

INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

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WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

FORUM ANNOUNCEMENT

Real Streets: New Approaches to Transportation

with

Dan Burden, national authority on pedestrian and bicycle facilities and programs

Tuesday, May 18, 2004

National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)
401 9th St., NW, North Lobby, Suite 500
6 pm, refreshments; 6:30 pm, program

New thinking among transportation planners is creating street designs and traffic management approaches that foster attractive places for pedestrians, bicyclists and cars. Learn from one of the country's leading voices on better designs for walking and bicycling. For more about Dan Burden, see: <http://www.walkable.org/>

RSVP: WRN, 202-667-5445, staff@washingtonregion.net. This event is free. Please arrive before 7 pm & bring photo ID. Gallery Place, Metro Center, Archives, Federal Triangle Metro stations. This is the third in WRN's series "Design Matters," see: www.washingtonregion.net for more information.

Affordable Housing Progress Report by WRN Shows Needs and Solutions

A new report released last week by WRN, "*The Affordable Housing Progress Report: What the Washington, D.C. Region's Jurisdictions Can Do to Combat the Crisis*," shows that the region's governments are falling behind affordable housing needs and could meet much more of the need by strengthening existing policies and adopting successful policies practiced in other parts of the country.

"We have a tremendous housing problem and thus far securing affordable housing in this region has been a story of one step forward and two steps back," noted Cheryl Cort, Executive Director of WRN. "For every new initiative, there are retreats in affordable housing programs

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Way Beyond Zoning: Form-Based Coding Shapes Good Places

By Ronald Eichner, WRN board member

Zoning has largely been a dismal failure in creating good places, according to Geoffrey Ferrell. But there is a promising alternative, and it was recently applied to Arlington County's Columbia Pike corridor.

Presenting at "Way Beyond Zoning," the April 13 WRN Forum Geoffrey Ferrell, a leading practitioner, showed how an innovative approach to zoning known as "form-based codes" works. Sometimes called "smart zoning," this technique goes beyond zoning, to do more than control inappropriate development, but to encourage the making of good places. Tim Lynch, Executive Director of the Columbia Pike Revitalization Corporation discussed citizen involvement during the planning process and the economic development incentives being employed along with the form-based codes in the Columbia Pike corridor in Arlington.

Ferrell began his presentation with a discussion of the failure of existing practices and traditional zoning with its "hyper-controls on use and density." Notwithstanding the worthy goal statements of twentieth century planning efforts, the results are "dismal," typified by automobile dominated landscapes, sprawl, the degradation of our environment and the social and experiential impoverishment of daily life. A "disjunction between words and action" can be seen in many aspects of his critique of the past 75 years of planning history. Of the modern planners who would have replaced what they saw as grimy city neighborhoods with tall residential buildings gleaming in fields of green and connected by streamlined cars on beautiful elevated highways, Ferrell recalls the sorry history of urban renewal, and notes "We built Le Corbusier's vision and it ain't pretty." Of Euclidean zoning with its emphasis on separation of uses and formulaic quantification, he noted that "FAR and density should be predictable but rarely are," illustrated by the one story building that covers a lot which has the same density as a four story building set back from the street. They have the same quantitative density, but

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WRN advocates transportation investments, land use policies, and neighborhood designs that enhance existing communities and the environment of the Washington D.C. region.

Cheryl Cort, Editor; Stephen Cerny, Stewart Schwartz, Ronald Eichner, Christopher Forinash, and Elizabeth Cox contributing writers.

(Affordable Housing Progress Report continued from page 1)

and spikes in market demand for housing. We are offering four actions jurisdictions should take to increase the amount of affordable housing.”

WRN compiled the report to document the region’s gaps in affordable housing, and point to actions local government could take to address the crisis.

The report found a significant need for affordable housing for the very low income but also for many in our community with moderate incomes, such as teachers, sales people and daycare workers. The report also found a great disparity in the amount of affordable housing in each jurisdiction relative to its population. The District of Columbia and Prince George’s County account for nearly half of the affordable units in the region though they only have one third of the region’s population. While Fairfax County has only 12 percent of the affordable housing supply, it has 23 percent of the region’s population.

“Fairfax County falls the farthest short in providing affordable housing. This pushes families with low to moderate incomes farther from their jobs,” said Cort.

One of the regional solutions called for in the report is a fair share of affordable housing in each jurisdiction to support the needs of residents and employers. Forcing people to live far from where they work due to housing costs increases traffic, raises overall household expenses, and reduces access to jobs.

