

## INTRODUCTION

The I-66/Route 29 Sector Plan was initiated by the Board of County Supervisors (Board) to achieve two important goals. The first was to fulfill a Long-Range Land Use Plan action strategy of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan calling for a more in-depth planning study of the economically significant I-66 Corridor. The second was to address the future impact of VDOT's planned reconstruction of the I-66/Route 29 interchange in Gainesville, which will create two-grade separated rail crossings, result in many business dislocations and restrict highway access along a lengthy section of Route 29.

### **Description of the Sector Plan Area and Surrounds**

The Sector Plan area comprises approximately 3,200 acres and includes the commercially zoned properties immediately adjacent to the interchange and a large, relatively undeveloped triangular area defined by I-66, Route 15 and Route 29. The convergence of these three major thoroughfares, together with its proximity to Dulles International Airport approximately 20 miles to the northeast, is the basis of the Sector Area's nickname – the “Golden Triangle.”

Land immediately to the west of the Sector Plan area is in the Rural Area, more popularly known as the “Rural Crescent.” To the east of the Sector Area lies Conway-Robinson Memorial State Forest and the Manassas National Battlefield Park. To the north are the Town of Haymarket and large planned residential projects, including Heritage Hunt, Piedmont and Dominion Valley. County housing inventory calculations of zoned properties show that up to approximately 9,000 housing units could be constructed north of the Sector Area. To the south are Lake Manassas and large residential projects along Route 29 and in the Linton Hall Road Corridor, which could yield another 9,000 units according to County calculations.

### **Existing Conditions**

The existing 1998 Comprehensive Plan generally provided for intense commercial (office/retail/industrial) development at the I-66/Route 29 interchange and the Route 29/Route 15 intersection; suburban employment uses along Route 55, Route 29 and south of Haymarket. Medium and high suburban residential uses are planned for towards the middle of the Sector Plan area, and mostly semi-rural residential (average 1 DU/2.5 acres) west beyond Carver Road.

The only significant existing residential zoning in the Sector Plan area is the Greenhill Crossing/Somerset development involving approximately 340 acres with a maximum of 498 Single Family Detached, 397 Townhouse and 492 Multifamily units allowed. Currently approximately 175 SFD and 200 Towns are built north of the railroad tracks; site plans are pending or approved for the development of 58 towns, 144 singles and 288 multifamily units south of the tracks

Existing commercial rezonings include the 104-acre regional retail Southview project and the 417-acre Virginia Gateway regional retail/flex employment center, each flanking Route 29 at the I-66 interchange; the 50-acre Gainesville Center community employment center on Route 29; the 25-acre John Marshall Commons community employment center on Route 55; commercial

portions of mixed-use projects along Route 29 to the Lake Manassas/Somerset entrance; and a fair amount of older unproffered general business and heavy industrial acreage along the rail line and Route 29, including the Atlas track and an automobile junkyard on North Fork. The only commercial developments in the Sector Plan area are a shopping center at Virginia Gateway, heavy industrial uses along the train tracks and commercial strips along Route 29. Many of the latter businesses will be displaced or lose highway access with VDOT's planned reconstruction of the Route 29 interchange.

### **The Citizens Advisory Committee and Public Input**

The Board appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) consisting of HOA representatives, business owners, board/commissions/authorities representatives, residents from both within the Sector Plan area and the County at large, and two representatives of owners of large commercial projects in the Sector Plan area, both of whom are professional planners. The CAC was charged with "planning and developing polices and strategies" for the Sector Plan area for recommendation to the Board. To achieve this, the CAC met as a committee once a month, with subcommittees meeting on an "as-needed" basis. All meetings were open to the public.

The CAC held its first public input meeting in March 2000 to determine what residents and businesses considered to be the major planning issues facing the Sector Plan area. Citizen comments at this well-attended meeting indicated citizens wanted a "sense of place" designed into future development; protections for the existing communities and historic sites; available affordable housing; pedestrian-oriented development; more community facilities such as schools; and improved transportation networks.

