

A Platform for Loudoun's Future

Restoring the Public's Place in Planning for our Community

We citizens of Loudoun County are passionate in defense of our communities and our environment. The current quality of life and the future of the County are threatened by unrelenting traffic, longer commutes, and inadequate public services stemming from a pace of growth we cannot afford.

For the past four years, Loudoun County has been the target of national developers and their proposals for massive increases in residential development beyond what our roads, schools and other community services can handle. Ignoring the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, developers have tried to add tens of thousands more houses to the more than 30,000 new units already in the pipeline.

The 2001 plan was developed in a multi-year, extensive public participation process, with thousands of citizen volunteer hours spent to help think it through. It lays out a more sustainable amount of growth. But the implementation of community level plans and services has been ignored while developer demands consumed County staff time and resources.

Thousands of us have fought back, seeking a say in the future of our home and the way it is planned. We want adequate libraries, ball fields, and schools for our children. We want to be surrounded by healthy ecosystems, which also provide habitat for wildlife. We value the history, rural economy and scenic beauty. We want the County to sustain our quality of life and property values. From suburban to rural Loudoun, we want the County to look out for the best interests of current and future residents.

Our Vision and Platform

Loudoun County is fortunate to have smart, creative citizens who are ready to be engaged in building a positive future. Continued public involvement, greater transparency, and more rigorous fairness in the planning of our community will ensure that the County makes the best decisions for our shared future. Therefore, we call on the Board of Supervisors to work with residents to tackle the challenges left unmet during the past four years:

- 1) Meet community needs.
- 2) Free us from traffic gridlock.
- 3) Have developers pay their fair share.
- 4) Protect drinking water.
- 5) Make Loudoun an energy conservation model.
- 6) Sustain the rural economy.
- 7) Preserve Loudoun's natural heritage.
- 8) Protect and celebrate Loudoun's cultural heritage.
- 9) Defend and implement the existing 2001 Comprehensive Plan.

1. Meet Community Needs

Loudoun County is diminished by too few recreational and nature parks, recreation centers, constant school boundary changes, and overwhelmed fire and rescue departments. The County must meet the service needs of existing residents and the more than 30,000 new houses that are already approved but not yet built.

- Complete the four community plans for suburban Loudoun using public visualization and design tools. Involve the community in the design process to identify valued environmental, cultural and historic resources.
- Develop a master list of community needs and fund these needs based upon levels of service equal to the best counties in the DC region. This includes identifying recreational and nature parks, libraries, recreation centers, and fire, police, and rescue needs.
- Mix incentives and regulatory requirements to ensure developers provide more housing choices to meet the needs of the entire workforce and people at all stages of life.
- Create plans for parks, greenways and trails, study the creation of a County Park Authority, and invest in park acquisition to equal other counties' success.
- Commit to funding county services at a level equal to that of the highest county level of service in our region.

2. Free Us from Gridlock

Out of control traffic costs us time with our families and jobs as well as strains our physical and mental health. Loudoun's gridlock is a product of too much poorly planned development, bad road network design, and too few transportation choices.

- Limit residential development because our east-west commuter corridors are already overwhelmed beyond their capacity. There is a funnel effect as commuters jam Loudoun's four main east-west roads (Route 50, the Dulles Greenway, Waxpool Road and Route 7) to get and from jobs located primarily east of Dulles Airport.
- Invest in more local streets with more interconnections to reduce traffic more effectively than the few, costly arterial roads we now have.
- Provide more commuter and transit options, particularly given rising gas prices and ever-higher tolls on the private Greenway. Provide analysis of all options including dedicated bus/transit lanes, telecommuting, improved express bus service, rail transit, and employer incentives to enable the county to provide the best mix of transit services.
- Design our communities to give us a better mix of jobs and houses which provides safe and convenient choices for walking and bicycling to schools, recreation, and stores.

3. Have Developers Pay Their Fair Share

We are paying the price for living in one of the nation's fastest growing counties. Because developers haven't paid their fair share for the capital construction and none of the ongoing operating costs of county services, Loudoun taxpayers face higher tax bills and compromised county services.

- Keep development at a pace the County can afford and won't undermine our property values. The 2001 Comprehensive Plan set forth an amount of growth that should be followed.
- Use the newly approved authority for impact fees which can be applied to all new development, not just rezonings.
- Ensure that proffers (developer contributions) as part of rezoning approvals are transparent to the public, adequate, enforceable, and available when needed by the community.
- Use proffers to provide natural areas and offset the cost of lost resources.

