

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The Comprehensive Plan for Prince William County contains a clear strategy for responsible, fiscally-sound growth to produce a vibrant, prosperous, stable, “livable” community. The Plan encourages new opportunities for high-end housing and targeted economic development that will strengthen the County’s tax base and balance existing housing and economic activities. It seeks to ensure a high quality of life for all County residents and heighten the County’s image by:

- Providing large amounts of open space, particularly in preservation and conservation areas.
- Encouraging higher land use densities at transit locations.
- Maintaining planned levels of residential and non-residential development.
- Providing adequate and affordable public services to meet the needs of current and future residents, and meeting established levels of service.
- Improving the design of sites and buildings.

The goals, policies, and action strategies in the Comprehensive Plan have been shaped by citizen preferences, the County’s Strategic Plan, sound planning principles, and a need to balance the competing demands for development and the preservation of the County’s distinct, irreplaceable character. The following four general goals for the future development of Prince William County represent the vision within which the Comprehensive Plan was crafted:

- **Strong economic growth**
 - ◆ New and expanded employment opportunities.
 - ◆ An improved County tax base – higher ratio of jobs to houses, non-residential uses to residential uses.
 - ◆ Higher-income professional jobs and higher-income housing.
 - ◆ Greater number of targeted industries, and the development and expansion of certain existing County-based companies.
 - ◆ Public and private investment to encourage quality economic growth.
- **Affordable, practical, and fiscally sound residential and economic development**
 - ◆ Infill development, mixed-use, and development of already developed areas within the development densities indicated in the Long-Range Land Use Plan, to maximize efficiency of existing infrastructure.
 - ◆ Updated levels of public service standards.
 - ◆ Capital Improvements Program and operating budget reflective of Comprehensive Plan policies and action strategies.
- **Prince William County as an attractive, “livable” community**
 - ◆ Good community design to ensure a high quality of life for County residents and to attract targeted businesses.

- ◆ Preservation of areas of rural character and significant cultural/historical resources.
 - ◆ Revitalization of older commercial and residential areas of the County.
 - ◆ Sound environmental quality.
 - ◆ A variety of land use types and densities, to make the County an interesting place to live or visit.
- **Cost-effective and Plan-based transportation systems**
 - ◆ Roadway widths and locations determined by existing and planned densities.
 - ◆ Major new roadways to serve development.
 - ◆ Regional mass transportation “hubs” to develop at high-density mixed-use with transit-oriented land uses.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A comprehensive plan is a general guide to the location, character, and extent of proposed or anticipated land use, including public facilities. It provides guidance for land use development decisions made by the Planning Commission and the Board of County Supervisors.

Section 15.2-2223 of the Virginia Code requires every governing body to adopt a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction. The Code further requires that comprehensive plans be reviewed every five years, to ensure that the plan is responsive to current circumstances and that its goals are still supported by the citizenry.

Each comprehensive plan is based on an analysis of current land use and future growth and the facilities needed to serve existing and future residents – such as roads, parks, water and sewer systems, schools, fire stations, police facilities, and libraries.

The Prince William Board of County Supervisors first adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1974. New plans or amendments to an existing plan were adopted by the Board in 1982, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1998, and 2003.

The Comprehensive Plan is prepared and then recommended by the Prince William County Planning Commission at a public hearing or hearings, and forwarded to the Board of County Supervisors for public hearing and adoption.

The Comprehensive Plan can be obtained at the County’s Planning Office or on the County’s web site.

