

Rose Hill Coalition

UPDATE

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Revving Our Engines Again

After a hot but sleepy summer for the Rose Hill Plaza Nomination, the deferred nomination is once again getting attention. Supervisor Lusk published his “position statement” in August after separate meetings with Combined Properties (CP) and the two local civic associations, Brookland-Bush Hill and Rose Hill. (My primary role at the meeting was as president of BBHCA.) After the statement was published, I released my commentary for the Rose Hill Coalition.

Since then, it was reported in the news that Lusk planned to meet with CP’s representatives two more times in private. Lusk’s office has indicated that a new proposal will be submitted sometime in the fall. The directive given to CP is to increase the retail component and decrease the number of rental units. So, the pendulum is swinging but no telling where it will land.

Meet the Franconia Supervisor Candidates

On **Saturday, September 16**, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, the Brookland-Bush Hill Civic Assn (BBHCA) is hosting a Q&A for the three candidates running for Franconia District Supervisor. Franconia residents are invited to attend, but the civic group is requesting attendees to RSVP. The event will be held at the Bush Hill Elementary School. Early voting begins September 25, and the general election will be on November 7.

Of course, top of mind will be the demise or resurrection of Rose Hill Plaza. However, a number of other issues are of importance and residents are encouraged to submit questions. Moderating the Q&A will be

Mark Hand from *The Patch*. According to the press release, “the candidates will first answer several prepared questions that were provided prior to the event. Candidates will then be asked to answer questions from the moderator and the audience. Attendees will be given instructions on rules of conduct and question format. No campaign materials will be allowed. Meet and greet after Q&A.”

To **RSVP** for the event, go to <https://forms.gle/CucU1qDWWu3BTJyf6>

Stay Tuned In!

Our goal remains to save Rose Hill Plaza. Ultimately, we believe the shopping center can be an excellent investment going forward for both the tenants, community, and CP *without razing it*.

You have succeeded in slowing the momentum of the CP proposal. But don't let the summer lull convince you that we are no longer in the battle to save the Plaza. All the candidates for Franconia District Supervisor have only recently jumped on the bandwagon that we have been driving since early 2022. Don't let their last minute enthusiasm cloud your perspective.

The Rose Hill Plaza nomination remains in the public forum for debate. The Rose Hill Coalition will continue to provide the information you need to assess the facts. The facts are important, but clarity is even more essential. Stay in touch!

Back to Square One?

We are still in the “Comprehensive Plan Amendments” process. The Rose Hill Plaza nomination by CP is a nomination to “amend” the language in the Comprehensive Plan to allow Combined Properties the opportunity to apply for rezoning. Due to the deferral and based on public statements by Supervisor Lusk, a new proposal will be submitted *sometime* this fall. In August, Lusk clearly indicated that this means the review process will be starting over again, including public hearings. Although I'm a bit skeptical, we will hold him to his word and make sure that the new hearings are widely announced, easily accessible, and give residents the full opportunity to weigh in and be heard.

Transparency May Be in Sight

Without a doubt, there has been a lack of transparency or concern for ensuring that the public can easily take part in the Fairfax County planning process. On top of that, although the land use planning staff are clearly knowledgeable, they have been overwhelmed with the workload due to the change in processes last year and not having enough staff. We have asked for clear, easily accessible information online. We *may* have been heard. *The County has completely revamped their website this summer.*

Of course, such a large endeavor always has some hiccups. Many links were “broken”, meaning they don't go to the intended page, or the page no longer exists. The working side of the website also was down for many “hours” in early September. Staff are frustrated to say the least, so I urge you to be patient. If you've ever created or managed a website, much less one the size of the County's, you know that it is an extremely complicated “web”. If you see something is not working, just kindly let them know.

As for whether the redesign has created a more useful, intuitive, and transparent tool for navigating the myriad of County services, including land use, you will have to be the judge. At first glance(s), they have done a remarkable job. I urge you to do a deep dive and I will do the same over the next several weeks. We welcome your reviews.

Getting in the Weeds

Zoning and Land Use Applications, and other land use matters are scheduled for public hearings before the district residents, Board of Supervisors, Planning Commission, and Board of Zoning Appeals. You can access online the schedules, agendas, and information including staff reports on applications.

