

Falls Church Vision 2040



Community Meeting #1, Kickoff June 18, 2016 Meeting Report

Overview

The first public visioning meeting took place from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, June 18, 2016. Approximately 80-90 people attended the meeting. The purpose was to educate the public about the Visioning process that will lead to updating and revising the Vision chapter of the Comprehensive Plan and to receive input on the City's vision and values.

Overall, City staff considered the Visioning Kickoff meeting a success. The guest speakers were provocative and spoke to important issues in the City. Many of the participants were new to planning meetings. The discussions, drawing exercise, and dot voting all yielded information that will contribute to the revision of the Vision chapter.

Outcomes

The presentations were educational and very well received. Each covered a distinct aspect of important issues facing the City: community character and place making; commercial sustainability; and demographic changes.

The facilitated discussions provided an opportunity for participants to express their ideas on the four topic areas. The flip-chart notes from the discussions are captured in a separate report (Facilitated Discussion Notes).

The drawing exercises provided another opportunity to express opinions on what participants value in Falls Church and what they would like to see in the City's future. The ideas expressed are captured in a separate report (Drawing Exercise Takeaways).

One dot-voting exercise asked participants to select 3 of the principles currently in the Comprehensive Plan that they most want to see in the revised Vision Statement. The second exercise asked them to vote for 3 out of 8 pictured activity centers they liked the best. Among the principles, Community Character and Environment were deemed most important. Among the activity centers, the most preferred were Shirlington and Old Town Alexandria. The full results of the dot-voting exercises are captured in a separate report (Notes – Dot Voting).

Schedule

The meeting schedule was as follows:

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome, Introductions, Meeting Format: Mayor Tartar and Vice Mayor Connelly

9:10 – 10:10 Presentations:

- Roger Lewis, Professor Emeritus of Architecture, University of Maryland: “Place Making”
- Ken Billingsley, Director of Demographics and Information, Northern Virginia Regional Commission: “Regional Demographic Trends”
- Erik Pelton, Vice Chairman, Economic Development Authority: “Development Trends in Falls Church”
- Bob Wulff, Director, George Mason University’s Center for Real Estate Entrepreneurship: “Real Estate Development Realities and the Scale of Development”

10:10 – 10:20 BREAK

10:20 – 11:25 Facilitated Discussions: Community Character, Commercial Redevelopment, Transportation, and Financial Stability

Exercise: Your Vision of “The Little City” : On the colored paper provided at the small-group tables, draw responses to the questions below. Answer individually throughout the presentations and discussions. Tape your drawings on the banners posted on the walls.

- Draw: What was your first memory of the City of Falls Church? (past view)
- Draw: What do you like now about the City and want to preserve? (present view)
- Draw: What do you want changed in the City’s future? (future view)

11:25 – 11:45 Principles of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and Visual Preference Survey

11:45 – Noon Report Out and Wrap Up

List of Attachments

1. Notes from Facilitated Discussions
2. Notes from Drawing Exercise
3. Notes from Dot Voting Exercise

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Community Meeting #1, Kickoff June 18, 2016 Facilitated Discussions Notes

Introduction

During the Visioning Kickoff Meeting attendees participated in small-group discussions on four interrelated topics. The notes below summarize the important points made from all the groups.

Community Character

Meeting participants wanted to see a vibrant, attractive downtown streetscape and residential neighborhoods with abundant trees and a small-town feel.

DOWNTOWN

- Make downtown more vibrant, with wider sidewalks, pocket parks, sitting areas, dog parks
- Increase streetscape continuity along all of Broad Street; plant more trees
- Prevent new commercial development from “privatizing” the streetscape; have passages or archways and public space to break up facades
- Keep/increase flowers, hanging baskets, and banners along streets
- Ensure that new architecture complements historic architecture

THE W&OD

- Create micro-parks along the W&OD
- Concentrate redevelopment where W&OD crosses Route 7 and N. Washington Street

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

- Limit size of new homes on small lots: change and/or enforce setbacks; keep residential areas green
- Keep Falls Church quirky, with a small-town feel
- Attract millennials, develop affordable senior housing, increase income diversity

Commercial Redevelopment

Meeting participants expressed a desire to attract a diversity of new businesses that would contribute positively to the City's tax base.

