

Preface

PREFACE

GOALS FOR FAIRFAX COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

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.

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

The recommendations of the Goals Commission were reviewed by the community during the 1988 Policy Review Year of the Annual Plan Review cycle. Participation in the process was extensive, 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, new "Goals for Fairfax County" were adopted on October 24, 1988.

The goals are comprehensive, encompassing every aspect of 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.

GOALS

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, nor should these policies 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.

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.

Employment Opportunities - Fairfax County should maintain its prosperous economic climate and varied employment opportunities.

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 areas of the County where present conditions warrant. Revitalization should prevent the effects of encroachment and deterioration of commercial and industrial development on stable residential areas, and should not hamper community improvements in these neighborhoods.

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 is 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.

Introduction

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: PURPOSE, SCOPE, AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

Purpose

The Policy Plan represents the latest stage in the evolution of the County's Comprehensive Plan; it is the key document that sets policy direction for decision-making about the built and natural environments of the County. In 1987, Fairfax County was experiencing levels of growth and economic prosperity at a rate never envisioned by those who drafted or those who adopted the 1975 Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County, Virginia. 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 that was guiding decision-making about site-specific issues.

During this period of review, it became evident that the Comprehensive Plan required a thorough revision based on the newly adopted Goals. On October 17, 1988, the Board of Supervisors accepted the Planning Commission's workplan, The Process for Plan Review, to begin the Major Plan Review. The Fairfax Planning Horizons process was initiated to produce revised Policy and Area Plans.

The purpose of the Policy Plan is to provide a concise statement of objectives, policies, and guidelines for implementing the County's Goals that apply to the future development pattern of the built environment in Fairfax County, while protecting natural and cultural resources for present and future generations. It will serve as a general guide for the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Commission, County staff, and the citizens of Fairfax County with respect to development and redevelopment in the County. The timeframe for the Plan encompasses the anticipated changes to the County over the next twenty years. As required by Virginia Code, the County will again review its Plan for the future within five years from the date of adoption.

Scope

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 Plan Concept.

Two major components make up the Policy Plan: 1) the County Goals; and 2) countywide objectives and policies by functional area (e.g., land use, environment, and transportation).

The Policy Plan incorporates this structure into the following sections:

The Preface presents the Board of Supervisor's Goals for Fairfax County, the basis of the Policy Plan.

The Introduction presents the purpose, scope and legal authority of the Plan. It also gives an analysis of the socio-economic conditions in the County in the context of the Washington, D.C. region. This is followed by a brief history of the comprehensive planning process in Fairfax County. Finally, Plan implementation and monitoring, as well as the role of community participation, are addressed.

Countywide Planning Objectives and Policies addresses countywide policy by specific functional area. This contains the goals, objectives, and policies for land use, transportation, housing, environment, heritage resources, public facilities, human services, and parks and recreation. The purpose of this component is to guide decisions that affect the County's 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.

The Action Agenda and Policy Plan Supplement

Two documents that will support the final adopted Policy Plan as separate companion documents are the Policy Plan Supplement and the Action Agenda. These two documents are useful to completely understand either the basis of the Plan or implementation actions which may be necessary to fully implement Plan policy.

The Action Agenda contains a list of actions that may need to be taken to implement the Policy Plan. The Action Agenda should be a basis for developing County agency workplans. It will not be adopted as part of the Plan; instead it will be used as a guide and revised at regular intervals to reflect which actions are completed and to include new items that should be undertaken. The Action Agenda items included in the Draft Policy Plan will be extracted from the final adopted version, revised as needed to reflect any changes that come about during the public review process, and compiled in a document that will include information on the priority, timing and agency responsibility of each item.

The Policy Plan Supplement contains information and statistics on existing conditions and trends until the year 2010. The purpose of this document is to summarize the background information used to develop the Policy Plan, as well as to highlight the critical issues identified during the process. The Supplement will be a separate document, not adopted into the Plan in order to be able to easily update it every few years. In this way, the Supplement will be a useful means for informing the community and decision-makers about the direction of trends and evolution of issues. The Supplement summarizes most of the eighteen working papers that were produced in support of the Policy Plan. These working papers form an additional basis for the Plan. However, these papers will not be kept current except as they may be reflected in the Policy Plan Supplement.

