

**Arlington Community Facilities Study  
Study Committee Meeting #5 – April 8, 2015  
Prepared by Sarah McKinley**

**Major conclusions:**

- **Outside consultants studied both the County and APS methodologies for demographic forecasting, and found that they were very good. However, they warned that projections of school population beyond the 3-4 year level are less reliable and depend on accurate projections of future births. Both demographers made recommendations to bolster Arlington projections, including studying migration patterns and taking a closer look at household ownership.**
- **An historic overview of planning processes in Arlington demonstrates the County’s commitment to dense development within transportation corridors, particularly the Rosslyn-Ballston (R-B) corridor. This represents only 11% of the land mass but represents about half of the assessed land value in the County.**
- **Historically development focused on a “bulls-eye” approach of dense development within a quarter-mile of a Metro station. Between 1970 and 2009 growth in the R-B corridor was dramatic: from 22,000 to 98,500 jobs; from 5.5 to 21.7 million square feet of commercial office space; from 7,000 to 28,643 housing units.**
- **The next area ripe for dense development is Columbia Pike. Development along Columbia Pike is based on its Redevelopment Plan and Form Based Code.**
- **Planning has evolved from the 1970s. The General Land Use Plan (GLUP) is a major guide for policy, which informs the creation of Zoning requirements. The “Comprehensive Plan” for Arlington actually consists of 11 major plans, of which the GLUP is one component. The Affordable Housing Master Plan, scheduled to be approved this summer, will become the latest component of the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **The schools use a Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) to site schools, with members selected by the School Board. The Public Facility Development Review (PFRC) process is used for all facilities, both County and school property, with members chosen by the County Board.**

**Forecasting Challenges, Changing Visions of the County, and Siting Processes**

The fifth meeting of the Arlington Community Facilities Study included several presentations, both to finalize the discussion of County and School demographics, as well as exploring the evolving visions of Arlington County and reviewing its siting processes.

Chairman John Milliken provided a quick review. Officials present at the meeting included: Arlington Public School Board Members James Lander, Nancy Van Doren and Barbara Kanninen; County Board Member John Vihstadt; and State Senator Barbara Favola.

### *Forecasting Methodologies*

The first joint presentation was presented by two outside consultants who reviewed the demographic methodologies use both by Arlington County staff as well as Arlington Public Schools. They were charged with helping to work out discrepancies between the sets of data presented to the working group.

Bob Scardamalia, RLS Demographics, focused on the County's methods for gathering and analyzing data. He found that the "bottom up" approach used by the County, which focuses on using small area census blocks, is appropriate. For example, the County focuses on occupancy rates and average household size. Employment estimates are based on the General Land Use Plan and approved projects for new and converted commercial, office, retail, hotel and other uses. Commercial vacancy rates are procured from a private company called CoStar, and are analyzed for sub-areas on a quarterly basis, with adjustments based on factors like BRAC and redevelopment plans.

Scardamalia had some specific recommendations, however. He advised the County to provide a comprehensive documentation of its methodologies. He also recommended that the County begin to monitor American Community Survey (ACS) for housing occupancy and average household size. Additional analysis could be done for age distribution, migration analysis, development of cohort-component demographic forecasts, analysis of self-employment, and integrating economic and demographic modeling. He referred to Page 8 of the joint report (see link below) to analyze migration patterns. Because Arlington has a large number of college students, this subgroup needs to be treated separately from normal in-migration and out-migration.

Richard Grip from Statistical Forecasting LLC, is a specialist in school demographics. He discussed the APS' model that uses grade progression to analyze school populations. He reported that this is the most widely used method, and one that he approves. But he warned that this method had good predictive ability only for 3-4 years out. If APS is trying to do 10-year forecasting the numbers are going to become "fuzzier" in the outer 6-10 years. The reason is pretty obvious. Any long-term forecasting requires determining how many children will be born in future. This requires determining the fertility rate of women of children.

He believes that over the past 11 years enrollment projections have been within +/- 2%, which is a good error rate for dynamic communities like Arlington. These are acceptable ranges. One very important piece is the use of housing pipeline data from the

county to forecast additional students. He recommended that Arlington analyze the length of ownership to the number of children per household. He provided a chart that he researched in a New Jersey community, which showed that the number of school-age children in homes that had been owned for more than 15 years dropped dramatically. In most cases, these were owned by empty-nesters, people aging in place, planning for retirement and end-of-life scenarios. He recommended taking looking at households in the first 10 years of ownership and using an average of the numbers of children from those households.

Grip's recommendations included APS publishing an annual report, computing alternative sets of projection, performing longitudinal analyses of projections, and considering past home construction before adding students from new home construction.

Group members appreciated the thoughtful approach by both demographers. But they continued to express concerns. They asked if the consultants had analyzed APS' track record for the past 15 years to see how closely their estimates had come. They had not done this, focusing instead on the current methodology. This is an important issue because the group needs to plan for new schools based on 10-15 year projections and those need to be as accurate as possible.

