

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY

Background

The Code of Virginia requires all governing bodies in the Commonwealth to have an adopted Comprehensive Plan, and to review the plan at least once every five years. Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan was established by resolution of the County Board on August 27, 1960. This resolution called for the preparation of Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan, which originally included five elements: the General Land Use Plan, the Water Distribution System Master Plan, the Sanitary Sewer System Master Plan, the Storm Sewer Plan and the Major Thoroughfare Plan. In later years, additional elements were added to the Comprehensive Plan and some were replaced by new plans.

The Comprehensive Plan, in conjunction with the annual budget, and the Management Plan adopted by the County Board, provides guidance during the year for County efforts.

Goals and Objectives

The Comprehensive Plan was established in order that Arlington County may remain a safe, healthy, convenient and prosperous community and an attractive place in which to live, work and play, with stable or expanding values and potentialities for growth and continued economic health. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to guide the coordinated and harmonious development of Arlington County through the provision of high standards of public services and facilities based on the following general principles:

- Retention of the predominantly residential character of the County, and limitation of intense development to limited and defined areas;
- Promotion of sound business, commercial and light industrial activities in designated areas appropriately related to residential neighborhoods;
- Development of governmental facilities which will promote efficiency of operation and optimum public safety and service, including the areas of health, welfare, culture and recreation;
- Provision of an adequate supply of water effectively distributed;
- Maintenance of sewage disposal standards acceptable to the immediate County area and its neighbors in the entire Washington Metropolitan Area and consistent with the program of pollution abatement of the Potomac River;
- Provision of an adequate storm water drainage system; and
- Provision of an adequate system of traffic routes which is designed to form an integral part of the highway and transportation system of the County and region, assuring a safe, convenient flow of traffic, thereby facilitating economic and social interchange in the County.

In addition, the County Board has endorsed a land use policy which has evolved from an extensive citizen participation process and is designed to ensure that Arlington is a balanced community which provides residential, recreational, educational, health, shopping and employment opportunities with good transportation supported by a strong tax base and the effective use of public funds. An overarching theme of many of Arlington's initiatives, from land use to transportation to stormwater management, is that of sustainability and Smart Growth. In support of Arlington's overall policy goals, the following adopted land use goals and objectives have been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan:

- Concentrate high density residential, commercial and office development within designated Metro Station Areas in the Rosslyn-Ballston and Jefferson Davis Metrorail transit corridors. This policy encourages the use of public transit and reduces the use of motor vehicles.
- Promote mixed-use development in Metro Station Areas to provide a balance of residential, shopping and employment opportunities. The intent of this policy is to achieve continuous use and activity in these areas.
- Increase the supply of housing by encouraging construction of a variety of housing types and prices at a range of heights and densities in and near Metro Station Areas. The Plan allows a significant number of townhouses, mid-rise and high-rise dwelling units within designated Metro Station Areas.
- Preserve and enhance existing single-family and apartment neighborhoods. Within Metro Station Areas, land use densities are concentrated near the Metro Station, tapering down to surrounding residential areas to limit the impacts of high-density development. Throughout the County, the Neighborhood Conservation Program, the Historic Preservation Program and other community improvement programs help preserve and enhance older residential areas and help provide housing at a range of price levels and densities.
- Preserve and enhance neighborhood retail areas. The County encourages the preservation and revitalization of neighborhood retail areas that serve everyday shopping and service needs and are consistent with adopted County plans. The Commercial Revitalization Program concentrates public capital improvements and County services in these areas to stimulate private reinvestment.

Other goals and objectives have been incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan through the years, including the provision of an adequate supply of beneficial open space which is safe, accessible and enjoyable, as outlined in the Public Spaces Master Plan, and targets for affordable housing, as set forth in the General Land Use Plan.

Elements of the Comprehensive Plan

Arlington County's Comprehensive Plan is currently comprised of the following nine elements:

- General Land Use Plan
- Master Transportation Plan
- Storm Water Master Plan
- Water Distribution System Master Plan
- Sanitary Sewer System Master Plan
- Recycling Program Implementation Plan and Map
- Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and Plan
- Public Spaces Master Plan
- Historic Preservation Master Plan

A description of each element follows.