Ongoing Development of the Comprehensive Plan

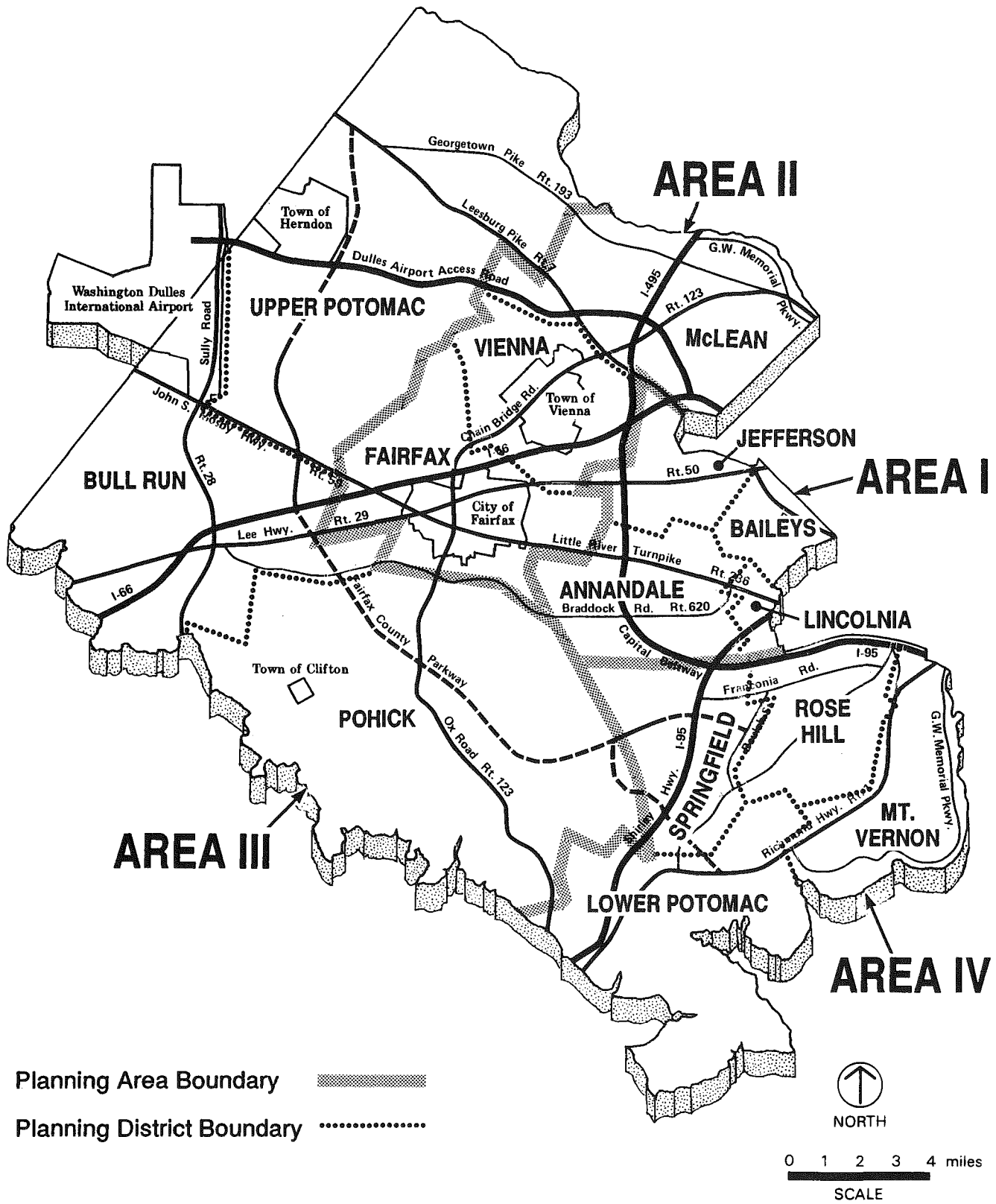
The adoption of the Policy Plan does not complete the planning effort. The Comprehensive Plan process will continue to progress toward revising the Area Plans. (See Figure 1). Further, the Plan will be revised, as necessary, according to Virginia Code and in response to planning related issues critical to the public health, safety and welfare.

The Legal Authority of the Plan

The legal basis for this Plan is well established in the law of the Commonwealth. The Code of Virginia in Section 15.1-446.1 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.

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



FAIRFAX COUNTY IN CONTEXT

Fairfax County is one of the most dynamic jurisdictions in the Washington Metropolitan Region. (See Figure 2.) It is an integral part of this region that encompasses hundreds of square miles and over three million people. 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 multi-faceted employment center, a generator of retail sales 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 Corner, 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, to the degree that preservation of remaining farm land, conservation of areas of high environmental and scenic value, and protection of open space to serve as breathing room have become high priorities.

