

# INTERSECT

NEWSLETTER

December 21, 2005

OF THE

Volume 9 Number 6

WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

## FORUM ANNOUNCEMENT

### Designing D.C.'s Future:

Shaping Buildings and Public Spaces to Enhance  
Community Identity and Protect the Environment

with

**Dhiru Thadani**

Urban Designer, Ayers/Saint/Gross, Inc.

**Paul Morris**

Urban Designer, PB Placemaking

**Monday, January 30, 2006**

6:00 pm Refreshments; 6:30 pm Program

National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC)

401 9th Street, NW - North Lobby, Suite 500\*

New residents, buildings and businesses are filling in vacant lots and renovating buildings. Leading urban designers discuss how D.C. can guide new development so that new buildings enhance neighborhoods, reclaim auto-oriented commercial strips, restore neglected parks and public spaces, make transit stations vibrant village centers, and build greener.

RSVP (attendance only): WRN, 202-244-1105, or e-mail: [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net). This event is free of charge. For more about WRN, see: [www.washingtonregion.net](http://www.washingtonregion.net)

### Capitol Heights Metro Station

#### Development Plan Kicks Off

By Andy Fellows

On November 7-10, the Prince George's County planners hosted a four-day planning workshop or "charrette" for the creation of a development plan for the Capitol Heights Metro Station. Pre-charrette work included briefing of D.C. officials on alternative plan concepts. The location of the Capitol Heights Metro Station, sited at the border of the District of Columbia in Maryland on Route 214, poses great opportunity  
(CAPITOL HEIGHTS *Continued on page 2*)

### Metro Names Riders' Advisory Council

Continuing efforts to be more responsive to its customers, Metro established a 21-member Riders' Advisory Council that includes six individuals each from Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia, two at-large members and the head of Metro's Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee. WRN Board member Steve Cerny, a resident of Reston in Fairfax County, Virginia was appointed to the Council.

More than 940 individuals applied for the Council after Metro's Board approved its creation in September. The Council includes people with different riding patterns, people who use Metrobus, Metrorail and MetroAccess; transit-dependent people; people with disabilities; people who travel short distances and others who travel long distances.

### Kaine Touts Growth Management and Wins in Virginia

By Lisa Gress

Tim Kaine was elected Virginia's next Governor by nearly 6 percentage points after committing to better growth management and transportation policies for the state. Kaine won previous Republican strongholds such as Loudoun and Prince William Counties, a feat that even his popular predecessor had not been able to accomplish.

"Tim Kaine's focus on helping communities to better manage growth as the best approach to reducing traffic congestion tapped into passionate, bi-partisan concerns. It helped him to win significant votes in the heavily Republican outer suburbs," said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth and coordinator of a transportation reform campaign called Reconnecting Virginia. Kaine, the current Lieutenant Governor and former Mayor of Richmond, won by a wide margin in the Northern Virginia region, an area where voters are increasingly frustrated with the worsening traffic. Although Kaine campaigned heavily in the fast-growing outer suburbs of Loudoun and Prince William Counties expecting to soften his losses in the typically  
(KAINE *Continued on page 2*)

**WASHINGTON REGIONAL NETWORK**

**FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

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

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Cheryl Cort, editor; Stephen Wade, Lisa Gress, Andy Fellows; contributing writers.

*(KAINE continued from page 1)*

Republican-controlled counties, he won in both, by a margin of 6 and 2 percentage points, respectively.

Late in the campaign, Kaine began to focus on transportation and land use issues that concern Virginia's fast-growing suburban and exurban counties. Soon after, he pulled ahead of opponent Jerry Kilgore in the polls, whom he had trailed for much of the race. Kaine announced, "I'll give your community more power to stop out-of-control development that increases traffic." Further, Kaine told the Washington Post, "You have got to connect your land use decisions with transportation decisions. There are some who find that this is a huge and controversial concept, the notion that we shouldn't just automatically rezone and develop everything when the transportation infrastructure isn't in place to support it. I think that is such a common-sense value." (Washington Post, 10.18.05 Kaine Sounds Slow-Growth Note in Exurbs). Kaine has several town hall meetings scheduled for Northern Virginia in January. E-mail: [contactus@govelect.virginia.gov](mailto:contactus@govelect.virginia.gov)

*(CAPITOL HEIGHTS continued from page 1)*

for collaboration between transit-oriented development proponents in both jurisdictions. One example of such potential collaboration is the continuation of the Watts Branch trail from the District into Maryland as a hiker/biker trail and green space amenity in both communities.

