

Falls Church Vision 2040



High School Visioning Session June 17 and 20, 2016 Meeting Report

Overview

Five classes of 10th graders (approximately 125 students) at George Mason High School participated in a Town Hall Meeting in June. Each session featured a guest speaker from the City, followed by a PowerPoint presentation and discussion facilitated by Vice Mayor Marybeth Connelly.

Students were asked to discuss their first memories of Falls Church, positive and negative changes to the community, problems that they thought could be addressed.

As might be expected, the George Mason 10th graders seemed to be focused on (1) mobility (wanting the City to be easy to walk in and frustrated about obstacles to walkability) and (2) destination locations where they could meet friends and have good experiences.

The sections below summarize the student feedback on the specific discussion topics.

Positive Changes in Falls Church

Students across the classes most often cited Harris Teeter, parks (Howard E. Herman, West End), the crosswalk at West Street near Lee, new shops and restaurants, and bicycle facilities as positive changes in the City.

Negative Changes in Falls Church

Students across the classes most often cited construction, traffic, tall buildings, too many apartments, too many auto shops, bicyclists not obeying rules and going too fast, sense of crowding, and lack of entertainment as negative changes in the City.

Specific Problems that could be Addressed

Students repeatedly brought up problems associated with walking around Falls Church: crosswalks needed (e.g., at Jackson and Parker and Jackson and Timber), too short signal or no signal for walkers (e.g., at Broad and Maple), sidewalks needing to be cleared after snow, and soap on the sidewalk at the car wash on W. Broad Street. Other addressable problems included flooding at Lincoln Park and a need for development near the Dunkin' Donuts.

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Block 1

Positive Changes in Falls Church

- Having 5th grade at TJ and really like the remodeled building.
- Howard Herman Park and bridge
- West End Park - much prettier, cute landscaping
- Movie theater\bringing in new businesses
- New development
- New bike facilities
- Reconstruction of West St. & addition of crosswalks.
- Lincoln Park renovations - always something going on there.
- More modern town. There is more to do.
- Harris Teeter
- Reconstruction of West St. - crosswalks
- Commitment to making city less car oriented.

Negative Changes in Falls Church

- Many bikers not obeying traffic rules, running through stop sign
- When you are driving, it is hard to tell what to do when the parking lane is also the bike lane.
- Bike crossing on Great Falls near near Cherry Hill park is understand for driver and biker.
- Bike lanes aren't good idea. It encourages bikers to be on street. Prefer them to stay on the bike path.
- Need communication with whole community on bikers needing to follow the law.
- Institute a bikers license.

Development/Commercial

- Auto body shops on route 7 ugly and bad feel
- Apartments will make public areas more crowded
- Big buildings near house makes it dark. They are too big and too tall and make it feel overcrowded.
- Harris Teeter - huge and spread out. Not attractive to look at, weirdly shaped. Prefers Flower Building -
- Mixed use because of schools and overcrowding. Mason used to be a special small elite public school, and it is getting too big.
- Big buildings are too big. Preferred lower
- Gun stores - makes me feel unsafe with all that is going on recently
- Small city feel going away with big buildings
- Parking minimums - make city really ugly - seeing gray parking lots along route 7 .
Would be better to have parking underground or hidden in the back

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“Why is there a Starbucks at Harris Teeter when there’s one across the street?”

- Apartments are different demographic
- Buying coffee in grocery store is impulse
- Certain amount of coffee drinkers
- One close to school is very convenient -
- Some have better parking than others.
- We should not be going to either Starbucks, but should be supporting Cafe Kindred.

What sort of things do we need in Falls Church?

- More opportunities to interact with kids your age who aren’t in your school system.
- More things for hs age group - summer camps that are more regional draw
- More sports stuff - get more kids involved at earlier age.
- Tech stuff/STEAM stuff
- Modeling after Mosaic developments - aimed at 20 year olds, movie theater, target & all other stuff
- Problem at mosaic - all apparel is women’s or - Leave mosaic to fairfax. Not practical
- Clothing shops - cool if we had some shops like tysons.
- Falls church is families and older people
- The more restaurants here the better.
- Wegmans
- We need a Chik-Fil-A
- We don’t need a Chik Fil A because we don’t support their anti LGBTQ policies.

Specific problems that could be addressed

- Car wash on Broad St. Sidewalk gets soapy and makes it really slippery. When they are drying cars they block sidewalk from pedestrians and bikes.
- Harris Teeter parking lot - could be a cut-through creating dangerous traffic. How will city enforce the cut-through traffic?
- Sidewalks not shoveled after storms. Whose responsibility is it and how to we get them plowed. Could FC follow NVRC’s adopt-a-hydrant program. Kids said they would do hydrants but would never shovel bus stops because they want to be out of school longer, not shorter, time.