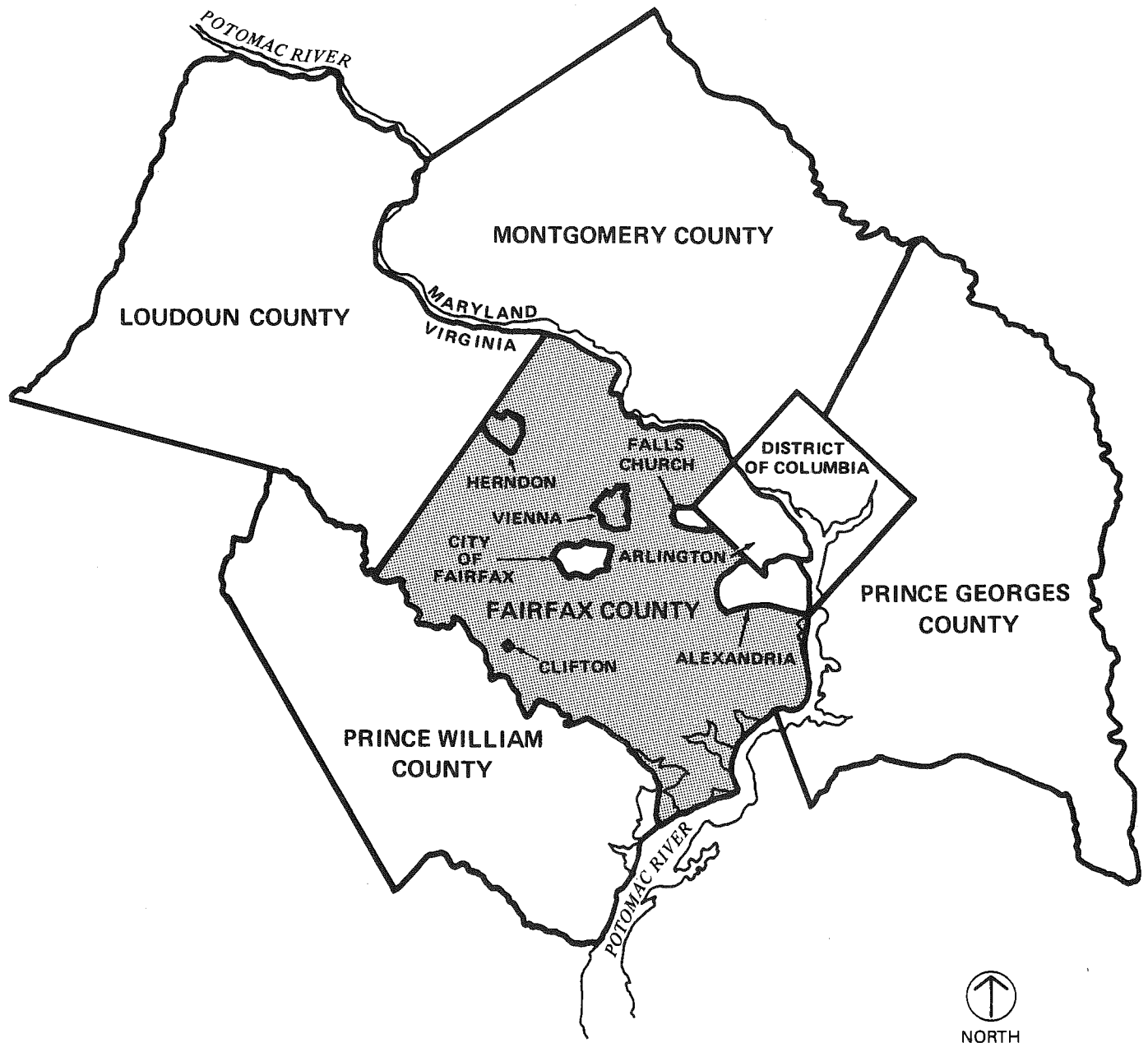
Until the mid-1960s, major roads led in a radial pattern to the District of Columbia, through the more urbanized areas of Northern Virginia (Falls Church, Arlington, Alexandria). Radial highways such as I-95, I-66, the Dulles Toll Road, and Route 50, along with the Metrorail system of high speed transit, now serve to link the various parts of the County. Some also link the County with Maryland and the rest of Northern Virginia. Today the Capital Beltway, a circumferential road, is the "main street" of the region, linking the inner suburbs. In the future, new circumferential roads, such as the Fairfax Parkway and the proposed Outer Beltway, will link the suburban employment centers.

In summary, Fairfax County, with 399 square miles, is both interdependent with a larger region, and the steward of the land which is home for almost three-quarters-of-a million people. The following is a depiction of Fairfax County in relation to the region as a whole, including demographics and employment statistics, with a summary of their implications for employment, transportation, housing and land use.

Population Growth and Land Availability

Fairfax County today is the most populous jurisdiction in the Washington Metropolitan Region. Between 1970 and 1988, the County's population increased from about 450,000 (16 percent of the region) to almost 750,000 (20 percent of the region). Population in 1990 is projected to be 795,700. (See Figure 3.)

Even more significantly, in 1975 when the Comprehensive Plan was last revised, Fairfax County's population stood at 537,200. Since that time, population has increased 39 percent. Since the early 1970s, Fairfax has attracted more than its share of regional growth because of its abundant supply of residentially-zoned land. In contrast, regional population grew by only 18 percent over the 1970-85 period. Confronted with a dwindling supply of available land, Fairfax County is faced with the need to make decisions as to how and where additional growth can be accommodated in a fashion that ensures the provision of the necessary infrastructure, public facilities, and services.



