Joint Center for Housing Studies

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Happy to Grow:

Development and Planning in Fairfax County, Virginia

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Introduction

When it comes to battling sprawl, the two most populous counties outside Washington, D. C. are a study in contrasts. In Montgomery County, Maryland, an engaged and savvy citizenry supported planning strategies and government policies that largely succeeded in shaping the pattern of urban development. In neighboring Fairfax County, Virginia, politically active citizens concerned about the effects of growth have elected majorities on the Board of Supervisors, the county's major governing body, and supported major growth management programs.

In Fairfax County, however, forces favoring development time and again have prevailed against those who would channel or limit urban development. Whether in the halls of county government or the state courts, the contrast between the two neighboring counties is striking. In Montgomery County, the growth management planners usually got their way, but in Fairfax County, more often than not it was the property owners and real estate developers who triumphed.

Following a similar study of Montgomery County[1], this paper investigates the circumstances that encouraged largely untrammeled physical development in Fairfax County, Virginia. It argues that many factors promoted growth in Fairfax County. The history of the county—including its land use patterns and early rail links to the Capital—set the stage for later development. Economic forces—ranging from the growth of federal employment to the local land market; highway transportation policies and projects, and land use and planning policies also encouraged growth. Finally, political circumstances, namely the existence and tradition of strong support for development within the county, has played a key role in the transformation of Fairfax County from an agricultural to an urban place.

The paper begins with an overview of Fairfax County and proceeds in rough chronological order to examine the evolution of land use and the politics thereof. It makes special note of important stimuli to development, such as the construction of the Capital Beltway and Dulles Airport, and critical battles over land use policy, such as the ambitious program, Planning and Land Use System. The history of Franklin Farm, a dairy farm of several hundred acres that became a showcase of housing subdivisions, shopping, and recreational areas, shows

[1] Lucille Harrigan and Alexander von Hoffman, "Forty Years of Fighting Sprawl: Montgomery County, Maryland, and Growth Control Planning in the Metropolitan Region of Washington, D. C." Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, 2002.

how diverse circumstances converged to promote development. The final sections examine current economic conditions, recent redevelopment efforts, and the prospects for regional planning.

Fairfax County, Virginia - An Overview

Fairfax County, Virginia is best known for the spectacular growth it has undergone in the last half century. Extending across 395 square miles, Fairfax County is located immediately south and west of the District of Columbia, separated from the city by the Potomac River and in the south, by the City of Alexandria and the 26 square-mile Arlington County. Once it encompassed great swaths of farmland many of which were devoted to dairy and some of which had been the sites of Civil War battles. Its historic roads and towns such as Fairfax, Chantilly, Herndon and Vienna had changed little since their founding in the colonial era. But from the middle of the twentieth century, people and businesses poured in, new homes and offices were built, and the old roads were expanded and became congested corridors. Between 1950 and today the county's population multiplied by a factor of 10 from just under 100,000 to more than a million. [2] Today it is best known for Dulles Airport, the nationally-famous "new town" of Reston, Virginia, and the prototypical Edge City—the massive office and commercial development at Tyson's Corner.

Today Fairfax is one of the wealthiest counties in the United States. The median household income in the county is close to $100,000. Nonetheless, the Fairfax population is relatively diverse. Almost 70 percent of the residents are Caucasian, but reflecting the recent immigration into the Washington metropolitan area, about 13 percent are Asian in origin. About 9 percent are African-American.

With one of the highest household incomes in the nation, Fairfax County housing is dominated by quality single-family developments, often well screened from major roadways and providing open space and amenities. Dense development with townhouses characterizes the eastern sections of the county adjoining Alexandria and Arlington County, with the basins of the Occoquan and Potomac Rivers on the east and southwest protected by larger lot zoning. The major "problem" area in the county is located along the eastern Route 1 corridor, where

[2] Fairfax County, VA, Economic and Demographic Information, available at <www.fairfaxcounty.gov>, based on U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and 2001 Decennial Supplementary Survey.

relatively old retail and residential areas are decaying; yet in this high-growth environment they are being replaced by new higher quality subdivisions.

Though it is home to six Fortune 500 companies, about 97 percent of the companies in Fairfax County are small businesses with fewer than 100 employees and less than $1 million in revenue. These firms, occupying close to 100 million square feet of office space, are scattered in office parks and employment centers throughout the county, with the massive Tyson's Corner retail/office development and the Dulles Corridor and Reston Town Center being major employment centers. Fairfax County is home to the campuses of three major universities (George Mason, University of Virginia and Virginia Tech) and also has the largest community college in Virginia. According to Fairfax County Public Schools, 92 percent of high school graduates attend some form of post-secondary education.[3]

By any possible measure, Fairfax is an economic success story. Almost 53 percent of residents work in Fairfax County, and the total nonagricultural employment for 2002 was 524,000. As part of the Washington metropolitan region, its economy is sheltered from business cycle downturns by a strong reliance on the federal government. The government's federal procurement is a dominant force in the economy, amounting to $7.1 billion in 2001 according to the U.S. Census Bureau.[4] Private sector firms nonetheless employ a far greater share of residents than the twenty percent that work for the federal Government and the eleven percent who labor for state and local government. Fairfax County rivals Silicon Valley in high technology employment, and at present, job growth has been so strong that there is a net import of workers.[5] County revenues are close to the $3 billion level.

Of the 363,333 households in the county, 182,655 reside in single-family units, which have a median market value of over $288,000. The county contains 88,799 townhouse units, which have a median market value of $165,475. It also has 91,879 multifamily units with a median market value of $94,555.[6] Over 69 percent of the households live in owner occupied housing units, with 28 percent occupying rental units. Low vacancy rates combined with a high demand for housing in the county are driving up prices of both ownership and rental housing,

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[3] Fairfax County, Economic and Demographic Information.
[4] Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, <www.FairfaxCountyEDA.org>.
[5] Gerald Gordon, President of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, interview with Lucille Harrigan, Vienna, VA, 6 November 2002.
[6] Fairfax County Regional Housing Authority, "Staff Report on the Need for Affordable Rental and Ownership Housing," January 2003.

and there is a serious deficit in housing available for lower income families, primarily those at or below 50 percent of the area median income ($40,500).[7]

Nodes of residential and commercial density are scattered throughout Fairfax County, with less dense development in the areas bordering the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. There are 21,665 acres of parkland and water quality concerns have limited development along the Occoquan and Potomac shorelines, but there is no program to preserve agriculture by very large lot zoning as there is in neighboring Montgomery County. While Fairfax is served by the regional Metro subway system and has a network of parkways and roads, Fairfax rush hour commuters are often subject to maddening delays. There is a severe shortage of funding for needed road and transit improvements, although Fairfax voters recently defeated a tax measure that would have brought some relief.

