

FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
POLICY PLAN COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2025

PRESENT: Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, At-Large, Chairman
Timothy J. Sargeant, Commissioner At-Large, Vice Chairman
Mary D. Cortina, Braddock District
Alyssa Batchelor-Causey, Dranesville District
Chris Landgraf, Franconia District
John A. Carter, Hunter Mill District
Alis Wang, Mason District
Walter C. Clarke, Mount Vernon District
Evelyn S. Spain, Sully District
Candice Bennett, Commissioner At-Large

ABSENT: Jeremy Hancock, Providence District
James Thomas, Springfield District

OTHERS: Kelly Atkinson, Director, Planning Division (PD)
Department of Planning and Development (DPD)
Corinne Bebek, PD, DPD
Michelle Stahlhut, PD, DPD
Katrina Newtson, PD, DPD
Carly Aubrey, PD, DPD
Lia Niebauer, PD, DPD
Salem Bush, PD, DPD
Anna Ricklin, Fairfax County Health Department
Robert Pikora, Transportation Planning Division,
Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT)
Stephanie Cornejo, Planning and Development, Fairfax County Park Authority
Larry Zaragoza, Chairman,
Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC)
Robert Cosgriff, Vice Chairman, Braddock District,
Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee
Samantha Lawrence, Senior Deputy Clerk, Planning Commission,
Department of Clerk Services

ATTACHMENTS

- A. POLICY PLAN AMENDMENT – CHECK-IN BEFORE PUBLIC HEARINGS -
PRESENTATION

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner called the Policy Plan Committee meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. in Conference Room 11 of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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MINUTES APPROVAL

Commissioner Sargeant MOVED APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 5, 2025, POLICY PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING.

Commissioner Bennett seconded the motion, which was carried by a vote of 10-0. Commissioners Thomas and Hancock were absent from the meeting.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner stated that the purpose of the meeting was to preview the presentation staff would present at the October 15, 2025 public hearing. The draft revised Policy Plan of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan would allow Boards, Authorities, Commissions (BAC), and Committee members an opportunity to share their assessment of the draft plan.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner recognized Corinne Bebek, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Development (DPD) as the Project Manager for delivering a high quality product within the timeframe that allowed the Planning Commission to meet the Board of Supervisors expectations. He stated that this was the first of two phases of the proposed Policy Plan Amendment that would be delivered by the end of this year. Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner also recognized Kelly Atkinson, Director, PD, DPD, other staff members throughout the County agencies, BAC members, and Commissioners for their input and contributions throughout the process. Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner also thanked Commissioner Sargeant for his support as Vice-Chairman of the Committee. He added that this policy document and the work product would be reviewed by policy makers, and changes were likely based on feedback and insights received from stakeholders, most significantly at the October 15, 2025 public hearing, and recommendations would be made by the Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors for a final decision. Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner announced his intent to defer decision only on the proposed Policy Plan Amendment to November 12, 2025. He explained that the deferral was based on consultation with Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay's office and Kathy L. Smith, Supervisor, Sully District (Board Vice Chairman and Committee Chairman), with regard to a deferral consideration from November 18, 2025 to December 9, 2025, allowing time for a Policy Plan Committee work session on October 30, 2025 to resolve any issues that required revisions to the main motion.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner requested that staff and Committee members introduce themselves to the audience and noted the rules for the discussion and answer session.

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Corinne Bebek, PD, DPD, introduced herself, Kelly Atkinson, Director, PD, DPD; Carly Aubrey, PD, DPD; Salem Bush, PD, DPD; Michelle Stahlhut, PD, DPD; Katrina Newton, PD, DPD; Lia Niebauer, PD, DPD; Anna Ricklin, Fairfax County Health Department; Robert Pikora, Transportation Planning Division, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT); and Stephanie Cornejo, Planning and Development, Fairfax County Park Authority. Ms. Bebek gave a presentation on the drafted proposed Policy Plan Amendment. A copy of staff's presentation is in the date file.

