

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 8, 2008

TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Ellen Cook, Acting Principal Planner  
Jason Purse, Senior Planner  
Kate Sipes, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Land Use Overview

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As the Steering Committee continues to discuss various sections of the Comprehensive Plan, staff planned an overview to the Land Use section well in advance of discussion of the technical report. Since there is a lot of background information to read through, staff wanted to provide as much lead time as possible for the Committee.

This memo will provide a brief an outline for the Land Use section, including important sections of the report and preliminary documents on policy issues such as growth management and the Primary Service Area. Since there are multiple large documents, staff does not anticipate getting through all of the discussion at this overview meeting, but hopes that the Committee will continue to evaluate these documents and use the blog to discuss some of the more important items before the Land Use technical report is presented in March.

The following section of the memo is an outline of important issues to Land Use. The first section lists topics that will be discussed further at the January land use applications and March technical report meetings. The second section discusses new information provided to the Committee for this meeting. The final section discusses much of the background information and policies that will require additional discussion prior to the March meeting. There will be a brief presentation on this last section at this December 8<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee meeting, as staff believes that starting discussion on these topics is important at an early stage in the process.

- I. **Major Sections of the Technical Report: focus of discussion in January and/or March**
  - a) *Development Trends*-Some information has already been presented in the Demographics, Population Needs, and Economic Climate sections. Additional information is still being gathered for the Land Use section.
  - b) *Regional Planning and Cooperation*-The City of Williamsburg, York County, and James City County have agreed to produce a regionally coordinated set of Comprehensive Plans and work will begin in 2010. During this Comprehensive Plan review, staff is mindful of this upcoming project and the avenues it may offer to better plan certain areas or issues.

- c) *Land Use Descriptions and Development Standards*-Land Use descriptions are integrally related to the Land Use Map. The Comprehensive Plan has 12 designations, plus descriptions of the Primary Service Area, the Enterprise Zone, and Inconsistency Areas. The 12 designations are Rural Lands; Low Density Residential; Moderate Density Residential; Neighborhood Commercial; Community Commercial; Limited Industry; General Industry; Mixed Use; Conservation Area; Park, Public, or Semi-Public Open Space; Williamsburg-Jamestown Airport; and State, Federal, and County Land. Language changes will be more thoroughly discussed during the Land Use application Committee meetings in January and the strikethrough format of the Land Use technical report in March.
- d) *Goals, Strategies, and Actions*-As with other sections, staff is still working on changes to this section, and those changes will be presented during the March Committee meeting.
- e) *Incorporation of plans completed since the last Comprehensive Plan update*- These include the Toano Community Character Area Study Design Guidelines, Five Forks Area Study, and the Jamestown: Shaping Our Shores study.

## **II. New Information Provided for Today's Overview Meeting**

- a) *Citizen Input*-Copies of the full citizen comments have been previously provided to the Committee, and a summarized version of Land Use related comments was provided as a reading for today's meeting. Staff will go over specifics in these comments during the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting. As with other sections, these comments will be directly influencing the priorities of staff's recommended changes to the technical report.
- b) *Consultant Work*-Staff is working with the Renaissance Planning Group on a range of topics, including the following:
  - A review of new planning legislation
    - Urban Development Areas
    - Transfer of Development Rights
    - Impact Fees
    - Rural Clustering
  - An update to the 2003 Rural Lands study done in 2003
  - Potential and emerging planning tools and trends

A preliminary document has been provided for your review, in hopes that the Committee can begin to communicate with staff about these ideas via the blog. While not all of the topics are covered in the preliminary document, staff envisions having a complete report prior to the March meeting. Staff is also working with URS on traffic modeling, which includes work on population projects and build-out scenarios. Information on the first set of models will be presented at the Steering Committee meeting on December 15.

## **III. Major Sections of the Technical Report, including Growth Management and Development Policies: focus of discussion for the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting**

Another document the Committee received was the 2008 VAPA document "Managing Growth and Development in Virginia: A Review of Tools Available to Localities." A previous version of this document was heavily referenced in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, as the County uses many of the tools currently. Tools include the following:

- a) *Primary Service Area and Utility Policy*-A PSA and utility policy summary sheet was provided as a reading for the December overview meeting. A more in-depth analysis of the PSA was reviewed in that document, but goals of the PSA include:
- Efficiently utilize public facilities and services
  - ensure facilities and services are available where and when needed
  - increase public benefit per dollar spent
  - promote public health and safety through improved emergency response time
  - minimize well and septic failures
  - and preserve rural lands

Information on the independent water systems in the County was also provided.

*Other tools in conjunction with the PSA*-These include the Adequate Public School Facilities Policy, proffers, land preservation (Greenspace Fund and Purchase of Development Rights programs), infill and redevelopment, as well as legislative case submittal requirements, and regional planning.

- b) *Rural Lands*-A copy of the 2003 "Report on Development Outside the PSA" by consultant Milton Herd was included as a reading for this meeting as well. The report provided many recommendations that are again being considered for incorporation with this Comprehensive Plan.

The report suggested the following actions:

- Reaffirming the PSA
- Strengthening the subdivision ordinance to incentivize very low density residential development and creating disincentives for existing higher density development
- Refining the rural cluster zoning provision
- Consider implementing a lot-cap or sliding-scale zoning provision
- Continuing to use value assessment and Agricultural and Forestal District programs
- Continuing the Purchase of Development Rights program
- Promoting and facilitating easement donation
- And providing assistance for limited development plans

Since the last Comprehensive Plan a Steering Committee and Technical Committee met to discuss amendments to the R-8 and A-1 ordinances. The proposed amendments included four development options: fixed lot, conventional, base density cluster, and rural conservation cluster. The options had varied requirements for water and sewer provision. No conclusion on the

rural lands discussions have been made to this point, as discussions have been on hold for the past year.

- c) *Other Policies*-Large Retail Establishments: discusses the potential impacts (aesthetics, transportation, problems in recycling or adaptive re-use if abandoned), benefits (convenience, impacts on public finance), and desired standards (integration as a component of a larger retail and business enterprise, location on arterial roads, etc).

Strip Commercial Development: description of these issues associated with strip commercial development and the means for addressing it through the different scales of development suggested by the Commercial and Mixed Use designations of the Land Use Map as well as the general performance zoning principles in the Zoning Ordinance.

In summary, Land Use issues will be discussed during three sets of Steering Committee meetings. The first set is the December 8<sup>th</sup> overview to begin the process of identifying and discussing the major issues; the second set is three meetings in January to discuss the land use designation change applications; and the third set is two meetings in March to discuss the Technical report and reach final decisions on the issues, and the related land use map language and goals, strategies and actions.