Although from time to time there have been reports of improper activities by elected officials, Fairfax enjoys the reputation for effective and open government. In February 2002, *Governing* magazine called Fairfax "one of the best-managed jurisdictions in America." [8] Like its Maryland neighbor and competitor, Montgomery County, Fairfax has earned a triple A bond rating from all three rating agencies for its sound financial management and strict debt service levels.

The structure of government in Fairfax County provides most authority to the Board of Supervisors. Nine members of the Board are elected by District, with tenth member elected at-large as Chair. [9] The Board appoints the County Executive, who is responsible for day-to day administration of the government, and oversees the planning agencies. In contrast to Montgomery County government where an elected Council and elected Executive divide power, the Board of Supervisors is clearly in charge in Fairfax.[10]

Finally, Fairfax County is resolutely in favor of development. The pro-growth private sector in Fairfax, according to a number of informants, has more unity of purpose on development issues than in Montgomery County. Montgomery County has no developer whose power can compare, for example, with John T. ("Til") Hazel whose bold vision and forceful

[7] Fairfax County Regional Housing Authority, "Staff Report," 4.
[8] *Governing Magazine*, Special Edition, "Grading the Counties," February 2002.
[9] This contrasts with Montgomery County, which has a rotating Council presidency.
[10] James Todd, CEO and James Vecchiarelli, CFO of the Peterson Companies, telephone interview by Lucille Harrigan, 17 July 2003. Todd and Vecchiarelli contrasted Fairfax with Montgomery County where opponents of a project may lobby or sue the Executive, Council and Planning Board.

lobbying created the prototype of “Edge City” in Tyson's Corner.[11] Private sector alliances with members of the Board of Supervisors have created a climate that is generally regarded as favorable to business. Though Fairfax County has offered very little in the way of monetary incentives for the location of new businesses, the regulatory climate is regarded as favorable and opposition by civic groups is less likely to cause costly delays during the development process than it does in Montgomery County.[12] Fairfax County residents and Fairfax County business interests have found a common ground in promoting high quality residential, office, and commercial development.

Early History

In 1608 Captain John Smith first arrived in what is now Fairfax County, and the county itself was created in 1742 and named in honor of Thomas, Sixth Lord of Fairfax, a friend and patron of George Washington. At that time the jurisdiction included what are now Arlington and Loudoun Counties and the City of Alexandria.

For most of the colonial era, tobacco was the cash crop and the major export of Virginia, including Fairfax County. Tobacco was the common medium of exchange, being used to pay salaries and taxes. By 1742, much of the land in Fairfax County had been granted or patented, with most of the land grants in Fairfax less than 500 acres. Major commercial sites were tobacco warehouses on the Occoquan, at the little falls of the Potomac and most importantly at the mouth of Great Hunting Creek, known as Alexandria.[13]

By the mid 1700s, Fairfax County was home to about 4,000 persons, most of whom were involved in one way or another with tobacco. A third or more of the residents were African or American slaves, and many of the whites were indentured servants. A small number of well-

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[11] See Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1991.) During the famous “dotcom” boom from 1997 to 2001, a number of Fairfax's most powerful entrepreneurs, including future Virginia Governor Mark Warner, met to decide which of the new high technology companies would receive an infusion of capital. See Shannon Henry, *The Dinner Club: How the Masters of the Internet Universe Rode the Rise and Fall of the Greatest Boom in History* (New York: The Free Press, 2001).

[12] Fairfax County's Economic Development Authority has effectively marketed Fairfax County as a suitable site for new business. Gerald Gordon, President of the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, interview by Lucille Harrigan, Vienna, VA, 6 November 2002.

[13] Nan Netherton, Donald Sweig, Janice Artemel, Patricia Hickin and Patrick Reed, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History* (Fairfax, VA: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, 1993), 163.

established landowners owned the most slaves and served as the justices and vestrymen who ruled Fairfax.[14]

In the decades after the American Revolution, large tobacco plantations largely disappeared. Agricultural productivity decreased because of soil exhaustion, primarily from extensive tobacco cultivation, and diversified crops were usually not profitable enough to sustain the previously high standard of living. Furthermore, the abolition of primogeniture law made it difficult for the children of large landholders to maintain their genteel way of life on reduced holdings. [15]

No longer the domain of grandees, Fairfax County from the mid-nineteenth century began to revive as a more diversified farming district. In the 1840s northern farmers, many from New York State, migrated to the county and bought up abandoned farms. Bringing modern agricultural methods such as deep plowing and crop rotation, the new generation of farmers was able to work the land once again. By 1850 artisans, business people, and professionals had come to Fairfax, and the slave trade virtually dried up. The Civil War and attendant military activities in the county set it back, but after the war Union soldiers and freed blacks moved to the county and took up farming there. By the end of the century, Fairfax County farmers were growing corn, wheat, rye, oats, potatoes, and raising cattle, sheep and hogs.[16]

More and more, Fairfax County became a producer for the growing population of Washington, D.C. In the late nineteenth century, the county went into dairying, stock and poultry farming, flour milling, and fruit, vegetable, and flower growing to serve the urban market. In the early twentieth century, the number of railroad lines increased and trains and electric trolleys ran more frequently between points in Fairfax County and the District of Columbia. The additional rail service gave Fairfax farmers, particularly dairy farmers, ready and quick access to stores in the District. Fairfax County now specialized in dairy production, in which from the 1920s until as late as the 1950s it led all other Virginia counties.[17]

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[14] Netherton, et al, *Fairfax County*, 32.
[15] Netherton, et al, *Fairfax County*, 161
[16] Grace Dawson, *No Little Plans: Fairfax County's PLUS for Managing Growth* (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1977), 22.
[17] Donald M. Sweig, “A Brief History of Fairfax County,” Heritage Resources Information Series: Number 1, February 1995, 5-7; Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, “About Fairfax County,” <http://www.fccc.org/about/about.htm>.

The Beginnings of Suburbia

By the end of the nineteenth century, Fairfax County was still primarily agricultural, but also housed people who earned their livelihood in the District of Columbia. A number of towns and villages dotted the county, whose seat of Fairfax was located near the geographic center of the jurisdiction. By 1900 the population was only 18,580, a small fraction of the Washington Metropolitan area's 400,000 some residents.[18]

The towns of Fairfax County had developed a distinctly suburban character, thanks in part to the increasing rail connections to the District. An *Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County*, published in 1907 by the Fairfax Board of Supervisors, describes "six incorporated towns in the county—all reached by one or more railroads, and all in a thriving and prosperous condition." Falls Church with a population of 1100, had excellent and frequent economical rail and electric car connection (via the Washington and Falls Church Electric Railway) with the District "making it more economical to reside here than in Washington. "The residents of the town are mostly business men of Washington, city and government employees, who, being people of culture have not spared expense in beautifying and making comfortable and attractive, their homes." Rail lines connected the District to the county seat of Fairfax, as well as the towns of Herndon, Vienna and Clifton, which commuters also inhabited.[19] Thus, even in the early twentieth century, Fairfax County was growing increasingly as a suburban adjunct to the District of Columbia, and as would be the case at the end of the century, transportation improvements were accelerating the process.