The charrette was a four-day, collaborative planning and design workshop with the community to prepare a transit district development plan and transit district overlay zone that helps to shape future development in the immediate area of the Capitol Heights Metro Station. Participants viewed alternative concepts for development, and were invited to give feedback to these proposals. Attendance was fairly low, possibly reflecting the lack of controversy, and development, at the station thus far.

Much consensus was built on a desire for greater density of development, to consider already ongoing development on the District side, and a need for greater pedestrian-oriented spaces. Elected officials and staff from the town of Capitol Heights participated, as well as local residents and a representative of County Councilmember Camille Exum.

A "post charrette" presentation is planned for January 11, from 6-9pm, at a location yet to be determined. This planning effort is part of a larger Central Avenue Corridor Study, which contains three Metrorail stations along the Blue line: Capitol Heights, Addison Road, and Morgan Boulevard. For more information, call 301-952-3972 or visit: [http://www.mncppc.org/cpd/central\\_avenue.htm](http://www.mncppc.org/cpd/central_avenue.htm)

## **Transit Agency Agrees to Sell Land for Vienna Metro Project**

By Lisa Gress

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA or Metro) agreed to sell a small parcel of land to Pulte Homes for a mixed-use development adjacent to the Vienna Metro station. The 3.75 acre sliver of land will provide a critical link between the Metro station and MetroWest, a proposed transit-oriented project by Pulte Homes and Clark Realty.

The MetroWest project will bring 2250 residential units, office space and retail to a 56 acre plot of land at the Vienna Metro Station. In its testimony, the Coalition for Smarter Growth estimated that the same number of units would consume between 750 and 2250 acres if developed at a typical suburban density. "Transit-oriented, mixed-use and walkable development like that proposed for the Vienna Metro station offers the best opportunity to reduce traffic congestion, save open space, provide housing close to jobs, and accommodate growth expected in Fairfax County," said Cheryl Cort, Executive Director of WRN.

The sale of the land was postponed after Congressman Tom Davis initially threatened to withhold federal funding for Metro if the sale was completed. WMATA held a public hearing on the land sale on November 1 to hear comments from both proponents and opponents of the sale. The hearing was well attended by neighbors, environmentalists, business leaders and citizen-activists. Many supporters of the project turned out to speak in favor of the project.

Pulte Homes has agreed to pay for \$17 million in improvements at the Metro station including a wider access road, increased pedestrian access and an aggressive program to reduce driving. "We recognize neighborhood concerns centered on traffic and density, but as modified, this is a well-designed development made better by the hard work of Supervisor Smyth, Planning Commissioner Lawrence, the staff, and neighboring citizens. With the additional requirements for traffic management and retail -- especially a grocery store -- this mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented development will reduce car traffic significantly compared to typical large suburban projects in Fairfax," said Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. To view the plans for MetroWest, visit <http://metrowestva.com/siteplan.html>

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**[www.washingtonregion.net](http://www.washingtonregion.net)**

**How Should D.C. Grow?**

By Cheryl Cort

At a WRN forum on October 24, three long-time D.C. thinkers, researchers, and institution builders discussed how the District of Columbia and its residents should respond to the rapid change the city is experiencing.

Martha Ross provided an overall understanding of trends in the region and the city affecting quality of life, employment and opportunities. Ross pointed out that while the region has grown, D.C. has lost jobs and population. Between 1980 and 2000, D.C. lost 10 percent of its population, while the region gained almost 1.5 million people. In the future, however, D.C. is projected to gain population and jobs. The region's continued growth is testament to the area's robust economy that is performing above the national average and consistently has had one of the lowest employment rates in the country. But racial and economic disparities are growing. On average the region's and D.C.'s residents are highly educated compared to other cities and areas, but minorities attain far less education than whites. Without higher education, residents are cut off from employment. While these trends are troubling, Ross pointed out that creating access for disadvantaged people to the region's prosperity and growth is a better problem to have than the economic decline faced by cities like Detroit.

The region is increasingly diverse, with a large immigrant population settling mostly in the suburbs. African American residents are clustered on the east side of the region – concentrated in eastern D.C. and Prince George's County. Median income is highest on the western side of the region. The east-west income and race divide appears on a map as running through D.C. along a north-south axis roughly along 16<sup>th</sup> Street, NW and I-95. Eastern D.C. and inner Prince George's have the most neighborhoods with high poverty levels.

The region has experienced soaring housing prices. Low-income families have been especially hard-hit, many spending more half their incomes on housing.