Source: Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning

Employment Growth

Fairfax County's employment tripled between 1970 and 1985, from 96,666 jobs in 1970 to 268,380 in 1985. During the same period, according to COG data, jobs in the Metropolitan region grew by nearly 60 percent, from 1,179,300 to 2,060,100.

The substantial increase in the County's employment since 1970 has transformed the County into a community where people both live and work. While in 1970 the number of persons in the Fairfax County labor force outnumbered the supply of jobs by 97%, by 1988 the labor force outnumbered jobs by only 32%. Because of the increase in employment opportunities in Fairfax County, a greater percentage of residents now work in the County. While in 1980 almost two-thirds of Fairfax County residents commuted to other jurisdictions to work, by 1988 less than half traveled outside of the County.

Fairfax County received a substantial share of the region's employment growth, with approximately 1 out of every 4 new jobs in the Washington region being located in Fairfax County. This growth in Fairfax County employment can be attributed to a number of factors. In general, the region has seen a trend towards increasing suburban employment. Fairfax County has been a particularly desirable suburban location because of its highly educated labor force, proximity to two major airports, availability of land for non-residential development, and favorable business climate.

The County's increased employment has positively impacted its tax base. In the late 1970s, the Board of Supervisors recommended efforts to increase the commercial/industrial share of the County tax base from 12%, the level at that time, to 25%. Because of significant employment growth and the resulting non-residential development, the County has reached its goal of 25% and has been able to provide its residents with many services and facilities that might have been too expensive if the County had been dependent primarily on a residential tax base.

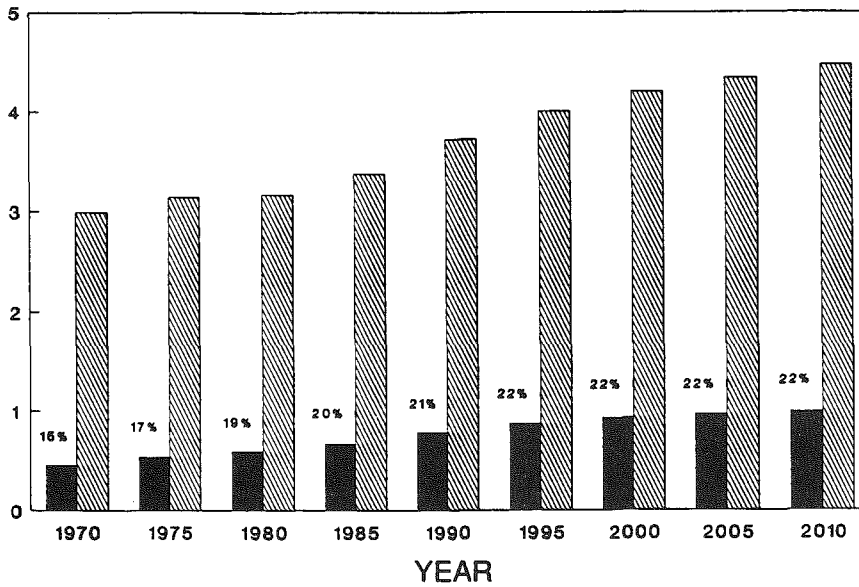
The increase in employment within Fairfax County is expected to continue. Based on current trends, Fairfax County and the entire region are expected to add more new jobs than residents between 1990 and 2010. While this will clearly provide more opportunities for residents to find employment within the County, it also suggests that there will be a greater number of commuters traveling into the County from other jurisdictions. This will be especially true as the proportion of older County residents no longer in the labor force increases, and as affordable housing grows more scarce. Even an ambitious affordable housing program would not keep pace with job growth, the number of commuters coming from other jurisdictions where housing is less costly will add to current pressures on the transportation system. The County's policies regarding affordable housing and transportation infrastructure development will play a significant role in determining the effect that job growth will have on Fairfax County.

Land Use

The major demographic changes and employment growth of Fairfax County have impacted strongly on the existing land use pattern. Between 1974 and 1988, the number of acres in residential land use grew by 21.5%. While single-family detached housing continued to predominate, the pattern became diversified by the addition of significant numbers of townhouses and apartments.

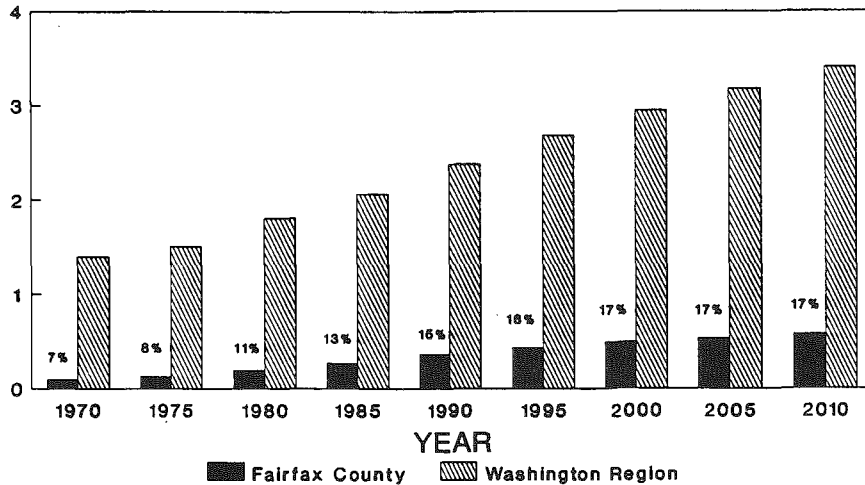
POPULATION GROWTH:
FAIRFAX COUNTY & THE REGION (1970-2010)