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There was a discussion between Ms. Bebek; Kelly Atkinson, Director, PD, DPD; Katrina Newton, PD, DPD; Michelle Stahlhut, PD, DPD; Carly Aubrey, PD, DPD; Anna Ricklin, Fairfax County Health Department; Robert Pikora, Transportation Planning Division, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT); Larry Zaragoza, Chairman, Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council; Robert Cosgriff, Vice Chairman, Braddock District, Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee; and multiple Committee members regarding the following:

- Concerns from the community regarding noise pollution associated with data centers;
- Concerns on whether current operations aligned with the Virginia Clean Economy Act goals, especially with reports for the increased use of coal to meet rising energy demands;
- The noise level comparisons between European data centers operating at 35 decibels compared to U.S. data centers that operated closer to 65 decibels, and a recommendation that staff revisit current noise levels;
- Evaluation and management of noise levels should be a priority in planning and permitting;
- A recommendation that louder equipment be placed at the rear of buildings, with building structures themselves used as a noise buffer for neighboring communities to help further reduce the noise impact;
- A suggestion that data centers be consolidated into campus-style layouts to streamline infrastructure investments with the use of fiber cabling, power lines, and substations;
- A recommendation to create operational efficiencies to better manage environmental and community impact through centralized planning;
- The proposed Policy Plan Amendment thoroughly addressed the priorities of active transportation and these priorities closely reflected what the community members advocated for at regular meetings;

- The Trails, Sidewalks and Bikeways Committee recognized the link between smart land use planning and transportation that achieved the active transportation goals of the County;
- The County's active transportation goals were to build a comprehensive network of active transportation infrastructure that was safe and open to users of all abilities;
- The Committee conducted a strategic reimagined process, which included working groups that focused on land use and its effect on transportation;
- One of the working groups examined how land use decisions affected transportation systems;
- The proposed plan aligned with the Committee's charter to advise the Board of Supervisors on active transportation needs within the community for more active transportation elements;
- A discussion on the background for the change in language that addressed the removal of power usage effectiveness metric, and the criteria that supported potential future repurposing uses for data centers;
- Staff noted that the Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE) metric standard was voluntary sharing what would be done with that information, and how it shaped future changes to the policy;
- A request for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building certification or equivalent, the standards that were needed for that level of certification used a lot of the same techniques, and the focus was obtaining LEED Gold;
- Concerns in the land use section of the proposed plan that addressed the criteria for development, redevelopment, and the essentials of the staff report based on this criteria;
- Concerns that tree cover requirements were removed from the environment and tree preservation section of the proposed plan;
- A recommendation to include a reference in the land use section of the proposed plan that highlighted environmental considerations and tree preservation, that aligned with the environmental element;

- Concerns that the transportation element of the proposed plan no longer included the policy prioritizing transportation improvements in the transit station areas, commercial revitalization zones, and the core of urban and suburban centers;
- Reference made to Objective 8, Policy c. language that noted “promote the creation of sustainable, and inclusive communities through environmental stewardship and equitable access to transportation in all new and revitalized development projects (e.g., green open spaces)” and staff further clarify that language;
- It was noted that the ActiveFairfax Plan recommended the installation of crosswalks on all four sides of an intersection;
- A concern that the proposed plan did not address speed, despite speed being a key factor in achieving safe streets for all;
- Under state code, the Planning Commission must review the Comprehensive Plan at least once every five years, and a concern that the plan was being reviewed on a site-by-site basis;
- The Office of the County Attorney stated that the current Comprehensive Plan review process was sufficient and met state code requirements;
- A concern that the current 10-year Comprehensive Plan review cycle could make it difficult for the Planning Commission to fulfill its duty to review the plan, as opposed to reviewing individual site-specific amendments;
- A recommendation that the Comprehensive Plan review process be changed to a periodic review, and that the review schedule was not strictly tied to staff’s 10-year review cycle;
- Concerns about light pollution addressed in the environmental element of the proposed plan;
- There was one policy that acknowledged light as a nuisance, focusing on unfocused light emissions;
- The plan lacked emphasis on identifying existing dark sky areas within the County;
- The need to prioritize preserving and enhancing dark sky zones, especially around the Occoquan area;

