**Update to Land Use Study Group, October 2023**

Want to know what will happen to a particular property - new gas station?  apartments?  data center?  - in Prince William County?  Check the long-range Comprehensive Plan that shapes rezonings over the next 20 years, as well as the current zoning.

The Prince William County Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) has primary responsibility for land use - where new houses and commercial development will be allowed, what sort of density/development will be permitted, and where new transportation ("mobility") infrastructure should be built. The BOCS dramatically changed Prince William County land use policies when it adopted key chapters of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan in December 2022, updating the 2008 versions.

After a very long debate in 2022, the BOCS authorized data centers in new locations outside of the already-defined Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District.  The supervisors also dropped the "smart growth" approach adopted in 1998, when increasing property taxes led to a commitment to focus public facilities in a Development Area and minimize public investment in a Rural Area.

The new Land Use chapter authorized more houses in the former Rural Area. The growth boundary had always controversial, Creating separate Rural/Development areas was approved in a split 1998 vote, with the three supervisors in western districts all opposed but a majority of eastern district supervisors voting in favor.  Developers soon started purchasing parcels in the Rural Area where only one house was permitted on a 10-acre lot, then trying to get the line redrawn so the land value increased substantially if denser development was authorized.

In 2022 the BOCS also adopted a new Mobility Chapter that proposed $6 billion in road expansion projects, plus a trails and transit plan.  A new Housing Chapter specified how many affordable housing units were needed by 2040.  However, the Electrical Utility Services Plan chapter did not identify any new high-voltage transmission corridors to deliver electricity to places where new data centers were authorized.

Because land use, transportation, and housing decisions have such a major impact on local residents, and because the jargon and planning processes are so confusing, our chapter of the LWV initiated a land use study group in 2023.  We are starting to get dangerously educated about the DAPS, SUP's, DCSM, and various aspects of local planning.

Why?  In political campaigns early money is like yeast, and in land use planning early involvement in the decision process is essential to making a difference.  If you are interested in joining the study group, contact Carol Proven at carol.proven01@gmail.com