4. Protect Drinking Water

We cannot make informed decisions about future growth in the County without knowing if our water supply will be adequate, safe and protected, even in times of drought. Developments have been proposed in the sensitive Goose Creek watershed threatening the Beaverdam and Goose Creek Reservoirs. Too much development near streams causes rapid runoff, scouring of the banks, and severely reduced retention of water in droughts.

- Inventory our ground water supply. The County has never done a study so we can know where and how much water we have, and so we can make decisions about future growth and development.
- Protect from development our reservoirs, streams, and underground aquifer recharge areas, using zoning and land conservation tools.
- Adopt a stream corridor and wetlands protection ordinance.
- Adopt a drinking water protection ordinance for our public sources and private wells.
- Complete watershed management plans countywide.

5. Make Loudoun an Energy Conservation Model

With rising energy costs and apparent climate changes, it is in our best interest to reduce our demand for energy. Loudoun is a leader in high-technology industries and we can be a leader in reducing our energy demand, especially in high-tech, cost-efficient ways.

- Reduce energy consumption in public buildings and seek national green building certification. (use the Green Building Council's LEED-ND)
- Reduce energy consumption and emissions in the County's fleet of buses, trucks and cars.
- Create goals and incentives for private construction to meet national green building certification and reduce homeowner energy bills (Use Earthcraft and/or the Green Building Council's LEED-ND).

- Attract high-tech energy firms and adopt innovative energy conservation and generation strategies as an alternative to new transmission slicing through our communities from distant coal-fired power plants.
- Promote energy conservation in Loudoun's housing and commercial development sectors.

6. Sustain the Rural Economy

The farms, productive soils, and open space of rural Loudoun support thriving rural businesses, including tourism. Loudoun's 165,000 acres of farmland generate net revenue to the County. Open land saves taxpayers' money, because it does not require tax-supported services forced by residential development. Rural Loudoun also provides healthy locally-raised food for residents and increasingly valuable open space and recreational opportunities.

- Promote rural tourism programs.
- Fund land conservation programs to preserve critical land for working farms.
- Develop programs to promote local products, encourage new and creative farming enterprises for small land owners, and support new and existing farmers.

7. Preserve Loudoun's Natural Heritage

Explosive growth has threatened the rich natural heritage and resources that sustain Loudoun's communities and wildlife. We need to preserve healthy ecosystems and habitats for clean air, clean water and wildlife protection. Our children deserve wild, natural places for play and learning.

- Identify and preserve valuable habitats and environmental features when approving development.
- Protect mature trees and adopt a "no-net loss" policy to prevent clear-cutting for new development.
- Preserve existing wetlands and restore lost wetlands through the County's "no-net loss" policy.
- Conserve continuous tracts of land for migration corridors and decrease habitat fragmentation.

8. Protect and Celebrate Loudoun's Cultural Heritage

Loudoun County's celebration of its 250th year highlights our rich, varied and unique heritage. Our heritage provides invaluable lessons and experiences for us and our children, and brings tangible economic benefits to private businesses and to the County. But this heritage is highly – and unnecessarily -- vulnerable to assaults from development and highway and power line projects brought on by unmanaged growth.

- Endorse the Journey through Hallowed Ground Partnership and the National Heritage Area Legislation to recognize the historic corridor through Loudoun that every other county in the four state region has already done.
- Adopt and implement the Heritage Resource Plan.

9. Defend and Implement the Existing 2001 Comprehensive Plan

After four years of delay it is time to work with the public to implement the existing Comprehensive Plan. County staff, not developer representatives, should be tasked with drafting all implementing ordinances. It's time to get back to the vision set forth by the Comprehensive Plan to ensure a better economic future and protect the integrity of the suburban, transition, and rural areas.

- Complete the four community plans for suburban Loudoun using public visualization and design tools. Let the community determine the location and number of *true* town centers needed and the appropriate mix of employment, commercial and residential uses.
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance, Land Subdivision Ordinance, and Facilities Standards Manual to be consistent with the Revised General Plan.
- Reinstate Conservation Design, River and Stream, Mountainside, and underground Limestone protective overlay zones.
- Complete the Transition Area plan to ensure it is a true transition between suburban and rural Loudoun.
- Plan collaboratively with towns to ensure growth in and around them is well designed, meets the town's needs, and protects historic character.