The Prince William County Comprehensive Plan contains chapters outlining goals, policies, and action strategies for the following:

- Community Design
- Cultural Resources
- Economic Development

- Environment
- Fire and Rescue
- Housing
- Libraries
- Long-Range Land Use
- Parks and Open Space
- Police
- Potable Water
- Sanitary Sewer
- Schools
- Telecommunications
- Transportation
- Sector Plans

The Comprehensive Plan also contains a series of sector plans for specific areas. The Comprehensive Plan contains a variety of land use categories within two general land use areas; the Development Area and the Rural Area (often referred to as the “Rural Crescent”)

The Development Area is that portion of Prince William County that has already been developed or is expected to be developed at residential densities greater than those in the remainder of the County. It also contains established commercial, office, and industrial areas, as well as undeveloped or under-developed land expected to meet the County’s projected growth, both residential and tax base-enhancing economic activities. The Development Area is divided into urban, suburban, and semi-rural sub-areas. The Comprehensive Plan encourages infill of the Development Area, to maximize the opportunities to provide public services in a cost-efficient manner and to provide an environmentally sound development pattern. Both public water and sewer would be provided in the Development Area.

The Rural Area is that portion of Prince William County containing agricultural, open space, forestry, and large-lot residential land uses, as well as two federal parks. Large-lot residential clusters, providing large tracts of permanent open space, are an alternative residential pattern permitted in the Rural Area. The Rural Area designation helps preserve the County’s agricultural economy and resources, the quality of the groundwater supply, and the present open space and rural character of Prince William County. The Rural Area may be served by public water facilities but not by public sewer facilities, except under the emergency conditions identified in the Sewer Plan or to serve specific public facilities. Designation of the Rural Area and application of the development goals, policies, and action strategies for it are intended to help avoid the negative economic, social, and environmental characteristics of sprawl development.

BACKGROUND

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan was developed through a process of making an overall technical update of the plan with a primary focus on incorporating mandatory changes needed to keep the plan valid, such as demographics and associated impacts on level of service standards, and to



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make corrections and updates to the goals and action strategies throughout the plan to accommodate changed circumstances. More substantive incremental changes will then be made after adoption of the 2008 plan, based on a particular subject area as prioritized by the Planning Commission.

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) STANDARDS

Six of the Comprehensive Plan chapters address facilities and services provided by the County to its residents and businesses: Fire and Rescue, Libraries, Parks and Open Space, Police, Schools, and Transportation. The agencies responsible for these services have established level of service (LOS) standards by which each agency measures the quality of the service it provides. The standards are derived from government requirements (such as classroom size), professional or industry standards (such as those provided by the Institute of Transportation Engineers for road capacity and traffic movement), and from citizen surveys and citizen expectations. These standards are regularly updated as circumstances and new data warrant.

The Comprehensive Plan appropriately establishes the relationship between the demand for public services created by new development and the County's fiscal ability to provide those services at the LOS standards set forth in the Plan. The Virginia Code provides for conditional zoning ("proffers"), voluntarily made by rezoning applicants, to mitigate the service effects of new development. The LOS standards provide an objective justification for mitigation requests. While the County is still responsible for funding service operations, proffers provide a valuable source of capital funding that relates new service demands to service costs.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Prince William County is the third most populous jurisdiction in Virginia. In December 2006 the population was estimated to be 378,455. This figure represents roughly a 34.8 percent growth since the 2000 population of 280,813. The County has projected a 2030 population of 555,012.

One of the most significant concerns regarding preparation of the Comprehensive Plan was the cost of providing quality County services – particularly schools and roads – to a burgeoning population. In (2007) dollars, for example, each new elementary school is estimated to cost \$22.6 million to construct (including land costs); middle schools each cost \$43.7 million; and high schools \$89.6 million. Each lane mile of road is estimated to cost \$4.6 million. County revenues – so heavily dependent upon residential tax dollars to support the annual capital and operating budgets – are severely stretched to plan and program public services and facilities to existing residents.

To meet citizen demands for quality services, for an appropriate linkage between development and those services, and for managed growth, the Comprehensive Plan continues the limits on the amount of new residential development established in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. The 1998 Comprehensive Plan lowered density levels in some land use classifications and designated the Rural Area for 10-acre residential lots and rural clusters. The intent of this change was to lessen the demand for new services so that the County could concentrate its spending to catch up with

existing infrastructure demand and to fully utilize the existing infrastructure within the Development Area.

TIMING AND DENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

The Comprehensive Plan land use classifications have been mapped on the Long-Range Land Use Plan Map.

