community Business Center
13. Seven Corners Community Business Center
14. Richmond Highway Corridor Area (includes the Community Business Centers of North Gateway, Penn Daw, Beacon/Groveton, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, South County Center, and Woodlawn, and adjacent Suburban Neighborhoods)
15. McLean Community Business Center

The local commission is required to review the Comprehensive Plan at least once every five years to determine whether the Plan should be amended.



**FIGURE 2**



## GOALS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY

On August 6, 1973, the Board of Supervisors approved sixteen interim policies designed to serve as the basic framework for developing the long range comprehensive plan process. Following an initial series of public forums from November 1973 through January 1974 and after extensive review, the validity of these policies was reaffirmed in October 1974. They were included in the Comprehensive Plan adopted September 8, 1975, as a result of the Planning Land Use System (PLUS) process. This was the first countywide land use plan since 1958.

The policies continued to guide decision making until February 1987, when the Board of Supervisors appointed the Fairfax County Goals Advisory Commission (Goals Commission) to review the policies in terms of the county's evolution over twelve years. First, the Goals Commission decided to use the term "goal" instead of "policy" to describe these statements of aspirations for the county. The Goals Commission assessed the accomplishments and shortcomings of the county in terms of achieving the goals, defined current problems, and recommended courses of action. The Goals Commission recommended eighteen new goals to guide Fairfax County into the future.

The recommendations of the Goals Commission were reviewed by the community in 1988 through an extensive public participation process, including district task forces, individual citizens, county staff, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. After public hearings before the Planning Commission and the Board, the Goals for Fairfax County were adopted on October 24, 1988.

The goals are comprehensive, encompassing every aspect of Fairfax County government, not limited to merely the planning function. Implementing some aspects of the goals is beyond the legislative mandate of the Planning Commission and the purview of the Comprehensive Plan. However, because the planning function is so far reaching, it is critical to use the goals as the basis for forming countywide planning policy. Therefore, the Goals for Fairfax County have provided the strategic focus for the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Quality of Life**—The primary goal of Fairfax County's policies and priorities is to achieve an outstanding quality of life through:

- Economic prosperity and expanding opportunity;
- Access to high quality education, public services and facilities;
- A balance between access to convenient multi-modal transportation and residential, commercial and industrial growth; and
- A pleasing physical and cultural environment in which to live and work.

**Land Use**—The county's land use policies should maintain an attractive and pleasant quality of life for its residents; provide for orderly and coordinated development for both public and private uses while sustaining the economic and social well being of the county; provide for an adequate level of public services and facilities, including a system of transportation facilities, to sustain a high quality of life; and ensure sound environmental practices in the development and redevelopment of land resources. Growth should take place in accordance with criteria and standards designed to preserve, enhance, and protect an orderly and aesthetic mix of residential, commercial/industrial facilities, and open space without compromising existing residential development. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan should set forth long range recommendations and

implementation techniques to ensure the envisioned coordination of harmonious development, while still achieving our economic goals. Densities and heights in excess of those compatible with these goals should be discouraged. These policies should not be construed as incompatible with the county's affordable housing goal.

**Transportation**— Land use must be balanced with the supporting transportation infrastructure, including the regional network, and credibility must be established within the public and private sectors that the transportation program will be implemented. Fairfax County will encourage the development of accessible transportation systems designed, through advanced planning and technology, to move people and goods efficiently while minimizing environmental impact and community disruption. Regional and local efforts to achieve a balanced transportation system through the development of rapid rail, commuter rail, expanded bus service and the reduction of excessive reliance upon the automobile should be the keystone policy for future planning and facilities. Sidewalks and trails should be developed as alternate transportation facilities leading to mass transit, high density areas, public facilities and employment areas.

**Environmental Protection**— The amount and distribution of population density and land uses in Fairfax County should be consistent with environmental constraints inherent in the need to preserve natural resources and to meet or exceed federal, state and local standards for water quality, ambient air quality and other environmental standards. Development in Fairfax County should be sensitive to the natural setting, in order to prevent degradation of the county's natural environment.

**Energy Conservation**— Fairfax County should promote energy efficiency and energy conservation within the public, commercial, residential, and industrial sectors.