Chris Zimmerman, Arlington County Board Member said, “Ensuring that each of our jurisdictions provides a fair share of housing for low- and moderate-income residents is clearly the right thing to do. It’s also a key component of a regional solution to traffic congestion and air pollution problems. In Arlington we’re working to preserve and increase affordable housing opportunities throughout our community, and especially in those areas with the greatest access to transit.”

WRN’s report highlights four nationally recognized affordable housing policies that if adopted by local jurisdictions can significantly contribute to producing affordable housing in the Washington metropolitan area. The report examines the performance of each of these policies as implemented by local governments and points to opportunities for these policies to be improved or adopted. The four key policies highlighted are:

Inclusionary Zoning – Requiring market-rate developments to include a percentage of low to moderate-income housing.

Dedicated Funding for Affordable Housing Trust Funds – Allocating a reliable source of funding to produce and preserve affordable housing.

Zoning for Housing Choices – Zoning that encourages a diversity of housing types. This can include allowing accessory apartments or “granny flats” as well as encouraging transit-oriented development.

Affordable Housing Preservation - Policies aimed at stabilizing affordable housing supply during rapidly changing markets, including property tax relief, anti-displacement efforts, tenant right to purchase, and moderation of rent increases.

David Flanagan, President of Elm Street Development, noted, “As a developer who has worked extensively with Montgomery County’s inclusionary zoning requirement, I know that these kinds of policies can work for local government, low income families and for the developer. With proper legislative requirements on both the government and the developer, we can both make money and provide affordable housing for those in need.”

The final finding of the report noted that while a few jurisdictions have adopted some policies to address affordable housing, no jurisdiction in our region has a comprehensive affordable housing strategy.

The Report is available on the WRN website at: <http://www.washingtonregion.net/html/AffHsgProgRpt.htm>

Walkable Community Workshops Come to the Washington Region, WRN Co-hosts Three D.C./Prince George’s Workshops

Between May 3 and 6, the Washington, D.C. region will host Walkable Community Workshops in eight locations. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking are sponsoring this series of half-day workshops that are intended to promote active living through community and street design. The instructors will be Peter Lagerwey of the City of Seattle and Gary McFadden of the National Center for Bicycling and Walking.

WRN is coordinating three of the workshops with local officials and community groups around the Minnesota Avenue, Fort Totten, and Capitol Heights (on the Prince George’s/D.C. border) Metro stations. For details see: www.washingtonregion.net.

Workshop locations and dates: May 3, Landmark Area of Alexandria; May 4, Richmond Highway (Route 1), Fairfax County; May 4, Oxon Hill, Prince George’s County; May 5, Olney Town Center, Montgomery County; May 5, Long Branch area of East Silver Spring, Montgomery Co.; May 6, Minnesota Avenue Station Metro Area; May 6, Capitol Heights; May 7, Fort Totten. For more contact Michael Farrell at COG, 202-962-3760, mfarrell@mwkog.org or Alphonso Coles at WRN, 202-777-5445 or email acoles@washingtonregion.net.

(Way Beyond Zoning continued from page 1)

very different urban form. Tragically, we build what's in the zoning code; we follow the rules; and wonder, "is that all there is?"

A code should "be thinking about the city, the street" not technical specifications. Cities can be seen in terms of form, management and density/use. The emphasis should be on form to make good places. "Form trumps use and density" because by controlling form you determine scale of a place, the kind of parking you can have, the size of buildings, etc. and therefore limit non-residential options to compatible uses.

Ferrell's form-based codes address the critical elements of buildings that make a good street: height (the number of floors and their height), siting (where does the building sit in relation to the street), architectural elements (windows, doors, and how they function), and uses (ground floor uses especially). Together these elements create the urban form, which is the result of public policy and is "the cake." The private sector brings architectural design, which is "icing on the cake."

A failure of current zoning practices is the focus on the block rather than the street. In traditional cities, different streets have different character. A given block often has different types of uses, building heights, or densities on each of its street frontages. Current zoning practices tend to treat the entire block as a homogenous unit, which may be easier for the planners, but certainly doesn't make for a lively diverse urban environment.

Along Columbia Pike, the codes describe a neighborhood of buildings three to eight stories, built to the sidewalk, with retail uses on the ground floor below office and residential uses. Ground floors are higher to accommodate shops and restaurants, with a lot of glass to underscore the continuity of public activity inside shops and on the public space of the sidewalk. Details such as second floor windows providing Jane Jacobs' famous "eyes on the street" to the inclusion of street trees to define and enhance the public space are also included in the code. Architectural style is not mandated, but durable urban materials are encouraged.