Within each land use classification, there is a range of density or intensity. All areas with the same land use classification, however, are not equal in terms of their location or the time frame within which their development is appropriate. Currently, some areas are more readily accessed by transportation, more readily connected to the sewer system, closer to schools and thus better able to accommodate – at established levels of service – a higher level of density or intensity. Within the Development Area different density or intensity levels are appropriate in different locations, as reflected on the Long-Range Land Use Plan Map.

As utility and facility networks are expanded and levels of service increased, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, potential density and intensity will increase accordingly but always within the established density or intensity ranges set forth by the Comprehensive Plan. Encouraging more intense uses in areas already well serviced – and infill of well-serviced areas already substantially developed, but still within the maximum density established in the Long-Range Land Use Plan – will discourage leap-frog development, land speculation, and sprawl development extended into areas of the County poorly serviced, while allowing the County to better focus limited fiscal resources.

The criteria below are intended to aid in the determination of whether a proposed project is appropriately timed and has a density of development relative to the available infrastructure. These criteria are consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and action strategies of the individual chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, with the Comprehensive Plan as a whole, and with the use of the "proffer" approach to conditional zoning as practiced in Prince William County. The criteria are not presented in order of importance.

1. Public Services

What are the current level of service (LOS) standards in a given area and how do they compare to the LOS standards established in the Fire and Rescue, Library, Parks and Open Space, Police and Schools Plan chapters of the Comprehensive Plan? Does the development proposal adequately achieve the intended level of service standards, or does the development need to be delayed or reduced in density until the appropriate levels of service are achieved in the area?

2. Transportation

Proposed development can have numerous effects on the County's transportation system. Transportation impact mitigation measures should be incorporated into the approved Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) that accompanies appropriate Comprehensive Plan

amendment, rezoning, and special use permit requests. In addition, the following criteria shall – at a minimum – be considered in determining timing and an appropriate density or intensity of development:

- **Residential Site Location.** If the development is a residential project, is the site close to or within walking distance of existing or planned employment areas? Is the site close to or within walking distance to shopping and services? Will the development provide effective pedestrian access between the residential project and nearby employment and/or commercial and service areas and/or public buildings and facilities?
- **Proximity to Existing/Programmed Transportation Facilities.** Is the site in the general and reasonable vicinity of an arterial or collector road that is improved or funded for improvement to the standards identified in the Transportation Plan, as reflected by the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) or the Virginia Six-Year Transportation Plan?
- **Existing or Planned Capacity of the Transportation Facilities.** Does the impacted transportation system have the capacity to absorb the trips generated by the development proposal without degrading the adopted level of service? If not, are on-site and off-site measures proposed to offset the impacts?
- **Transportation Systems Management.** Does the development proposal address a broad range of programs and techniques to increase the efficiency of the transportation system? (Examples include participation in a transportation funding district, vanpooling, staggered work hours, employer-assisted transit use incentives, shuttle services, pedestrian access between the residential and/or non-residential development and public transportation, etc.)
- **Transit.** Is the project in the urban portions of the Development Area and within walking distance of transit services or a Transit Corridor? Is effective pedestrian access provided between the project and transit service(s)? Does the project account for an on-site commuter parking area or are other transit facilities being provided?
- **Non-motorized Facilities.** Non-motorized facilities include items such as trails, sidewalks, and bikeways. Does the project provide internal non-motorized facilities? Does the project link to external non-motorized facilities and contribute to Countywide non-motorized facilities, in accordance with the Transportation Plan?