**Growth and Adequate Public Facilities**— Growth in Fairfax County should be held to a level consistent with available, accessible, and adequate public facilities as well as with rational plans to provide new public facilities and to maintain existing public facilities. The county's plans for development should take into account financial limitations associated with increased needs for public facilities.

**Adequate Public Services**— Fairfax County is committed to provide a high level and quality of public services to the community, within its financial limitations.

**Affordable Housing**— Opportunities should be available to all who live or work in Fairfax County to purchase or rent safe, decent, affordable housing within their means. Affordable housing should be located as close as possible to employment opportunities without adversely affecting quality of life standards. It should be a vital element in high density and mixed use development projects, should be encouraged in revitalization areas, and encouraged through more flexible zoning wherever possible.

**Economic Development and Opportunities**— Fairfax maintain its prosperous economic climate and varied employment opportunities by continuing to develop and pursue a broad range of actions, including public/private partnerships, designed to enhance its long term competitive position in regional, national, and international economic development. At the same time, the county should enhance those systems that support the employability of the population for its economic betterment.

**Education**—Fairfax County should provide comprehensive education, training programs, and facilities in order to ensure quality education by effectively meeting student and community needs.

**Human Services**—Fairfax County should provide a range of services and facilities for all residents, so that they may sustain a secure and productive lifestyle. Each individual should have the opportunity to achieve self-sufficiency and function to the limits of his or her ability, particularly in providing family stability.

**Culture and Recreation**—Fairfax County should provide local systems and participate in regional programs for safe, accessible and enjoyable parks (including active, passive, and historical parks); recreational programs; libraries; and cultural programs and facilities. Fairfax County should also support and encourage the identification and preservation of its heritage resources for the aesthetic, social, and educational benefits of present and future citizens.

**Open Space**—Fairfax County should support the conservation of appropriate land areas in a natural state to preserve, protect and enhance stream valleys, meadows, woodlands, wetlands, farmland, and plant and animal life. Small areas of open space should also be preserved in already congested and developed areas for passive neighborhood uses, visual relief, scenic value, and screening and buffering purposes.

**Revitalization**—Fairfax County should encourage and facilitate the revitalization of older commercial and residential areas of the county where present conditions warrant. Revitalization initiatives should encourage business development, promote public and private investment and reinvestment, and seek to prevent or eliminate the negative effects of deteriorating commercial and industrial areas. Revitalization efforts should work in concert with other community programs and infrastructure improvements and strive to foster a sense of place unique to each area, thereby contributing to the social and economic well-being of the community and the county.

**Regional Cooperation**—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 are dependent upon regional cooperation.

**Private Sector Facilities**—Fairfax County should continue to encourage the development of appropriately scaled and clustered commercial and industrial facilities to meet the need for convenient access to needed goods and services and to employment opportunities. Particular attention should be given to the needs of small and minority businesses.

**Public Participation**—The Fairfax County community should be encouraged to take part in the shaping of policies and plans that will affect the environment in which they live and work. Active and timely public participation in actions involving areas of public concern in the county should be encouraged and promoted.

**Financial Planning and Management**—Fairfax County should support equitable systems of taxation and user charges, where appropriate, necessary to implement all its policies and to support quality public services for its residents, recognizing the county's obligations to provide services and facilities to both established and new development, and to attract quality residential projects and desirable business and industry.

~~**Monitoring**—The county's performance in achieving these goals should be regularly and rigorously monitored, and the goals themselves should be reviewed at least once every four years.~~

~~**Visual And Performing Arts**—Fairfax County should encourage a dynamic and diverse arts presence by supporting the works, participants, and audiences in the areas of dance, creative writing, choral and instrumental music, theater arts, film and new media, two and three dimensional visual art in traditional and contemporary cultural iterations, but also in the ways that these areas may overlap and interact with new and emerging technologies.~~