Tim Lynch reviewed a process that featured many charrettes and community meetings designed to "find out what people want rather than what they don't like about Columbia Pike." Participating in creating design proposals, presenting their vision, and defending those designs helped people work together productively. The resulting Columbia Pike Masterplan grew out of the charrettes and elaborate computer visualizations of the transformation of Columbia Pike. The form-based codes provide "rules for predictable growth" that would get the community "the pretty pictures

the architect showed us."

Arlington established economic incentives to encourage developers to use the form-based codes (they are voluntary), including speedy administrative approvals, since the planning and design issues have been incorporated already; parking facilities supported by tax increment financing; a commercial revitalization rehabilitation tax exemption for smaller projects; and high technology tax incentives.

Lynch noted that the ease of use and predictability of the form-based codes and the clarity of the economic incentives are attractive to the development community, and many proposals are now in the pipeline. Small sites are not required to provide on-site parking, but can contribute to a fund. Ferrell added "Parking requirements are evil," explaining that they are "designed for situations which don't exist" in urban situations, where you do not drive from a retail store to a restaurant, to your office, etc. Under typical parking requirements, "your car has 4 or 5 spaces all over town." Rather, we should think of parking as a community issue, a management issue, primarily." Lynch believes that this approach to parking in the Columbia Pike revitalization area has allowed smaller developers to participate in the revitalization, and has contributed to, and reflects, the diversity of the Columbia Pike community.

This event was the second of a five-part Spring 2004 Forum series called "Design Matters: Building Livability." The series looks at approaches and solutions that create livable neighborhoods. Recognizing that to be successful, transit-oriented development must be more than building near a Metro, WRN encourages the creation of attractive, convenient, diverse and walkable neighborhoods. The next Forum in series is "Real Streets" with nationally recognized pedestrian expert Dan Burden, May 18, see: www.washingtonregion.net.

Support *Intersect*, Join WRN

This newsletter is a free service. Please help WRN continue to report on these issues important to livable communities; join WRN and support *Intersect*. WRN welcomes all donations but a basic membership is \$35 for individuals and \$200 for organizations. Contribution forms are available on our website: <http://www.washingtonregion.net/html/contributionform.html>.

WRN thanks the following organizational donors and individuals for their support for WRN's efforts to promote livable communities for the Washington region: Grace Malakoff, Peter Harnik, Mayhood Company, David Frye, Steven C. Hill, and David DeCamp.

Dulles Rail: Halfway There but Miles to Go

Opinion by Stephen Cerny and Chris Forinash,
WRN Board members

A long discussed plan for a new Metro line to Dulles Airport and beyond received a major boost on February 23 when the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors approved the creation of a special business tax district. That district would fund the 25 percent local share of the project for a \$1.5 billion first phase that would construct a line from just east of the West Falls Church station, through Tysons Corner, to Wiehle Avenue on the east side of Reston. A second phase, currently without a funding plan, would extend the line to Dulles Airport and Loudoun County. The tax district includes Tysons Corner and nonresidential areas within about a quarter of a mile of the Dulles Toll Road to a point approximately halfway between Wiehle Avenue and Reston Parkway. An earlier version of the tax district approved by the Board of Supervisors last year foundered when it was rejected by the Town of Herndon. That proposal would also have funded a Metro extension to Wiehle Avenue, but would have taxed commercial property owners as far west as Dulles Corner, several miles beyond the Wiehle station. The Town of Herndon rejected the earlier proposal because there was no guarantee that the line would be extended beyond Wiehle in a second phase, even though property owners in Herndon and the surrounding area would have contributed to the cost of the first phase.

Advocates of the Dulles rail project envision that an additional 25 percent of the cost of the project would be funded by the Commonwealth of Virginia, mostly through increased vehicle tolls on the Dulles Toll Road, and the remaining 50 percent by the federal government.

We have wrestled with the question of whether to support the Dulles rail project. On one hand, the line would provide a much-needed public transportation alternative to the severely congested Tysons Corner area and could encourage quality redevelopment in that poorly planned, pedestrian-hostile environment. The project's potential to foster sound mixed-use, transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly redevelopment around the rail stations in the Dulles corridor beyond Tysons Corner would also be a welcome improvement over the existing situation. Indeed, Fairfax County has amended its Comprehensive Plan to strongly encourage such redevelopment in both areas. In Reston, the plan amendments have the added advantage of encouraging the development of affordable housing in the areas surrounding the proposed stations. These plan changes would become effective once funding for the first phase of rail occurs.