3. Environmental Resources

The Zoning Ordinance contains a provision for developer-submitted environmental constraints analyses with rezoning and/or special use permit applications. The purpose of these analyses is to determine areas of a site unsuited for development and that will be provided as preservation or conservation areas. Items for consideration in determining

appropriate density of development should include – but not be limited to the following objectives:

- Reducing surface runoff.
- Reducing erosion potential.
- Increasing pollutant removal potential.
- Managing soil nutrients.
- Controlling toxic substances.
- Minimizing stormwater runoff and mitigating the impact of such runoff through the use of low-impact design techniques.
- Protecting federal or state rare, threatened, or endangered species, or species of special concern, identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.
- Protecting habitat function.
- Avoiding direct disturbance of aquatic habitats.
- Protecting aquatic habitats.
- Preserving tree coverage.
- Clustering of residential units resulting in densities no greater than that possible under conventional development standards to further valuable environmental objectives.
- Preserving and conserving open space and areas, including woodland conservation areas, that will remain in their natural state or otherwise undisturbed by development.

4. Mixed-Use Projects and Planned Developments

Mixed-use projects – including town centers – are planned developments that encourage and accommodate a mix of land uses. These projects include an appropriate mix of commercial, office, and residential development. They provide an efficient development pattern that can foster economic development, provide diversity in land use, and reduce the number and the length of automobile trips. These projects are encouraged in appropriate locations in Prince William County, as shown on the Long-Range Land Use Plan Map. The increased efficiency of such projects warrants consideration for encouraging their creation.

The Prince William County Zoning Ordinance contains development regulations for a variety of planned development districts, including those for town centers. A Master Zoning Plan (MZP), in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, is adopted for each district that generally outlines the location and extent of densities, intensities, public facilities, and open space. These mixed-use projects and planned developments are appropriate only in the Development Area and should be carefully considered in terms of timing and density of development in relation to the area's infrastructure.

5. Cultural Resources

Development proposals that impact significant cultural resources are to be evaluated with regard to provision of long-term measures to protect the integrity of such resources.

Development should preserve, renovate, or otherwise restore an archaeological site, historic site, historic structure, or viewshed.

6. Planning and Design

The consistency of a project with the existing and planned land uses is greatly influenced by its design. The Community Design Plan provides more specific guidance regarding those features necessary to create desirable, visually pleasing, and economically sustainable communities. A proposal for a Comprehensive Plan amendment, rezoning, special use permit, and site or subdivision plan should be in concert with the Community Design Plan.

7. Economic Development

Development proposals that provide for increased targeted employment opportunities, the development and expansion of existing local businesses, and serve to diversify the County's economy are to be encouraged. The Comprehensive Plan encourages economic development in centers consisting of mixed-use projects, planned developments, and improvements that focus public capital improvements in those centers – including the existing residential communities which support them – so that they remain viable, visually pleasing, and prosperous.

8. Phasing for REC, CEC, and RCC Projects

Proposed development in areas planned for Regional Employment Center (REC), Community Employment Center (CEC), and Regional Commercial Center (RCC) shall include a phasing plan that ensures development in accordance with the purpose and intent of that land use classification. The REC district, for example, allows employment, retail, and residential uses; phasing in this classification should address the timing of each of these elements relative to each other. The phasing plan should consist of a general development plan or Master Zoning Plan (MZP) and a table that identifies when (sequencing) – and in general, where – primary and secondary uses shall be developed. Each general development plan or MZP and table shall include an inventory of primary and secondary uses, as defined in the Long-Range Land Use Plan.

9. Zoning Text Amendments

The Zoning Ordinance includes a residential density and/or non-residential floor area ratio (FAR) requirement for each zoning district. Whenever a new district is added or an existing district is amended, those density and intensity ranges should be evaluated under the relevant Comprehensive Plan components, including those reflected and/or referenced above.

In summary, the criteria used for determining appropriate timing and density of development are intended to:

- Set forth, or reference, Comprehensive Plan components, including standards, levels of service, and other facets of development. These criteria should be uniformly used when evaluating rezoning, special use permit and/or Comprehensive Plan Amendment applications;
- Allow for more exact development intensities or densities to be identified within established ranges, and
- Respect the basic development potential of land as reflected by the Comprehensive Plan.

COUNTY POLICY GUIDANCE

Prince William County's major policy documents include the Comprehensive Plan, the Strategic Plan, the Principles of Sound Financial Management, and the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan. In addition, the County has, with adoption of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, prepared an Infrastructure and Facilities Plan (IFP). The Comprehensive Plan and the Strategic Plan contain goals and strategies that reinforce the linkage between the two documents and to the County's various implementation plans.