## ~~HISTORY OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN FAIRFAX COUNTY~~

### ~~INTRODUCTION~~

~~The history of planning in Fairfax County goes back to the mid-1950s with the adoption of the first zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. The decade of the 1970s was marked by increasing concern among citizens and public officials regarding the problems associated with rapid and generally uncontrolled growth. In February 1973, the county created the Planning Land Use System (PLUS), a major planning effort that resulted in the 1975 Comprehensive Plan. Thirteen years later, in 1988, the county undertook a major review of the 1975 Plan, during the Planning Horizons process. This process resulted in the adoption of the Policy Plan in 1990 and the adoption of the four Area Plans in July 1991. Many of the key components of the 1975 Plan remain in the current Comprehensive Plan, such as the emphasis on focusing growth in centers; decreasing automobile dependency; and protecting environmentally sensitive areas and stable neighborhoods. What has changed are some of the means to achieve these ends. The following discussion highlights the evolution of the Plan from the 1970s to the present.~~

### ~~PLUS PROGRAM (1973-1988)~~

#### ~~PLUS Components~~

~~In the fall of 1973, efforts began toward simultaneous preparation of updated countywide and area plans, components of the Comprehensive Plan. After analyses of existing conditions and countywide issues was completed, the Countywide Plan Alternatives document was published in September 1974. This reaffirmed the "interim development and redevelopment policies," later to be known as the "Board of Supervisors Policies" in the 1975 adopted Plan. These evolved into the "Goals for Fairfax County," adopted in October 1988.~~

~~The Plan updating process was structured by grouping the 14 planning districts into four planning areas. Ultimately the Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County, Virginia was adopted in five parts. These were Area I (adopted June 16, 1975); Area II (adopted August 25, 1975); Area III (adopted June 30, 1975); Area IV (adopted July 28, 1975); and Countywide (adopted September 8, 1975).~~

#### ~~PLUS Principles~~

~~The Countywide Plan Alternatives document defined a specific approach to land use planning, the most important of which was the use of "planned development centers" as the focal point for future growth. Recommended as an alternative to sprawl, this development concept was designed to achieve the following:~~

- ~~• To increase local employment (in a period when Fairfax County was still primarily a bedroom suburb on the fringe of the urban core);~~
- ~~• To decrease reliance on the private automobile by reducing the length of work trips and making mass transit facilities more easily accessible;~~
- ~~• To reduce pressure for development in environmentally sensitive areas;~~
- ~~• To preserve stable neighborhoods; and~~

- To lower costs by more efficient provision of public services.

### **FAIRFAX PLANNING HORIZONS (1988-2013)**

Following its adoption in 1975, the Plan underwent some revision through the Annual Plan Review process and several small area studies. However by the late 1980s, the Board of Supervisors decided that it was time to reassess the county's direction, and they appointed the Goals Advisory Commission in February 1987 to review the county's goals and progress. In addition, the Board restructured the Annual Plan Review Process to create the 1988 Policy Review Year. This decision was based on a Planning Commission recommendation that a Policy Review Year would provide a needed opportunity to closely examine the countywide policy volume that was guiding decision making about site specific issues. The Planning Commission asked the Office of Comprehensive Planning, known today as the Department of Planning and Zoning, to conduct the Plan review and to coordinate the effort with other county agencies. The effort was divided into Phase I, the review of the countywide policy volume, and Phase II, review of the other four volumes containing the Area Plans.

The process included examination of alternative concepts for future growth in population and employment. Six different land use concepts and three road networks were developed and tested for their potential impacts on the transportation system, the environment, water quality, sanitary sewer capacity, and fiscal implications.

The process of community participation for Planning Horizons was open to anyone wishing to participate. An extensive series of night meetings and Saturday workshops took place, as well as public meetings before the Planning Commission, a Planning Commission round table seminar, and formal public hearings. This process had widespread publicity, in order to keep the community informed. Eighteen working papers were distributed widely for community review.

The major product of Phase I of the Planning Horizons process was the Policy Plan. Adopted by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 1990, the Policy Plan contains a hierarchy of goals, objectives and policies for each functional area, such as land use, transportation, the environment and public facilities. These recommendations guide planning and development review considerations to implement county goals. The goals address the future development pattern of Fairfax County and the protection of natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. Another, separate document was the Concept for Future Development, containing both text and maps, which highlighted a generalized land use pattern to guide future development for the county. Particularly distinctive was the new Land Classification System, an element of the Concept for Future Development which identified those areas that were expected to share similar characteristics by the year 2010. The Concept and the Land Classification System were accepted by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 1990, to be used as a guide for the update of the Area Plans during Phase II of the Planning Horizons process. The Concept for Future Development was revised in 2012 to update the character descriptions and the map.