In the following decades, Fairfax County's suburban settlements expanded and multiplied, raising questions about the future disposition of the county's land. During the decade of the 1930s, concurrent with the increase of the federal government programs and employees, the county's population rose sharply from 25,000 in 1930 to 41,000 in 1940. In 1938, in the midst of this population increase, the Board of Supervisors appointed an independent planning commission to promote the orderly development of land. As a result of the commission's efforts, Fairfax County adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1941. The zoning ordinance took a conventional approach: for example, it attempted to segregate industrial and residential uses from one another. Nonetheless a local landowner, L.W. Parker, felt such zoning

[18] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population, 1900.*
[19] Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, *Industrial and Historical Sketch of Fairfax County Virginia.* (Fairfax, VA: County Board of Supervisors, 1907), 6, 8.

unconstitutionally infringed on his property rights and challenged it in the courts. The ordinance was ultimately upheld and remained in effect in Fairfax until 1959.[20]

Despite Parker's objections, the zoning ordinance did little to slow either the growth or measures promoting growth in Fairfax County. Between 1940 and 1950, Fairfax County experienced the post-war construction boom and population grew more than 140 percent, reaching almost 100,000 residents. Fairfax in 1947 enacted its first ordinance governing subdivisions, which fostered the development of low-density, single-family communities. At the same time, a large number of septic tanks had begun to fail, and in 1951, the high cost of providing sewers to some 80,000 scattered residents led the Board of Supervisors to call for the county's first master plan. The government's administrative duties expanded along with the growing population, and after the residents approved in an election, Fairfax County adopted a County Executive form of government, which went into effect on January 1, 1952. The county government in 1953 rezoned a tract at Seven Corners in the eastern end of the county, allowing development of what became the first enclosed shopping mall in the Washington area. The following year the Seven Corners shopping center was attracting so much traffic that the Board of Supervisors petitioned the Virginia Department of Highways to widen the roads in the vicinity.

To impose some order on development in the growing county, the county's Planning Commission in 1952 hired a planning staff and placed it under the direction of F. Dodd McHugh, a consultant from New York City. Two years later McHugh presented a draft county master plan, which included a system of sewerage and proposed three-to-five-acre zoning for most of the undeveloped western two-thirds of the county. Both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, however, rejected McHugh's master plan. In vetoing the plan, the government officials responded to rural landowners who felt that it would devalue their land. The landowners succeeded in obtaining a new master plan. Thus, even the county government's mildest prescriptions for managing growth failed to make headway in the pro-growth politics of Fairfax County.

[20] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 15.

Pro-growth versus a Suburban Status Quo

By mid-century, two distinct political interests had emerged in Fairfax County. One was made up of rural landowners who wished to protect the potential profits to be made from selling their land and therefore was interested in promoting growth at all costs. They had the support of business owners and the workers in the building and real estate industries. The other political group consisted of newly arrived suburbanites who were committed to preserving a particular quality of life. "Ever growing in numbers," Dawson writes, "the suburban newcomers sought to maintain the low-density character of the county that had originally attracted them. They saw development not in light of the profit to be made from land sales, but as a threat to the suburban lifestyle they sought." In 1955, the two forces went head to head in an election that Dawson describes as a "watershed" that marked "a shift in political control of the county from rural to suburban interests.[21] This tension between rural landowners seeking a profit and suburban residents seeking to protect the quality of their neighborhoods has been a persistent theme in Fairfax politics, as it is in many urbanizing rural areas.

Although the suburbanites had triumphed in the election, the landowners had friends in court and were far from defeated. After a 6-month rezoning moratorium in 1959, Dodd McHugh submitted a modified land-use plan, changing some of the proposed 3-5 acre minimum lot zoning in the western part of the county to a 2-acre minimum lot. In what was to become a familiar pattern in Fairfax County, the landowners challenged this zoning in court and won the famous *Carper* case. The decision resulted in the up zoning of much of the county to a 1-acre minimum lot, which would allow development of much higher population density. As Dawson observed, "this opened the floodgates for construction."[22] The advocates of very low population density were foiled because unlike in neighboring Maryland, in Virginia the courts have generally protected property rights and frowned upon attempts to control or manage growth.

Spurs to Fast Growth

By the 1960s, the suburban areas of Arlington County and the City of Alexandria close to the District of Columbia were almost fully developed, and Fairfax and the neighboring Maryland counties of Prince George's and Montgomery were the most rapidly growing areas in the

[21] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 16.
[22] Ibid.

Washington region. Fueling this growth was the movement of businesses from the District of Columbia to locations in the inner suburbs and later near the newly completed Capital Beltway. In addition, the federal government also had begun to decentralize: the Department of Defense moved to the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia in 1943 starting a march of agencies to the suburbs. The U.S. Geological Service relocated to Fairfax County, building a new headquarters in Reston in 1971.

In addition to the growth of the federal government and related businesses, major events propelled rapid development of Fairfax County during the early 1960s. The construction of the new George Mason College of the University of Virginia, adjacent to the Town of Fairfax, and the creation of the planned town of Reston on 7,400 acres in the central part of the county contributed to the growth.

Among the projects that spurred the most development in Fairfax County was the Capital Beltway (I-495 and I-95), the 64-mile-long Interstate freeway that circles Washington, D.C. Planned during the 1950's as part of the Interstate Highway System, the first section of the Capital Beltway opened in 1961 and the entire highway was completed in 1964. Built initially with 38 interchanges (now 40) the circumferential highway became an important connecting link for localities within the metropolitan area as well as a by-pass for travelers up and down the East coast. The original sections of the roadway were built with four lanes, two in each direction, but most of the roadway has eight lanes, with projects for additional twelve-lane sections under way. Major Potomac River crossings are the Woodrow Wilson Bridge near the Capitol, which is now slated for replacement and expansion, and the American Legion Bridge which links Montgomery County with Dulles Airport and Tyson's Corner.

A number of Capital Beltway interchanges throughout the region would later become the sites for a startling amount of development. The most notable instances of growth along the Beltway are found at Tyson's Corner, one of the nation's largest retail/office developments, and at the Springfield interchange, where retail office and housing growth have made it necessary to undertake a major improvement project. Hence, the new road influenced the location of urban development in the region.