The Prince William County Strategic Plan is a document designed to establish a blueprint for achieving the community's long-term vision. As such, it sets out a limited number of the community's high-priority goals in four-year increments. In doing so, the Strategic Plan provides crucial policy guidance for service delivery and resource allocation decisions. The Strategic Plan can be obtained from the Office of Executive Management and the County's web site.

The Principles of Sound Financial Management, established by the Board of County Supervisors, provides policy guidance for the County's financial decisions. Prince William County has a long-standing commitment to sound financial management. These principles were first adopted in 1988 and receive regular updates to ensure their continued usefulness for decision-making. The sound financial management of the County's resources is achieved by following the consistent and coordinated approach provided by this policy document. These principles include policy statements on such issues as the County's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), the Annual Fiscal Plan, and debt management. The Principles of Sound Financial Management can be obtained from the County's Finance Department and the County's web site.

The Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP), adopted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), is a 25-year multi-modal transportation plan for the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Federal law requires that this plan be "constrained" in two ways: first, by being fiscally realistic, with all projects in the plan having funding sources identified for their implementation; and second, by conforming in its entirety with emissions budgets established by the EPA. The CLRP can be obtained from MWCOG.

The Infrastructure and Facilities Plan (IFP) is included as an appendix in the appropriate chapters of the CIP and includes information regarding suggested public facilities on a 20-year horizon. The Comprehensive Plan, the Strategic Plan, and the Facilities Master Plan, which are County Implementation Plans (see Figure 1), will provide input to the IFP. The IFP will be

regularly updated, as the planned facilities may change based on changing community goals, service-delivery, or land use and/or demographic patterns. The IFP is contained within the County's Capital Improvements Program, from the Office of Executive Management and the County's web site.

COUNTY IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

The policy documents described above guide the Board of County Supervisors' operating and capital decisions. Those decisions are detailed in the documents described below. In addition, County policy also contributes to the development of the Virginia Transportation Development Plan, which specifies what primary and secondary roads the Commonwealth will construct.

- **The Capital Improvements Program (CIP)** – The CIP specifies the capital infrastructure and facilities projects that are firmly scheduled for funding over a six-year period, in order to: achieve the community's long-range vision; achieve the 20-year goals of the Comprehensive Plan and the shorter-term goals of the Strategic Plan, and maintain or enhance the County's capital assets and delivery of services. In addition, the CIP describes funding mechanisms for these projects, including debt financing, cash-to-capital, and the use of proffers. The CIP can be obtained from the Office of Executive Management and the County's web site.
- **Annual Fiscal Plan** – Each year, the Board of County Supervisors adopts an annual budget for all County government operations. The budget is based on estimates of projected expenditures for County programs as well as the means of paying for those expenditures (revenues). Program expenditures are determined based on "outcome budgeting" – on achieving desired outcomes, outputs, service quality, and efficiencies (Prince William County's "family" of performance measures) for each activity in each agency of County government. The Board of County Supervisors makes budget decisions based on its established policy guidance; (e.g., Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and the service level targets found in agency program budgets). Outcome budgets also allow citizens to see the County's future direction and what their tax dollars are really buying. The annual budget can be obtained from the Office of Executive Management and the County's web site.
- **Five-Year Budget Plan** – This Plan forecasts the revenue and expenditures (both capital and operating) of the County for five years. As such, it assists the Board and the community in gauging the multi-year impacts of fiscal decisions and in weighing the corresponding implications of tax rates and other revenue sources. The County's Five-Year Budget Plan is combined with the Five-Year Budget Plan prepared by the Prince William County schools to provide a total picture of the General Fund requirements for the upcoming five-year period. The Five-Year Plan can be found in the County's annual budget and can be obtained from the County's web site.
- **Policy Guide for Monetary Contributions** – The Policy Guide provides guidance for monetary proffers during the rezoning process. Specific sections include Transportation, Schools, Police, Parks, Libraries, and Fire and Rescue. Each section of the Policy Guide outlines the corresponding service needs, level-of-service (LOS) measures, a cost per capita/student, and assignment of value for single-family,

townhouse, and multi-family dwellings or per non-residential square foot. The guide was adopted as a supplement to the Comprehensive Plan and is, on the request of the Board of County Supervisors, updated periodically. The Policy Guide can be obtained from the Planning Office and the County's web site.

