



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

DATE: November 22, 2016

TO: Board and Commission Liaisons

FROM: Paul Stoddard, AICP, Principal Planner
Shelley Mastran, Planning Consultant

SUBJECT: Visioning Update

Request

City staff is continuing to engage the public in a visioning process and to update the Vision Chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan. At a work session on November 21, 2016, City staff received concurrence from Council to distribute the draft Vision Statement and Vision Chapter to Boards and Commissions for review and comment.

Please distribute the attached draft vision chapter to your Board or Commission members and schedule the item for review so that comments can be returned by January 23, 2017 (and sooner, if possible). Returning comments by that date will ensure that feedback can be incorporated into the draft chapter before the Planning Commission and Council take action.

Feedback

Boards and Commissions are free to comment on any portion of the draft chapter. The following questions are provided to draw attention to particular aspects of the draft.

1. Do the draft Vision and Core Values (pp. 14-15) capture the interests of your group?
2. Can the draft Community Indicators (pp. 16-17) meaningfully track progress on the interests of your group?
3. What's missing in the draft materials?

1. Project Scope – What is Visioning?

Visioning is the process a community undergoes to discuss what it wants to be and look like in the next 20 to 25 years. Visioning engages the public in conversations about values and principles that will help shape the community in the future. Through visioning, a community states succinctly what it wants to be and articulates the values around which to structure its future.

The City is undertaking a visioning process at this time as part of the ongoing review and update of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Virginia law requires comprehensive plans to be reviewed and updated every five years. The City of Falls Church is working through the updates chapter by chapter. Most

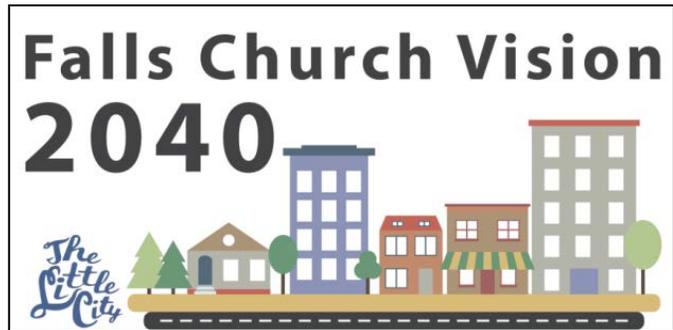
recently, the City adopted Mobility for all Modes (2014) and Parks for People (2015), updates replacements for the Transportation Chapter and Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Chapter, respectively.

The visioning process will help staff draft the revised Vision Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. The visioning process and the updated Vision Chapter will provide an overarching set of principles to guide future planning efforts and provide a compass for identifying priority investments.

What makes a good vision statement?

A good vision statement is a concise statement of what kind of place a community wants to be. Borrowing from Berke, et. al. in their classic *Urban Land Use Planning* text, a vision statement should include the following:

- Broadly held public values,
- Matters of concern that are widely agreed upon,
- Major assets of the community,
- Trends that can potentially impact the future of the community, and
- A vision of what the community wants to become.



2. Public Engagement – Building an Inclusive Vision

The Comprehensive Plan belongs to all members of the community. As such, City staff is committed to involving the public in updating the City’s Vision statement. To date, City staff has used numerous tools to involve the community. Through these tools, approximately 918 people have participated in the visioning effort (see table below).

Summary and detailed reports for all of the public engagement events are attached and available on the project webpage, www.fallschurchva.gov/vision.

Event	# of Participants	Date	Format
Community Meeting #1	80	June 18, 2016	Presentations, facilitated discussions, dot voting on vision principles and activity centers
School Town Hall	125	June 17, 2016 and 20, 2016	Presentations, speakers, and open facilitated discussion
4 Pop-Ups, Building the Vision	129	August 6, 17, 24, and 31, 2016	Dot voting on easels set up at locations throughout the City
Survey	472	August 1 through September 9, 2016	Eleven questions and collection of comments
Community Meeting #2	51	October 1, 2016	Presentations, discussions, dot voting, and post-it notes with comments
Pop-Up, Reviewing the Vision	61	November 5, 2016	Dot voting on easel set up at the Farmers Market
Total	918		

Table 1: Participation in visioning public engagement events

Planning Context

Updating the City’s vision statement is not a “blank slate” exercise. Planning happens within the context of the City’s history as well as regional and national trends. That being the case, the vision process seeks to blend three streams of information – (1) public input, (2) existing City plans and policies, and (3) best practices.

Balancing Inputs

Since planning involves multiple streams of information, selecting the right level of public engagement is important for balancing those inputs. Through this effort, staff is working directly with the public to (1) understand concerns and aspirations, (2) incorporate that information into the updated vision statement and principles, and (3) regularly report on how public feedback is being incorporated.

3. Reviewing the Draft Vision Chapter

The draft vision chapter (attached) provides a historical summary of planning and development in the City and lays out a vision for the future of the City. The chapter is broken down into the following components:

1. Legal Authority for Comprehensive Planning
2. Development History in the City
3. Geography of the City
4. Planning the City: Past, Present, and Future
5. The Planning Process
6. Vision Statement and Core Values
7. Community Indicators
8. How to Use this Plan

The key policy pieces of the draft chapter are the (1) vision statement, (2) principles, and (3) community indicators.

Vision Statement

The draft vision statement is a product of the public engagement process. Staff developed the statement by reviewing input from the public engagement process (see above) and mapping that input onto the framework of what makes a good vision statement (see above). The draft vision statement reads:

In the year 2040, the City of Falls Church is a vibrant, walkable, safe, small city in Northern Virginia. Falls Church keeps pace with regional growth, while strengthening its identity as a special place. The City invests in its schools, neighborhoods, and natural environment. The City celebrates its history, community character, and cultural diversity. A growing population and economy and the continual rejuvenation of commercial areas support the City's high quality of life.

Principles

The draft vision statement is supported by a set of principles. Whereas a vision statement describes what a community wants to be, the principles describe the supporting pieces that make that vision possible. The draft principles included in the plan are:

- Community Character/Urban Form
- Economic Sustainability
- Education
- Efficient Transportation
- Environmental Sustainability
- Housing/Diversity and Social Sustainability
- Public Health and Safety
- Good and Responsive Governance

Community Indicators

Community Indicators track progress against adopted goals. Community Indicators are numerical measures that can be used to track progress. Regular Community Indicator reports allow the City to periodically revisit its adopted goals and assess progress against them. A handful of indicators for each principle could be identified to monitor progress. For example, monitoring the percentage of streetscape-matching adopted design guidelines, the jobs/housing balance, and the high school graduation rate can measure success against the principles of Community Character, Economic Sustainability, and Education respectively.

The draft chapter includes several draft indicators for each principle. City staff will prepare a brief report every 2 years to track the draft indicators. Staff will present the report to the City Council and the Planning Commission and post it on the City's website.

4. List of Attachments

1. Draft Vision Chapter
2. Public Engagement Reports