- The importance of protecting current dark sky capabilities to maintain environmental quality;
- An intent to focus on aspects of transportation with staff, collaboration on the proposed amendment and the community outreach conducted was acknowledged;
- Concerns about the economic viability of some sites, particularly if developed on a smaller, walkable scale, and a recommendation for staff to offer guidance on these aspects to help foster a strong sense of community and place;
- The community engagement aspect of placemaking could be strengthened by adding language that outlined the process for involving the community;
- How the proposed policy plan would be applied, whether it would be voluntary, advisory, suggestive, and what would be the consequences if the criteria were not met;
- The use of protecting neighborhoods. Reference made to Page 7 of the draft staff report which noted the following and a discussion on staff's rationale on the changed language:
 - "A large change proposed as part of this Plan amendment is the shift away from protectionist language and policies that would limit redevelopment in certain areas to ensure the Policy Plan is contributing to, and fostering, equitable development throughout the county. For example, there has been a transition from using language recommending "protection of neighborhoods" in favor of language focusing on "thoughtful integration of land uses to enhance communities and provide additional housing opportunities."
- Collaboration efforts between staff and Committee members on updates to plan language that emphasized neighborhood protections and stability;
- Some of the terminology which dated back 30 years took on different meanings over time, which influenced how one interpreted the overall plan, which included who was being protected and the reasons for those protections;
- The proposal introduced language that allowed for additional housing options within Suburban Village Centers located near existing neighborhoods, where in the past, may have been considered protected or off limits because they were outside designated activity centers;

- The proposed policy change provided organic growth and change that should be permitted in areas beyond density zones. Some examples were townhome developments along arterial roads, and housing in shopping centers;
- A concern that the way in which the policy statements were presented in the proposed draft could lead to misinterpretation, as well as a sense that the County was moving away from a long standing policy, and a recommendation that the current language be strengthened;
- A recommendation that staff clarify language under the environment element section of the staff report. Reference made to Page 14 of the draft staff report which noted the following:
 - “The preferred option includes an ambitious goal of meeting good forested condition for sites that are developing or redeveloping. If meeting good forested condition is not practicable, further guidance is provided recognizing that a majority of county streams have been identified as impaired.”
- Staff clarified that most of the County’s streams were impaired and that the quality of forested areas were under review, the thresholds in the second option were based on impervious surface coverage which affected the health of the streams, staff would further review the language and would provide additional clarification based on specifics of each development proposal;
- Staff noted that based on feedback received from the Board of Supervisors, some of the language regarding data centers was refined, streamlined, consolidated, the energy demand strategies and necessary utility information were also combined, and language that was not feasible or redundant was removed;
- Staff agreed that the proposed policy changes related to future data centers were reflected in the revisions, addressed many of the concerns, and lessons learned were incorporated from previous data center developments;
- Staff felt confident that noise concerns were addressed adequately in the proposed plan, noted the role of the existing Fairfax County Noise Ordinance, and related criteria language;
- The approved Zoning Ordinance required noise studies and the criteria requirement specified that if the noise levels exceeded those standards they should proffer to ensure compliance with the code;

- Staff noted that Objective 13 language, which outlined Green Building expectations, was strengthened and improved, and the standards for LEED certification for residential activity centers to LEED Silver aligned with industry trends;
- The previous policy spoke to adding opportunities for electric vehicle charging in residential areas where they were not available, and this access was extended to all users;
- Bird-friendly design was formalized through policy and has been successfully implemented in building projects;
- The Comprehensive Plan served as a guide, however, if a project could not fully meet its requirements, staff collaborated with developers to align the proposal with the plan's intent before presenting to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors;
- Staff noted that the drafted proposed Policy Plan Amendment aligned with the approved matters authorized by the Board of Supervisors, factoring in the environmental policies that the Board adopted or endorsed over the past year;
- The drafted proposed policy plan amendment also aligned with the Fairfax County Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan and the Fairfax County Operational Energy Strategy;
- Staff clarified that the draft language that addressed equity in the overview was reorganized in the introduction chapter to better emphasize the various goals, linking the introduction to key issues before presenting the specific goals and practices. Housing, equity, and environmental practices were among the issues highlighted;
- Staff acknowledged that equity could not quickly be resolved and land use was one tool that addressed it;
- The County's land use policies were evolving and responded to current equity needs, particularly through the inclusion of the Healthy Communities Element, the inclusion of language that addressed equity throughout the proposed document, and intentional coordination of policies across various elements;
- Staff was recognized for their innovative thinking in developing the policy framework, especially regarding the Healthy Communities Element of the Proposed Policy Plan Amendment;
- It was stated that community members expressed concerns about the size of the document;

