

Livable Fairfax

Preparing the City's New Comprehensive Plan

November 9, 2015 Planning Commission Meeting
Comprehensive Plan Work Session

What is a Comprehensive Plan

- Document describing a community's vision for how it wants to physically grow and develop in the near future (10 to 20 years)
- Provides guidance on land use, transportation, housing, economic development, environment, public facilities, parks, arts, and historic preservation
- Policy document for decision-making which informs zoning and budget decisions, i.e., the capital improvement program (CIP outlines five-year plan for physical improvements in the City – facilities, infrastructure, etc.)

Code of Virginia – Sec. 15.2-2223

- Standard City Planning Enabling Act developed by Dept of Commerce in 1928 adopted by State in 1934
- Comprehensive plan became mandatory for all Virginia localities in 1980
- Local planning commission tasked with preparing and recommending comprehensive plan to governing body (City Council) which is responsible for adopting it
- Plan intended to be general in nature and identify “approximate” locations & characters of major features
- Includes long-range recommendations for general development and a map of the area

Code of Virginia – Sec. 15.2-2223

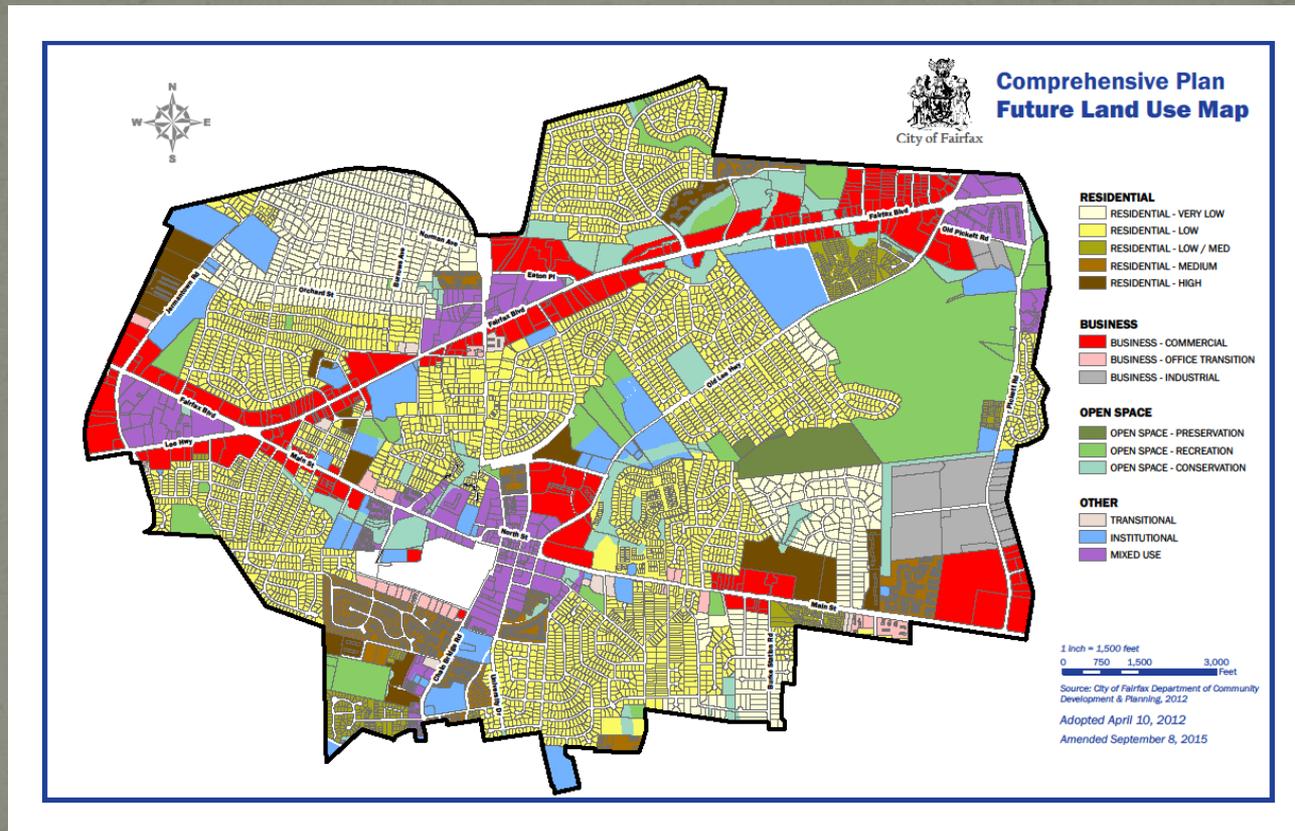
- Transportation Plan (required)
 - Designated system of infrastructure needs and recommendations supportive of planned development
 - Map showing improvements, including cost estimates
- Affordable Housing (required)
 - Designate areas for affordable housing and measures for construction, rehabilitation & maintenance
- Urban Development Areas (optional)
 - Designate areas for higher density development; incorporate principles of traditional neighborhood design

Code of Virginia – Sec. 15.2-2224

- Surveys and studies to be made in preparation of Plan:
 - Use of land, preservation of forests, characterizations and conditions of existing development, trends of growth or changes, natural resources, historic areas, ground & surface water, geologic factors, population factors, employment, environmental and economic factors, existing public facilities, drainage, flood control, transmission of electricity, road improvements and costs, transportation facilities & improvements, and the need for affordable housing
 - Probable future economic and population growth

Code of Virginia – Sec. 15.2-2224

- Methods of implementation ...