D.C.'s finances have changed dramatically in recent years – posting healthy budget surpluses after years of deficits. This means that the city is not cutting programs. The strong growth in the tax base is largely due to residential property values and increasing incomes. Ross said that the city needs to grow its residential base in order to continue to strengthen its tax base. The city can only tax the incomes of people who live here, Ross said. D.C. needs more taxpayers and needs to boost the incomes of current residents so they can be part of a growth tax base, she explained.

(FORUM Continued on page 5)

**Montgomery Agricultural Reserve Gains New Protections**

By Lisa Gress

Montgomery County Council voted against the extension of sewer and water to private institutional facilities (PIFs) in the Agricultural Reserve in Montgomery County, Maryland. The vote supports the ideals behind the master plan of rural land preservation that created the Agricultural Reserve 25 years ago, according to preservation proponents.

PIFs are federally tax-exempt organizations such as churches, private schools, and daycare centers. Per zoning laws in Montgomery County, PIFs are permitted in any part of the county. However, the scale and location of these structures has changed dramatically in the last few years. Increasingly larger PIFs are being built on the outskirts of town rather than within the community the institution would serve.

To preserve the county's farmland and rural character, development in the 93,000 acre Agricultural Reserve is limited to one house per 25 acres. Development is further discouraged by the prohibition to extend sewer and water service to any facility in the reserve. The ban forces any building in the reserve to rely on septic systems that effectively limits its size. Until the recent Council vote, PIFs had been exempt from this rule.

(RESERVE Continued on page 4)

**Affordable Housing Compromise Reached for Arlington's Metro Corridors**

By Stephen Wade

Arlington's Affordable Housing Roundtable reached a compromise that requires developers to provide affordable housing (or fees in lieu) in new high-rise developments along the county's two Metro corridors. The County Board adopted this agreement on December 10 in the form of approved amendments to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance that will be used in the approval process of site plan projects. The County will now work with state representatives to have the ordinance codified in the Virginia General Assembly.

“This compromise is better than anything we have had before. We are going to get more housing, quantitatively, than we used to and now we have an unassailable, no question, bottom line expectation for affordable housing contributions,” said Chris Zimmerman, member of the County Board and Roundtable.

The compromise emerged from conflict over the last year about how Arlington County can request or require affordable housing in private development. The core dispute centered on who owns the value that is created when developers are

(ARLINGTON Continued on page 4)

## **D.C. Affordable Housing Options Severely Limited, Study Finds**

By Stephen Wade

Home prices in the District have risen at a double-digit pace since 2000, and rents in the city are rising faster than in most other parts of the region, according to the fourth annual "Housing in the Nation's Capital" report issued by the Fannie Mae Foundation. The report finds that while the effects of the District of Columbia's economic turnaround have strengthened many neighborhoods, others remain underdeveloped with respect to housing, education, and economic opportunity. Further, as the District's economy continues to prosper, housing costs also continue to spiral upward and affordable housing is disappearing.

"Many of our low-income residents—and increasingly many of our moderate-income residents—are victims of, rather than beneficiaries of, our housing boom," said Stacey D. Stewart,

(REPORT Continued on page 6)

(RESERVE Continued from page 3)

"While we believe that PIFs have an important role to play in the overall life of the county, we also believe that there are appropriate places other than the Agricultural Reserve where PIFs would be more consistent with the surroundings and where the infrastructure already exists to support them," stated Andrea Arnold, with the Montgomery Countryside Alliance. According to Arnold, allowing new PIFs to be built in the Agricultural Reserve will conflict directly with the reasons behind its creation 25 years ago by taking land out of agricultural production, increasing traffic and pollution, and degrading the rural character of the area. Arnold further stated that any new PIFs built in the Agricultural Reserve "should be consistent with the size and scope of existing PIFs, in addition to being consistent with the working farms and rural character of the Reserve."

Additionally, increased development in the Agricultural Reserve means increased impervious surfaces, contributing to runoff of contaminated stormwater that pollutes waterways and agricultural land. A working group convened by the Montgomery County Council has proposed a cap of 15-20 percent impervious surfaces. However, research shows that water quality begins to degrade after a watershed is 8 percent impervious. The Agricultural Reserve contains the last remaining healthy streams in the county. Further development would increase pollution in those streams and compromise the quality of the water leaving the reserve as well as in the rest of the county, according to Arnold.

In January, the Council will hold a hearing on the use of multi-use septic systems in the Agricultural Reserve. For updates, visit [www.solutionsnotsprawl.org/pifs2.htm](http://www.solutionsnotsprawl.org/pifs2.htm).

