



Transition Area Alliance Supports the Transition Policy Area

Value land as an asset not a commodity

The Transition Area Alliance is a group of Loudoun County residents and nonprofit organizations dedicated to protecting the Transition Policy Area (TPA) to improve the quality of life for all Loudoun County residents by preserving 50 to 70 percent open space using Green Infrastructure policies and practices. Keeping the TPA as a permanently defined policy area in the revised Comprehensive Plan with recommendations by the TAA will provide economic, quality of life, and environmental benefits to the residents of Loudoun County. The Transition Area Alliance advocates for:

- Maintaining the existing Transition Policy Area and current densities and open space;
- Using a watershed protection strategy that includes PDRs, development and conservation easements and county land purchases to preserve land in perpetuity; and
- Using land assets to promote and support agribusiness, eco-tourism, eco-recreation, and historic and cultural resources.

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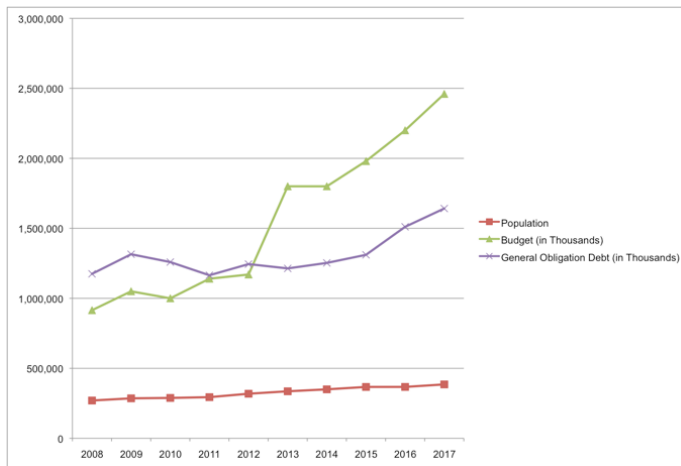
Recommendations to Board of Supervisors & Envision Loudoun Stakeholders Committee

Preservation of the Transition Policy area ensures Loudoun is environmentally sound by protecting, sustaining, and enhancing the County's air quality, water resources, soils, landscape, wildlife, and other natural and man-made resources, including the historic and archaeological heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. By maintaining current densities, the TPA can feature working farms growing fresh produce and meat; recreational opportunities for healthier living; cleaner water; protection against the heat island effect; and local businesses such as bike shops, restaurants offering locally grown food, breweries, equine facilities, and farmers' markets. The Transition Policy Area can be a strong, diverse and resilient economy, capable of generating productive jobs for Loudoun's work force, and of contributing its share of the public revenue stream while supporting smart residential growth.

Neighborhoods within Loudoun's communities can be designed or revitalized in conformance with the natural environment to provide a mix of pedestrian-friendly housing types and safe walking access to schools and services through well planned, bike friendly roads and other multi-modal commuter and recreational opportunities.

Impacts of Expanded Development

Loudoun County's population has increased from 242,515 in 2005 to an estimated 385,414 in 2017, representing an increase of 59%. The student population grew from 44,715 to 78,665 in the same period, an increase of 76%. The budget increased from \$1.0 billion in \$2.5 billion, an increase of 145%. The county debt increased from \$865 million to \$1.6 billion, an increase of 90%. The data show the student population, the county budget, and county debts are increasing at faster rates than the general population (i.e. taxpayers).



Fiscal growth within Loudoun County has brought in more county revenue and created more economic opportunities. But it has come with more than a billion dollars of accumulated debt for decades of growth.

Further expanding development jeopardizes Loudoun's water security, consumes natural resources, limits recreation opportunities, impacts transportation, and damages historical culture. More emphasis must be placed on what Loudoun residents are giving up for expanded development. There needs to be a sensible balance between economic growth versus quality of life and environmental future.

There are 1200 acres of developable land left in the Suburban area and 6,800 acres in the TPA. Considering this represents 0.4% and 2% of land in with respect to the entire county, this is a warning that the window of opportunity to protect this land for future generations is closing.