Based on those comments, the CAC focused its efforts on Land Use, Transportation, Community Design, Economic Development/Telecommunications and Community Facilities, which includes Libraries, Schools, Parks and Fire and Rescue. Later Housing and Cultural Resources chapters were separated out of Land Use. Other planning chapters in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan covering such subjects as Potable Water, Sewer and Environment were considered adequately addressed in the existing plan. Thus, once adopted by the Board, the Sector Plan amends the 1998 Comprehensive Plan only in regards to those Goals and Action Strategies specifically embodied in the Sector Plan.

The CAC developed preliminary recommendations and held two additional public input meetings. Again, each was well attended and provided ample public comment. Numerous residents of nearby planned communities requested that the CAC eliminate all residential uses from the mixed-use districts. Other citizens expressed strong concerns about preserving the Buckland Historic District, which is largely outside the Sector Plan area. Many citizens requested calculations on how many residential units and how much commercial space could be developed under the existing and proposed plans. And again, concern was voiced over the fate of the existing rural communities in the heart of the Triangle.

## **CAC Recommendations**

The CAC's final recommendation incorporates to one degree or another most of the major issues raised at the public input meetings. It is a blueprint for creating viable, vibrant communities that are "livable" and that offer a range of housing in close proximity to community employment and services. It also recognizes the economic importance of future regional commercial development in the Sector Plan area to the County as a whole. The Plan:

- § Focuses the most intense development in mixed-use urban centers at the immediate I-66/Route 29 interchange. Office use has been added as a primary use in the regional retail centers that in the long term can take advantage of this strategic location and provide a high return to the County Tax base.
- § Lowers the maximum Floor Area Ratio in the regional employment and commercial centers to reflect a more marketable and more desirable suburban density.
- § Reduces the multi-family densities in the regional employment and commercial centers.
- § Reduces overall employment and retail densities, and does not increase overall residential density in comparison with the 1998 Comprehensive Plan.
- § Introduces a new Land Use classification geared at creating a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use "Town Center" at the village scale in the Community Employment Center area immediately to the west of the interchange. The Town Center will place greater emphasis on community design, neighborhood services, recreation, and retail in order to foster the "sense of place" missing in much suburban development.
- § Retains the concept of mixed use in regional and community centers as the best way to offer different types of housing, avoid "dead" zones after 5:00 pm, reduce vehicular trips, and encourage sustainable development.
- § Transitions to lower density residential uses towards the western boundary with the Rural Area. Suburban medium densities are proposed between Carver and Old Carolina Roads to provide diversity in housing types and lot sizes and to further the concept of a parallel road along Route 29. Eliminates the high-density urban employment center at Route 15.
- § Retains Flex Employment classifications but increases the FAR to emphasize technology and high end host, primary, and support businesses in a campus-like setting, while excluding low-end light industrial and warehousing/storage uses.
- § Recognizes the cultural and historical significance of the Buckland Historic District and the Town of Haymarket.

- § Provides for new Sector Plan area roads paralleling Route 29 and crossing the railroad track to keep intra-community traffic off Route 29 and reduce multiple entrances on Route 29.
- § Specifies the necessity of unified Community Design in any future development, especially the “Gateway” at the Interchange and the Town Center.
- § Evaluates the need and recommended location for new Community Facilities based on projected growth.
- § Highlights the importance of telecommunications infrastructure for qualify economic development.

The Sector Plan is not a zoning map or a site plan; it cannot mandate whether or not any particular type of business or resident chooses to locate in or leave the Sector Plan area. Rather, the Sector Plan is intended as general guide for the Board to achieve an overall goal of quality, “sustainable” future growth. “Sustainable” is defined by the CAC as quality development that can be maintained and that in the long term nets positive financial return to the County after factoring in the cost of services and infrastructure. Whether or not the Sector Plan area achieves this goal will be a function of the open market and subject to the review and approval of the Board.

# I-66/Route 29 Sector Plan

## Sector Plan Boundary and Planning Areas

