

STAFFORD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
WORK SESSION MINUTES
October 10, 2012

The meeting of the Stafford County Planning Commission of Wednesday, October 10, 2012, was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairman Michael Rhodes in the Board of Supervisors Chambers of the County Administrative Center.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rhodes, Hirons, Apicella, Boswell, Hazard, Gibbons, and Schwartz

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Baker, McClendon, Zuraf, and Knighting

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Mr. Rhodes stated he did not believe roll call would be necessary. There were several members that were caught in traffic. Mr. Apicella, Mr. Hirons and Dr. Schwartz would be arriving later. He stated because 4 members were present, there was a quorum. He asked Mr. Zuraf to start his presentation.

3. DECLARATIONS OF DISQUALIFICATION

4. DISCUSSION OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. Background – Form of the Comprehensive Plan

Comparison of previous 2003 Land Use Plan to current 2010 Land Use Plan

Code of Virginia Sec 15.2-2223.1

How UDAs came into being – Location, size, number of UDAs

Mr. Zuraf gave a presentation and explained the Commission members received a memo with background information in their package. He presented some of the background information on the current Urban Development Areas that were recommended in the Comprehensive Plan which also included the basis for the Urban Development areas as they exist and details on each Urban Development Area. He stated the Commission also received new population projections that were released October 1, 2012. Mr. Rhodes asked if the population was a preliminary or final. Mr. Zuraf stated it was a preliminary projection. He stated Kevin Burns of the George Washington Regional Commission presented comments to Weldon-Cooper and he thought the Commission had received that as well as Weldon-Cooper's response to some of the comments. So there was already dialogue going back and forth and in his opinion the intent was Weldon-Cooper would collect the comments from the localities and regions and work to develop final projections that would be released at the end of the year. He stated he would like to give the Commission a broad look at the Urban Development Areas. Mr. Rhodes stated he thought that would be very helpful because there had been a lot of transition and turnover in the Planning Commission during the time dealing with UDAs. He stated it would be good to step back and see how we got here and better understand what we are looking at, as we decide how we are going to go forward.

Mr. Zuraf presented the outline he had with information on the background of how we got here, looking at general planning concepts as it may relate to more urban type of development patterns and some evaluation points that the Commission may want to consider as they are discussing and considering the issue. He started out with a comparison of the 2003 Land Use Plan verses the plan that

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was adopted in 2010. The 2003 plan had more distinct land use categories than the current plan. Residential uses were separated from commercial uses. Within commercial uses you had different intensities and some of the growth areas differed. He stated the Urban Service Area did not change too much, it was identified that the Urban Development Area that was previously developed had a good amount of available land for development within it, so the new plan did not have a big expansion of the growth area. In the 2003 plan the growth areas were focused along 610, in an around the courthouse and along Route 17. In the 2010 plan, more of the higher density commercial, urban commercial and residential development ended up going into the Urban Development Areas which generally shifted further to the south. Still around the courthouse, but including other properties along Courthouse Road and south of Courthouse Road, sort of filling in between the two established growth areas that we had in the county in north and south Stafford. Along 610 and Route 1 we have new designations. Commercial corridors were identified, which recommended a continuation of the type of highway oriented commercial development that you have in these areas along the corridors. The focus on the new plan was shifting more of the higher intensity development further to the south. In addition, in the 2010 plan, the land use categories are more generalized as opposed to separation of land uses, you have a larger more general suburban designation which allows residential, commercial or industrial development, which allows us to evaluate each case and base it on what was in the general area. He stated in the old plan every rezoning that came in was in conjunction with a Comp Plan Amendment, and if every project needed a Comp Plan Amendment how good was the Comp Pan? He stated it was found that since this document was looking twenty years out, it was better to not get so exact on properties when you don't know exactly what might come in when you are looking beyond ten years, so it included more general land use categories. He stated as part of the background why we have the Urban Development Areas. The Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2232.1 has a subset of the enabling legislation for comprehensive planning in Virginia for localities. This was specifically addressing a requirement that certain high growth localities, which Stafford is one, had to designate Urban Development Areas in their Comprehensive Plan. In the language in the State Code specific established standards had to be met by each locality regarding the recommended density of development. He stated there were two different thresholds. Stafford was in the lower thresholds, which specified four dwelling units per acre for single family detached units, six units per acre for townhomes and twelve units per acre for apartments and at least 0.4 floor area ratio for commercial development. He stated the amount of growth was specific as well. Urban Development Areas had to plan for ten to twenty years worth of projected growth in the locality and there were certain location criteria that the plan should identify and the Urban Development Area should follow along. He stated regarding the amount of growth, as it related specific to Stafford County based on the amount of projected growth at the time, it equated to us designating 14, 661 dwelling units within the Urban Development Areas for the ten year growth projection. He stated early on in the process the Committees working on developing the Urban Development Areas felt that planning for ten years growth in the Urban Development Areas was appropriate because of all the already approved development in other parts of the county.