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) provides guidance on land use, development review and zoning issues to decision-making authorities including the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission, and is responsible for various permitting and approval functions in the land development arena.

DPD consists of three major divisions ([Planning Division](#), the [Zoning Evaluation Division](#) and the [Zoning Administration Division](#)), two sections (Community Revitalization and Urban Centers), as well as support functions including human resources, information technology, and mapping.

[Land Use](#) (About and Services in Fairfax County)

[Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan](#) (2017, with amendments)

[Site-Specific Plan Amendment \(SSPA\) Process](#) (proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan; this is where the CP proposal for Rose Hill Plaza begins)

[Land Use Policy Committee](#) (Board of Supervisors)

[Franconia Land Use Committee](#) (meeting dates; meetings are open to the public)

Land Use Portal (Planning, Permitting, and Construction)

PLUS (Planning and Land Use System) is the County's central online platform for zoning, building, permitting or other land development, submitting complaints, and environmental health processes. Customers must use PLUS to create and submit applications online, pay fees, track application status, and receive electronic notifications. To use the system, you must register for an account. Go to <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/plan2build/plus>

The PLUS platform is based on ACA (Accela Citizen Access) which is owned and operated by Accela (<https://www.accela.com/>). According to their website, they “design and deliver government software to improve efficiency and increase resident engagement.”

Fairfax County Seeks Board of Zoning Appeals Member

Interested candidates must apply by Sept. 28 to the Fairfax Circuit Court, which appoints the board's seven members. This position will be for a five-year term from the date of appointment. Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals are appointed for staggered five-year terms; are compensated at a bi-weekly rate of \$357.69; and *serve as private citizens*, not as county employees. Applicants must be residents of Fairfax County.

The Board of Zoning Appeals' powers, duties and procedures are set forth in state law, and they are further detailed in the County's Zoning Ordinance. These duties include:

- Hearing and deciding appeals of administrative decisions made pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance.
- Hearing and deciding applications for special permits and variances as authorized by the Zoning Ordinance.
- Hearing and deciding applications for interpretation of the zoning map where there is uncertainty about the location of a zoning district boundary.

The Board of Zoning Appeals meets weekly on Wednesday mornings in the Board Auditorium (12000 Government Center Pkwy) beginning at 9:00 a.m., except for weeks that contain a County holiday. A recess is generally taken in August/September and in late December/early January.

To learn more about the Board of Zoning Appeals, visit its [webpage](#). For more information, contact Brent Krasner; Zoning Evaluation Division, Fairfax County Department of Planning and Development, at 703-324-1280, TTY 711.

Source: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/fairfax-county-seeks-board-zoning-appeals-member>

Fairfax County Email Subscriptions

To receive the latest information, updates and newsletters on many topics, agencies, and departments, sign up for County email subscriptions at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/maillinglist>. Signup is easy and so is unsubscribing if you decide its not “news you can use”.

IN THE NEWS

(and a few commentaries as they say it so well)

Residents Await New Version of Rose Hill Plaza Redevelopment Proposal

8/25/23: “In his statement, Lusk said that if the next version of Combined Properties’ proposal doesn’t meet the calls for fewer residential units and increased retail space, “it will remain deferred until we have a proposal that I believe is ready for public consideration.”

For almost a year, many residents around the shopping center, including members of the Rose Hill Coalition, have been urging the county to reject the plan to redevelop the shopping center.”

Source: <https://patch.com/virginia/kingstowne/residents-await-new-version-rose-hill-plaza-redevelopment-proposal>

Fairfax County Growth Skews Toward Mixed-use Areas, Multifamily Housing

7/21/23: Between 2010 and 2023, growth in multifamily housing units outpaced single-family housing according to a presentation to the County’s Policy Plan Committee on July 13.

The Planning Commissioner for Dranesville District asked whether permitting a “missing middle” approach like the one adopted by neighboring Arlington—where the county would allow some smaller multifamily units in areas that now only allow single-family housing—could provide an opportunity for additional residential growth. Fairfax County planner Clara Johnson said that **with plan amendments, the County is seeing redevelopment of shopping centers and along major transportation corridors.**

Where transit is not available or planned, plan changes focus “on improving walkability, creating new public spaces, implementing good urban design, and creating bonus height or density incentives to promote revitalization...”