However, there are drawbacks to the rail plan that have prevented us from supporting it in the past. First, extending Metro several miles into Loudoun County will surely promote additional suburban sprawl, with its attendant envi-

ronmental and infrastructure problems. We generally believe that new development should occur in established communities, especially around existing Metro stations, where there is plenty of land to meet a significant part of the region's growth needs for many years to come.

Another major area of concern is the cost of the project. Devoting such a tremendous amount (\$4 billion) of the region's resources to a single project that would benefit a corridor that already has a reasonable level of bus service, particularly in the Reston area, seems to be a misuse of scarce resources that might be better utilized elsewhere. A less costly alternative would be to extend Metro to Tysons Corner only. The corridor beyond could be served by improved bus service, and potentially new bus rapid transit (BRT) technologies. Reston already has good local bus service, which could be improved even further, and other areas such as Herndon and Oak Hill would benefit from the level of service Reston already has. Better connections could also be provided to the Fairfax County Government Center, Dulles Airport, George Mason University, and other areas that are difficult to access by public transportation at the present time.

By consuming a large share of the region's transit resources, a Dulles line would exacerbate ongoing problems in the existing Metrorail system. For example, the Orange line through Arlington is currently at crush loads through much of the morning peak period. Feeding additional traffic through this segment is not possible. Any funding for the Dulles line would have to include significant upgrades to capacity through this and potentially other "downstream" segments. Dedicated maintenance funds also fail to cover the needs of the current system. This problem must be solved before dedicating significant resources to extending the system's reach.

In a December 2003 letter to Karl Rohrer, Dulles Rail Project Manager for the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, WRN expressed serious reservations with the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the project. We criticized the inequitable local tax scheme, which ultimately made the original plan politically unfeasible, and took issue with the DEIS's brush-off of BRT options, which were never seriously considered.

Recent developments described above now suggest that funding for the first phase of the Dulles rail project may be ready to fall into place. We maintain that BRT should have been, and should in the future be seriously considered as an alternative to heavy rail west of Tysons Corner. Given these developments, we support the current plan for phase one because it will bring Metro to Tysons Corner, where it is sorely needed and would provide a strong incentive to redevelop the station areas on a human scale. The potential for well-designed, pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented rede-

velopment that would include a significant affordable housing component at the Wiehle station in Reston, tips the balance in favor of the project. The plan would include a smooth interface with feeder buses at the Wiehle station, which would provide an incentive for automobile commuters living west of the station to switch to public transit for the duration of their trips.

We still have serious concerns about a future second phase of the project, which would extend the Metro line deep into Loudoun County. Extending the line to Dulles Airport does not raise as many objections, but the Loudoun County segment would, as discussed earlier, induce sprawl and poor land use patterns in that area. The two proposed stations would be difficult to access and would require massive parking garages since just about everyone would need to drive to the stations. Loudoun commuters would likely be much better served by an improved bus and/or BRT system that would feed into the Metro line in Fairfax County. If current budget trends continue at the state and Federal level however, it is unlikely that a second phase of the Dulles rail project would be seriously considered any time soon, so stakeholders have a welcome chance to re-evaluate corridor and regional needs. Overall, the Washington region needs to invest in transportation projects that improve transportation performance while supporting more livable communities.

A Time to Choose Metro or Outer Beltways

Opinion by Stewart Schwartz, Coalition for Smarter Growth

The Intercounty Connector, Techway, and Western Transportation Corridor, all components of a potential Outer Beltway around Washington D.C., remain the top transportation priority of many regional business and development industry leaders.

Collectively, these projects could cost as much as \$8 to 10 billion to construct. The ICC alone will cost at least \$3 billion when financing costs are included and will involve borrowing against Maryland's future federal transportation revenues.

At the same time, fixing a maintenance backlog and meeting urgent demands from a growing ridership for Metro will require \$1.5 billion as soon as possible. Longer-term Metro needs have been estimated to cost billions more. Rail to Tyson's Corner will cost \$1.5 billion. Other key projects such as the Purple Line, a circumferential transit line connecting the spokes of the Metro system and near-Beltway job centers, face foot-dragging in Virginia and Maryland.