The Concept for Future Development comprises two elements: the Concept Map which shows the general location and character of future land uses and the Land Classification System which divides the county into eight broad categories that describe the desired future character for each area.

The Concept Map shows the general character of the county with respect to the location of each area type, metro stations and major roads. The Land Classification System, when graphically illustrated by the Concept Map, presents a future policy direction for Fairfax County.

The Concept for Future Development's policy direction is that almost all employment growth should occur within designated Mixed Use Centers and Industrial Areas. When combined, these centers and Industrial Areas encompass about 10% of the county's land area. With the exception of the Industrial Areas, some degree of mixed use development is encouraged for activity centers. This emphasis on mixed use development is designed to introduce a residential component into employment areas. Mixed use development is generally defined as two or more uses designed to be functionally, economically and aesthetically integrated. The boundaries shown for these nonresidential/mixed use areas coincide with the current boundaries of commercial, industrial, and mixed use areas as generally defined by existing nonresidential zoning and/or the nonresidential/mixed use boundaries traditionally identified in the Area Plans.

Within some of these employment and mixed use oriented centers and areas, limited areas have been planned as "core" or "transit development" areas. Medium to high density development intensities within these core and transit development areas are planned to take advantage of transportation and other functional opportunities and are often centered around a transit station or planned town center. Lower intensities are encouraged outside the "core" and "transit development" areas in the remaining portions of these employment and mixed use centers. Transitions are planned between core and non-core areas. These transitions are created through the tapering down of development intensity and building heights, changes in use, and through landscaping, screening and buffering treatments.

The remainder of the county is composed of Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas. In general, nonresidential development is not encouraged within the Low Density Residential Areas; when appropriate, neighborhood serving commercial services and institutional uses are encouraged within the Suburban Neighborhoods if compatibly scaled with surrounding neighborhoods.

In summary, the Concept for Future Development is a vision and direction for guiding Fairfax County's future growth and development. The Concept for Future Development generally describes the types of land uses that are appropriate throughout the county and the character envisioned for them. It is used in conjunction with the countywide objectives and policies contained in the adopted Policy Plan and provides a foundation and framework for the Area Planning process.

Phase II of Planning Horizons included the adoption of the four Area Plans by the Board of Supervisors in 1991. These volumes of the Comprehensive Plan contain detailed recommendations for land use, transportation, housing, the environment, heritage resources, public facilities and parks and recreation. These recommendations refine the guidance provided in the Policy Plan and were developed within the framework of the Concept for Future Development.

Each Area Plan is subdivided into Planning Districts, which, in turn, are subdivided into Community Planning Sectors, the smallest geographical components of the Plan. The Community Planning Sector text provides details on existing development and planned land use. For purposes of development review and other land use related decisions it is emphasized that the planning guidance for each Planning District is contained in the Area Plan text; on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Map; in the Policy Plan; and in the land use guidelines contained in the Concept for Future Development and Land Classification System.

The primary planning objectives in all Area Plans are to:

- Realize the objectives and policies of the Policy Plan in planning and development decisions;

- Utilize the Concept for Future Development as a guide to land use planning decisions when Plan amendments are considered; and
- Employ site specific guidance to review and formulate recommendations for development requests in furtherance of the public health, safety and welfare as provided in the Code of Virginia.

#### The Policy Plan Action Agenda and Planning Commission ‘Super Priorities’

The December 1989 draft version of the Policy Plan contained an ‘Action Agenda’ with over 350 items thought worthy of consideration. Given the large number of suggested actions contained in the Action Agenda, the Board of Supervisors requested that the Planning Commission consider and prioritize the Action Agenda. The Planning Commission working through its Major Plan Review Committee formed four subcommittees to examine the areas of 1) Land Use; 2) Transportation; 3) Public Facilities, Housing, Human Services and Fiscal; and 4) Environment, Parks, and Heritage Resources. County agencies provided support to the work of these committees. Six major countywide organizations concerned with the Comprehensive Plan were invited to attend and participate in the deliberations. A public workshop was held and public comments were solicited as part of the deliberations. In March of 1992, the Planning Commission presented to the Board of Supervisors a list of ten ‘super priorities’ that included about 45 of the ‘agenda’ items. The commission felt the identified actions were important for advancing Fairfax County’s adopted Goals.