Similarly, the development of Dulles International Airport has had a profound impact on the development in Fairfax County. President Eisenhower in 1958 chose the 3,000 acre site for a new airport in Chantilly on the border of Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, an area then largely farmland. President John Kennedy dedicated the facility, which was named after the late Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, in 1962. The creators of the Dulles International Airport lavished much care on its design. The airport's architect, Eero Saarinen, who is best known for his celebrated design of the TWA terminal at Kennedy (Idlewild) airport in New York, considered the control tower at Dulles, "the best thing I have ever done."[23] Among the unique features of the airport are the nineteen "mobile lounges" used to transport passengers between the terminal building and the aircraft parked on a jet ramp a half mile away from the terminal. An additional thirty "plane mates" carry passengers directly to their planes, attaching directly to the aircraft.

Although originally considered a white elephant, Dulles International in recent decades became one of the fastest growing airports in the world, serving both as a regional hub and, along with Baltimore-Washington International Airport as the international gateway to Washington D.C. When fully built out, Dulles will handle 55 million passengers a year (150,000 a day) and will be one of the world's major airports.

Automobile access to the airport was part of the development project. The first 13.5 miles of what came to be known as the "Dulles Access Road" connected the airport to the Capital Beltway and Route 123 near Mclean, Virginia. Upon completion of I-66 through Arlington, Virginia, early in 1983, the Airport Access Highway was extended. Total travel time between downtown Washington and the airport is approximately 30 minutes. Additional access by rail or by dedicated bus lane is under discussion, but funding problems have delayed construction.

Since its original construction, Dulles International has served as an economic engine for the surrounding communities, and today provides over 15,000 direct jobs and billions of dollars in business revenue. In the airport's vicinity, new businesses and development projects have flowed to the Dulles Corridor, where more growth is expected in the future.[24]

<u>Land Use Planning in the 1960s</u>

Although the government of Fairfax County was slow to attempt a major overhaul of land-use planning, it did incorporate a series of improvements. Fourteen planning districts were

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[23] Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, "History of Washington Dulles International Airport," <http://www,metwashairports.com/Dulles/history.htm>.
[24] Ibid.

created and a series of watershed plans attempted to link land use to drainage and sewer facilities. The size of the planning staff grew. The 1959 county master plan was 7 pages long with one map and 2 residential zones. By 1969, the policies plan for development in the Upper Potomac area of the county outlined 283 policies in eight categories.[25]

In contrast to its Maryland neighbor, Montgomery County, Fairfax County did not find it feasible to implement its own version of the National Capital Planning Commission "wedges and corridors" corridors plan.[26] In 1963, Fairfax issued its own version of "wedges and corridors" under the title, *Western County Development Policy.*[27] But as many planners and activists have noted the "wedges and corridors" plan was ill suited to the topography of Fairfax. Its watersheds run perpendicular to the transportation "corridors" that were to radiate out from the District of Columbia center of the planning area. And though the Board of Supervisors gave lip service to the philosophy of the Year 2000 plan, there were no real attempts—other than the notable exception of the new town of Reston—to implement the development of the "satellite" cities that would provide shopping and employment within walking distance of many residents.[28] In contrast to Montgomery County, most stops on the Metro subway line were not zoned for intense mixed commercial and residential use.

In 1965 the Fairfax Planning Department published a comprehensive and detailed survey of land use in the county, providing a base line from which to chart the rapid growth of the following four decades.[29] The County was, at that time, already one of the fastest growing suburban areas in the United States. Many of the major roads were already in place [30] Development had occurred first in the areas bordering the District of Columbia. By the 1960s

[25] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 19; Fairfax County, Va., Division of Planning, Division of Planning, Department of Planning and Financial Management. *A PreliminaryComprehensive Plan - Upper Potomac Planning District.* December 1969.
[26] National Capital Planning Commission, National Capital Regional Planning Council, *A Policies Plan for the Year 2000*, Washington, D.C., 1961.
[27] Fairfax County, Virginia, Fairfax County Planning Department, *Western County Development Policy*, 1963.
[28] As developed by Robert E. Simon, Reston contained planned housing and commercial zones, as well as a resident planned community zone, the first of its kind.
[29] Fairfax County Planning Department, *Existing Land Use Survey*, January 1965.
[30] Although many of the major roadways were later widened or improved, the major arteries leading to the District of Columbia were already in place. The *Land Use Survey* list includes: The George Washington Memorial Parkway, Leesburg Pike (Route 7), Lee Highway (US29-211), Arlington Boulevard (Rte. 50), Little River Turnpike (Rte. 236), Shirley Highway (I-95), Kings Highway (Ret. 611), Jefferson Davis Highway (U.S. Rte. 1), and the Mt. Vernon Memorial Highway.

the suburban areas of Arlington and Alexandria close to the District were almost fully developed.[31]

As might be expected, the master plan, zoning ordinance, and other measures taken by the Fairfax government proved no obstacle to development pressures. During the 1960s Fairfax added nearly 200,000 residents, an increase of 83 percent, to reach a total of more than 454,000. In the same period, school enrollment expanded by 133 percent, and the county budget mushroomed by more than 300 percent. Meanwhile, the portion of developed land area increased from roughly one third of all county land in 1960 to almost one-half by 1970.[32]

The PLUS Program - Fairfax County Attempts to Manage Growth

The political history of Fairfax County demonstrates the ambivalence of its electorate with regard to land use issues. In general, the populace has supported economic development, and the independence of the supervisory districts has blocked the emergence of "slow-growth" majorities.[33] However, from time to time slow-growth forces have been able to elect a majority on the Board of Supervisors and attempted to manage growth through such measures as an adequate public facilities ordinance or the downzoning of environmentally sensitive areas.

One of the attempts at growth management, well documented by Grace Dawson in her book, *No Little Plans*, illustrates many of the persistent political forces in Fairfax County.[34] In 1971, Fairfax County elected a Board of Supervisors committed to growth management and soon thereafter launched an extensive 18-month study to develop a Planning and Land Use System, known under the acronym of "PLUS." The Board allocated $1.5 million in Revenue Sharing Funds to finance the study, which included an ambitious program to engage large numbers of Fairfax citizens in planning the future of their county.

This was an ideal time for such an effort, since the state of the economy had cooled the building boom and a full-scale recession began in mid-1973. Hardest hit was the housing industry, long a foe of growth control in Fairfax. Dawson notes that during 1973 in the

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[31] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 18.
[32] See Dawson, *op.cit.* and John Hysom, "An Evaluation of the Effects of the Planning and Zoning Criteria Used for Allocating Land for Residential Purposes in Fairfax County, Virginia," doctoral dissertation, The American University, 1973.
[33] The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Fred Seldin, Director of Planning for Fairfax County, interview by Lucille Harrigan, Fairfax, VA, 25 July 2002.
[34] Dawson, *No Little Plans.*

Washington, D.C. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), single-family housing construction dropped 15 percent below 1972 levels *without* any new major land use controls.