Mr. Rhodes confirmed that with the latest amendments UDAs no longer had to accommodate a certain amount of growth. Mr. Zuraf stated no. Mr. Rhodes stated it was up to the Commission to determine. Mr. Zuraf stated yes.

Mrs. Hazard asked how apartments and multi-family homes fit into the 14,661, or whatever number was decided on by the Commission. She asked if it was an apartment building, was it calculated by per unit. Mr. Zuraf stated yes.

Mr. Zuraf explained how Urban Development Areas were currently in place. He stated there was a joint Board and Planning Commission Committee established and they looked at many potential

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locations for Urban Development Areas under the mandate. He stated over 14,000 units needed to be identified and there was an estimate of approximately 10 million square feet of commercial that needed to be identified. He stated at one point approximately 1 million square feet of commercial a year was identified. He stated the Committee indicated the City of Fredericksburg had approximately 7,000 dwelling units.

So the thought was if there was one large Urban Development Area that would be like placing two Cities of Fredericksburg within Stafford County. The Committee felt it would be better to distribute the Urban Development Areas in smaller areas to lessen the impact that might result. As the Committee went through the evaluation, some of the Urban Development Areas such as the Westlake area and Sherwood Farm area were removed because the Committee felt they were far removed from I-95 and other infrastructure. He stated Boswells Corner was initially designated as a possible Urban Development Area but was removed during the review as a result of comments provided by Quantico. Upon the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in December 2010 the Stafford Station and Brooke Station Urban Development Areas were removed. Those two Urban Development Areas accounted for 4,000 dwelling units, so upon approval the Board set up a Committee immediately to reevaluate and redesignate those dwellings units. He stated that was done through some good public input sessions and as a result 7 Urban Development Areas were designated. He stated the Brooke UDA came back and the units from the Stafford Station UDA were redistributed to the other UDAs. He stated two of the UDAs were located along the rail line to take advantage of the VRE, two of the UDAs overlapped with Redevelopment Areas which were the Courthouse and Southern Gateway Redevelopment Areas. The remaining three Urban Development Areas were focused upon Interstate 95. He showed a map that was included in the Comp Plan which identified the impacts that Quantico raised concerning the noise impact areas and aircraft flight areas, so these areas were avoided in the designation.

Mr. Gibbons asked for clarification on the location of the Southern Gateway UDA. Mr. Zuraf stated it was from England Run to I-95. Mr. Gibbons asked if the rezoning that would be heard later in the evening was included. Mr. Zuraf stated no and showed the location of the rezoning on the map. Mr. Gibbons asked if the larger developments like Embrey Mill were included in the 14,000 units. Mr. Zuraf stated some of the larger projects did not meet the previous density requirements that were mandated by the State Code. He stated that was no longer a mandate. Mr. Rhodes stated before the State Law was amended the Urban Development Areas had a certain density requirement and because some of those large developments did not meet the density, the Committee accounted for 14,661 that did not include those larger developments.

Mrs. Hazard stated from her perspective that was the question that the Commission could now explore. Can we now look at approved developments? She stated Colonial Forge was approximately 538, Westlake was approximately 900, Embrey Mill was approximately 2,038 and she was not sure of Sherwood Farm, but that was a huge tract. She stated that was approximately 3,700 units not including Sherwood Farms that were on the books and ready. She stated in her opinion those larger developments should be taken into account. She gave an example by stating Westlake was to be developed on Route 17, and the Commission needs to look at the placement of community services. She suggested the Commission have targeted growth areas and approved growth areas and remove the UDA designations. She suggested discussion of the development of a map showing what was already approved and targeted areas. Mr. Rhodes stated that would be an element the Commission would want to consider as further discussion was held about the continuation of UDAs, and consider the benefit of UDAs for the county.