Population in Millions



EMPLOYMENT GROWTH
FAIRFAX COUNTY & THE REGION (1970-2010)

Millions



SOURCES: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Fairfax County Office of Research and Statistics

During the same time, the number of acres in non-residential land uses expanded by over 49.0%. Fairfax County became the region's pre-eminent location for new office, research, and shopping center development. Tysons Corner alone holds more office space and workers than downtown Miami and more major department stores than all but two other suburban jurisdictions in the country. Yet Tysons is but the largest of several other commercial and office concentrations in the County.

Increasing development has resulted in a diminishing supply of vacant land. Less than 50,000 acres, roughly 20 percent of the County's land area, remain undeveloped, excluding designated Agricultural/Forestral districts. As the County's economy has matured, and the resource of vacant land dwindled, attention has begun to focus on revitalization and redevelopment.

Age

Fairfax County's population is aging; between 1970 and 1988, the median age in the County rose from 25.2 to 33.5 years. This aging pattern, reflecting national demographic trends, can be primarily attributed to three factors: (1) aging of the baby boom generation; (2) drop in birth rate during the 1970s; and (3) growth in the elderly population due to increased life expectancies. Whether or not County population grows at comparable rates as in the past, by the year 2010, the County can expect a dramatic increase in the number of residents 45 years or older. Therefore, the County must be positioned to provide physical and social support to older residents. The aging population will be seeking recreational and human service facilities that are readily accessible from their homes; many may desire smaller housing units close to shopping and community services.

Households

While population growth is one measure of change, the households formed by Fairfax County residents are the primary source of demand on housing, public facilities, and services. In Fairfax County, the relative growth in number of households has exceeded that of the population overall. Fairfax County's population has grown from 454,275 people in 1970 to 746,600 in 1988, representing a 64 percent increase. Fairfax County had 126,500 households in 1970, and 270,600 in 1988, a 114 percent increase. The County's Office of Research and Statistics (ORS) estimates that there will be about 287,000 households in the County in 1990.

Household size in Fairfax is decreasing, as it is elsewhere in the region and the nation. While average household size in the County was 3.14 persons in 1975, by the beginning of 1988 it was 2.70, a trend that will probably continue into the next century. A number of factors contribute to this change: as a larger percentage of young women enter the work force, many choose to establish careers before marrying and having children; families generally have fewer children than in earlier generations; and the higher divorce rate and increase in elderly have also caused a decrease in household size.

These factors become even more apparent when reviewing the changes in household types. In 1970, over 90 percent of Fairfax households were families (those with two or more related individuals), and by 1980 this percentage had dropped to 77. Conversely, there was an increase in households of single persons and unrelated individuals. Similar changes have occurred in the region as a whole.

The trend toward smaller households and fewer family households could have a significant impact on the type of housing demanded by County residents in years to come. Smaller families will not require as much space, and many may need or desire apartments and townhouses instead of traditional single-family units.

Income

The Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia indicates that the 1985 median household income in Fairfax County was the highest of any Virginia jurisdiction in the Washington region. According to ORS figures, the County's median household income has risen dramatically since 1979, increasing from \$30,100 to an estimated \$55,000 in 1987 and more recent projections indicate that the median household income has continued to rise. Adjusting for inflation, this represents a 16.5% increase between 1979 and 1987. Over the same time period, the median household income in Virginia increased 11.3% in real terms while the median household income across the nation decreased 1.1%.

The disproportionate rise in Fairfax County median household incomes can be attributed to a number of factors. Since 1980, numerous high-paying jobs have been created in the Washington region. In 1980, Fairfax County had a higher percentage of "white collar" workers than did the region as a whole. Over half of the employed residents held professional, managerial, or sales jobs, with another quarter in administrative support positions. Also, the percentage of the County's female labor force employed outside the home has increased from 43.4% in 1970 to 72.0% in 1988, a percentage above the national average. The increase in dual income households thus has caused a rise in the County's median household income.

In 1987, only 9.3% of Fairfax County households had an annual income of less than \$25,000, though this percentage could increase, if, as expected, the percentage of elderly residents on fixed incomes increases in the next two decades. While the high income levels of Fairfax County residents reflect positively on its desirability, the lack of housing opportunities for lower income households could negatively impact the County's employment growth. In fact, much of the housing constructed in the County since 1980 has been relatively expensive, and resale housing prices have also increased considerably. In many cases, only those households with substantial incomes have had the means to purchase homes in Fairfax County. Many workers have to commute from other jurisdictions where housing is less expensive, thus placing further strains on the County's transportation system.