BUSINESSES NEEDED

- Seek out these businesses/type of development: clothing stores, small business condos, live/work space, day-care and other youth-driven and family-oriented businesses, an ice rink, museum, art galleries, tech companies, specialty medical facilities, microbrewery, quality restaurants, venues for outdoor musicians, more hotels, pop-up businesses, Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, entertainment businesses

BUSINESSES NOT NEEDED

- Have fewer yoga studios, florists, and psychic readers

OTHER

- Create wayfinding signage downtown
- Require open space or plazas (with water features) in new developments
- Market clusters of business within the City
- Develop the Gordon Road area into a town center

Transportation

Meeting participants reinforced the importance of multi-modality in the City, with increased pedestrian, bicycle, and public transportation opportunities as well as consolidated parking.

BICYCLES AND PEDESTRIANS

- Ensure a sense of safety for bicyclists and pedestrians along streets and crosswalks
- Make bicycling easier with better routes, more information on routes, more bike racks, more benches
- Make sidewalks wider and safer; install more crosswalks

PARKING

- Have centralized parking for regional visitors
- Have more permit parking in residential neighborhoods

MINIMIZING AUTO IMPACTS

- Develop more bus/shuttle options, car sharing, Uber
- Install traffic-calming measures, especially near schools

Financial Stability

Meeting participants across multiple groups identified a desire to maintain a stable tax rate and to support development that has positive fiscal impacts.

Revenue

- Find other sources of revenue
- Capture through traffic to increase business activity/revenue
- Increase the number of buildings with positive fiscal returns, like hotels

- Use land more efficiently, maximize building space while reducing surface parking
- encourage commercial development without residential
- Evaluate the amount of additional residential population needed to support new commercial development

Expenditures

- Use public spaces and buildings more efficiently by building structures for multiple uses.
- Attract millennials while maintaining the boomer population
- determine a target percentage of households with children for fiscal sustainability

Equity

- Redistribute the tax burden: raise more from large businesses, lower or stabilize tax on small businesses and homeowners, perhaps through a special business tax district

Analysis

- Explore alternatives or adjustments to the fiscal impact model
- Analyze fiscal and economic implications of financing the new high school

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Community Meeting #1, Kickoff June 18, 2016 Drawing Exercise Notes

Introduction

During the Visioning Kickoff meeting, we asked participants to draw their answers to three questions. Colored paper and markers were provided at each table, and participants could draw throughout the meeting. They posted their answers on the wall.

Below are summaries of the answers provided to each question, grouped according to general topic. Note: in a majority of cases, participants wrote their answers and did not draw.

What was your first memory of the City of Falls Church?

Community Character

- Mix of housing stock; mix of old and new commercial uses
- Mixed community
- Quirky stores
- Adorable town down W. Broad, but where was City center?
- Historic small-town character
- Broad Street: right out of the '50s
- Green space, trees, residential neighborhoods
- Neighborhood streets

Mobility/Activity

- Walkability
- Being able to walk to restaurants, stores and music
- Walking and biking to bike path, West Broad
- Getting married, with everyone walking from church to the reception down the street
- Location between Seven Corners and Great Falls
- Kids playing football in neighborhood with ice cream truck
- Biking
- Marching band
- 4 Ps, music

Schools

- Bidding war for a house because of excellent schools
- Excellent schools

- George Mason High

Specific Landmarks

- Farmers market, Cherry Hill Park
- Tinner Hill Arch
- Cherry Hill Park
- Red Lobster
- Oakwood Apartments
- Duck Pin Alley
- State Theater
- Corner of West Broad and Lee Highway (1958) with Falls Church Bank, Brown's, Robinson's 5 and 10, and dry cleaner's
- State Theater: \$1.00 movies

What do you like now about the City and want to preserve?