The PLUS program was extremely ambitious. Its objectives were no less than the improvement of the “quality of life” in the county through planning and land-use controls. The consultants and planning staff placed on the agenda almost every planning innovation of the past decade including land banking, transferable development rights, an adequate public facilities ordinance, long-range capital programming, requirements for environmental impact analysis, and the adoption of a new zoning code and the encouragement of clustered commercial and industrial facilities.

An important element of the PLUS program was the participation of the public in developing land use plans. This effort brought about numerous meetings. The studies and documentation for the PLUS program filled volumes. Each registered voter received a communication from his or her representative on the Board of Supervisors inviting participation. Although many citizens participated and exhibited great fortitude in attending meetings, they seldom expressed any real interest in countywide planning. Dawson notes that: “Despite all the rhetoric of the 1971 campaign regarding the quality of life in Fairfax County, most citizens were primarily interested in the quality of life in their own backyards.”[35]

A stumbling block, as in the past, was the Virginia court system. In response to the first legal challenge to the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, the Virginia courts ruled in 1975 that the law’s requirements could not be used to delay growth or require development to proceed in phases. The decision, Fairfax County attorneys concluded, drove “the last nail in the coffin” of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance as a means of slowing or controlling development.

When the Fairfax Board of Supervisors imposed a building moratorium, supporters of growth strenuously objected. Among the opponents of the moratorium was the Chamber of Commerce, whose president was a retired U.S. Army Colonel and World War II veteran who had developed his family's dairy farm into the Westgate office park. He and other moratorium opponents argued that it would lower land values, drive away businesses, diminish the tax base, and raise housing costs for young families and workers. They were able to mobilize construction workers. At a public hearing in February 1974, 900 people appeared to get into a hearing room that holds 180. Most of them were construction workers, carrying signs that read, “Grow or

[35] Dawson, *No Little Plans,* 103.

Die," "My Kids Need Housing," "No Growth Means No Jobs." With such loud protests in the background, the developers and their allies launched a legal campaign that stopped the moratorium.[36]

Fairfax Supervisors and planners explored the strategy of staging or delaying growth by limiting sewage facilities. However, this was thwarted by the Virginia State Water Control Board (SWCB), which along with the State Department of Health has formal responsibility for assuring water quality in all state waters. In the early 1970s, the Water Control Board pushed local governments to build large-capacity sewage treatment plants, a requirement that county officials believed would ensure a future of uncontrolled growth. Virginia jurisdictions are not legally empowered by the state to ration hookups to sewer lines. In contrast, neighboring Maryland Counties of Montgomery and Prince George's were able to impose a sewer moratorium in the 1970s to delay growth until additional capacity became available.[37]

As a result of the political and legal opposition, the elaborate PLUS effort accomplished only minor improvements in the zoning ordinance and planning mechanism and no major innovations in managing growth. In sum, "Fairfax County learned through the PLUS program that with the best intentions in the world and with ample resources, the ability of local government to affect the use of private land is extremely limited by the courts, by special interests, by political concerns, and by the citizens themselves."[38] Two months after the conclusion of the PLUS program, John F. Herrity, a pro-growth advocate with strong business connections, defeated Jean Packard for the post of Chair of the Board of Supervisors by 1600 votes of a total of 87,000. With Herrity as Chair, the PLUS effort was abandoned and Fairfax launched an effective advertising campaign that helped to establish its reputation as a desirable location for high technology firms.[39] Sure enough, since the late 1970s Fairfax County has become the prime location for high technology industry and its population has continued to grow.

Hence, the most ambitious attempts to manage growth in Fairfax County in the 1970s came a cropper. Pro-growth forces, including land owners, business leaders, and jurists stymied

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[36] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 53; Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, "About Fairfax", <http://www.fccc.org/about/1970s.htm>.
[37] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 9.
[38] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 104.
[39] The present Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Katherine Hanley, was elected in 1997 and has been a moderate on growth issues. The Board, however, has been sensitive to concerns of the business community

the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, PLUS program, and a transferable development rights scheme (like the one adopted in neighboring Montgomery County). Surveying the landscape, Dawson concluded that "The county's success in adopting new ways of regulating land use was inversely proportional to the degree of innovation attempted."[40]

The Development of Franklin Farm

The story of Franklin Farm, the last working dairy farm in Fairfax County, illustrates the ways in which economic circumstances, transportation improvements, earlier development of nearby areas, and the county's pro-growth policies promoted the conversion of farmland in Fairfax County into housing, shopping centers, and other suburban facilities.

Successful real estate development requires, as Marion Clawson pointed out in his classic work, *Suburban Land Conversion in the United States*, the availability of appropriately sized parcels of land. Consolidating numerous small parcels owned by diverse parties may be too time-consuming and expensive to allow the project to proceed. As it happened, the history of Fairfax County provided many land parcels—in the form of large dairy farms—whose size were favorable to large-scale real estate development. A case in point is Franklin Farm, which encompassed 852 acres.[41]

In 1978 circumstances were conducive to developing Franklin Farm. By that time, it was the last operating dairy farm in Fairfax County. The owner, James B. Franklin was 71 years old and ready to retire. The farm was no longer economically viable, if indeed it ever had been.[42] Meanwhile, the taxes on the land amounted to nearly $40,000 a year. Furthermore, the Commonwealth of Virginia does not have the tradition of preserving farmland, as Maryland does. Fairfax County officials wanted to help farmers preserve their farms, but admitted that pro-growth sentiment in the county made it unlikely that their proposal for an agricultural district would gain approval.

On the others side of the development equation, real estate developers were willing to pay large sums for land in Fairfax County. In the late 1970s, developers such as Milton V.

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[40] Dawson, *No Little Plans*, 122.

[41] Marion Clawson, Suburban *Land Conversion in the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press for Resources for the Future, Inc., 1971), 120-1. The authors acknowledge the assistance of Stephen Fuller of George Mason University for his generosity in sharing his time as well as advance copies of his most recent studies of the regional economy.

[42] Todd and Vechiarelli noted that Franklin was a gentleman farmer. One of the nation's first commercial airline pilots, his winnings in the Irish Sweepstakes permitted him to fulfill a lifelong ambition to be a farmer.