Housing Needs and Prospects

Amid the affluence of Fairfax County, many households are squeezed by the lack of affordable housing. Approximately 9.5 percent, or 23,600, of the County households have incomes at or below 50 percent of the metropolitan statistical area median. In 1986, almost 12,000 renter households had incomes under \$30,000 per year and were paying more than 35 percent of their incomes for rent. According to the County's Department of Housing and Community Development, in their report, "The Need for Affordable Housing," approximately 4000 households had incomes below \$10,000 and were paying more than 45 percent of their incomes for rent. While the number of assisted housing units in the County increased by 35 percent between 1982 and 1987, the total stands at only 8,681, well below the estimated need. Meanwhile both land and housing prices in Fairfax County continue to increase.

As of 1988, there was more than a 14 year supply of vacant land planned for residential densities of five units per acre and under, based on recent rates of housing production. At the same time, there were only 1,841 acres planned for residential densities between 5 and 12 units per acre (townhouses), about a five year supply. And while there was a 16 year supply of multifamily land based on recent rates of growth, the total amounted to only 624 acres, a relatively modest figure if multifamily construction is to play a more prominent role in shelter production for future residents.

In the long run, the demand for more affordable housing, the shrinking supply of vacant land, and the decreasing household sizes will require a far greater production of more compact, land conserving multifamily and townhouse units than has occurred in the past.

Geographic Distribution of Employment

The percentage of residents who commute to work outside of the County remained almost constant between 1970 and 1980, but dropped considerably between 1980 and 1986. The substantial increase in the number of jobs located in Fairfax County has provided an alternative to jobs in the urban core and the opportunity for many residents to work closer to their homes.

Although the percentage of residents traveling to other jurisdictions decreased, the actual number increased as a result of the rapid growth in the size of the County's labor force. The number of residents commuting to other jurisdictions has a significant impact on the regional transportation network. As the area's population increases, it will become more difficult for County residents to commute by private automobile, unless extensive improvements to the road system are made and auto dependency can be reduced.

Although recent job growth has provided greater opportunity for residents to work in the County, it has also significantly impacted commuting patterns in the Washington region. In the early 1970s, most commuters traveled from suburban locations to the regional core. By the mid-1980s, a large number of commuters were traveling from one part of the County to another, and others were traveling from other localities, particularly outlying jurisdictions, into Fairfax County. In 1986, more than 90,000 persons commuted into Fairfax County to work. Employment centers such as Tysons Corner and the Route 28 corridor have experienced significant increases in traffic congestion as a result. Changing commuting patterns have strained the existing transportation infrastructure: employment and shopping trips are shifting from a predominately radial pattern focused on the urban core to an increasingly circumferential suburban pattern.

Unemployment Rate

Since 1970, the unemployment rate for Fairfax County has been consistently lower than the rate for the Washington metropolitan area or the nation as a whole. The unemployment rate has remained low because the region's strong, stable economy has provided many employment opportunities for Fairfax County's highly skilled labor force.

While the low unemployment rate has been beneficial for the County's residents, it has become a problem for some businesses which have recently begun to experience labor shortages. The labor shortage has been most prevalent among businesses that pay lower service sector wages, such as retail establishments. Most County residents that want jobs are already employed, and those that are unemployed frequently are overqualified for these service sector jobs, or find that compensation is not enough to offset the high cost of living in Fairfax County.

Fairfax County's unemployment rate has remained low, while the regional unemployment rate has been slightly higher, indicating that there may be persons in the region that could be employed in some of the positions that Fairfax businesses are having difficulty filling. The region's transportation system, however, makes commuting from other jurisdictions difficult, especially for those dependent on public transportation. At the same time, most housing in the County is too expensive for lower paid workers. Finally, working parents frequently need low-cost child care, which is not always readily available.

The locational mismatch between potential employees and service sector jobs has become significant, and it could become more severe if the number of jobs in the County continues to increase substantially. Fairfax County will need to increase its supply of affordable housing and low-cost daycare, as well as public transportation access to its employment centers, if it expects to have the substantial service sector required to support the County's projected increases in both population and employment.

Conclusion: Implications of Growth

Fairfax County's economic boom has brought many benefits to the community and the region. County residents enjoy both a high standard of living and fine quality of life. However, growth has brought with it not only benefits, but problems in terms of land use, housing, and transportation. These, in turn, have serious implications for the provision of public facilities, parks, recreation facilities, and the conservation of the environment and heritage resources. The broad implications of demographic and employment growth serve as background for countywide policy put forth in this Comprehensive Plan. Successfully addressing the problems associated with growth is necessary to maintain the quality of life for present and future generations.