#### Monitoring and Review

In 1993, the Board of Supervisors initiated a four year Comprehensive Plan review process. The review process supported the goal of regular review, assessment, and revision of the Comprehensive Plan. The inaugural cycle included the 1995 Plan Monitoring Year, the 1996 Policy Plan Review Year, and the 1997-1998 Area Plans Review (APR) Years. As part of the 1995 Plan Monitoring Year, a series of reports were published to describe the existing conditions and trends in the county. The reports covered socio-economic characteristics, land use/housing, transportation, the environment, public facilities, heritage resources, and parks and recreation. The final product of the Policy Review Year was the 1996 State of the Plan report, which presented the results of the evaluation and suggested potential new actions that warranted consideration. The 1996 Policy Plan Review Year involved evaluating the county’s progress on the Planning Commission’s “super priorities” and key objectives in the Policy Plan. The APR years followed the Policy Plan Review Year, evaluating proposed Plan amendments at the planning district, community planning sector, and site specific levels. In addition to major planning studies, the APR cycles evolved to be the focus of work over the next decade.

#### Fairfax Forward

Following the 2008-2009 North County and 2009-2010 South County APR cycle, a retrospective of the APR process that included extensive public outreach indicated minor changes to the APR process would not address recurring issues, related to timeliness and the fragmented nature of amending the Plan. The effort concluded with a recognition that a more substantial change to the Plan review process was necessary. In early 2012 at the direction of the Planning Commission, the Department of Planning and Zoning began Fairfax Forward, an effort to develop a new means to review the Comprehensive Plan. In order to develop a strategy for the future, staff evaluated recent Plan activity, the strengths and weaknesses of the current APR process, and best practices for Plan review at a local and national level. During the same period, Plan amendments between 2002 and 2010, themes resulting from the amendments, and changes to planned development potential between 2000 and 2010, were assessed. In 2012, a State of the Plan was



published to summarize the results of the county's efforts to implement planning policies over the previous ten years. In addition, the Concept for Future Development and Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map were updated to reflect Area Plan recommendations. Portions of the Policy Plan and the Area Plans were also revised to reflect current land uses.

The research efforts contributed to recommendations for a major shift in the county's planning process. The proposal that emerged expanded upon the successful aspects of current planning studies, namely related to review and evaluation, and modified areas that needed improvement, including public participation and the organization of the Plan review. Extensive public outreach was conducted to confirm the recommendations. Fairfax Forward culminated in the adoption of a new Plan amendment review process and the implementation of the Pilot Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program in July 2013.

### **~~THE FUTURE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS (2013-Present)~~**

The Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program is the new approach to the planning process that emphasizes greater community engagement. The current planning processes and practices should be monitored to ensure that the objectives of increased public participation and more cohesive planning are met. The recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan should continue to be assessed to gauge correlation with the county's goals and objectives. This activity is also necessary to project trends for the future and will aid the community in understanding the evolution of the county and the growth and development issues that confront it.

## **IMPLEMENTATION/PLAN MONITORING/CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Comprehensive Plan is used by the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, county staff, and the public to guide decisions about the built and natural environment, as well as the conservation of cultural and heritage resources. The Policy Plan contains the Board of Supervisors' Goals for Fairfax County and countywide objectives and policies related to the Goals. This hierarchy of policy guides decision-making for countywide, area, and site-specific issues. The Policy Plan is used to provide direction for the Area Plans and guide existing implementation mechanisms (i.e. provide direction for evaluation of zoning proposals). The Area Plans provide detail at the planning district and community planning sector level.

There are many ways to assess how the Comprehensive Plan is evolving to meet local and regional goals. One is to monitor the Plan on a frequent basis. The Board of Supervisors adopted a goal to regularly review, assess, and revise the Comprehensive Plan in order to ensure a thorough on-going review of the Comprehensive Plan. Citizen participation is the foundation of the planning process in Fairfax County, and a wide range of participation opportunities assures active involvement of the public in county planning.