Allen Howze asked if telephone surveys would help in analyzing projections. Both demographers thought this would be a waste of time and effort. Even if a telephone survey were successful, it would only represent a snapshot in time, which could become outdated in a matter of months. Others thought that Millennials (the most likely group to begin bearing children) would be less likely to participate in such a survey, whether by telephone or online.

Committee members asked if the demographers had any insight or predictions for Millennials in general, as that has been a key consideration in every discussion of the group. They had little to offer.

Other questions focused on migration patterns for military and State Department personnel, and differences between economic boom and bust cycles.

Other concerns included how fertility rates would be determined. The demographers thought this would be a fairly easy task—simply figuring out what the population of women would be, broken out by age categories, and applying national statistics for birth rates. However, Arlington doesn't fit that pattern. One chart from a previous meeting showed that birth mothers in Arlington tended to be older, with a higher percentage of women in their 30s and 40s giving birth, compared to the region or the nation as a whole. Birth rates for African Americans and Hispanics also tends to be higher than whites; Arlington has a large group of Hispanic residents.

An issue that has not been addressed is the rate of adoption. One woman (during the break) discussed anecdotally the large number of adoptees, particularly in North Arlington.

### *Arlington's Planning Vision – 1970 to 2015*

Bob Brosnan from the County Manager's Office, gave an historic overview of the planning vision since the 1970s, as well as the creation of the County's planning framework.

Since the 1970s the County consciously decided to use transit and well-planned growth to revitalize the community. Core elements encouraged growth within a quarter-mile of metro stations, while preserving the rest of the community, particularly the single-family detached housing neighborhoods.

In 1960 the County had 7.5 million square feet of office space (primarily for the federal government), declining retail corridors (as businesses moved to shopping malls in the outer suburbs), about 97,500 jobs and 71,230 housing units, including a large number of garden apartments that were built during or after World War II and beginning to decline. But there was an emerging market for government office space, and there were strong single family neighborhoods.

By the 1970s several concerns had started to emerge. There was declining population, declining school enrollment, declining shopping areas. But at the same time there was rising employment and pressures for development. The Metro was under construction and there were increasing public transportation costs. By 1972 the County had begun developing the Rosslyn-Ballston (R-B) Corridor, with a "bulls-eye" view of high-density development within quarter-mile of each Metro station.

By 1975 the County adopted a "Long Range County Improvement Plan," whose focus was to look at the county as a whole, focusing growth in the immediate vicinity of the Metro stations and Shirlington, encouraging public transportation, discouraging single-passenger commuting to and through the County and strengthening the tax base by encouraging growth in these corridors.

In 1977 the County approved the General Land Use Plan (GLUP), which further refined policy guidance for development throughout the county. It included high quality pedestrian environments, enhanced open space, and reinvestment in established residential neighborhoods.

A decade later the County Board accepted a citizen-led report called "The Future of Arlington: The Year 2000 and Beyond." Its primary assumption was that the GLUP and the Transportation Plan, which had been adopted after extensive public discussion,

would be followed. The County, unlike other jurisdictions, doesn't have a single comprehensive plan. Instead, we have a series of "pieces" that have been adopted and updated through the years.

Our "Comprehensive Plan" now consists of the following: Chesapeake Bay Preservation Plan and Ordinance; Community Energy Plan; General Land Use Plan (GLUP); Historic Preservation Master Plan; Master Transportation Plan; Public Spaces Master Plan (which includes the Urban Forest Master Plan, Public Art Master Plan and Natural Resources Master Plan); Recycling Program Implementation Plan and Map; Sanitary Sewer System Master Plan; Stormwater Master Plan; and the Water Distribution Master Plan. The Affordable Housing Master plan is the next element, when and if it is approved this coming summer.

There may be competing interests between the Plan elements. Arlington tends to resolve these competing interests with Sector and Area plans, and then with Site Plan approvals. The General Land Use Plan is not law, but is a policy guide for future development, and also guides the County Board's decisions on rezoning and approval of special exceptions, including Site Plans.

Sector Plans have been developed for Clarendon and Court House. Revitalization Plans have been approved for Columbia Pike and Cherrydale. And a Small Area Plan was created for Quincy Street.

The GLUP map includes color-coding for uses and density for the entire county. There are four forms of Zoning approval in Arlington: **By-right**—approved subject to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. Most home building in Arlington is By-right. **Site Plans** require approval from the County Board as a special exception to the Zoning requirements. Columbia Pike has developed a "**Form Based Code**" that governs density and building height at points along the Pike, and moving away from the Pike into the neighborhoods; and **Use Permits** apply to certain uses that might impact adjacent properties (like use permits for live music or home daycare).