HISTORY OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

This Policy Plan represents the latest phase of the evolution of comprehensive planning in Fairfax County which began in the mid-1950s with the adoption of the first zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan. The decade of the 1970's 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. Many of the key components of the 1975 Plan remain in the revised 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 Components

In the Fall of 1973, efforts began toward simultaneous preparation of updated countywide and area plans, components of the Comprehensive Plan. After analysis 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.

The Fairfax Planning Horizons

Since its adoption in 1975, the Plan underwent some revision through the Annual Plan Review process and several small-area studies. However, in 1988, the Planning Commission decided that it was time to review the Plan in light of analysis of current conditions, updated projections for future growth, and the implications of a different economic climate. The Planning Commission asked the Office of Comprehensive Planning 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 have been 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 Phase I of Planning Horizons has been open to anyone wishing to participate. An extensive series of Tuesday night Topical Meetings and Saturday workshops have taken place, as well as public meetings before the Planning Commission, a Planning Commission roundtable seminar, and formal public hearings. This process has had widespread publicity, in order to keep the community informed about its progress, meetings they could attend and documents that were published. Eighteen working papers have been distributed widely for community review.

The products of Phase I are also innovative: the first volume, 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. Also new is a separate document containing the Concept for Future Development, both text and map, which highlight the generalized land use pattern to guide future development for the County. Particularly distinctive is the new Land Classification System which identifies those areas that are expected to share similar characteristics by the year 2010, if not today. 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 up-date of the Area Plans during Phase II of the Planning Horizons process. The Land Classification System is a revision of that used during the last major revision of the Comprehensive Plan PLUS, when the County was divided into stable areas, option areas, complex areas, planned development centers, and economic growth centers.

Another innovative product is The Policy Plan Supplement, a separate document which will contain information and statistics on existing conditions and trends. The purpose of this document is to summarize the background economic and demographic information used to develop the Plan, as well to highlight the critical issues identified during the process. This document will not be adopted as part of the Plan, but will serve as a background resource. It is anticipated that its data base will be updated periodically, in order to keep the community and decision-makers informed about the direction of trends and evolution of issues.

During Planning Horizons, a new document was developed, called The Action Agenda. This contains a list of all the actions that should be taken to implement the objectives and policies in the Policy Plan. As a basis of agency workplans, this Action Agenda will not be adopted into the Plan. It is envisioned to remain flexible so that it can be revised at regular intervals to reflect which actions are completed and others to be initiated. (See the Implementation/Monitoring section of this Introduction for details.)

Planning Horizons initiated another aspect different from previous processes, that of Plan monitoring. The Goals Commission identified the need for a systematic Plan monitoring methodology with citizen participation as a key component. When the goals were revised during the 1988 Policy Review year, goals for Plan monitoring and for public participation were adopted for the first time. Plan monitoring, as described later in the Implementation/Monitoring section of the Plan Introduction, combines both short- and long-term approaches. In the short term, a status report on Plan implementation will be presented to the Planning Commission and community to review what has been accomplished vis a vis the Action Agenda. In the long term, at the appropriate time in the Plan Review cycle, the County's goals will be reassessed. This reassessment would examine not only how well the goals have been achieved, but also whether the goals themselves need revision to address changing community needs and values. Community participation would be an important component in both short- and long-term Plan monitoring.

The Future of the Planning Process

After the updated Policy Plan and Area Plans are adopted, it is expected that the planning processes and practices will be modified to accommodate many of the innovations initiated by the Planning Horizons process. Given the new simplified format of the Policy Plan, in future Plan reviews it will be easier to identify those policies that need to be revised or deleted, as well as where new policies should be added. Also, decision-makers and the community will be able to stay informed about the evolution of the County through the information updated periodically in the Policy Plan Supplement. The community, the decision-makers and the staff will be able to track the progress of Plan implementation through the new Plan monitoring process, utilizing the Action Agenda. All these elements are expected to make it possible to maintain the Plan as a dynamic and responsive guide to the planning process.

IMPLEMENTATION/PLAN MONITORING/CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Plan of Fairfax County is a dynamic document which is actively used by the Board of Supervisors, the Fairfax County Planning Commission, County staff, and the public to guide decisions about the built and natural environment, as well as the conservation of cultural and heritage resources. It is important to note that the Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance to both public and private initiatives.

There are a variety of ways to assure the dynamic nature of the Comprehensive Plan. One is to monitor the Plan on a frequent basis. The Action Agenda, reviewed through a biennial status report, and the Plan Review, conducted at least every five years, meet this need. The second is through an informed citizenry. Citizen participation is the foundation of the planning process in Fairfax County and a wide range of participation opportunities assure active involvement of the public in County planning.

Implementation, monitoring and citizen participation mechanisms for the Comprehensive Plan are elaborated in the following sections.