General Land Use Plan

The General Land Use Plan is the primary guide for the future development of the County. The Plan establishes the overall character, extent and location of various land uses and serves as the guide to communicate the policy of the County Board to citizens, businesses, developers and others

involved in the development of the County. In addition, the General Land Use Plan serves as a guide for the County Board in its decisions concerning future development.

The County first adopted a General Land Use Plan in 1961. Since then, the Plan has been updated and periodically amended to more clearly reflect the intended use for a particular area. The Plan is amended either as part of a long-term planning process for a designated area or as the result of an individual request for a specific change.

Master Transportation Plan

Arlington's original transportation plan was the Major Thoroughfare and Collector Streets Plan. Since its adoption in 1941, the Plan has been updated and expanded to address multiple travel modes.

The Master Transportation Plan establishes the principles to guide the implementation of transportation facilities to address future transportation needs and challenges in Arlington County. The Master Transportation Plan provides:

- the overall rationale for developing transportation facilities (transit networks, roads, walkways and/or bikeways) to meet future travel needs;
- a basis for establishing County transportation-related program priorities;
- a framework for offering advice to other agencies responsible for transportation in this area; and
- an overall direction to guide transportation projects in Arlington County.

In 1989, the County Board adopted the Paratransit Plan as a new element of the Master Transportation Plan. The Paratransit Plan includes policies and recommendations related to public transportation systems operating over the street system that are intended primarily to meet group passenger travel needs, are available to the general public and use vehicles smaller than a mid-size bus (i.e. carpools, vanpools, shared-taxi systems, vans and minibuses).

In April 1994, the County Board approved the Arlington Bicycle Transportation Plan. This Plan replaced the Hiking, Biking and Jogging Trails section of the Master Transportation Plan. The Arlington Bicycle Transportation Plan defines the transportation policy principles regarding bicycle facilities. The goal of this element of the Master Transportation Plan is to improve the County's bicycling environment through the development of specific bikeway facilities throughout the County.

On January 11, 1997, the County Board adopted the Arlington County Pedestrian Transportation Plan, which replaced the walkways element of the 1986 Master Transportation Plan – Part I. This document represented a comprehensive effort to address all conditions affecting pedestrians and strove to fully integrate the consideration of pedestrians into the planning, design, construction and operation of all transportation systems and land developments.

Storm Water Master Plan

The County Board originally adopted the Storm Sewer Plan in 1957. In 1976, the Corps of Engineers prepared the Four Mile Run Watershed Runoff Control Program Hydrology Report, which

included a computer model of the watershed. The purpose of this study was to ensure that the capacity of the Four Mile Run Flood Control Channel would not be exceeded for 100 years.

In September 1996, the County Board adopted the Storm Water Master Plan to replace the 1957 Storm Sewer Plan. The Storm Water Master Plan prioritizes individual watersheds for detailed hydrologic, hydraulic and water quality analyses and addresses new state and federal environmental laws and regulations, floodplain management issues, concerns regarding stream valley conditions, new technology, design methods and engineering practices.

Water Distribution System Master Plan

The Water Distribution System Master Plan, adopted by the County Board in September 1992, is the policy document that guides the operation, maintenance and expansion of the County water system. The plan evaluates the existing water distribution system facilities and operation practices and determines the policy and facility improvements that will be necessary to meet and maintain the desired quality of service.

Sanitary Sewer System Master Plan

The Arlington County sanitary sewer system collects and treats wastewater produced in Arlington County and some adjoining portions of Fairfax County, the City of Alexandria and the City of Falls Church. The Sanitary Sewer System Master Plan, adopted by the County Board in December 2002, evaluates the current sanitary sewer system facilities, practices and programs and determines the policies and facility improvements needed to provide and maintain adequate service now and in the future.