Code of Virginia – Sec. 15.2-2230

- At least once every five years the comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it's advisable to amend the plan
 - 2008-2011 - Planning Commission reviewed 2004 Comprehensive Plan
 - 2011 - Planning Commission recommended major update in two-step process
 - First step – Amend existing Comprehensive Plan
 - Second step – Draft new Comprehensive Plan
 - 2012 - City Council adopted minor revision to 2004 Plan
 - First step of two-step process
 - Updated population and housing data
 - Incorporated Fairfax Boulevard Master Plan (Appendix D)

Comprehensive Plan Amendments

- 2013
 - Text Amendment
 - Affordable housing implementation measures
 - Map Amendments
 - Avery Park from very low density to low density residential
 - Layton Hall apartments to extend northern boundary of Old Town Fairfax transition overlay district
- 2015
 - Text Amendment
 - Designated mixed use areas as “UDA-like”
 - Map Amendment
 - Mantua Professional Center from commercial to mixed use

Conclusions of Code of Virginia

- Certain requirements, but content and process left largely to individual locality
- A comprehensive plan carries with it important legal standing, so scholars and history have demonstrated need for a clear plan that reflects community values
- Public facilities are required to be substantially in compliance with the comprehensive plan through what is known as 2232 review (“Legal status of plan”)
- State code contains review requirements

Planning Commission Bylaws

Article II - Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Planning Commission are as follows:

- It shall prepare a Comprehensive Plan;
- It shall review the Comprehensive Plan at least once every five (5) years to determine whether it should be revised or amended and shall make recommendations regarding such revisions and/or amendments.

Assistance and recommendations on specific features of the Comprehensive Plan may be requested from members of the City staff, but ultimate responsibility for preparing the Comprehensive Plan and any revisions or amendments thereto, shall remain with the Planning Commission;

What a Plan Should Provide*

1. A plan should describe a community. It should identify the community's character.
2. A plan should clearly identify how a community will get from today to tomorrow.
3. A plan should show how the new will fit in with the old.
4. A plan should clearly identify community problems and propose solutions.
5. A plan should identify strategies for maintaining community attributes and strengths.
6. A plan should state how things will work and where they will be physically located.
7. A plan should provide some guidance as to the timing of development and redevelopment.
8. A plan should contain a specific change strategy.
9. A plan should be developed with strong public input.
10. A plan should be consequential and capable of making a community difference.

* *Dr. Michael Chandler, former professor at Virginia Tech*

Comprehensive Plan Mechanics

Briefing Paper (July 2011) – Best Practices

- Communication
 - Outreach
 - Provide the highest likelihood of participation with the use of “high tech” (social media) and “low tech” (public mtgs) tools
 - Direct public participation
 - High tech (web-based questionnaires)
 - Low tech (staff hours in the community; walkabouts)
- Visualization
 - Digitally Enhanced Photography
 - 3-D and Artist’s Renderings
 - Interactive Maps and GIS Mapping

Comprehensive Plan Mechanics

Briefing Paper (July 2011) – Best Practices

- Important to have a clear plan that reflects community values through direct public participation
- The process validates the plan and communication is central to the process
- Upfront involvement creates efficiencies
- Best practices for areas of focus and matters related to planning examined in other briefing papers or through data collection and analysis

Comprehensive Plan Process 2015-2017

- Generally follow process initiated in 2011
- CD&P staff and Planning Commission to lead (as a whole and/or with subcommittees) along with City staff, committees/boards and stakeholder participation
 - Standing work session item throughout planning process
- CD&P staff responsibilities:
 - Eric Forman – data collection/analysis, drafting the plan, public engagement
 - Stephanie Kupka – sustainability/environmental research, public engagement, drafting the plan
 - Kelly O'Brien – public engagement, research, graphics, drafting the plan
 - Cindy Petkac – project management, public engagement, research, drafting the plan

Comprehensive Plan Process 2015-2017

- Start with community survey to gauge areas of interest
 - Provides an opportunity for the community to identify issues and be part of the process from the beginning (proactive) as opposed to a top-down approach (reactive)
 - Raises awareness of planning process
 - Recognizes matters and issues of importance to be evaluated in greater detail
 - Ensures a more complete discussion

Comprehensive Plan Process 2015-2017

• Collect and Analyze Data

- Population and housing
- Existing land use
- Current zoning
- Future land use
- Housing descriptions
- Types of uses by building sq. ft.
- Existing building heights
- Tenant mix
- Overall existing FAR
- Permitting activity
- Assessed value trends
- Sales
- Tax revenues
- Vacant lots
- Street infrastructure
- Traffic counts
- Access points & circulation patterns
- Parking (public, on-street, private)
- Average block length and size
- Public properties
- Utilities
- Non-public open space
- Topography
- Environmentally-sensitive areas
- Tree canopy coverage
- Stormwater
- Utility easements
- Viewsheds

Comprehensive Plan Process 2015-2017

- Community Input (Winter 2016)
 - Develop and distribute statistically-valid survey
 - Communicate and educate the community (via City website, Cityscene, email, etc.)
 - Formulate the vision, goals and objectives
- Plan Development (Spring 2016-Winter 2017)
 - Determine content areas and format approach
 - Collect and analyze data
 - Share analysis and develop alternatives
 - Solicit feedback and develop plan recommendations
- Draft Plan (Spring-Summer 2017)
 - Solicit comments on draft plan and revise accordingly
- Final Plan (Summer-Fall 2017)
 - Hold public hearing and recommend revised final plan

Discussion

Discussion Items

- Support of general process and timeline
- Planning Commission's level of involvement
- Ready to proceed? Next steps ...
 - Joint work session with City Council on general process and timeline
 - Develop survey and discuss at future work session
 - Discuss issues anticipate covering at future work session