MECHANISMS TO IMPLEMENT COUNTY PLANNING POLICY

The Comprehensive Plan - The Plan is, in itself, a mechanism for implementing the Board of Supervisors Goals for Fairfax County. This is carried out through the Policy Plan which contains countywide objectives and policies relating to the Goals. This hierarchy of policy guides decision-making for countywide, area, and site-specific issues. The Policy Plan will be used to: 1) provide direction for the Area Plans; 2) guide existing implementation mechanisms, (i.e. provide direction for evaluation of zoning proposals); and 3) guide any new implementation mechanisms that are developed through the Action Agenda.

The Area Plans are key elements for implementing the direction from the Policy Plan to the more detailed Planning Districts and Community Planning Sectors, both during the Area Plan update process and during the development review process. Also considered are existing conditions and issues applicable to the immediate area around the subject site. Community attention and participation is inherent in both the Plan update and zoning process because both directly affect residents and the business community.

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 implementation of the Public Facilities Manual requirements.

Capital Improvements Program - This document is a guide toward the efficient and effective provision of public facilities. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) document 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.

Programming capital facilities over time can promote better use of 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. By looking beyond year to year budgeting and projecting what, where, when, and how capital investments should be made, capital programming enables public bodies to maintain an effective level of service to the present and future population. The CIP is intended to implement the public facilities element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Although the Policy Plan presents a twenty year projection of types of facilities and approximate measures to determine their numbers, timing of facility construction is dependent upon a number of variables. For example, in addition to the Capital Improvements 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.

The Action Agenda - This is an implementation mechanism proposed in the Policy Plan. The Action Agenda will be a separate document that acts as a companion piece to the Plan, but will not be part of the adopted Plan. Because the Action Agenda will be a basis for developing agency workplans, it is important that it be flexible, not requiring a Plan Review process to make changes as actions are completed or new ones need to be added. This will enable modifications to be made with participation from the community but without the necessity of a formal plan amendment.

The Action Agenda will:

- Describe specific actions that are recommended to implement the policies put forth in the Policy Plan. These may include recommendations for specific legislation, ordinance changes, further research, and additional examination by the community and/or the County staff.
- Present an anticipated timeframe for priority items.

- Designate the parties with primary responsibility for achieving the action items.
- Act as a tool for Plan monitoring to serve as the basis for periodically assessing the success of the Plan and progress toward policy implementation.

It is envisioned that the Action Agenda will be updated and revised periodically to reflect changes in the status of recommended implementation actions and to add any new initiatives that are needed.

Conclusion

The previously discussed implementation mechanisms are representative of the major tools that Fairfax County uses in development review. All mechanisms which reference the Comprehensive Plan as providing guidance to their function remain as implementation mechanisms even though they may not be specifically mentioned in this document.

PLAN MONITORING

Board of Supervisors Goal:

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

Plan Monitoring Mechanisms

There are two mechanisms for carrying out Plan monitoring - the Action Agenda and the Plan Review process:

The Action Agenda - This will be an important part of overall Plan monitoring. It will be used as the principal mechanism for tracking policy implementation efforts, recognizing that other Plan monitoring mechanisms will be needed to examine such things as policy effectiveness and goals achievement.

Biennially, the Office of Comprehensive Planning will present a status report on the Action Agenda to the Planning Commission and the community. This status report will:

- Indicate actions that have been initiated and completed, as well as those that are on-going;
- Indicate any proposed changes to the timeframe for undertaking specific action items; and
- Propose new action items that the community or the staff feels are warranted.

This status report will provide an opportunity for discussions with the community and the Planning Commission regarding the need to update and revise the Action Agenda. The community and the Planning Commission will also have the opportunity to comment on the success of past actions and to make suggestions regarding additions and revisions to the Action Agenda. The review of the Action Agenda will be one of the ways in which the community, the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, the County Executive, and the Office of Comprehensive Planning can jointly participate in monitoring the implementation of the Policy Plan.

The Plan Review is the Plan monitoring mechanism that evaluates Goals achievement and reassesses the relevance of the Goals in light of the County's evolution over time. Both of these evaluations, as well as a periodic review of the five volumes of the Comprehensive Plan, were recommended by the Goals Commission. Plan Review will occur at least once every five years.

A major component of The Plan Review will be to evaluate whether the Transportation Level of Service Standard, that is established under Transportation Objective 3, Policy b, will be achieved during the Planning Horizon time frame.

Out-of-turn Plan Amendments - Between Plan Reviews, the Board of Supervisors may consider out-of-turn Plan amendments, if circumstances warrant such exceptions. In order to identify those situations when an out-of-turn amendment might be considered, the Board adopted a screening criterion on December 8, 1986. It states:

Consideration of out-of-turn 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.

To initiate an out-of-turn Plan amendment, the applicant makes a request 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 proceed with an evaluation of the proposed amendment. The proposed Plan amendment is then submitted to the planning staff for evaluation and recommendation. 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 accepted.

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:** A process for periodic review of the status of the Plan will include publication of a status report and 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 Out-of-Turn Plan amendment process 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.
- **The County Budget Process and the Capital Improvements 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.