- Appreciation for the extended review of the proposed plan prior to the public hearing was voiced;
- Clarification was provided on the number of pages in the staff report for the proposed Policy Plan Amendment;
- An intent to defer the public hearing on the proposed Policy Plan Amendment with the record remaining open for written comments until November 12, 2025;
- A request that feedback on the proposed Plan Amendment be submitted prior to the October 30, 2025, Policy Plan Committee workshop;
- The process for submitting substitute and follow-on motions after the main motion was discussed;
- Emphasis on how the proposed policy plan would be applied, and a suggestion was made to create a handbook or pamphlet that explained the use of the Comprehensive Plan similar to that of Arlington County;
- A request that the Arlington County document referenced be shared with staff;
- Clarification that the existing Policy Plan was used during the review of zoning applications, Comprehensive Plan Amendments, 2232 applications, and interjurisdictional reviews;
- Staff noted there were no plans to produce any additional formal documents or publications on the proposed policy plan;
- Information about the proposed plan's use could be included in the staff's presentation for clarification during the public hearing; and
- Staff further clarified that additional equity language was added to the proposed plan, and staff was trained to ensure consistent implementation.

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Chairman Niedzielski-Eichner thanked staff and BAC members for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

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The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.
Phillip A. Niedzielski-Eichner, Chairman

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Planning Commission Office,
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 552, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

Minutes by: Samantha Lawrence

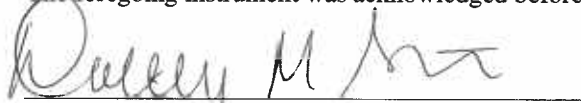
Approved: June 25, 2026



Nicole Blackwell, Clerk
Fairfax County Planning Commission

County of Fairfax
Commonwealth of Virginia

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 30 day of June 2026, by Nicole Blackwell


Signature of Notary

Notary Seal

Notary registration number: 7114113

Commission expiration: January 31, 2028





PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



Policy Plan Amendment: Check-in Before Public Hearings

Planning Commission Policy Plan Committee
October 9, 2025

Policy Plan Amendment Timeline



December 2022 - 2023

BOS Authorization; PC Policy Plan Committee Established; Phase I Topics Identified; Internal Research; Internal Policy Audit Completion

May - June 2024

BOS LUPC Meeting; Joint BAC/PC Committee Coordination and Mtgs.; Informational Outreach Phase

March - May 2025

Community Check-In Phase; Community Feedback Report/Draft Plan Guidance Published; Policy Development/Outreach Continues; BOS and PC Committee Mtgs

January - April 2024

Internal Research; Outreach Plan Finalization; PC Policy Plan Committee Mtgs

June 2024 - February 2025

Focused Topic Outreach Phase; PC Policy Plan Committee Mtgs, BOS Updates & Committee Mtgs; Staff Research; Policy Development Begins