### **~~MECHANISMS TO IMPLEMENT THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN~~**

The Zoning Ordinance—This ordinance and its accompanying map(s) prescribe both the size (intensity and bulk regulations) of lots and the uses which may be placed on the property. All property in the county is mapped to a certain zoning district. The Zoning Ordinance Map, therefore, is a primary means by which the use and intensity for specific land use recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented. An important component of the rezoning process is the proffer system, which enables a property owner to commit to conditions voluntarily which supplement the Zoning Ordinance and ensure conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Subdivision Regulations—This is the basic tool for controlling the subdivision of land. It contains the regulations for dividing parcels of land into lots of any size less than five acres and for the provision of public facilities, if required, to serve the lots so formed. Lots to be developed must conform to applicable zoning regulations.

Public Facilities Manual—This document sets forth the guidelines which govern the design of all facilities which must be constructed to serve new development. Both the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Ordinance make specific reference to the requirements of this manual. The sections of the Policy Plan concerning the environment and public facilities provide guidance to implement the Public Facilities Manual requirements.

Capital Improvement Program—This document is intended to implement the public facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan, serving as a guide toward the efficient and effective provision of public facilities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is published annually and proposes the development, modernization or replacement of physical public projects over a multi-year period. The CIP shows the arrangement of projects in a sequential order based on a schedule of priorities and assigns an estimated cost and anticipated method of financing for each project.

By looking beyond year to year budgeting to project what, where, when, and how capital investments should be made, capital programming enables public bodies to maintain an effective level of service for present and future generations, better use the county's limited financial resources, and assist in the coordination of public and private development. In addition, the programming process is valuable as a means of coordinating among county agencies to avoid duplication of efforts and to take advantage of joint planning and development of facilities where possible.

Timing of facility construction is dependent upon a number of variables. For example, in addition to the Capital Improvement Program, projects are evaluated on an annual basis through the county budget process, to determine viability in light of fiscal constraints. Additionally, facilities proposed now may not be necessary in the future due to any number of factors, such as the provision of services through the private sector or changes in federal policy and funding.

### **MECHANISMS TO REVIEW THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

— The implementation of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan is monitored regularly and rigorously to ensure the county is achieving its goals. The primary mechanism for reviewing the Plan is through the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program. The Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program schedules planning studies for a three year period through areawide, neighborhood, and countywide studies. The schedule and order of studies on the work program will be reviewed approximately every two years in order to keep the schedule responsive to community needs, changes in circumstance, and other priorities. The schedule ensures that all elements of the Plan are up to date and relevant based on current and future needs.

— New planning studies on the work program should be selected using the following criteria based on Comprehensive Plan policy and the experience of past planning efforts:

- Reflect previous authorizations by the Board of Supervisors or deferred Area Plans Review nominations;
- Address emerging community concerns or changes in circumstance;
- Respond to actions by others, such as federal, state, or adjacent jurisdictions;
- Advance major policy objectives, such as promoting environmental protection, fostering revitalization of designated areas, supporting economic development, preserving open space, providing affordable housing, or balancing transportation infrastructure and public facilities services with growth and development;
- Better implement the Concept for Future Development;
- Reflect implementation of Comprehensive Plan guidance through zoning approvals; and/or
- Respond to or incorporate research derived from technical planning or transportation studies.

~~Between work program reviews, the Board of Supervisors may authorize the consideration of Plan amendments, if circumstances warrant such exceptions. In order to identify those situations when an amendment may be considered, the Board adopted a screening criterion on December 8, 1986. It states that consideration of Board authorized Plan amendments:~~

~~'...will be limited in any year to those that result from emergency situations in which the public health, safety, and welfare or sound land use planning will be harmed if action were deferred until the next appropriate Plan Review Year. Issues of sound land use planning will be evaluated in terms of oversights, inconsistencies, or land use related inequities.'~~

~~A request to initiate a Board authorized amendment must be made directly to a member of the Board of Supervisors to sponsor a motion to consider the amendment. If the member agrees to sponsor the motion, the Board must vote to direct staff to evaluate and make a recommendation on the proposed amendment. The Planning Commission subsequently holds a public hearing and makes its recommendation to the Board. The Board of Supervisors holds a public hearing and determines if the amendment should be adopted.~~