Peterson targeted young families with children as the market for new homes in Fairfax County. There was a demand, as the developers saw it, for houses with a yard and a basketball hoop at the end of the driveway. Seeking lucrative opportunities for this kind of development, Peterson and his colleagues constantly reviewed tax maps, consulted with business associates, and inquired of owners of large parcels to determine if they were willing to sell.[43]

In these circumstances, there hardly seemed much choice for the Franklin but to sell. A consortium of developers acquired the Franklin Farm land for a total of about $5.5 million, which transaction gave Franklin a tidy sum for his retirement.[44]

The prime movers in the development of Franklin Farm were experienced and well heeled. They included John T. ("Til") Hazel, a developer of the massive Tyson's Corner retail and office complex, and Milton V. Peterson, who had been developing large-scale housing projects since the early 1960s. An equity partner, Giuseppe Cecchi, brought the resources of the Societa General Immobiliare, Italy's largest real estate firm whose projects included the Plaza Terrace cooperative in Foggy Bottom and the Watergate apartment hotel complex.

The Franklin Farm location seemed ideal for development, especially given a synergy created by the expanding number of transportation routes, jobs, and stores in the vicinity. The farm was located on the edge of already established neighborhoods and within access to the major highways of Route 50 and I-66, which lay to the south. It offered convenient access to the rapidly growing employment center around Dulles Airport, which was directly west of the farm, and the site of the huge Fair Oaks Mall, under construction only a few miles away.

Hazel and his associates originally sought to develop a "planned residential community" which, they felt, would have none of the disadvantages of planned towns, such as Reston and Columbia, Maryland, that were located in relatively outlying areas and lacked infrastructure of services when they were built. Hazel was quoted in the Washington Post as saying, "The zoning so far has been mostly sprawl. We're going to try to put a center of focus in Franklin. It won't be sprawling."[45] Original plans were for single-family and town houses in the $65,000 -$90,000

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[43] James Vecchiarelli, the CFO of the Peterson Companies and a member of the firm during the development of Franklin Farm, and James Todd, current CEO of the Company, generously gave of their time and provided reference material on the development of Franklin Farm. Conference call with Lucille Harrigan, July 17, 2003.
[44] Tom Grubisch, "Third 'New Town' Is Proposed for Fairfax County," *Washington Post,* October 25, 1978.
[45] Ibid.

range, with neighborhoods connected by a trail system. Hazel saw this as an attempt to "bring order to an area that he said is an example of haphazard suburban planning."[46]

In retrospect, it is questionable whether the market was quite ready for another "new town," but the county was not. Apparently the political sentiment in favor of suburban places—rather than untrammeled growth—was just strong enough to stop a new project that hinted at urban densities. In any event, the zoning for a new town was not granted.

This was only a minor setback, however, and Hazel and the Petersons worked to carry out their vision for Franklin Farm. Their companies pushed to develop 1,100 acres as the Franklin Farm and Franklin Glen residential communities by late 1985. In June 1985 the developers broke ground on the first phase of Franklin Farm Village Center, a $15 million, 165,000 square foot retail, food and office shopping center near the proposed Fairfax County Parkway.

As it happened, the county government was seeking a right-of-way through the Franklin Farm area for the Fairfax Parkway. In Fairfax County, a landowner who is seeking rezoning of land according to the master plan recommendation is permitted to make "proffers" or offers of amenities to the Board of Supervisors. Although to some observers, the rezoning with proffers actually is illegal "conditional zoning," it has long been the accepted practice in Fairfax and other Virginia counties and help ease development proposals get government approval. From the developer's point of view, it is an opportunity to enhance the marketability of the development.

In this case, the parkway had been under consideration for many years, and with a pro-development majority on the Board of Supervisors, the developers were reasonably certain that it would be built.[47] Planned as a four-lane divided highway, except for a few sections near Herndon and Springfield, where it would be six lanes, the road was to extend for 35 miles from Rte. 7 southward to Rte.1, with a spur connecting to the express lanes of Interstate 95. Shiva Pant, Fairfax County's chief transportation official described the road as badly needed to connect residential and employment areas in Reston, Herndon and Fair Lakes.[48]

From the developers' point of view, the parkway would make the Franklin Farm area easily accessible to the growing employment and shopping centers in the Dulles Corridor. Hence, in November 1988 the Hazel-Peterson firm and Cavalier Land Development Corp. paid

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[46] Ibid.
[47] The Fairfax County Parkway later was named for John T. Herrity, the Chair of the Board of Supervisors.
[48] *Washington Post,* 4 November 1988, "Dr. Gridlock" column, p. e1.

for the construction of a stretch of the new parkway running .8 mile between Franklin Farm and Stringfellow Roads. Eleven months later, thanks to this contribution and transportation bond funds recently approved by voters, a three-mile section of the Fairfax County Parkway opened. The project cost $23.6 million, but now drivers could travel from West Ox Road near Herndon to Interstate 66. No doubt, then, that this proffer was repaid many times over by the large increase in the value and marketability of Franklin Farm brought by the new parkway.

Even though "Til" Hazel was blocked from building a new town in the conventional sense, the developers did produce a large-scale development with plentiful amenities and access to jobs and stores. Today Franklin Farm consists of 1,777 homes in 27 smaller neighborhoods, each with its own association. There are 182 acres of open space that offer recreational facilities that include hiking trails, swimming pools, tennis and basketball courts, and tot lots. A commercial shopping center provides convenience shopping. It contains several historical structures, including the silo of the original Franklin Farm, which were preserved as part of the landscape. The Franklin Farm Foundation provides governance, while a variety of citizen volunteer committees provide services, including publication of a monthly newsletter, architectural review of new buildings, and planning of community-wide events.

Whether or not the Franklin Farm area represents unwanted sprawl, the availability of suitable and well-located land and the highly profitable market for quality housing in Fairfax County allowed large-scale developers to provide the amenities and conveniences desired by prospective homeowners.

Current Economic Conditions in Fairfax County

The National Capital Region has a fairly unique economy relying on federal government spending and a high technology sector concentrated in information technology and telecommunications services, and professional management services. Many of the business firms have open contracts with the federal government facilitating quick contract add-ons and changes to respond to new government procurement such as the switch to the area of homeland security.[49] There is a counter cyclical strength in federal sector spending. When compared to other U.S. high technology regions, the National Capital Region ranked third after San Jose

[49] Roger R. Stough and Rajendra Kulkarni, "The Technology Sector in 2002," George Mason University School of Public Policy, January 21, 2002, <www.masonenterprisecenter.org/ Stough-presentation-Jan-24-2002-conf.ppt>

(Silicon Valley) and Boston in technology employment, but it has almost twice the amount of Federal procurement dollars.[50]