Site plans allow for higher density and flexibility for zoning. They require extensive community review and County Board approval. Often the Bonus density that is provided to a developer requires them to be subject to conditions, like paying for streets, sidewalks, streetscapes, utility upgrades, undergrounding, and contributions to affordable housing funds.

Increasingly, Sector Plans are becoming more prescriptive and are less flexible. Elements of Sector Plans can be incorporated directly into the Zoning Ordinance.

So how has Arlington County fared? Between 1970 and 2009 the R-B corridor has grown dramatically. Jobs have grown from 22,000 to 98,500. Commercial office

space has grown from 5.5 to 21.7 million square feet. Housing units have grown from 7,000 to 28,643.

Arlington is continuing to grow. Between 2010 and 2040 the County is expecting dramatic growth, with the largest projections along Columbia Pike. Metro ridership has also grown along with everything else. But the goal of reducing car traffic has succeeded. Even though population has grown, 73% of people walk to Metro stations, and car trips along major arterials have actually dropped between 1996 and 2006.

The Metro corridors represent only 11% of the total land space, but they represent \$27.5 billion out of a total \$57.5 billion in assessed land value. Today Arlington has more office space than downtown Dallas, Los Angeles, Denver or Boston.

### *Siting Processes*

Susan Bell of County Staff provided a presentation of public facility siting and review processes, both for Arlington County and for Arlington Public Schools. In general the public facility planning includes three basic steps: a needs assessment, site selection and a development review process.

The Siting Process was began when the County was confronted with a need for a Residential Program Center. In 1990 the County manager chartered a Citizens' Group to research the possibility of creating a Multi-Program Residential Center (primarily for the homeless, eventually sited on the east end of Columbia Pike across from the Sheraton Hotel). Their process influenced the later design of the siting process.

By June 1993 the County adopted the "Principles of Siting Process" and the "Siting Process Procedures." There are six principles: 1) demonstrate and communicate need; 2) share information; 3) establish process; 4) recommend best solution/site; 5) selection of site; and 6) guarantee standards and safety. Needs can be identified by County departments through the County Manager, Citizen Advisory Committees or individual citizens. This is followed by establishing a citizen/staff fact-finding group to verify the need and examine how it will be met.

Some lessons learned in the process included the fact that the siting process didn't anticipate every situation; it only covered a limited number of County facilities, not schools. It needed a broad definition of stakeholders, not just neighbors. It required an open process. And it was not workable for lease situations.

In 1999 the County Board appointed a Siting Process Review Committee (SPRC), which was charged with fast-tracking projects when that was required; taking action on land or space as it became available in a specific location; identifying facilities in approved plans, and adding space or expanding programs at existing facilities. This

group, which represented broad interests, from the Planning Commission, Parks and Rec, Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee, Community Schools Board, Civic Federation and various neighborhoods, provided their recommendations to the County Board in December, 1999. They included: revising the process to accommodate shorter timelines; decoupling land acquisition from siting when land or options on land must be acted on quickly; and applying the process to leases of five years or longer, or shorter leases if the facilities have major community impact. In total, the group had 11 recommendations. The County agreed with most of the suggestions, but ultimately did not adopt them officially.

Instead, in 2011 the County created a Memorandum of Understanding that codified that permanent solutions must respect County policy as articulated in Master Plans, neighborhood and development plans.

The Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) and the Public Facility Development Review process (PFRC) are both used after a site has been identified for a facility. The BLPC is only for school projects with stakeholders appointed by the School Board, while the PFRC process reviews both County and school facilities, with members appointed by the County Board.

Materials:

Agenda:

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_SC5\\_Agenda](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_SC5_Agenda).

Opening Remarks:

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_SC5\\_Opening](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_SC5_Opening)

Report: Projection Methodology Review

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_SC5\\_MethodologyReviewReport](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_SC5_MethodologyReviewReport)

Presentation: Projection Methodology Review

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_SC5\\_MethodologyReview](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_SC5_MethodologyReview)

Presentation: County's Plan – A Comprehensive View

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_SC5\\_CountyPlanVision.pdf](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_SC5_CountyPlanVision.pdf)

Presentation: Public Facilities Siting and Review Processes

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_SC5\\_PublicFacilitySitingReview.pdf](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_SC5_PublicFacilitySitingReview.pdf)

Resource: Principles of Siting Process and Siting Process Procedures (June 1993)

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_Arlington\\_Siting\\_Process\\_1993.pdf](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_Arlington_Siting_Process_1993.pdf)

Resource: Siting Process Review Committee – Charge and Ideas (1999)

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS\\_Siting\\_Committee\\_1999.pdf](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_Siting_Committee_1999.pdf)

Resource: Criteria for Considering Arlington County Facilities and Land in APS Capacity Planning Process (November 2011)

[http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/08/TJSiteEvaluation\\_FacilitiesCriteria\\_2011.pdf](http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/08/TJSiteEvaluation_FacilitiesCriteria_2011.pdf)