

# SSPA Retrospective - Summary of Community Feedback on Proposed Modifications



FAIRFAX COUNTY  
SITE-SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS  
RETROSPECTIVE



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

May 2022

The notes below summarize comments on the proposed modifications to the SSPA process. Comments were received in late April – May 2022 in a series of four public open houses on the proposed changes, as well as meetings with various development industry groups, community groups, and individual planning stakeholders. The comments are arranged by topic, with the stakeholder types identified for context as follows:

(D) Development Industry Representative

(T) Task Force Member

(P) Public Participant/Land Use Committee Member

#### Countywide Nomination Period Every Two Years

1. Ensure that the nomination form is clear and can be understood and used by member of the public. (P)
2. Greater frequency of the nomination period, paired with the broader eligibility criteria, is a good change. (D)
3. Moving to an annual [countywide] nomination cycle [as opposed to the proposed two-year countywide nomination cycle] would better achieve the goal of steering more amendments to the SSPA cycle, in comparison to out-of-turn amendments. (D)

#### Screening Phase Community Engagement

4. Whenever possible, cut down on “planner-speak” and use plain language to ensure greater understanding of the process, the proposals, and the issues when providing advertisements, notifications, presentations, and other materials. (T/P)
5. The changes will cut out the community by removing the task force component. (T)
6. The task force model in screening is tough [to understand the level of detail needed] when the focus should be on whether the proposal represents sound land use planning at a high level. (D)
7. Provide the list of nominations on the website, along with maps showing where the nominations are located to ensure people know what is going on around them. (P)
8. Ensure renters are notified of the community meetings. (T/P)
9. Advocates for community members or certain issues should be recognized as stakeholders in the process, not just property owners. (T/P)
10. SSPA remains ultimately a political process. The Planning Commission should have the ability to move nominations forward for further study without concern for political boundaries. (D)

### Eligibility Criteria Changes

11. If only one proposal is allowed for sites by a nominator, flexibility should be provided for nominations to propose alternative layouts, variations of land use programs, etc. that are still based on a main idea. The proposal should be allowed to change and adapt throughout the process. Rigid adherence to the initial proposal limits the ability for the proposal to evolve. (D)

### Justification Criteria Changes

12. Ensure that the justification criterion "Explain how the proposal responds to changes in circumstances or emerging community concerns" can include market changes. (D)

### Submission Requirement Changes

13. Requiring property owners' signature is commendable. (D)
14. Requiring property owners' consent will cut out some community-driven nominations. (T)
15. Guidance will be needed on the level of detail expected for the illustrative plan. The illustrative plan should be general and not an engineered plan. (D)
16. More stringent requirements, paired with the increased frequency of the cycle, should smooth out the number of nominations that are submitted in a given cycle. The changes should also produce more concurrent rezoning cases, which tend to have an easier review process. (D)

### Planning Prioritization

17. Issues that are relevant beyond the immediate area of the site should be considered, especially impacts to public facilities. (P)
18. There is a need for enhanced supporting data (for example, stormwater calculations) during the planning process. (P)
19. Issues of general concern that are common amongst SSPA nominations (such as office repurposing, retail and shopping center redevelopment, etc.) could be better addressed through countywide policy, rather than addressing the same issues on multiple sites. (D)
20. Consideration should be given for room on the Work Program for Board authorizations outside of the cycle, not just SSPAs. (D)

### Evaluation Phase Community Engagement

21. Uncertainty about the exact outreach type at the Evaluation phase could be an issue since it will not be identified until the Work Program is adopted. Would recommend identifying potential or recommended engagement types during the Screening phase so that the community can have greater certainty about next steps if a nomination is added to the Work Program. (D)
22. There should be intentional outreach to advocates so they know how to participate, the website should be updated to help the public know. (T)

23. Consider ways to intentionally reach out to underserved populations and people under 50 years of age. 75% of planning participants are older residents and we should bring in younger age groups. (P)

#### Other Topics

24. There may be policy issues related to the post-COVID-19 environment that need to be addressed at a countywide level. (P)
25. HOA Newsletters are a great way to get the word out about planning issues, in addition to district newsletters, and the Department should consider using these for outreach on a regular basis. (P)
26. Areas targeted for growth in the Comprehensive Plan should have far broader plan recommendations to facilitate implementation. (D)
27. Update the SSPA website to make it easier for advocates and members of the public to identify the key issues being considered with the nominations and resulting plan amendments. (T)
28. Enhance community notification on SSPA and other planning efforts by considering regular, public newsletters that provide plain language summaries of what's going on in the planning realm. (T)