June - Fall 2025

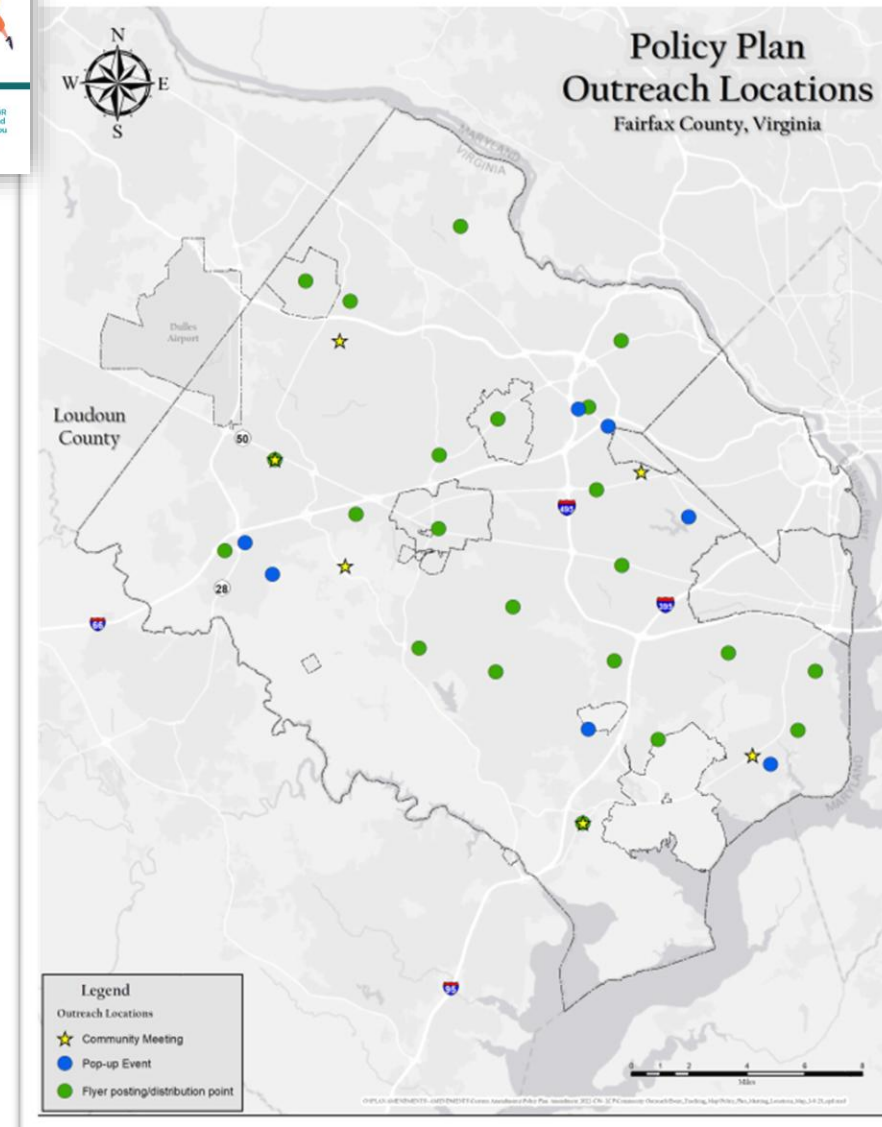
Policy Refinement; Phase I Staff Report Development and Publication; PC/BOS Public Hearings; Commencement of Phase II

We
Are
Here



Policy Plan Amendment Outreach

- 26 Community Meetings
 - Virtual and In-Person
- 15 Pop-up Events
 - Farmer's Markets; Back-to-School; Bike to Work Day
- 8 Board of Supervisors Meetings
 - Land Use Policy Committee (6)
 - Economic Advisory Committee (1)
 - Economic Initiatives Committee (1)
- 16 Planning Commission Meetings
 - Policy Plan Committee
- Industry Coordination
 - Land Use Attorneys; NVBIA/NAIOP; ESI
- Extensive County Agency Collaboration



Policy Plan Amendment

Comprehensive Plan Overview Changes



Sections of the Comprehensive Plan Overview

- Contextual Land Use Planning Narrative (Substantial updates)
- Land Use Vision and Goals (Substantial updates)
- Legal Authority, Purpose, and Scope (Editorial revisions)
- Implementation, Review, and Community Participation (Editorial revisions)

Policy Plan Amendment

Healthy Communities Element (New!)

- **First** health-focused element in Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan.
- Introductory language provides context for **place-based** solutions for health priorities.
- Five objectives and 36 actionable policies **encourage** healthy environments and **promote** healthy behaviors.
- Policies **complement** other elements in the Plan and integrate equity perspective.