Any one of these major projects will likely require a special federal earmark over and above the share of federal funding given to each of the three jurisdictions. Let's also not forget that VDOT's push for I-81 expansion has it seeking all of the \$900 million in national "truck-lane" funds proposed by the House of Representatives. With Virginia and Maryland already the recipients of a \$900 million earmark for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, it is highly unlikely that the Washington, D.C. region will be able to win adequate federal funding for all of the mega-projects on its wish list. Beyond federal money, there's

clearly not enough state or local money to both maintain/expand Metro and build an Outer Beltway. Something will have to go.

The question for the business community and elected officials is, "Will you make Metro or the Outer Beltway your funding priority?"

It's about more than transportation dollars. The choice made will determine where and how the region will grow and who will benefit. In a recent study, Professor Robert Cervero concludes that, "the dominant effect of building roads is likely to reshuffle growth within a region, not to add jobs and households." This means that a decision to build the ICC and Western Bypass would be a key determinant of the location of future economic growth.

In "A Region Divided," the Brookings Institution documented that the east side of the region represented by Prince George's County, eastern D.C., and Northern Virginia Route 1 corridor, is falling behind the west in school performance, jobs, economic investment, and tax base. The Outer Beltway would further shift jobs and investment outward exacerbating this inequity and directly threatening the economic future of D.C., Prince George's and Route 1 communities. Concurrent failure to invest in Metro would mean declining service, loss of riders, and fewer Metro-oriented development projects. Metro has warned of a "death spiral" without more funding. Washington area residents, public officials and business leaders ought to be concerned.

Instead of Outer Beltways, the region should prioritize transit maintenance and investment to take advantage of the amazing economic development potential represented by 114 Metro, MARC and VRE stations. Prince George's and eastern D.C. have two-dozen Metrorail and MARC stations with little to no development. Development at these stations can spark reverse commuting in now-empty Metrorail cars improving economic and transportation efficiency. A study of a regional transit-oriented development future by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Environmental Defense showed real reductions in driving and congestion, not to mention the benefit of increased land protection, reduced air pollution, and improved access to jobs.

For suburban areas without rail transit, encouraging more walkable communities with a mix of homes, offices, retail, parks and public services, combined with a better grid of local streets and improved bus service would do more to reduce traffic and improve quality of life than a sprawl-inducing Outer Beltway.

It's time to face fiscal reality, we cannot afford both the Outer Beltway and Metro. We cannot afford to leave eastern D.C. and Prince George's behind in economic growth. We cannot afford outer beltways that magnify sprawl without reducing traffic congestion. And we have an obligation to preserve and enhance the economic and social health of our nation's capital. It's time for all of us, but especially the powerful business community to choose.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 24th to 28. **American Planning Association conference** in Washington, DC. See: www.apa.org

Saturday, April 24, 9am-3:30pm. **Workshop for Neighborhood Leaders.** The American Planning Association invites you to attend this special workshop to learn how planning tools and techniques can help you create and sustain viable neighborhoods. Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street NW, Washington, DC. \$35 registration fee (includes lunch). See www.planning.org/2004conference/pdf/neighborhoodwkpbrochure.pdf.

Wednesday, April 28, 8:30am-12:00pm. **Minority Planning Summit.** Hosted by the American Planning Association Omni Shoreham Hotel, 2500 Calvert Street NW, Washington, DC. Free but registration required. www.planning.org/2004conference/pdf/Minoritysummitbrochure.pdf

Wednesday, April 28, 7:00 - 8:30 pm. **Modern-Day Streetcars...Coming Soon to a Neighborhood Near You?** Hosted by the Citizens Advisory Committee of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board. At Benjamin Orr Elementary School, 2200 Minnesota Ave SE, Washington, DC. See www.mwcog.org.

May 3-6. **Walkable Community Workshops.** The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and the National Center for Bicycling and Walking are sponsoring workshops in the to promote active living through community and street design. See www.mwcog.org or <http://www.washingtonregion.net/html/walkablecommworkshops.htm>

May 6-8. **America Walks Conference.** The National Congress of Pedestrian Advocates 2004 will discuss this year's theme "Walking: Everybody's business-Revitalizing people and places" at the Hilton in Silver Spring, MD. See www.americawalk.org

May 7th - **Bike To Work Day**, see: <http://www.waba.org/new/bwd/index.php>

May 18, **Dan Burden**, national authority on bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs on: **"Real Streets: New Approaches to Transportation."** 6 pm, refreshments; 6:30 pm, program National Capital Planning Commission (NCPD) 401 9th St., NW, North Lobby, suite 500. RSVP: WRN, 202-667-5445, e-mail staff@washingtonregion.net.

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