



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of December 12, 2009**

DATE: November 23, 2009

SUBJECT: Adoption of a Resolution certifying that the General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan of Arlington County, accommodates growth in a manner consistent with the requirements of Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1 requiring Urban Development Areas.

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the attached resolution to certify that the General Land Use Plan incorporates areas that meet the requirements of Urban Development Areas pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1.

ISSUES: This is a resolution certifying that the General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan of Arlington County, accommodates growth in a manner that meets the definition of Urban Development Areas pursuant to requirements of Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1.

SUMMARY: An Urban Development Area is an area designated by a locality for higher density development due to the proximity of transportation facilities, availability of public water/sewer and proximity to other developed areas. Such areas must incorporate principles of New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Design. Certain localities are required, pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1, to amend the Comprehensive Plan to designate Urban Development Areas to accommodate projected growth. However, a locality that determines that its Comprehensive Plan already accommodates growth in such a manner may meet the requirement upon adoption of a resolution certifying compliance. Arlington County's General Land Use Plan meets the requirements for Urban Development Areas, and therefore the attached resolution certifies compliance with Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1.

BACKGROUND: On April 4, 2007, the Virginia General Assembly adopted legislation that requires any County that has a zoning ordinance and either i) a population growth rate of 15 percent or more in 1990-2000, or ii) a population of at least 20,000 during the year 2000, and a 1990-2000 population growth rate of 5 percent or more, to incorporate Urban Development Areas (UDA) into their comprehensive plans by July 1, 2011. With a 1990-2000 growth rate of 10.8%, Arlington falls into the latter category.

County Manager: BMD/GA

County Attorney: CEW/SAM

Staff: Deborah Albert, Planning Division, DCPHD

PLA-5413

The law defines UDAs as areas designated by a locality for higher density development due to proximity of transportation facilities, availability of public water/sewer or proximity to other developed areas. State and local transportation, housing, and economic development funding are required to be directed to the UDA, to the extent possible. The designated areas must accommodate growth as follows:

- Allow for residential development densities of at least 4 units/acre and commercial densities of at least 0.4 FAR (Floor Area Ratio).
- Incorporate principles of New Urbanism/Traditional Neighborhood Design, which may include pedestrian-friendly road design, interconnectivity of new local streets/roads and pedestrian networks, preservation of natural areas, stormwater management, mixed-use, reduced setbacks, and reduced subdivision street widths and turning radii.

In order to meet the requirements, a qualifying locality must:

- Describe financial and other incentives for development in UDAs in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Designate one or more UDAs that are sufficient to accommodate projected growth for a period of at least ten years, and no more than 20 years.
- Reexamine the boundaries and size of the UDA(s), and if necessary, revise the area(s) every five years in conjunction with the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

However, a locality whose Comprehensive Plan already incorporates areas that accommodate growth in such a manner may meet the requirement by adopting a resolution certifying compliance. Arlington County's General Land Use Plan meets the UDA requirements.

DISCUSSION: The Arlington County General Land Use Plan (GLUP), a component of the Comprehensive Plan, accommodates growth in a manner consistent with the requirements for Urban Development Areas. With the exception of areas planned for "public" and "semi-public" uses, and a small subset of areas planned for "Low" Residential (1-10 units per acre) uses that are zoned "R-20" (which permits residential lots that are a minimum of 20,000 square feet, or approximately two units per acre), all of Arlington County is planned for residential, commercial or mixed-use densities at or above the minimum densities required in a UDA. Incentives for development in Arlington are established through optional special exception zoning compatible with specific GLUP categories. The special exception site plan process allows the County Board to approve significant increases in density for development proposals consistent with respective sector plan and small area plan goals and policies and for the provision of other community benefits. Adopted policies promote pedestrian-oriented design, the creation of town, village and/or mixed-use centers, and access to transit.

Urban Development Areas are required to be sufficient to meet projected residential and commercial growth to support population projections for a period of at least ten and not more than twenty years. Population forecasts for the County are 238,000 in 2020 and 245,300 in 2030. Population forecasts are generated by the Arlington County Planning Division as part of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) forecasting process. These figures are based on an analysis of potential development that can be sustained under the guidelines of the General Land Use Plan (as of July 2008), existing development interest, development characteristics of projects currently under construction, and characteristics of projects approved by the Arlington County Board.