Policy Plan Amendment

Land Use Element Changes



- **Structural Updates**

- 12 Broad Headings
- Integrated the Appendices into Policy Objectives and Development Criteria
- Streamlining Policy and Reducing Redundancy

- **New And Expanded Policy Areas**

- Placemaking
- Visual Arts
- Suburban Village Centers
- Equity & Displacement
- Flexibility in Mixed-Use Centers
- Maintaining a Diverse Economy (flexibility)
 - Office Repurposing
 - Industrial Preservation
- Data Centers



Policy Plan Amendment

Transportation Element Changes

New	Objectives/Sections	Policy Themes/Updates
1	Multimodal Transportation System	Movement of people, balance and use multimodal travel options
2	Land Use & Transportation	Align land use and transportation into a complementary system
3	Active Transportation	Develop, enhance and promote walkable and bikeable communities
4	Public Transportation	Increase use, improve facilities/services, expand Metrorail and BRT options
5	Safety	Prioritize safety for people who use transportation facilities, services
6	Transportation Demand Management (TDM)	Promote transit, flexible work schedules, to reduce SOVs, congestion
7	Technology & Infrastructure	Improve, emphasize multimodal operations, innovative strategies
8	Transportation Solutions	Minimize adverse impacts on community, environment, sensitive areas
9	Community Engagement	Collaborate with public and stakeholders for planning, initiatives, projects
10	Funding	Seek funding sources, partnerships, to support plans and improvements
	Appendices 1-4	New terms, updated maps, revised standard cross-sections
	Glossary	Added new and updated terms, removed outdated terminology

Policy Plan Amendment

Environment Element Changes



- Streamlined to reduce redundancies and outdated information.
- Updated policies to align with CECAP, Resilient Fairfax, and the Operational Energy Strategy (OES).
 - LEED Certified to LEED Silver for residential development in activity centers,
 - Mitigate against urban heat island effect, and
 - Account for potential flood risks and projected climate change impacts to ensure resiliency of the built environment.
- Formalized policies:
 - R-C District 50% undisturbed open space,
 - Bird-friendly design, and
 - Natural landscaping.
- Development of countywide stormwater management guidance.



Policy Plan Amendment

Parks & Recreation Element Changes

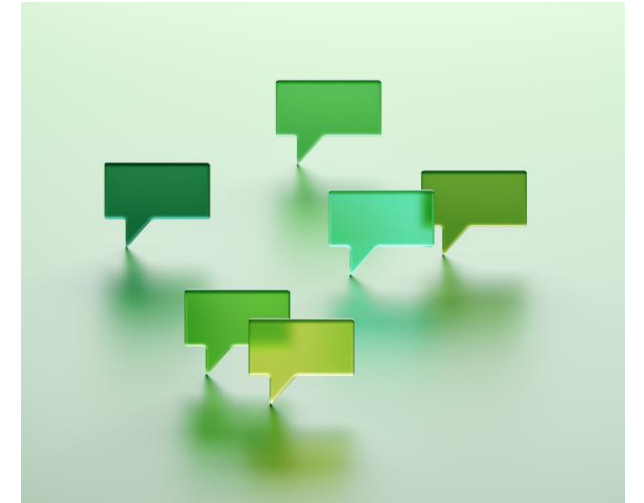


- Changes include updates to address equity and incorporation of the Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Access (PROSA) Strategy into the element:
 - Improve 10-minute walk access to FCPA parks.
 - Enhance access to complete park experiences.
 - Enrich habitat connectivity between environmental corridors.
 - Analyze and prioritize recreation needs and projects with an equity lens.
- Policy text amendments recognize equitable access to parks and recreation.
- New Objective 7 on the PROSA Strategy framework.

Policy Plan Amendment

Next Steps

- Planning Commission Public Hearing
 - October 15, 2025
- Board of Supervisors Public Hearing
 - November 18, 2025



Policy Plan Amendment

Resources and Contact Information



- To review the Staff Report, please visit: [Staff Report for Plan Amendment 2022-CW-2CP \(Policy Plan Amendment\) - Fairfax County, VA](#)
- To review the current Policy Plan, please visit: [Policy Plan \(encodeplus.com\)](#)
- To learn more about the project and review past materials, please visit: [Plan Amendment 2022-CW-2CP | Planning Development \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)

Questions and Discussion

