



## A Smart Growth Platform for Fairfax Fall 2015

Fairfax remains one of the nation's wealthiest jurisdictions, and has maintained a high level of community services, including great schools, while becoming a socio-economically diverse community. But the county is also facing important challenges including:

1. Traffic congestion from within and outside the county, generated by patterns of development that offer many people no choice but to drive.
2. Significant office vacancies due to federal government downsizing, telecommuting, and the shift away from office parks in favor of urban, transit-accessible locations.
3. Aging commercial corridors and older housing stock.
4. Competition in attracting the upper middle class -- from new homes and new schools in outer jurisdictions to the vibrant, walkable and transit-rich neighborhoods of Arlington, Alexandria, and DC.
5. Lack of housing that is affordable to many levels of the workforce.
6. Loss of remaining forested parcels, and the heavy stormwater runoff from paved-over areas that erode and degrade local streams.

The county has sought to tackle some of these issues including investing in the Silver Line and other expanded transit service, planning for the revitalization of aging commercial corridors and centers (Tysons, Baileys Crossroads, Annandale, Seven Corners, Route 1, Dunn Loring/Merrifield, and McLean), investing in fixing stormwater runoff problems and expanding parks, and some investment in housing but not nearly enough.

### **Why should Fairfax continue on a smart growth course?**

1. The competitive future of Fairfax County hinges on its leadership in sustainable growth -- in land use, urban design, transportation, housing, energy, and the environment.
2. The most competitive communities will be those that are energy efficient, location efficient, diverse and inclusive, vibrant, green, and creative.
3. Attracting and retaining the best and brightest young people, immigrants, seniors, and families, and the most creative, cutting edge companies, demands placemaking and revitalizing older neighborhoods, and investment in transit, in a diverse housing stock, and in protection and restoration of forests, parks and outdoor recreational assets.
4. Through efficient use of infrastructure, competitive placemaking, and continued attraction of a range of employers, Fairfax County will generate and diversify the tax base it needs to continue its record of significant investment in strong K-12 education and other public services.

### **Smart Growth in Fairfax**

1. Is the best way to handle growth in a way that reduces the amount of driving and traffic.
2. Is key for attracting the next generation workforce and companies to support the tax base.
3. Helps the environment by saving natural areas, and reducing stormwater and air pollution.
4. Offers more transportation and housing choices.



5. Contributes to healthy communities and habits by creating walking and bicycling-friendly neighborhoods

**Here are key policies and approaches to support:**

1. Keep investing in making Fairfax a great place to live, including parks and recreation, schools, walking and bicycling, and other public services.
2. Focus on creating walkable, biking-friendly, transit-oriented centers and communities in order to attract and retain the next generation workforce and companies. Get the details right, including:
  - a. Adding new high-capacity transit in dedicated lanes -- bus rapid transit, light-rail, and Metrorail.
  - b. Converting acres of parking lots and strip development into mixed-use, walkable centers.
  - c. Creating a network of local streets that meet the needs of people walking and people biking within these redevelopment areas.
  - d. Providing green parks, managing stormwater, restoring local streams, and creating great public gathering places.
  - e. Ensuring a mix of housing for people of all income levels.
3. Offer more transportation options for suburban neighborhoods.
  - a. Provide safe routes to schools, libraries, parks, and work; with protected bike lanes, improved sidewalks, calmed streets, and safer crossings.
  - b. Link homes, libraries, schools and stores within walking distance wherever possible.
4. Expand housing options.
  - a. Increase funding for the housing trust fund in order to invest in preservation of existing affordable housing and leverage private investment as well, to address the needs of families making 60% or less of the area median income.
  - b. Redevelop aging commercial corridors to increase the total supply of housing and the number of units allocated to those families making less than 80% of the area median income, and increase incentives for including a higher percentage of affordable units within new development.
5. Invest in more transit, walking and bicycling. The seemingly never-ending widening of roads harms adjacent neighborhoods and leads to yet more driving and traffic. By creating mixed-use, transit-accessible development and making the transit walking and bicycling investments to match, we'll better manage growth and traffic.

**For the Future:**

With growth continuing to come to our successful region, it's best to focus it where we can provide high-capacity transit in a walkable environment, minimizing driving. If we care about the environment, smart growth means we can reduce driving and the resulting air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, save parks and forests, and fix old stormwater problems to restore our streams.