Source: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/fairfax-county-ranks-number-one-nationwide-study-commercial-real-estate-development>

YIMBYs of Northern Virginia Have Big Plans

8/8/23: YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard) wants elected officials to change zoning codes to allow more density where homes are hard to find and harder to afford. They argue that not doing so “will constrain economic growth, accelerate the hollowing out of the local middle class, plunge the region further into a housing shortage, and could force younger people to leave.”

But not everyone agrees, particularly established homeowners worried about what changes could mean for the neighborhoods they've invested so much in. After Del Ray residents in Alexandria raised concerns, the city planning commission delayed a plan to allow developers to build higher buildings *even if they included affordable housing*.

Source: <https://dcist.com/story/23/08/08/what-do-the-yimbys-of-northern-virginia-want/>

Housing Crisis Aversion (Commentary)

“Have you noticed how many places claim to be going through a [housing crisis](#) right now? Regardless of where you live, be it a coastal metropolis or a midwestern commuter town, the story is roughly the same: some combination of politicians, NGOs and real estate developers has painted a bleak picture of home availability in your area. According to these pundits, the solution is simple: construct new residential complexes as fast as possible; then get people from wherever to move into them. Consider the glaring disconnect in such a scheme.”

Source: <https://www.thedcequalizer.com/post/housing-crisis-aversion>

Developer Backs Out After Neighbors Protest

6/6/23: A developer in Arlington withdrew their plans to build a two-unit, semi-detached residential property after local neighbors informed them that they may use “legal remedies” to try to stop construction.

Source: <https://patch.com/virginia/arlington-va/developer-backs-out-missing-middle-project-after-neighbors-protest>

Housing Rental Costs are Cooling

6/31/23: Monthly rental costs increased 15 percent from 2020 and 2022, but costs are starting to plateau or come down. Why now? In the U.S. more than 970,000 new apartment units are currently under construction. Of those, 520,000 are expected to hit the market this year, with another 460,000 to follow in 2024.

Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2023/rent-prices-coming-down-near-me/>

Fairfax County Ranks Number One in Commercial Real Estate Development

7/31/23: One of the highlighted features of the county's permit process is its commitment to providing applicants with flexible options. Commercial developers have the choice to opt for modified processing (footing and foundation permits), phased occupancy, an expedited review, Fast Track Plan Review or third-party inspections for their projects. This approach enables the jurisdiction to move approvals forward, even if there are internal capacity constraints. By allowing applicants to decide, the county empowers developers to control the pace of their projects while ensuring timely reviews.

Read the full study: [Examining Development Approvals Across North America: An Analysis of Site Plan and Building Permit Review Processes](#)

Fairfax City's Affordable Housing Units Open to Residents

8/29/23: Located north of Fair City Mall and Main Street, Sutton Heights consists of three- and four-story townhomes with private garage parking, optional rooftop terraces, and a new promenade with seating and open park space.

Source: <https://www.ffxnow.com/2023/08/29/fairfax-citys-first-ever-for-sale-affordable-housing-units-open-to-residents/>

Cultivating a Sense of Place (Commentary)

7/20/23: "...we must start giving more thought to the part of our home that sits outside the front door. We must think about how the design of our places shapes our day-to-day lives and what we want that life to look like. Do we want to walk more, do we want to know our neighbors, do we want to cultivate local ownership and small businesses? These are all factors of placemaking. Do we want to live in a place that makes us proud? A place our kids don't want to leave when they graduate? A place that inspires us and melts us with its beauty? This is the importance of place."