Recycling Program Implementation Plan and Map

The Recycling Program Implementation Plan was prepared in compliance with a requirement in the Code of Virginia to include the location of existing recycling centers in the Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a guide for the development of effective recycling programs in Arlington. The Plan includes major recommendations related to the implementation of multi-material curbside collection of source separated recyclables from single-family dwellings; the implementation of a multi-material source separation recycling in the multi-family and commercial waste segments; planning of a materials recovery facility to serve the County; and, the implementation of a public education/promotion program which stresses source reduction and recycling. The plan also includes a map that shows the location of existing recycling centers.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and Plan

Arlington County adopted this new Chesapeake Bay element of the Comprehensive Plan in 2001, as required under the provisions of 9 VAC 10-20-220(A)(2). The purpose of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Plan is to satisfy this requirement of the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Division (CBLAD). The Plan addresses the following issues: Arlington County's water resources; existing and potential sources of pollution; existing County programs that address water quality management; policies and programs that relate to the County's implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance; and implementation measures to protect and improve the County's streams and riparian buffers adjacent to streams.

The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Plan was closely coordinated with the County's adopted Watershed Management Plan. Both plans recommend a consistent phased implementation plan. This implementation plan reflects the results of a comprehensive inventory of County streams conducted during the summer of 1999, as well as recommendations of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Task Force, which presented a report for the County Board in July 2000.

Public Spaces Master Plan

The Public Spaces Master Plan adopted in December of 2005 replaced the Open Space Master Plan adopted in 1994, and provides policy guidance for the future of Arlington's open space. The plan is designed to establish the overall character, extent and location of open space. The plan includes priorities, objectives and recommended actions designed to guide policy-making, public investments and County management of public spaces during the next two decades. In addition, the plan inventories existing open space and facilities and benchmarks certain attributes of the County's public space system with similar jurisdictions from across the country. Two additional elements are combined under the umbrella of the Public Spaces Master Plan: the Urban Forest Master Plan and the Public Art Master Plan.

Arlington's Urban Forest Master Plan was initiated to facilitate the County's ongoing commitment to enhance and preserve Arlington's tree canopy. The Master Plan has the following components: a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) street tree inventory, a tree canopy satellite analysis, long-range goals and recommendations, along with a final Urban Forest Master Plan report which includes GIS-based planting plans. The Master Plan will ultimately contribute to the attractiveness and sustainability of Arlington through enhancements to the tree canopy.

The Public Art Master Plan outlines a vision for how public art can be a tool - alongside elevated standards for design, architecture, landscape architecture and a focus on the quality of public spaces and the built environment in Arlington - for civic placemaking. The creation of Arlington's first Public Art Master Plan was stipulated by the Public Art Policy adopted by the County Board in September 2000 to help refine the policy's direction that public art should be sited in "prominent locations." The Public Art Master Plan puts forward a definition of "prominent" based upon whether a site represents a certain confluence of civic, residential and commercial activities, as well as an opportunity for public art as provided by a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) or other major capital project within which the public art would be an integrated component. The Master Plan provides guidance for project prioritization and implementation processes for public art associated with County-funded projects, site plan/special exception projects and community-initiated projects. The Master Plan's development included a survey of other planning processes and initiatives, including Sector Plans, Neighborhood Conservation Plans and studies to ensure that its recommendations would be in support of these other policy tools.

Historic Preservation Master Plan

The purpose of the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan is to establish priorities, goals and objectives for Arlington County's historic preservation activities. It is the first in a two-step process to establish a historic preservation element in the County's Comprehensive Plan:

- **Step 1: Master Plan.** This is a framework of policies to provide a proactive approach to historic preservation in Arlington. It is the product of collaborative work that began in 2002 and reflects the priorities of preservation advocates, the Historical Affairs and Landmark

Review Board (HALRB), the County's Historic Preservation Program and various County staff, residents and others. This document identifies the County's position with regards to historic preservation.

- Step 2: Implementation Recommendations. The implementation document identifies how the County will accomplish the vision, goals and objectives set forth in this Master Plan. Its direction is based on the Master Plan, and it contains programmatic recommendations for historic preservation. The creation of this piece required the completion of the Master Plan and the participation of County staff and others whose day-to-day work will be impacted by its implementation.

The Master Plan makes broad policy-level recommendations concerning history and historic preservation activities for the Historic Preservation Program and its partners in Arlington County. In order for these policies to translate clearly into day-to-day actions by County officials, staff and others, the policies therein are expanded into suggested approaches in the implementation document. That document's development involved consultation with many County agencies/divisions and officials, as well as active County history and preservation organizations.