B. Planning Concepts

Representative images of Urban vs. Suburban development

Transect Zone Concept
Coordination of UDAs and Redevelopment Areas

Mr. Zuraf moved on to different planning concepts. He showed pictures as plan view comparison when comparing an Urban Development Area and a Suburban Area. He stated this was a good example of the Embrey Mill area compared to the existing Austin Ridge development. He stated Austin Ridge was a conventional suburban development and by looking at the lot lines you could see the intensity of the development verses the more dense development pattern you get with Embrey Mill. He showed an image comparing the conventional suburban development pattern verses traditional neighborhood development pattern that you may have with an Urban Development Area. He stated suburban development showed a separation of uses with multiple access points off of a main road where traditional neighborhood development patterns included interconnection of streets so you could avoid traffic on the main road. He showed an image looking at the transect zone concept which was a currently in the Zoning Ordinance. He stated this was the basis of the PTND district and the image illustrates the different transect zones intended to taper intensity of development from the more intense areas such as the T-6 zone to the T-1 zone, which was the rural preservation areas. He stated this concept was currently on the books and could be applied to some of the Urban Development Areas. He stated the rezoning application for Clift Farm Quarter was proposing a PTND District and they have different transect zones applied to that property with the intent of scaling down the development from the more intense areas to the more rural areas. He stated the idea of the transect zones was more of establishing standards on building heights, setbacks, and density but worries less about the specific uses. He stated it was more focused on the form of development as opposed to what specific use goes in every area.

Mr. Zuraf stated a point to consider in the evaluation is the coordination of the Urban Development Areas with the Redevelopment Areas. He showed a map of what was currently in the Land Use Plan around the Courthouse area and the Courthouse Redevelopment Area. He stated the redevelopment area covered a larger area than the Urban Development Area, and was originally prepared before we knew the specific location of the Courthouse Interchange. He suggested if there were any modifications to the Urban Development Area and there was now a better idea of the location of the interchange, this may be a good time to marry up some of the planning concepts which were very similar.

C. Evaluation Points

- Strengths and Challenges of UDAs
- Development Constraints / Existing Conditions
- How might the County best benefit from the concept of UDAs
- Consideration of New Population Projections

Mr. Zuraf moved on to some evaluation points with Urban Development Areas. Looking at some of the strengths of Urban Development Areas, they could offer transportation alternatives because some of the Urban Development Areas take advantage of rail transit. Also the overall potential of increasing the density of development may afford people the opportunity to walk or ride their bike as opposed to always using their car. He stated Urban Development Areas may be a strength as it relates to Resource Conservation, environmentally it offers a better use of the land by consolidating more of the future growth in a smaller area and allowing more preservation of rural areas in the county. Also UDAs may conserve public facility resources by locating more people around schools and parks and lessening the need for more of those types of facilities. He stated the Urban Development Areas do offer potential for housing variety by offering different levels of housing for younger people who are just starting out and may want something smaller. He stated looking at the mix of housing the county was

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predominately single family detached, so this would provide a better opportunity to provide a better mix and offer more options.

Mr. Zuraf stated some of the challenges with Urban Development Areas included some of the Urban Development Areas being located in areas where you have a lot of different parcels with a lot of different land ownership. That could be challenging in making it happen. Specifically the Southern Gateway UDA and Courthouse UDA, there were a lot of different land owners and getting everyone on the same page could be challenging. In some areas UDAs may require significant infrastructure improvements in the way of roads, utilities or schools. He stated the current UDA language does a good job of spelling out what the needs may be for school sites, park sites and fire and rescue stations in certain UDAs, but some areas may require a bit more than others. He stated another challenge was potential conflicts with existing residents, when you are looking at the transition to adjacent uses. If you have existing low density development and then a higher density development comes in, that may create some conflicts. He stated some issues for the Commission to consider would include development constraints and existing conditions, looking at the existing transportation network where any UDAs were located, existing or planned infrastructure for sewer and water also public facilities. Are there planned or existing schools in the location or locations that may benefit? Also, considering natural resources, are there steep slopes, significant wetlands, resource protection areas that may be impacted by much more intense development? He stated there should also be consideration for existing and planned subdivisions that may be coming in and then the issue of conflicting land uses. He stated if you have a hard edge where you are planning an Urban Development Area up against a rural area, which was found in some cases in the Comp Plan, we should consider the transitions. He stated a question for the Planning Commission might be how the County could best benefit from the Urban Development Areas and if there were any changes desired. He stated he previously mentioned the new population projection received. The Commission had already been provided with projections from GWRC and they had been reviewed. The projections from GWRC were a little lower than VEC. He stated these numbers were the year 2030 projections. The latest Weldon-Cooper Center projections were much higher than the latest or previous projections by VEC. He stated in addition to the residential projections, the Commission may want to consider the commercial projections because of the designation of commercial areas also in the UDAs applied a 0.4 FAR to very large areas and some of the UDAs may be overstated. He stated it was not bad to plan for more commercial but some of the areas just may be a little overboard like the George Washington Village Urban Development Area, which recommends 10 million square feet of commercial in that area alone. He stated the Commission may want to consider if that was too much. He stated those were some of the comments provided to the Commission