The single most important factor in Fairfax County economic growth in recent years has been the level of federal procurement contracts. Beginning with the administration of Ronald Reagan, the federal government pursued a policy of "outsourcing" its work as much as possible. The changes in federal procurement patterns, according to economist Stephen Fuller, principally benefited the National Capital Region. Between 1983 and 2001, Fuller explains, the value of federal procurement increased 55 percent across the nation, but in the National Capital Region it ballooned by 359 percent. The practice of outsourcing attracted a variety of firms in the area of technology, management services and telecommunications to the Washington area, which, in turn, fostered service industries that support the high tech firms and their employees. Within the region, Fairfax County was the big winner in the government procurement business. In 2001 it garnered more than $9.3 billion in government contracts, whereas in contrast, neighboring Montgomery County received $3.9 billion.[51]

Hence, although the government of Fairfax County has worked hard to attract businesses, the county's economic development and population growth are in the first instance a result of its location in such an economically dynamic region.[52]

As the suburban region outside Washington, D.C. expanded, each jurisdiction sought to avoid being a "bedroom community" that would carry the burden of providing education and other services to residents without the commercial tax base to finance those services. Attracting new jobs becomes a matter of balancing the books for each local government. And as job centers dispersed, the market for housing has moved ever further from the city. If the journey from the town of Leesburg in Fairfax County to the District is daunting, the trip from Leesburg to a Dulles Corridor office center is not.

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[50] Ibid. In 2001 the National Capital Area held 343,352 technology jobs in, compared to 399,904 in Silicon Valley and 379,810 in Boston. NCA had $77 billion in Federal expenditures, more than twice the amount of any other area.

[51] In California, the state that received the largest dollar amount in federal contracts, total value actually declined by 6 percent. Data provided by Dr. Stephen Fuller, George Mason Center for Regional Analysis.

[52] "The evidence of recent decades suggests that the region in which a metropolitan area is located may have more to do with its prospects than efforts to improve intrametropolitan cooperation. If employment, and skill levels of 1960--had been scooped up by a giant moving device and deposited in Florida or Arizona, the city and suburbs would have done much better than they did in New York even had they enhanced ideal cooperative arrangements." Janet Rothberg Pack, *Growth and Convergence in Metropolitan America.* (Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 2001), 29.

Furthermore, tax policy in Fairfax County has reinforced the tendency toward ever more economic development. One of the persistent political factors in government decision-making is that political office holders try to provide the services that citizens want but and are reluctant to pay for.[53] Unlike its neighbor and competitor, Montgomery County, Fairfax County has limited revenue sources and is heavily dependent on the property tax. The county does not have the authority to tax income, as is the case in Maryland Counties where a "piggy-back" on the state income tax provides a buffer to property tax increases. Thus in Fairfax there is strong pressure for economic development so that taxes on business can relieve rate burden on the homeowner.[54]

Recent Redevelopment Efforts

Today in Fairfax County the large reservoir of agricultural land that once kept land prices low has been exhausted, yet the demand for housing and commercial space persists. As a result, there is a move to redevelop older suburban areas of Fairfax County to denser urban forms. In September 2002, the *Washington Post* announced the redevelopment of the 1950s communities of Dixie Hill, Centennial Hills and Legato Acres (DixCenGato) near Fairfax City.[55] Centex Homes is converting about 80 acres of single-family homes on half-acre lots to a town house and apartment development of more than a thousand dwelling units. To make the deal more palatable, the developers offered $12 million worth of amenities, including the construction of two ball fields, $900,000 in road improvements, land for an elementary school, and a promise to protect an old Civil War railroad bed. Michael Pawlukiewicz of the Urban Land Institute, supported the effort, saying

In the next 20 years, we're going to have a million more people here, but where are they going to go? Hopefully places will be densifying, so we won't have so much sprawl and we won't be so auto-dependent.[56]

The Fairfax County's planning policies facilitated this redevelopment by creating a 5,300-acre special development district around the new county government center. DixCenGato

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[53] For a discussion of this factor in promoting growth, see Andrew E.G. Jonas and David Wilson, eds., *The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives Two Decades Later* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

[54] Both economist Stephen Fuller and Gerald Gordon, Director of the Fairfax Economic Development Authority, cited reliance on property taxes in interviews with Lucille Harrigan.

[55] Sandra Fleishman, "In Fairfax, High-Density Suburban Renewal: Development Seen as First of Many," *Washington Post,* 3 September 2002, A-1 ff.

[56] Fleishman, "In Fairfax," A-1.

is in the center of this district. And as development proceeded around the three subdivisions, homeowners began to accept the inevitable and Centex was able to get the needed signatures representing 85 percent of the 80 acres.

As Fairfax County runs out of developable land, the inner suburbs will become ripe for change, and land will be converted to more intense use. Jim Todd, President of the Peterson Companies said: "You'll see more and more of this in Fairfax County because we have no major developable parcels left."[57]

Yet the intense development of the past forty years has raised land prices to the point that they may put a brake on further redevelopment of built-up areas to more intensive uses. Former Board of Supervisors Chair Jack Herrity noted that the sheer price of acquiring properties with existing structures close to Washington sometimes thwarts the dreams of redevelopment.[58] Clark Massey stressed that smart growth depends on the ability of private developers to realize a profit for building in areas already serviced by transit and other forms of infrastructure.[59]

Smart growth also depends on a strong market for more compact housing. As executives of the Peterson Companies explained, the new smart growth and the boom in apartment construction and downtown redevelopment reflect the change in the composition of households. "Empty nesters," couples whose children have moved away, value convenience more than play space. Working couples without children create a market for town houses and condominium apartments located near the amenities of urban life. Hence, demographic factors, such as size and age of households, influence the evolving urban form more than campaigns stressing the desirability of smart growth.

The Prospects for Regional Planning of Growth

The Washington metropolitan area has a tool for planning future growth, but its ability to manage the process is limited. Since 1957, representatives of local government jurisdictions of

[57] Fleishman, "In Fairfax," A-6.
[58] Jack Herrity, interview by Lucille Harrigan, Fairfax City, VA, 23 December 2002.
[59] Clark Massey, commercial land developer and former Chair of the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce, interview by Lucille Harrigan, Reston, VA, 16 December 2002. [Massey expressed amusement and enthusiastic agreement with a phrase coined by Alexander von Hoffman that the role of government in trying to achieve "smart growth" was to "honey the area and hope that the bears will come."]

the Washington metropolitan area have come together in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to discuss major issues affecting the region.[60]

In the process, government staff and officials from each jurisdiction have reached consensus on a number of important issues relating to land use and transportation. In 2002 the members of the Council of Governments approved a plan entitled "Metropolitan Washington Regional Activity Centers: A Tool for Linking Land Use and Transportation Planning" which is largely based on existing land use plans in the member jurisdictions.[61] The document is intended to be a guide to smart growth, encouraging development in areas already served by highway and transit and preserving areas of open space. But the Council of Governments is by no means a regional governing body, and each jurisdiction is guided by its own imperative to balance its budget by encouraging the development of jobs. While planners and government officials may agree on the desirability of development within the regional activity centers, new growth does not necessarily follow the vision of the Council of Governments.[62]