## **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING PROCESS**

### Board of Supervisors Goal:

~~'Public Participation—The Fairfax County community should be encouraged to take part in the shaping of policies and plans that will affect the environment in which they live and work. Active and timely public participation in actions involving areas of public concern in the county should be encouraged and promoted.'~~

### Community Participation Mechanisms

~~Community involvement is important, both to ensure that the Plan is being implemented as intended and to ensure that the Plan reflects current needs, through periodic review. A variety of opportunities exist for a member of the community to become active in the planning process, including the following:~~

- ~~• Plan Monitoring: The process for periodic review of the status of the Plan includes publishing a status report and holding public hearings to capture public sentiment about the achievement of Plan policy.~~
- ~~• The Plan Amendment Process: The Plan is subject to amendment through the Plan Review process and through the Board Authorized Plan amendments and special studies for urgent cases. Citizens, both as individuals and as members of task forces, can review proposed amendments, make recommendations of their own, and testify at public hearings.~~
- ~~• Magisterial District Citizen Groups: Local planning groups monitor planning and zoning activity for their district. These groups often are involved in review of proposed Plan amendments, rezoning cases, and proposals for siting of public facilities.~~
- ~~• Special Study Task Forces: When the county undertakes a special planning study of a small area, the Board of Supervisors may appoint a special task force to participate in this project. Such a task force is composed of a cross section of the community, in order~~

- to reflect a broad spectrum of views. Public meetings conducted by the Task Force may be held to involve the community.
- ~~Board appointed Committees and Commissions: The Board appoints citizens to be members of standing committees and commissions to advise them on a wide range of issues, including many that are related to countywide planning. These include the Wetlands Board, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council, and the History Commission to name just a few. The Board also periodically appoints a commission to address a specific task in a finite period of time. For example, the Board appointed the Goals Advisory Commission to review and revise the county's goals in the period of one year.~~
  - ~~Technology: The county enhances public participation in the planning process through the use of online and mobile social media. These communication tools can increase access to planning information and provide opportunities for dialogue among users.~~
  - ~~The county budget process and the Capital Improvement Program: Public hearings are held during the review of the proposed county budget and also for the Capital Improvements Program. These hearings offer an important opportunity for the community to be involved in the funding of Plan implementation.~~
  - ~~County Authorities: The Board of Supervisors, with state mandate, appoints quasi governmental authorities such as the Park Authority, Housing Authority, and Economic Development Authority. Appointees from the community serve as members of these bodies. The general public can participate in their public meetings and hearings.~~
  - ~~The list above describes the highlights of the opportunities available to the community to become involved in the planning process. Even if a citizen is not a member of an organized group, he or she can:
    - ~~Follow local issues in the press and county staff reports;~~
    - ~~Attend public hearings to voice opinions on rezoning cases or Plan amendments;~~
    - ~~Vote on bond issues;~~
    - ~~Attend meetings of the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, and other commissions and authorities;~~
    - ~~Propose a Plan amendment through the appropriate process; and~~
    - ~~Be active in a neighborhood association to monitor local planning and zoning activity.~~~~

All of these aspects of public participation strengthen the planning process by tapping the community's most important resource, those who have a stake in enhancing the community's quality of life.

## INTRODUCTION TO FUNCTIONAL AREAS

### Purpose

The countywide element acts as a broad statement of county policy to guide decisions toward enhancing the built and natural environment for the benefit of existing and future generations. Both the countywide policy embodied here and the more specific guidelines in the *Concept for Future Development and Land Classification System*, found in a separate document, are to be used together to give direction to the Area Planning process. The Area Plans give more site-specific guidance, from the Planning District down to the Community Planning Sector level. Finally, the entire Comprehensive Plan, made up of the Policy Plan and Area Plan volumes, is used during the development review process.