Property Development Rights

Along with smart, managed growth comes the need to acknowledge property rights along with public interest and shared values of the growing community. While several organizations exist for encouraging owners to put land in conservation easements, there needs to be financial incentives for doing so along with acquisition of undeveloped land by the County.

A study by Soren Anderson, Macalester College, found that homes adjacent to open space increased property values by 20% and "planner and developers have incentive to design future communities with this in mind...Local and regional governments must factor in the tax revenue benefits of open space preservation (as

realized through increased property values) when making fiscal decisions.” *Source:* https://www.msu.edu/~sta/Anderson_openspace_MJE.pdf.

Impact of Parks on Property Values: A Review of the Empirical Evidence supports the 20% increase in property value and “refutes conventional wisdom that creating large parks or forests areas result in a net reduction in the value of an area’s tax base.” *Source* http://www.actrees.org/files/Research/parks_on_property_values.pdf

This is Smart Growth by the Smart Growth Network found that parks, natural areas, and scenic landscapes have great economic value. Protected open space increases the property values of nearby homes and attracts tourism and recreation. Working lands such as farms and ranches support local economies, strengthen the tax base and provide food. Preserving and restoring environmentally important areas such as wetlands helps protect drinking water from pollution, reducing the need for costly water treatment infrastructure. *Source:* <http://www.colorado.edu/AmStudies/lewis/west/thisisgrowth.pdf>

The TPA could be a national model of marrying smart growth with preservation of open space by recognizing the value of open space and creating financial incentives for property owners to conserve their land. Increasing residential density increases the County tax deficit - for every \$1 in residential taxes collected, it costs the County between \$1.20 - \$1.62 to provide services for these homes. *Source: 2014 study by RCLCO and 2011 Report by the Loudoun County Economic Development Commission.*

Land Use

Retain existing densities and design guidelines as articulated in the 2001 Revised General Plan.

- Lower Sycolin/Middle Goose –base density of 1 dwelling per 10 acres in clustered development pattern to maintain minimum of 70% of site as open space.
- Upper Board Run/Upper Foley/Lower Foley – base density of 1 dwelling per 3 acres and 1 dwelling unit per acre per current zoning patterns.
- Lower Bull Run – 1 dwelling per 3 acres.

Open space dedicated as part of the land development process (clustering) must be protected permanently, through conservation easement. Land uses within the TPA can incorporate varying densities and development patterns, such as higher density mixed-use villages; residential clusters at varying densities; and large-lot, low-density residential development as long as they are cognizant of cultural resources and environmental constraints.

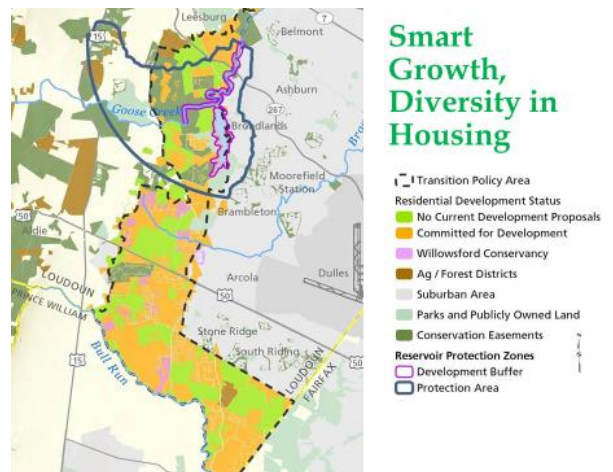
Non-residential components can include tax-generating uses that represent an appropriate transition from suburban to rural land uses such as golf courses, active recreation uses, kennels, nurseries and similar commercial uses; public and private schools; and other compatible institutional uses. These uses will serve to promote a rural character while serving rural and suburban populations. The active quarries at the southern and northern ends of the TPA should be protected from encroaching residential development. New non-residential uses that support residential development, such as schools, churches, small-scale commercial retail and home business occupations/local offices, should be located within community cores of villages at appropriate scales.