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Block 3

Positive Changes in Falls Church

- Places to go and hang out: shops, Chipotle, Starbucks Harris Teeter adds a lot - another major grocery store.
- Like that is central, near community center
- Plenty of places to park bikes.
- Sidewalk on West St. by Taco Bell and crosswalk makes it easier to cross street

Negative Changes in Falls Church

- Too many car dealerships along W. Broad.- not necessary, wasting space.
- Construction bothers people and is disruptive
- School construction will make things tightly compressed. How will be squeeze it all in?
- Don't like construction. Feels crowded.
- Become more crowded - good to bring in more people, but feels suffocating.
- Turning into Tysons corner.
- Need to balance small and big.
- Large buildings on smaller plots - makes traffic
- You have to go out of the city to do entertaining things other than eat.
- A lot of living places but not a lot of entertainment.
- Would like higher speed limit on Broad St.

What Sort of Things do We Need in Falls Church

- Ice rink
- Only things to do are eat and bowl Laser tag
- Stuff to do for kids
- Put laser tag on top of bowling alley
- Community gym if you live in area that
- Pool and exercise area.
- Would like a pool - indoor pool in . Rent it out to other people to use it, like Wakefield does.

Specific problems that could be addressed

- Try to not block off streets as much when doing construction
- Difficult to ID the new green bikes as bike racks. Make the fact that it is a bike rack more obvious.
- Light timing on Broad St needs to be fixed.
- Near Dunkin Donuts, there is nothing there. Need construction and development in that area of town.
- Add dividers in GMHS boys bathroom between urinals - to provide privacy.

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Block 4

First memory of Falls Church

- Library
- Community center to play pingpong
- Farmers market - visiting it when she lived in Fairfax, before moving to FC
- Bike trail
- Pre-k at Mt. Daniel
- Cherry hill Park
- Mike's Deli
- Parking lot under Pearson - scary lights blink are very yellow
- Jumping off playground equipment at Mt. Daniel

Positive Changes in Falls Church

- Street lamp outside house on Lincoln was out and now is fixed
- New parks benches & outdoor focus
- Old areas that have been redeveloped
- Street repaving and water problems fixed (lives on Villa Ridge)
- Harris Teeter - student will be able to walk to work
- Park & greenery, encourage walking and biking
- People in Falls Church are open to change
- Previously lived in a more from urban area. Likes the urbanization and growth of FC.
- Likes to run and bike ride especially in Howard Herman Park
- New parks and maintenance, particularly Berman Park stream revitalization
- Like new businesses but height of buildings feels too big.
- Crosswalk near Lee and West Broad is greatly appreciated - but blocking off sidewalks is not appreciated.
- Skate Park
- Stoplight at Pennsylvania & Broad/ Rees Place makes it easier to get out when traffic is busy.
- New shops and restaurants - a lot to choose from
- Little parks
- Like that school is small. Easy to transition into this school.
- Really cracked road near Cafe Kindred. Better paving made it better
- Renovated parks
- New businesses: Sushi & Lucky Thai
- Traffic light by City Hall and improved intersection at Park & Little Falls
- Cozy look of Jessie Thackrey
- Howard Herman Park
- New stores. Excited for Harris Teeter

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- Having lived overseas, appreciate what the new buildings. There is more here similar to other places. Having lived in Toronto (too big) & Barbados (too small) Falls Church seems just right.

Negative Changes in Falls Church

- Construction and commercialization
- A while ago it took 6-8 months to get a permit to build a garage and do renovation. (We assured him it was better now!)
- Grove Ave. resident is worried about Mason Row. Doesn't like that tall building will block sun.. Traffic on Grove is really bad right now. It will get worse with construction
- If we are rebuilding GMHS and Mason Row there will be a lot of construction at one time.
- Doesn't like bike lanes . Cars park in the lane
- Don't like Kensington because employees and visitors may park on street.
- Difficult to walk in Broadmont. No sidewalks and street lamps are too dark.
- Too many banks.
- High rises seem overwhelming and distracting. Too close to street.
- Feels like we are maxing out on tall buildings
- Construction is disruptive.
- Hard that new development is not connected. It is just like islands and there is lots of ugly/scary stuff in between.
- Concern that so many apartments built.
- Signs in the middle of the street crosswalk on West make it crowded in the morning when driving to school.