### Scope

This section of the Plan contains the countywide planning objectives and policies for eleven functional areas:

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Environment
- Economic Development
- Heritage Resources
- Public Facilities
- Human Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Revitalization
- Visual and Performing Arts

The functional elements share a common structure. Each begins with an introduction that contains an overview of the issues facing the county, both now and over the next twenty years. This is followed by a statement of the appropriate Board of Supervisors Goal(s). It is assumed that most or all of the goals may have some bearing on all elements; however, only the key goals that pertain to each are cited at the beginning of the corresponding element. The goals are followed by objectives, each with its own set of policies and action agenda items.

The approach used to develop the content of this document involved working through a logical progression from general goals to increasingly more specific objectives, policies and, in some cases, guidelines and/or standards. Goals are broad statements of the community's aspirations. All elements in the Policy Plan use the Board-adopted "Goals for Fairfax County" as their starting point. Objectives, the next step in the hierarchy, have been derived from key points that are stated in or implied by the goals. Thus, objectives are statements that provide further direction for achieving an aspect of a goal. Policies have been derived from the objectives. These policies are approaches for pursuing a given objective. Adopted in the Plan, the policies give guidance, which when pursued, will assist in implementing the objectives. Guidelines and standards, in turn, give more detailed direction for implementing some of the policies.

To identify changes, the new text is shown with underline and deleted text shown with ~~strikethrough~~.

**VISION STATEMENT:** The county will plan for growth by providing diverse housing options, ample employment and business opportunities, and essential services, for all people and preservation of the natural environment for future generations. Healthy environments and Ceommunities will be designed to be safe, walkable, and well-connected by multimodal transportation options, and include vibrant with cultural, and recreational, and healthy spaces that foster a sense of place and ensure a high quality of life for everyoneall people.

### 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 ~~40-Ten~~ 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~~ they 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 Ten Community Outcome Areas.

- **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 and utilities, that ensures a high quality of life for residents by accommodating anticipated urban growth, promoting a vibrant mix of ~~activities~~uses, providing access to multimodal transportation, 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.** Fairfax County is a place where all people live in communities of opportunity with the ability to engage fully in decisions that affect their lives and neighborhoods. Residents ~~Community members 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 the community to opportunities, 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 that are well connected by multimodal transportation;~~ and include safe, and walkable neighborhoods that have access to facilities and amenities that benefit the community. The county will have flexible ~~comprehensive plan policies, especially in the County's Mixed-Use Centers,~~ to facilitate the development of diverse housing options ~~and expand housing opportunities to increase housing supply 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-community members~~ 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-community members~~ 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-community members~~ 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 ~~e~~Environmental ~~s~~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 ~~ecologically healthy and sustainable living environments and healthy communities~~ by protecting and preserving natural resources, including air, water, trees, and soil. ~~The County will p~~Prioritizing energy efficiency ~~through renewable and conservation of energy sources~~ across all economic sectors, including public, commercial, residential, and industrial, ~~is essential for to reducing-reduce~~ environmental impact and ~~mitigating~~ the effects of climate change.



Fairfax County values ~~the~~its diversity of ~~its~~natural ecosystems, from stream corridors to urban tree canopies. Appreciating the environmental, social, and economic benefits provided by these areas, the ~~C~~eounty aims to create and preserve viable ecosystems, ~~regardless of scale, 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~~proactive measures to enhance the resiliencet of natural resources and community 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 ~~e~~Economic ~~o~~ppportunity and ~~r~~Resiliency.** Fairfax County will continue to prioritize economic growth through ~~land use~~ policies that ~~direct and accommodate~~ future employment growth ~~directed to in~~ the County's Activity Centers and revitalization areas. The county will equitably 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 scated and mixed use or clustered commercial and industrial uses to meet the needs of residents and businesses alike.~~

Investing in the current and future workforce is critical for a sustainable economy. This means providing opportunities to educate and train future employees as well as meeting workforce housing needs and quality of life demands. 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 s~~**Promote s**~~Safe, w~~**Safe, w**~~Welcoming, Beautiful, and w~~**Welcoming, Beautiful, and w**~~Walkable u~~**Walkable u**~~Urban d~~**Urban d**~~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/~~intensity~~ across the ~~c~~County, and prioritize context sensitive solutions. This includes encouraging transit-oriented developments and other higher density/~~intensity~~ mixed-use centers that are less automobile-dependent and promote healthier, more connected ~~neighborhoods~~communities, 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~~