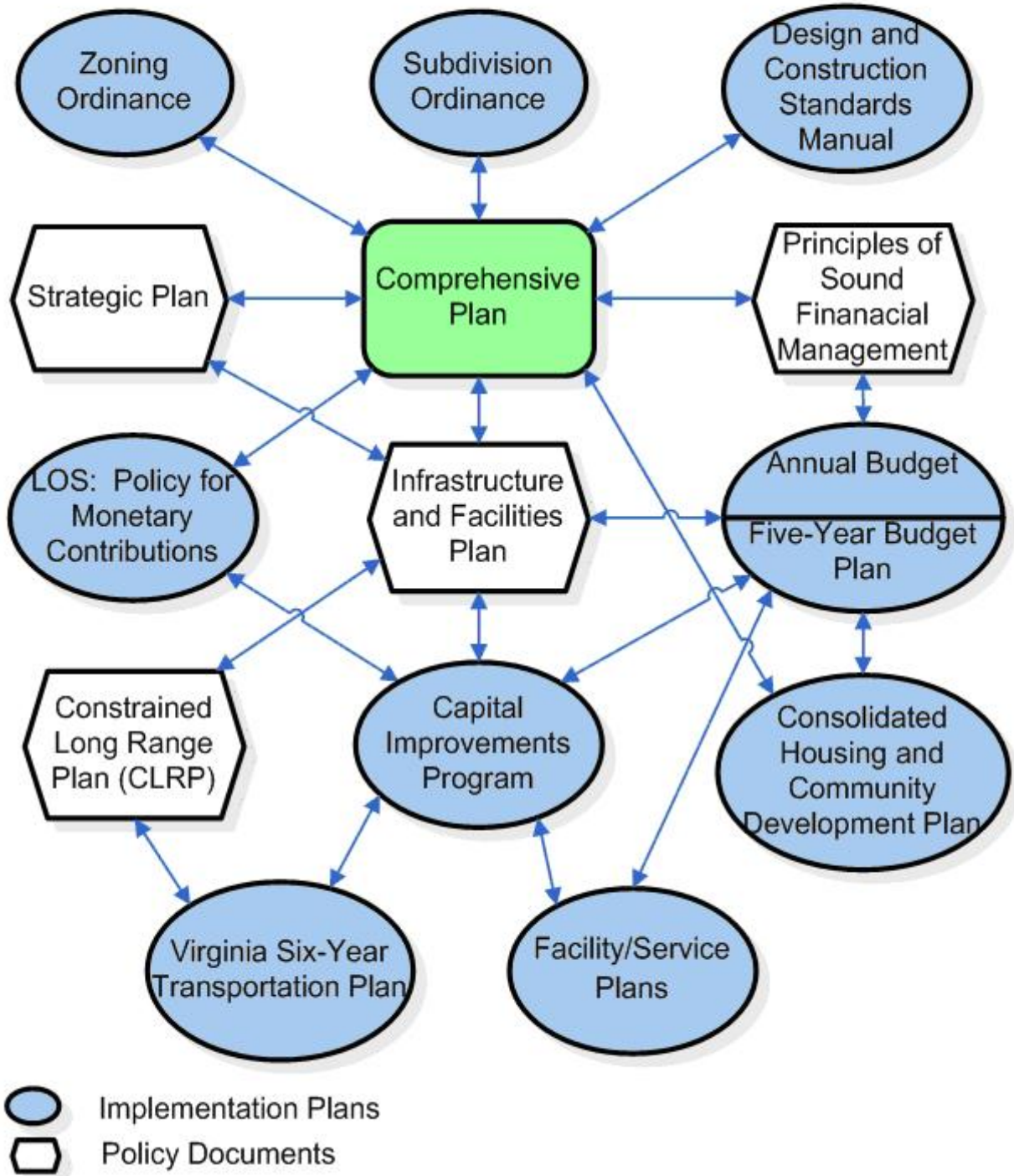
- **Information Technology (IT) Plan** – The purpose of the IT strategic plan is to align the County's technology investments with its overall strategic plan. The IT strategic plan provides a "roadmap" to position the County to deliver services to citizens in support of its goals, objectives, and direction. Technology has the potential to revolutionize the way government conducts its business and serves its citizens. It is, therefore, critical for the County government to plan technology investments to maximize and optimize those investments and to leverage technology in ways that will create more effective and efficient government. The Technology Plan can be obtained from the Office of Information Technology and the County's web site.
- **Facilities Master Plan** – The Facilities Master Plan is a tool for projecting and managing the need for County facilities over the next ten years. Service delivery trends, technology, and demographics are constantly changing, resulting in changes to the County's facilities objectives. The purpose of the Master Plan is to define the future space needs of the County showing expansion for staff and equipment. The scope of the Plan includes Human Services, Administrative, Judicial, and Public Safety space needs. The Plan may be obtained from the County's Public Works Department and the County's web site.
- **Virginia Six-Year Transportation Plan** – The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Six-Year Transportation Plan for primary roads (with identification numbers less than 600 like Rt. 234) and secondary roads (with identification numbers 600 or above). The Transportation Development Plan is adopted by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). The Chairman of the Prince William Board of County Supervisors traditionally testifies during the CTB public hearings as to Prince William County's priorities. The Plan can be obtained from VDOT.
- **Zoning Ordinance** – This ordinance, adopted pursuant to the Virginia Code, is for the general purpose of promoting the health, safety, and general welfare of the public; providing for development of new community centers with adequate highway, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities; recognizing and providing for the needs of agriculture, industry, and business; providing that the growth of the community be consistent with the efficient and economical use of public funds; and implementing the intent, goals, policies, and action strategies of the adopted comprehensive plan. The intent of the Zoning Ordinance is to provide for adequate light, air, convenience of access, and safety from fire, flood, and other dangers; reduce or prevent congestion; facilitate the provision of adequate public facilities; and provide other elements of sound community planning. The Zoning Ordinance can be obtained from the Planning Office and the County's web site.
- **Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM)** – The DCSM sets forth the engineering and development standards for new construction of required public improvements, as well as for protection and enhancement of the environment. It also