CONCLUSION: Staff reviewed the General Land Use Plan in light of Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1, which requires a locality's Comprehensive Plan to include Urban Development Areas, and has determined that the Arlington County General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, accommodates development in a manner consistent with the requirements of UDAs. Jurisdictions whose Comprehensive Plans already meet the requirements of VA Code 15.2-2223.1 may certify compliance with the code by resolution. Therefore, staff recommends that the County Board adopt the attached resolution to certify that the Arlington County General Land Use Plan accommodates growth in a manner meeting the requirements of Urban Development Areas pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1.

**RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY COMPLIANCE WITH
URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREA REQUIREMENTS**

WHEREAS, on July 1, 2007, Section 15.2-2223.1 of the Virginia Code became effective and requires any County that has adopted zoning pursuant to Article 7 (§15.2-2280) of Chapter 22 of Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia and that has a population of at least 20,000 and population growth of at least 5%, to amend its comprehensive plan to incorporate one or more urban development areas or to adopt a resolution certifying that its plan accommodates growth in a manner consistent with §15.2-2223.1; and

WHEREAS, the latest decennial census (2000) reported population of Arlington County was 189,453, and the 1990-2000 growth rate was 10.8%; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1 requires that the County's Comprehensive Plan shall further incorporate principles of new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development, which may include but need not be limited to (i) pedestrian-friendly road design, (ii) interconnection of new local streets with existing local streets and roads, (iii) connectivity of road and pedestrian networks, (iv) preservation of natural areas, (v) satisfaction of requirements for stormwater management, (vi) mixed-use neighborhoods, including mixed housing types, (vii) reduction of front and side yard building setbacks, and (viii) reduction of subdivision street widths and turning radii at subdivision street intersections; and

WHEREAS, Urban Development Areas are required to be sufficient to meet projected residential and commercial growth in the locality for an ensuing period of at least 10 but not more than 20 years; and

WHEREAS, based on an analysis of potential development that can be sustained under the guidelines of the County's General Land Use Plan (as of July 2008), existing development interest, development characteristics of projects currently under construction, and characteristics of projects approved by the Arlington County Board, the Arlington County Planning Division, as part of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments forecasting process, forecasts Arlington County's population to be 238,000 in 2020 and 245,300 in 2030; and

WHEREAS, the County's comprehensive plan is required to describe any financial and other incentives for development in the urban development areas; and

WHEREAS, the County Board finds that the General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan of Arlington County, establishes that all areas of Arlington County, with the exception of those areas planned for "public" uses and a subset of those areas planned for "Low" Residential (1 - 10 units per acre) uses that are zoned "R-20", are appropriate for reasonably compact development at a higher density as provided in §15.2-2223.1 of the Code of Virginia due to proximity of transportation facilities, the availability of a public water and sewer system and proximity to other developed areas; and

WHEREAS, the County Board finds that the County's General Land Use Plan, together with its Zoning Ordinance incorporates principles of new urbanism and traditional neighborhood development, in that it includes special exception zoning options, compatible with specific General Land Use Plan designations, that encourage mixed-use and/or form-based development that promotes pedestrian-oriented design, the creation of town or village centers and access to transit; and

WHEREAS, the County Board finds that the County's General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, together with its Zoning Ordinance, provides financial and other incentives for development in higher density areas, in that the special exception site plan process allows the County Board to approve significant increases in density for development proposals consistent with respective sector plan and small area plan goals and policies and for the provision of other community benefits; and

WHEREAS, the County Manager has recommended that the County Board find that the Arlington County General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, accommodates growth in a manner consistent with §15.2-2223.1 of the Virginia Code; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Arlington County has made the foregoing findings and considered the recommendations of the County Manager, and has considered the purposes of the GLUP and the Comprehensive Plan as set forth in these documents together with the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance and the Code of Virginia,

THEREFORE, the Arlington County Board hereby determines that the Arlington County General Land Use Plan, an element of the Comprehensive Plan, accommodates growth in a manner consistent with the requirements for Urban Development Areas, and hereby certifies that Arlington County is in compliance with Virginia Code §15.2-2223.1.