Community Character/Urban Form

- Heritage of the Colonial; The Falls Church
- History plus innovation and moving ahead
- Historic character providing a small-town character
- Mix of development with quirky stores and local flavor
- Mixed community of homes, townhomes, and apartments
- Neighborhoods
- Hometown feel, sense of community
- Beach shack
- Free parking
- Easy parking
- Small business community
- Small stores
- The Flower Building
- Restaurants and new streetscapes
- Charming architecture
- Small iconic residential buildings
- Outdoor cafes
- Farmers market (2)
- State Theater (2)
- Old houses and buildings
- New street furniture
- Tree-lined streets; tree-lined streets with holiday lights

Mobility

- Walkability (7)
- Biking, bike paths (3)
- W&OD Trail (3) with connections
- Availability of public transportation

Civic Institutions and Programs

- The school system (3)
- Educational excellence
- VPIS
- Availability of City Council
- Civic spirit, engaged people
- Responsive local government services
- DMV monthly visit
- Safety
- Concerts in the park (3)
- Small-town celebrations: Memorial Day parade, fireworks on 4th, Santa on firetruck, New Year's event

Parks, Trees, and Green Space

- Trees (7)
- Our City parks (5)
- Amazing parks: Cherry Hill and neighborhood parks
- Howard Herman Park (2)
- Green spaces (2)
- Birds
- Wildlife

Draw what you desire in the City's future

Community Character/Streetscapes

- Improved common areas (2)
- Lots of gathering places: indoors, outdoors, commercial, public
- More benches, small tables and chairs, bike racks, free library stands, food/coffee trucks
- Outside art work, musicians, cafes, passages and arches in front of buildings
- Underground wires
- Improved streetscape on Washington Street commercial corridor
- Better architecture on new buildings
- Improvement on Lee Highway
- Bigger setbacks
- Consistency of façade design in new buildings
- Tree-lined streets (2)
- Continuity between Applebees to high school on W. Broad: signs, flags, flowers
- Improved areas around Metro

Commercial Land Uses

- Outdoor restaurants (2)
- More stores and restaurants
- Performing arts stage and fountain with unique restaurants and shopping
- Fewer apartments; more office buildings
- Offices of the future: incubators, office sharing
- More high-end, destination restaurants; mix of restaurants (4)
- Mid-tier clothing stores
- J.C. Penney
- Stronger business community with quality jobs

- Not like Mosaic

Mobility

- Walkability (2)
- Better bike and walking options (3)
- Improved crossings for pedestrians on Broad and 29
- Better routes for kids to walk/bike to school, especially the GM/MEH campus
- Large, wide sidewalks (3)
- Wider roads and pedestrian bridges
- Less traffic
- More reliable Metro to DC
- Smarter public transportation
- Jitney to Metro

Parking

- More parking for visitors; more renters' parking
- Paid public parking
- Larger parking spaces in new buildings
- Residential permit parking

Parks, Trees, and Green Space

- Parks and plazas
- Trees
- Peaceful parks, wider sidewalks, and more trees
- Improved parks (playground equipment, plantings)
- Culture and parks
- Wildlife
- More green open space
- Green; healthy
- More pocket parks
- Ice rink, pools, ball fields

Schools

- Strong programs at schools with athletic fields and outdoor spaces
- Maintain brilliant school system (3)
- New Mt. Daniel School
- New George Mason High School (2)

Fiscal Conditions

- Fiscal solvency
- Affordability for retirees
- Support for small, local businesses

Energy

- Energy efficiency
- Net zero district energy loop
- Well-building standards
- Resiliency building codes

Other

- Greater diversity (2)
- Stop naming things for George Mason, a slave owner
- Keep history at the forefront

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Community Meeting #1, Kickoff June 18, 2016 Dot-Voting Notes

Introduction

During the Visioning Kickoff Meeting attendees participated in two dot-voting exercises. Participants were given 3 red dots with which to vote for the visions or principles in the Vision Statement of the current Comprehensive Plan that they feel are most important to include in a revised Vision Statement. They were given 3 blue dots with which to select the activity centers (out of 8 pictured) that they like the most. The notes below summarize the results of the dot voting.

Values or Principles in the City's Current Vision Statement

Value /Principle	Number of Votes
Community Character	21
Environment	21
Education	15
Transportation	15
Commercial Development	13
Diversity/Housing	11

Activity Centers Liked the Most

Activity Center	Number of Votes
Shirlington	25
Old Town Alexandria	24
Mosaic	20
Falls Church	14
Downtown Fairfax City	8
Ballston	2
Tysons Corner	0
Braddock Road Metro	0