Transportation

Retain Revised General Plan policies supporting compatible road network in TPA based on established densities. Match roadways and capacities to areas with low density and rural character, such as traffic calming and roundabouts. Remove Bi-County Parkway from Revised General Plan. Maintaining current densities will avoid adding more traffic to suburban area.

Open Space

Revised General Plan requires County to “consider the contiguity of the open space area to other designated open space and unique site features” during the development process. Recommend development of an



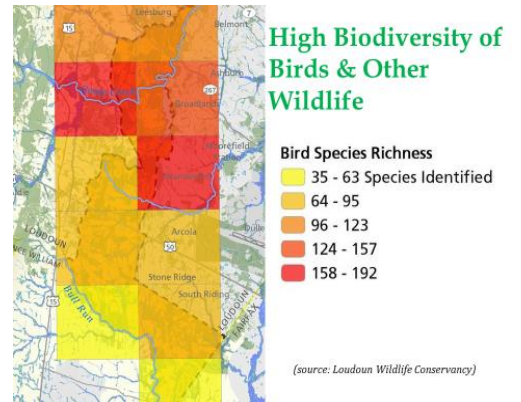
integrated network of open space with parks; hiking, biking and equine trails; and preservation of natural habitats for wildlife.

Natural Resources

Protect the character of Loudoun County and its valuable and vulnerable land and water resources through preservation, conservation, and restoration of a contiguous network of open space, natural and habitat areas, wetlands, watersheds and woodlands, floodplains, air quality, agriculture, steep slopes, hydric and highly erodible soils, cultural landscapes and sites, and scenic views via identification and monitoring of these assets.

The TPA is home to 56 Species of Greatest Concern according to the Virginia State Wildlife Action Plan. The TPA encompasses three watersheds, including the quality-impaired Upper Broad Run. In January 2015, the Loudoun County Transportation and Land Use Committee recommended watershed management practices including stream restoration, reforestation and conservation of existing watershed lands because they were experiencing rapid changes in land use. Reducing the impacts of current and future urbanization is of key importance to protect and improve water quality.

Enhancing the tree canopy reduces stormwater runoff, ameliorates the urban heat island effect, and improves air quality. The runoff from one acre of paved parking generates the same amount of annual runoff as 36 acres of forest or 20 acres of grassland. Source: *PSU extension report: The Role of Trees and Forests in Healthy Watersheds* <https://extension.psu.edu/the-role-of-trees-and-forests-in-healthy-watersheds>. Preserving the TPA reduces impervious surface, supports bioretention areas and green streets, reducing areas vulnerable to flooding and associated pollution. Retaining the TPA defends the environment by preserving and enhancing natural habitat, reducing fractured habitats while providing resilience to drought and impacts of development.



Quality of Life & Sense of Place

Non-residential uses in the TPA will help to solve the two biggest quality of life issues in the area - overcrowded roads and schools. Middle and high schools built just 4 or 5 years ago are already overcrowded, school district boundaries are constantly changing, and budgeting for new schools can't keep up with population growth already planned. Roads are no sooner improved and widened than they are at capacity.

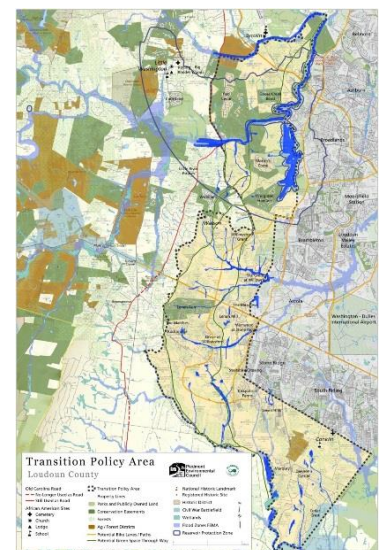
Water Resources

Three major drinking water sources are in the TPA – Beaverdam, Goose Creek, and Occoquan reservoirs. Conservation and development go hand in hand. In a watershed that is 60% forested, treatment costs \$29 per 792,516 gallons of drinking water. If the forested portion of the watershed drops to 10%, the drinking water treatment cost rises to \$91 per 792,516 gallons.