Specific problems that could be addressed

- Add crosswalk at Jackson and Parker
- Add crosswalk at Jackson and Timber to cross Timber. Especially dangerous when TJ lets out, and there are cars, kids, bikes and buses.
- Parking on Jackson near condos at Washington St. is very tight, and used by some not in neighborhood.
- Near traffic light at Pennsylvania makes too many lights in a row. Need to recalibrate the traffic flow.
- Hard to cross Oak at Broad St. Maybe should move light from Lee & Broad to Oak & Broad.
- Better parking enforcement in neighborhoods.
- Long waits for light at West and Broad to cross Broad, and then there is barely time to cross the street.
- Walk signal light was broken at West & Broad, but is now fixed.
- No FCCPS bus service if you live within a mile, but some neighborhoods that are a mile on the map are longer than a mile to walk, and kind of dangerous - the cut through traffic is bad at Highland
- Paving of roads in Walnut/Lincoln neighborhood is inconsistent. After developers were done, they repaved roads, but they sunk and there are deep holes in the road.

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- Traffic light next to Oakwood on Roosevelt. Hard to know when you can cross
- Rain garden may not be working properly at bottom of Buxton. Gets a little flooded when it rains.
- Stop sign by Rite Aid is tilted at angle. Touching ground.
- Abortion clinic protestors are very aggressive, and confront students when they are minding their own business and walking to 7-11.

Block 6

First Memory of Falls Church

- Trees, across Virginia from the library (the ones that are gone now)
- McDonalds
- Taco Bell
- My house
- 4th of July celebration at GMHS (my first day in FCC)
- Giant
- TJ creek
- My apartment
- Baja Fresh
- The Red Lobster
- Camps at the Community Center

Positive Changes in Falls Church

- 24 hour grocery store coming
- 24-Hour Fitness
- Chipotle
- Lazy Sundae
- Fiber Optic internet
- W&OD Bike Trail
- How easy it is to walk everywhere
- Small town feel, little local shops
- Harris Teeter (they have free cookies)
- More trees
- More restaurants
- Crosswalk (and light) by Panera
- Rain gardens
- Community Center
- Crosswalks
- New buildings
- Walkability
- New creek near TJ
- More places to hangout
- More chains coming here

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- The people

Negative Changes in Falls Church

- Loss of trees across from Cherry Hill Park (now houses)
- Can we build a McDonald's in Falls Church? (to keep tax money here)
- Crime issues by Taco Bell
- Why are houses so expensive?
- Affordability
- Protesters at Abortion Clinic (interfere with my life)
- High rent
- Stop lights on Route 7
- Congestion
- Traffic
- Apartment buildings - more students - more than we have room to accommodate
- Loss of Mike Deli (it's walkable and affordable)
- Construction early in the morning and on weekends
- Fear that we will lose the small town businesses
- Hard to get out of FCC - Public transportation issues
- Boundaries aren't clear
- Roads are confusing (near Seven Corners)
- Historic and authentic places are going away (Anthony's, Mike's)
- Parking pass fee at high school
- Apartments in mixed use buildings lead to overcrowding in the schools
- Construction impedes sidewalk access
- All construction happening at the same time
- Big ugly houses
- Bikers don't stop, don't follow the rules
- No nature
- Tall buildings - makes the city look smaller
- Huge houses on tiny lots
- Safe, lots of walking, but back road street lights don't work (winter, walking home at 6:30 it's really dark)
- Broad Street could be prettier
- Slow speed limit
- Bike path is dark at night
- Too many stop lights all down Broad (faster to walk?)
- People who don't live on my street who park there making it difficult to pull out of driveways
- Too many cars parked on streets
- Smokers outside Giant
- Near TJ Elementary school - road closure at arrival and dismissal time.

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Specific problems that could be addressed

- Lincoln Park flooding - rain gardens haven't helped enough, still flooding but gardens interfere with park use
- Can we add traffic light at GMHS and Haycock?
- White streak of paint near Lincoln Ave by West where a builder left a mess.
- Pedestrian walk light by Doodlehopper (Broad & Maple) is 10 seconds - not long enough to cross safely.
- Walking to Berry Street - no cross walk - not enough crosswalks on East Broad
- GMHS bus is 31 minutes late on short Wednesday. So it really isn't short Wednesday!
- In 200 block of Poplar, there is giant hill with no signage that says dead end - unsafe for pedestrians, who almost get hit.
- Always people parking by my house (Little Falls) who don't live there
- Crosswalk without pedestrian walk signal (South Cherry crossing E. Broad toward Avalon)