The issue of automobile traffic is another potential area for regional planning. Congestion is an almost universal complaint in the Washington metropolitan area, and there is a growing awareness of the regional aspects of traffic congestion. Indeed, "pass through" traffic is a significant factor for Montgomery and Fairfax Counties as the outer suburbs become developed. Fairfax County now has sufficient jobs so that the net traffic flow is into the county.[63]

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and its national Capital Region Transportation Planning Board have been the instruments for area-wide discussions of transportation policies. Meaningful regional cooperation was at its height during the design of the Metro subway system when the availability of considerable federal funding gave the regions a powerful incentive to work together.[64]

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[60] In addition to the District of Columbia, 17 governments are represented in the Council of Governments. In Maryland the members are the cities of Bowie, Gaithersburg, College Park, Greenbelt, Rockville and Takoma Park, and Prince George's, Montgomery, and Frederick counties. In Virginia the member jurisdictions are the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Fairfax and Manassas and Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William counties.

[61] Metropolitan Washington Council of Government, *Metropolitan Washington Regional Activity Centers: A Tool for Linking Land Use and Transportation Planning,* July 2002.

[62] Ronald Kirby, Director of Transportation Planning, Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, interview by Lucille Harrigan, D.C., 11 August 2003.

[63] Ronald F. Kirby, Director of the Department of Transportation Planning, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, interview by Lucille Harrigan, Washington, D.C., 11 July 2003.

[64] Ibid.

Although the Transportation Planning Board has produced admirable and far-reaching plans for meeting priority transportation needs, it has proved difficult to direct development into those areas identified as having an existing transportation infrastructure. The Washington region is in violation of federal clean air standards and transportation-related emissions have been predicted to exceed regional limits by 2005. Though air quality is generally improving, shortages of funding have proved an obstacle to building the tens of millions of dollars in transportation improvements that would be necessary to make a substantial reduction in emissions.[65]

Yet the issue of funding for transportation improvements recently dealt the pro-growth advocates a defeat of sorts. In November of 2002, the citizens of Virginia were asked to vote on a proposal to raise the sales tax by half of a penny per dollar to pay for wider roads, new roads, and expanded rail and bus transit. Campaigning, pro and con was intense and roadways were lined with signs saying "No Tax Increase" and "End Gridlock." The proponents included "a coalition of local governments, business leaders and frustrated commuters who believe that their trip to work would be eased by building extra roads. The No side consists of environmentalists, anti-tax conservatives and frustrated commuters who believe that only Metro-oriented, close-in development can stem the march of sprawl and ease paralysis on the roads." Although the pro-tax pro-highway coalition claimed it did not favor spreading development further into the countryside, the *Washington Post* reported, "the map of proposed projects and the pattern of cash cascading into the coffers of the Yeas campaign tell a different and disturbing story." Stewart Schwartz of the coalition for Smarter Growth decried the transportation plan as "an open-ended permanent stream of income for outer county highway building to fuel the next generation of speculative development." [66]

Besides the natural antipathy towards taxation, lack of trust in the state government in Richmond helped defeat the referendum. An unusual coalition of conservationists and anti-tax advocates prevailed against the best efforts of the business community and pro-business elected officials. Yet for all that, neither did the fight produce a comprehensive transportation program for the county.

[65] Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Transportation Planning Board Annual Report for the year 2002, *The Region*, Vol. 41 2002, p. 10 ff.

[66] Marc Fisher, "'No on Road Tax Would Go Furthest To Ease Gridlock" *Washington Post*, 20 October 2002, B-1.

Dillon's Rule and the Absence of Home Rule

Planners and civic activists in both Fairfax and neighboring Maryland counties frequently ascribe the failure of growth controls in Fairfax County to "Dillon's Rule," but they probably exaggerate its importance. Named for a nineteenth- century Iowa Supreme Court justice, Dillon's Rule is a judicial doctrine that strictly interprets state laws that allow localities to possess only such powers as are specifically delegated to them by state law.[67] This is seen as an alternative to home rule, and many scholars and government officials have blamed "Dillon's Rule" for the failure of localities to manage growth. Yet Dillon's Rule does not necessarily guide the state legislature in delegating powers to local government. Virginia is one of many states that enacted laws that gave localities broad powers to enact laws unhampered by the state legislature. Moreover, as we have seen, political support for growth management at the local level in Fairfax County has been intermittent and narrowly based, so that even home rule would do little to control the pace and direction of urban development.[68]

Conclusion

The pattern of growth in Fairfax County illustrates the vital importance of general economic conditions, private sector decisions, and public policies in determining the pace and nature of urban growth. Over the course of the last century, the District of Columbia, as the seat of the government of the nation, generated remarkable increases in population and jobs. Inevitably, this affected Fairfax County, which early in the twentieth century rail and trolley lines connected directly to the District and a growing regional economy. At the core of the regional economy was the federal employment and later procurement contracts, which attracted entrepreneurs, attorneys, lobbyists, consultants, and contractors. These people and their families sought homes and work places in suburban locales, and the real estate industry has been happy to oblige them in Fairfax County.

At the same time, there has long existed *within* the county a large body of support for the development of local real estate. In contrast to Montgomery County, where large landholders supported both urban development and protection of parks and open spaces, Fairfax's large

[67] For Dillon's Rule and growth management, see Jesse J. Richardson, Jr., Meghan Zimmerman Gough and Robert Puentes, *Is Home Rule the Answer? Clarifying the Influence of Dillon's Rule on Growth Management*, Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, January 2003.
[68] Richardson, et al., *Is Home Rule the Answer?*, 14, 15.

landowners, including the owners of the old dairy farms, accommodated and sometimes even carried out real estate development. In addition, local business leaders and workers in the building industries adamantly supported growth as a way of expanding revenues and jobs.

The local support for real estate development in Fairfax County set the context for the public policies that encouraged growth. Most directly, such support influenced zoning and regulatory decisions within the county and provided a political cover for the state agency and court actions in favor of development. Indirectly, pro-growth sentiments at the very least accommodated the decisions to build the highways and the airport that instigated a complete transformation of large sections of the county. It would not be surprising if further research revealed that the supporters of development played a role in bringing these projects to the county.

In the absence of a strong regional planning authority, the real estate interests will continue to hold sway in Fairfax County. The development industry, responding as it does to market forces, pays more attention to changes in demographics than to government exhortations for smart growth. Just as the baby boom sparked the construction of Levittown and the traditional suburban development, new demographic forces may encourage more dense development in areas close to jobs and served by transit. And if history is any indication whatsoever, the county will welcome this latest round of real estate development with open arms.

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