- effectuates and supplements the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance, as well as other state and federal regulations. The DCSM can be obtained from the Planning Office and the County's web site.
- **Subdivision Ordinance** – The purpose of the Subdivision Ordinance is to implement the County Comprehensive Plan, to encourage the orderly subdivision of land, to improve the public health, safety, convenience, and welfare of the citizens of the County, to ensure that the County land records remain clear, and that certain basic requirements are met for development of building lots, and to provide for the construction of required public improvements. The Ordinance can be obtained from the Planning Office and the County's web site.
 - **Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan:** This plan, as approved by the Board of County Supervisors, is prepared by the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) and outlines the vision for providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. The Plan is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in order for the County to receive Community Development Block Grants, HOME Investment Partnership funds, Emergency Shelter Grants, and American Dream Down Payment Initiative funding. It is a five-year plan that is the basis for annual funding allocations, described in one-year Action Plans, which identify the specific programs and activities to be undertaken annually with federal funds. OHCD also prepares the Action Plans, which are approved by the Board. The Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan is updated every five (5) years. The Consolidated Housing Plan and the Action Plans can be obtained from the Office of Housing and Community Development and the County's web site.

The diagram (Figure 1) on the following page graphically illustrates the basic linkage, or interrelationship, among these various policy documents and the implementation procedures and plans that carry out these adopted County policies.

Figure 1

LINKAGES



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