(ARLINGTON Continued from page 3)

granted the increased density that exists between what is allowed by-right in underlying zoning and the increased amount possible under the General Land Use Plan (GLUP). The county insisted that this is a publicly created value, while private property owners considered it their entitlement. The compromise establishes a legal precedent that the increased density is not strictly entitled to the property owner.

The compromise's three main tenets articulate how developers are required to contribute (either units or cash) to affordable housing production or preservation in and around the county's two Metro corridors. New residential developments will be required to contribute to affordable housing units or optional contributions as part of site plan projects when increased optional density is granted above 1.0 FAR. (FAR is the ratio of the floor area of a building to the area of the lot on which the building is located.)

Under the updated amendment, new developments will follow specific requirements, thus creating a clear path forward and streamlining the approvals process. Also, developers have four options to meet their affordable housing requirement: on-site units at 5 percent of the increased density above 1.0, off-site units nearby at 7.5 percent of increased density above 1.0, off-site units within the County at 10 percent of increased density above 1.0, or a cash contribution.

The framers of the compromise hope that the flexibility enables the requirement to be effective regardless of market conditions. "With an extremely strong luxury condominium market, it was a challenge to get many affordable units on site, because the economics make the depth of subsidy per unit very expensive for the number of people ultimately served," said Melissa Bondi, an Arlington Housing Commissioner who represented community interests on the Roundtable. "Now, in a slightly cooling condominium market, a rental apartment developer may find it more cost effective to build units onsite, increasing the stock of new units." The ordinance also allows developers to make deals with existing property owners to preserve units already serving families below median income. In addition, the cash contribution option is on a graduated scale so that the highest density projects, those that make the greatest profit, will provide a commensurate amount of money towards the county's affordable housing preservation efforts.

This agreement is in response to a lawsuit and subsequent bill in the General Assembly that would have greatly limited Arlington County's ability to encourage, require or accept affordable housing as part of private development.

For more information see the Affordable Housing Roundtable website, [http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/CPHD/housing/hpp/CPHDHousingHousing\\_infoRoundtable](http://www.co.arlington.va.us/Departments/CPHD/housing/hpp/CPHDHousingHousing_infoRoundtable).

(FORUM *Continued from page 3*)

Jim Gibson offered a long term perspective on D.C.'s revival and current struggle with housing affordability. He said that the growth in downtown residential development and the low office vacancy rates are the envy of many other cities, and the results of long term planning by the city government. Growth is even occurring in neighborhoods. From a low of the 1960s which saw explosive growth of the suburbs and the 1968 riots in the city, the D. C. and federal governments have invested billions in public infrastructure – namely the Metrorail system. These investments are paying off, he said.

Gibson said the question is how can we guide the current success of the city. A rise in homelessness is emerging, and working families are finding housing costs beyond their reach. Gibson said that the city is more polarized by race and income, and that concentrated poverty is increasing, rather than decreasing as it is in other cities.

An adequate supply of affordable housing is critical to sharing the benefits of a thriving city, Gibson said. He suggested that the revision to the comprehensive plan need to set the framework for addressing housing needs by creating an inclusive rather than exclusive approach to residential development. After years of loss to the suburbs, embarrassing political mismanagement and financial takeover by the D.C. Control board, D.C. has emerged as an attractive place to live and invest in again. A strong employment base, increased traffic congestion in the suburbs and the attractiveness of city neighborhoods is giving confidence to D.C. leaders. Segregation, however, persists as a huge contributing factor to inequality, he said. While most Blacks remain highly segregated, Hispanics are increasingly becoming segregated and class segregation within ethnic communities of color is growing.

In addition to land use polices as critical determinants of opportunity, the election of leaders committed to fairness and dignity for all D.C. residents is also a key to the city's future, according to Gibson. In addressing the question, "how should D.C. grow?," Gibson suggests: "I've said that we will have to plan well, especially with regard to long range policies and that we will need to elect good people to lead our government." He explained that we need to adopt policies that permit us to use the city's economic strength to invest in its people, especially those at the lower end of the economic spectrum. He said the city must also continue to upgrade public schools and monitor charter schools. But ultimately, Gibson believes that achieving our aspirations depends on a "geography of opportunity" – ample affordable housing in decent and safe neighborhoods for the full spectrum of our residents.