Mr. Gibbons asked the current population in Stafford. Mr. Zuraf stated it was a little over 130,000. Mr. Gibbons asked if the projection shows the population over 200,000 in eighteen years. Mr. Zuraf stated yes. Mr. Rhodes stated almost all of the projections have it over 200,000, every decade we have grown 40 to 60 percent for the past 50 years. He asked Mr. Zuraf what distinct authority or ability from a planning perspective do we get with the UDA legislation even as amended. What does it distinctly allow us to do that we would not otherwise be allowed to do? Mr. Zuraf stated it previously assisted with transportation funding. He stated he would have to review the language to see if that was still... Mr. Rhodes stated if that was not readily available that would be a good bit of information. He asked if the Commission could confirm what this tool that was a UDA provides to us that we otherwise would not have available to us from a planning perspective. He stated in his opinion that would be important as the Commission moves forward. He stated Mr. Zuraf raised a great point in his presentation about the single map as we look at the aggregate of the Redevelopment Areas as well as the current UDA areas and also identify all of the large pending developments. He stated in his opinion that would be helpful as the Commission considers this, but as important as anything in his mind was

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getting a clear understanding of the authority this provides us now that it was optional.

Mr. Rhodes asked the other Commissioners if they had additional thoughts for staff. Mr. Gibbons stated he did not like the word authority. He stated maybe we could use the word “tools”, as in what tools were in the UDA that we could use. Mr. Rhodes asked mainly what does it provide that we can’t already do. Mr. Gibbons asked if a transit study was done when the UDA was done. Mr. Zuraf stated within the UDAs there were recommended transit or bus stations and commuter parking lots in some of the UDAs. Mr. Gibbons asked if they did a Comp Plan Transit Study to see how these urban areas would be serviced.

Mr. Zuraf stated no. Mr. Gibbons stated that when you go more urban you get more federal money for the urban district. He stated if you look at Garrisonville, Embrey Mill and the other two put together, he thought you were pretty close to what Fredericksburg had as a City.

Mrs. Hazard stated she agreed with Mr. Rhodes concerning what the benefit was to having a UDA. She stated along that same line there was a corresponding benefit if it were called the Redevelopment Area, because at least two of them sit in a Redevelopment Area. She asked if we could get it through other designations and asked Mr. Zuraf if that helped to frame it for him. Mr. Zuraf stated yes. Mr. Rhodes asked if there were any other questions or comments for staff as they were working on framing information for the Commission. Mr. Gibbons stated there must be some benefit of the UDA when you are talking federal grants. Mr. Rhodes stated, if he could expand on that, it was not just the tools or authority we get from the State with the designation of UDA that might be unique but there may be other opportunities for something we could leverage by that classification. He asked Mr. Zuraf if staff planned to comment on the tentative growth projections. Mr. Zuraf stated he has not had that discussion yet. Mr. Rhodes asked when the thirty days would be up for the comment period. Mr. Zuraf stated October 30th or 31st. Mr. Rhodes stated the Commission had one more meeting before that would happen. He asked the Commissioners to look at attachment 4 and, if they had particular reactions to bring it back at the next session to share with staff as potential consideration of comments going forward.

Mr. Gibbons stated the acronym he was looking for was CMAC Funding.

Mr. Rhodes thanked Mr. Gibbons and stated there was more time on the agenda to discuss the Urban Development Areas. He stated when the Commission gets out of the Work Session and begins the formal Planning Commission meeting we might entertain a motion to move Urban Development Areas after item 10 and we can get through the full agenda business and if we want to can have further discussion on Urban Development.

Mr. Rhodes thanked Mr. Zuraf and stated it did help to refresh and look back at how we got here and think about what was in there. He asked the Commission if they wanted to do another work session as a Committee of the whole at 5:30 on the 24th to this item because there were only a few time to meet before January 3rd. He asked Mr. Zuraf if that allowed enough time to pull together the information requested. Mr. Zuraf stated it was enough time. Mr. Rhodes stated the Commission would tentatively plan on meeting at 5:30 on the 24th to discuss Urban Development Areas again.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Rhodes stated the Work Session would close and the formal Planning Commission meeting would start in 5 minutes. With no further business to discuss the Work Session adjourned at 6: 24 p.m.

