

**League of Women Voters of Falls Church (LWVFC)
Support Positions Approved by the Board
February 12, 2013**

I. PLANNING (revised 2013)

The League of Women Voters of Falls Church supports the ongoing implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and City Area Plans, which afford a coordinated approach to meeting the present and future needs of the City's residents. Future development should:

- A. Encourage the continuation of the caring, cohesive, and nurturing atmosphere of the community;
- B. Employ demographic analysis as an important tool in the public decision-making process;
- C. Enhance the physical appearance of buildings and landscapes in the City;
- D. Consider the ability to walk and bike as well as traffic and parking in the City;
- E. Encourage density around transportation hubs;
- F. Structure consideration of redevelopment, new development and rezoning projects to provide public input and review before a First Reading by the Planning Commission and/or City Council on any major development project;
- G. Require Planning Commission review and approval.

II. ZONING (1970, 2007, 2013)

The LWVFC believes zoning ordinances, which have the force of law, should be strictly interpreted and enforced in a predictable and consistent manner, including adequate on-site reviews of conformance to approved plans, and that:

- A. The Zoning Ordinance and its interpretation should support the City's efforts to ensure that development is compatible in location, height, mass, scale, density, use, site layout and architectural character with the surrounding neighborhoods;
- B. Exceptions should be allowed only after review by the Planning Commission and approval by the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), and in the case of staff approvals, only after consultation with and approval of the Chairman of the BZA;
- C. Stabilization and protection of residential areas should be a major consideration in the review of any new development, redevelopment or rezoning proposal;
- D. Effective buffers sufficient to screen and protect low-density residential areas from the impact of new development should be required in all cases;
- E. New development should not overburden the capacity of the City's infrastructure, including but not limited to water, sewer, schools, and roads;
- F. The City should ensure that the financial and infrastructure impact analyses are readily available to interested members of the community in a timely fashion;
- G. Consideration of redevelopment, new development and rezoning projects should be structured to provide public input and review before a First Reading by the Planning Commission and/or City Council on any major development project.

III. HOUSING (1969, 1974, 1977, 1993, 2007, 2013)

Within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan, housing goals should:

- A. Encourage affordable housing units for all age levels and support efforts to meet the needs of diverse social and economic groups, including the homeless;

- B. Encourage zoning code changes and mixed-use development to increase affordable housing;
- C. Pursue developing new sources of support and subsidy for affordable housing;
- D. Support development of residential mixed use to meet changing economic conditions;
- E. Integrate new housing with existing neighborhoods.

IV. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (1977, 2007, 2013)

Commercial/business development in the City should have the following goals:

- A. Increase business development with a variety of business types in commercially zoned areas;
- B. Encourage land consolidation to allow for a greater mix of business uses;
- C. Expand employment opportunities while also increasing City revenues;
- D. Ensure that City infrastructure is not overburdened;
- E. Incorporate design, massing, scale, site layout and uses that conform to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and are in accordance with the City Area Plans.

V. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978, 2007, 2013)

The Capital Improvement Program should:

- A. Promote broad dissemination of information to citizens regarding capital improvement projects;
- B. Provide periodic public review (i.e., every five years) for all capital improvements that have been deferred;
- C. Support:
 1. A cost-benefit study prior to any bond decision, to determine the feasibility of a project and/or the desirability of new construction versus renovation;
 2. Early publication of notification of intent to present a bond issue;
 3. Dissemination of information to the public on the justification for the City’s decision to support a project going to referendum.

VI. LAND USE (1984, 2013)

The LWVFC supports a mixture of land uses to promote vitality by providing housing, office, retail and restaurant uses in business and transitional areas in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and City Area Plans. The City should encourage restoration, renovation and redevelopment of commercial property as follows:

- A. New development, redevelopment, and rezoning should be negotiated with the City and constructed as stipulated in negotiated contracts;
- B. Rezoning should be allowed only as provided by the Comprehensive Plan and City Area Plans;
- C. Changes in parking ordinances should be reviewed frequently, taking into consideration the demands of business and housing in any part of the City, and shared parking should be encouraged;
- D. Parcel consolidation should be encouraged in all new development and redevelopment planning;
- E. Design concepts should conform to the latest approved City of Falls Church Design Guidelines.