Source: [https://www.fws.gov/daphne/shu/2012economic_benefits_factsheet2\[1\].pdf](https://www.fws.gov/daphne/shu/2012economic_benefits_factsheet2[1].pdf).

According to Loudoun Water, its customers may require up to 90 million gallons of drinking water per *day*, representing a 40 million gallon per day increase from today's customer demand.

Use a watershed protection strategy that includes PDRs, development and conservation easements and county land purchases to preserve land in perpetuity to protect the Rural Policy Area from encroachment of high-density suburban and urban growth. The TPA and the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) are the point beyond which central sewer and water is not feasible. Beginning in the north, the UGB follows the Suburban Policy Area boundary to the point where it meets the TPA. The UGB then follows the western edge of the TPA to meet the Prince William County line in the south. While central water and sewer lines are permitted in the TPA, natural open spaces will be the predominant visual element and create a contiguous network of green spaces consistent with the Countywide Green Infrastructure objectives.

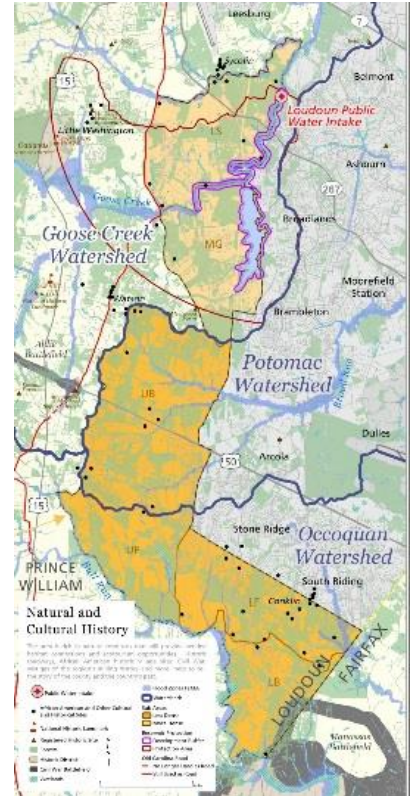


Recreation

A parks and trails network in the TPA would serve the entire County, especially residents of suburban areas, providing recreation and accessibility to Metro and work centers in Leesburg and Sterling. Routes for biking and hiking trails for recreation need to be identified, with the Washington and Old Dominion Regional Park as a natural destination. Bike and pedestrian trails, either natural or hard surfaces, should connect to commuter hubs, taking cars off of the roads. Such a network was planned for this area recognizing the intrinsic value of bicycling and walking and establishing bicycling and walking as a transportation goal. (Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan, 2003). An increase in trails and commuting alternatives saves money by increasing the efficient use of public space, reducing the need for costly infrastructure, and improving the health of the community. Natural trails can boost the economy by creating a community that is attractive for new residents, tourists and businesses. Outdoor Recreation Contributes \$730 Billion to the US economy. Trail sports represent three of the most popular outdoor recreation activities with 182 million participants (OIF 2006). Biking and trail sports are two of the most popular outdoor activities in Virginia.

History & Culture

Important resources and sites in the TPA include the Carolina Rd; Mosby Heritage Area; Journey Through Hallowed Ground; numerous African American cemeteries; and Braddock Rd (originally named Colchester Rd.) that was traveled by George Washington, Daniel Boone, Lafayette, King Louis Phillips of France. Preserving these sites against larger-scale development provides educational and tourism opportunities. Preserving historic sites, whether incorporating them in parkland or requiring their preservation within village-concept communities, provides educational opportunities for schools, summer camps, and tourism. Loudoun County has a history unlike any other and must be preserved.



By preserving tangible links with our history, we honor our past. By planning new development that we can be proud of, we honor our future. With thoughtful planning, we can pass on a legacy of beautiful and vibrant communities for generations to come. This is Smart Growth by The Smart Growth Network (SGN).

The Transition Area Alliance includes concerned citizens and the

Aldie Heritage Association

League of Women Voters of Loudoun County

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Loudoun Residents for Reasonable Growth

Piedmont Environmental Council

in cooperation with the

Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition

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