Source:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=777571541036883&id=100063521322537&mibextid=qC1gEa&aiipv=0&eav=AfbNOggCg_NOIQCymoizguvF3vub0ask2pPoCVxMaR3jaH938BNNNoJ9aU-mbu18oCuY&_rdr

Old Town Fairfax to be New Site of Eight-story Mixed-use Development

7/13/23: "This project completely disrespects the historic nature of Old Town Fairfax," a resident of Old Town Fairfax since 1974 said. "[We] strongly oppose the City West project, which will be over 90-feet high. It will dwarf our city hall and the surrounding historical buildings on Main Street, one that rings in the death knell of the old town feel that used to be Fairfax. If Old Town Alexandria can keep its historic charm, then City Council can do the exact same thing for Old Town Fairfax."

Source: <https://www.ffxnow.com/2023/07/13/merging-past-and-present-old-town-fairfax-to-be-new-site-of-eight-story-mixed-use-development/>

'Persistent' Remote Work Could Slash Office Values By 44%

5/23/23: The researchers who predicted that \$500B in value would be wiped from office buildings nationwide because of remote work gave a chilling update for real estate investors this week: They underestimated the damage.

Source: <https://www.bisnow.com/new-york/news/office/persistent-wfh-could-wipe-44-from-office-values-by-2029-119082>

Whatever Happened to the Starter Home?

9/25/22: "The nation has a deepening shortage of housing. But, more specifically, there isn't enough of this housing: small, no-frills homes that would give a family new to the country or a young couple with student debt a foothold to build equity.

...the small, detached house has all but vanished from new construction. Only about 8 percent of new single-family homes today are 1,400 square feet or less. In the 1940s, according to CoreLogic, nearly 70 percent of new houses were that small."

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/25/upshot/starter-home-prices.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

New Regional Housing Plan Pushes Fairfax County to Lower Income Criteria for Affordable Housing

2/8/23: "Fairfax County and several other localities have released a draft of the [Regional Fair Housing Plan](#) that not only provides some goals for housing, but comes with a look at specific zoning changes that can be made to help achieve those goals.

The plan was put together by a team of representatives from eight localities, including Fairfax County, and a few partner groups. A 60-day public comment period is scheduled to run through March 31, allowing locals to submit their thoughts on the plan."

Source: <https://www.ffxnow.com/2023/02/08/new-regional-housing-plan-pushes-fairfax-county-to-lower-income-criteria-for-affordable-housing/>

Fairfax County Unveils New Look with Website Redesign

7/13/23: Information, links, site structure and department content remain the same, but the county updated the visual presentation of the website's information. The redesign was marketed as "costless".

Source: <https://www.ffxnow.com/2023/07/13/fairfax-county-unveils-new-look-with-website-redesign/>

Other Resources

Regional Fair Housing Plan

- Increase the supply of affordable housing for families earning at or below 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the region — especially where there hasn't been any.
- Change zoning and land use policies to expand access to fair housing. Increase the development, geographic distribution, and supply of affordable housing.
- Implement policies to preserve affordable housing and prevent displacement of residents. Keep the same number of existing affordable rental units in our region.
- Increase the number of homeowners in the region and reduce the unequal treatment and discriminatory practices that keep members of protected classes from buying a home.
- Protect the housing rights of individuals who are part of protected groups. For example, people of color, those with disabilities and seniors.
- Increase community integration and reduce housing barriers for people with disabilities.
- Make public transit easier to access and afford for members of protected classes.

Each of the goals comes with strategies for localities to pursue. Some of the potential zoning changes, for example, involve not only reducing limitations on [accessory dwelling units](#) (ADUs), but also offering incentives to homeowners who want to build them on their properties.

The plan also lists fair housing goals and strategies for specific localities. For Fairfax County, it suggests:

- Reform the county's for-sale workforce dwelling unit policy by lowering income requirements and creating a separate policy for high-rise condominiums outside Tysons
- Protect the housing rights of individuals in protected groups

Fairfax County has its own [231-page document](#) in the plan outlining the current state of affordable housing, a history of affordable housing policies, and what work remains ahead. The document includes a detailed breakdown of economic stratification in the county.

Affordable Housing

Investing in the Power of Home to Help Virginia Communities Thrive

<https://www.virginiahousing.com/about/mission>

Economic Impact

<https://www.virginiahousing.com/about/economic-impact>

Real Estate Organizations

U.S. and overseas associations and organizations involved in the real estate field

<https://guides.loc.gov/real-estate-industry-sources/residential/multifamily>