Gibson said that D.C. needs an arsenal of affordable housing policies, the least of which should be:

- a robust Affordable Housing Trust Fund that is grows in proportion to the new wealth being created;
- highly selective and appropriately targeted and strengthened rent controls;
- funding and policy assistance for tenant purchase of rental units converting to condominiums;
- a strong, mandatory inclusionary zoning policy that applies throughout the city;
- a District-funded housing voucher program;
- full implementation of the Mayor's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness;
- continuation and expansion of the current trend towards the creation of more mixed income housing developments throughout the city;
- substantial increase in monitoring, testing, and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and regulations.

Kathryn Smith, former Executive Director of Cultural Tourism D.C., said that change coming to D.C. must be managed so that it can tell the story of old and new places and show the history of places with meaning. Smith showed a photo of the fence exhibition that was displayed on the 1300 block of U Street N.W. depicting scenes from the area's early 20th century history when the neighborhood was a cultural and intellectual center of D.C. African American life. She talked about the unique features that make a place distinctive. She said that 8<sup>th</sup> Street/Barracks Row is one of the city's oldest commercial areas in the city because of its adjacency to the Navy Yard. She talked about how many places or buildings of historical significance are unmarked. She discussed how icons are places that hold memories – such as the Dupont Fountain or Ben's Chili Bowl, or the Atlas Theater on H Street, NE. Smith explained that historic preservation should be core to our planning for the future. She said that the Comprehensive Plan needs to cherish our unique assets as we grow and change. Current efforts to boost economic development and build off of physical assets such as Mainstreets, Business Improvement Districts, and the Great Streets Initiative need to reflect the soul of the city. Murals and signs that tell about the history of the neighborhood can help people learn about and preserve the stories of the community. In order to tell the story, the government, artists, and private investment are needed.

In the question and answer period, Gibson and Smith emphasized the need to put policies in place ahead of market pressures that displace small businesses and low and moderate income residents. Along with affordable housing programs such as inclusionary zoning, one audience member suggested rent control for small local businesses. To view the presentations from the forum, see <http://www.washingtonregion.net/events/pastevents/index.html#grow>

(REPORT Continued from page 4)

president and CEO of the Fannie Mae Foundation. “While it’s true that the District’s economic turnaround has strengthened many neighborhoods, these same market pressures are driving many out and blocking others from coming in,” said Stewart. “The District’s affordability crisis is having a disproportionate effect on low-income residents, on ethnic and racial minorities, and on working families. This is a troubling trend, with serious implications for our city’s rich cultural heritage,” Stewart added.

The report notes that in 2004, nearly half of all single-family homes in the city sold for more than \$400,000 and that more than 80 percent of the District’s current home sales market is now out of reach for a family supported by the salary of a school teacher. The latest data also show that the portion of District renters who are severely cost-burdened—paying half or more of their monthly income on housing—jumped from 18 percent to 23 percent between 2000 and 2004 alone.

Further, properties that have long provided affordable homes for low- and middle-income residents are being sold to new investors, renovated as luxury housing, or converted to condominiums. Also, according to the study, as housing prices rise across the District, minorities and lower-income families represent a dwindling share of home buyers, especially in neighborhoods that are experiencing the most intense market pressures. View the report at: <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org/publications/reports/hnc/2005/hnc2005.shtml>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Tues., Jan. 3, 6:30 PM.** Fairfax Transportation Town Hall hosted by Governor-Elect Tim Kaine. George Mason High School, Auditorium, 7124 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church. For more info, email [contactus@govelect.virginia.gov](mailto:contactus@govelect.virginia.gov).

**Thurs., Jan. 12, 12:30 - 1:30 PM.** “Realizing Affordable Housing Through Smart Growth” featuring Ralph Bennett, architect and University of Maryland professor, National Building Museum, 401 F Street NW (Judiciary Square Metro). See [www.nbm.org](http://www.nbm.org).

**Wed., Jan. 18, TBD.** Prince George’s County Zoning Hearing on West Hyattsville Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Proposed Plant. 14741 Gov. Oden Bowie Drive, 2nd floor, Upper Marlboro, MD.

**Jan. 26-28, 2006.** 5th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference, Denver, Colorado. Registration deadline January 9, 2006. [www.newpartners.org](http://www.newpartners.org).

**Mon., Jan. 30, 6 PM.** “Designing D.C.’s Future: Shaping Buildings and Public Spaces to Enhance Community Identify and Protect the Environment,” a WRN forum at NCPC, 401 9th Street, NW, Suite 500 (Gallery Place or Archives Metro). RSVP to WRN: 202-244-1105, [staff@washingtonregion.net](mailto:staff@washingtonregion.net). Doors close at 7 PM. see [www.washingtonregion.net](http://www.washingtonregion.net)

## Thanks!

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