VII. EDUCATION/CHILD DEVELOPMENT (1973, 1981, 2005, 2013)

The Falls Church League of Women Voters supports:

- A. Sufficient funds to provide:
 1. A caring, competent, qualified teacher in every classroom;

2. School and class sizes that are appropriate for instructional goals and the emotional needs of children;
 3. Strong early childhood programs and interventions for students with special needs;
 4. Quality professional development opportunities;
- B. Educational programs that offer challenging curricula and enrichment for diverse learners and that prepare all students for higher education or competent entry into the work force;
 - C. Opportunities for all students to participate in extracurricular and service learning activities to develop and apply skills needed to become active participants in their communities;
 - D. Parenting education for high school students;
 - E. Extended day care for all school-age children whose families request it, financed primarily by user fees on a sliding scale, with City subsidies where necessary;
 - F. Adult classes in child development and behavior, with City subsidies where necessary;
 - G. Efforts to seek business and private support of the schools to enhance the education programs provided by public funds, with the goal that such efforts be self-sustaining and that the school system continue to fund the essentials of a quality education.

VIII. EDUCATION: NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE (2010)

- A. The League of Women Voters of Falls Church supports full-funding by the City Government of the Northern Virginia Community College annual assessment because NVCC provides:
 1. High-quality, cost-effective, post-secondary education to an increasing number of George Mason High School graduates and other City residents;
 2. Educational courses and certificate programs in the critical areas of technology, first response and health care as well as other workforce education for the region;
 3. Enhanced opportunities for cultural activities as well as personal enrichment through courses such as foreign language, art and technology courses.
- B. The League considers the City's continued financial contribution to NVCC to be an important part of the City's responsibility to the Region.
- C. The League of Women Voters of Falls Church believes the Falls Church City School staff, teachers and counselors should:
 1. Provide comprehensive counseling, starting in middle school, to students and parents regarding cost benefits as well as the wide-range and quality of educational opportunities provided by NVCC;
 2. Invite NVCC representatives to come to GMHS more than once a year for recruitment efforts;
 3. Invite NVCC representatives to PTSA meetings to inform parents regarding the educational options, financial aid, online courses, small class size, student support systems, and other benefits offered by NVCC;
 4. Offer students the opportunity to participate in a field trip to visit local NVCC campus(es);
 5. Expand Dual Enrollment opportunities to allow students to earn both college and high school credit by taking college-level courses taught at GMHS by NVCC faculty and/or accredited teachers.
- D. The League of Women Voters of Falls Church believes:
 1. George Mason High School, Falls Church City Government, the Falls Church Education Foundation and the Falls Church Economic Development Advisory Board should add information to their websites about NVCC courses and other services, including a link to the published NVCC course schedule and to a calendar of NVCC-sponsored cultural events;
 2. The City's representative on the NVCC Board of Directors should regularly request statistics related to Falls Church City citizen and GMHS graduate enrollment in NVCC;
 3. The Falls Church City Government should issue a press release announcing the statistics and also publish them on the City's website;

4. The City should request that NVCC to offer classes within the Falls Church City limits by renting class space at GMHS or another school in the evening and/or in other available office space in the City.

IX. RECREATION (1969, 1981, 2013)

The LWVFC supports:

- A. Land acquisition for recreational purposes and open space within the City;
- B. The City of Arts, Theater, Culture, and History (C.A.T.C.H.) and its mission to enrich the lives of its citizens by making the arts available and accessible to all City residents;
- C. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and its mission to enhance the communities of Northern Virginia and enrich the lives of their citizens through the conservation of regional natural, educational and cultural resources.

X. TRANSPORTATION (1983, 2007, 2013)

The LWVFC believes it is important to:

- A. Synchronize traffic signals on major streets to facilitate traffic flow without encouraging excessive speed;
- B. Emphasize traffic calming on the City's streets;
- C. Encourage a common entrance into parking areas for adjacent businesses, with exits onto side streets;
- D. Maintain plantings, curbs and gutters along our streets;
- E. Improve and expand sidewalks to create a pedestrian-friendly environment in every neighborhood.

XI. WASTE MANAGEMENT (1990, 2007, 2013)

Recognizing the need for increased attention to problems of waste management at all levels of government and the need to develop efficient local strategies to address these problems, the LWVFC supports:

- A. City funding of an expanded curbside program to include all marketable recyclable material;
- B. A voluntary program, with the possibility of a future mandatory program;
- C. A requirement by the City that apartment owners provide opportunities for tenants to separate newspapers and other recyclable materials included in an expanded City program;
- D. A requirement by the City that owners of commercial buildings; establishments, and institutions provide opportunities for the collection of office paper, as well as for the collection of all marketable recyclable materials where sufficient volume exists;
- E. City efforts to encourage food-service businesses to procure recyclable food-service containers;
- F. A collection program for accepting and disposing of household hazardous materials, such as Northern Virginia Regional Commission's "Known Toxics" program;
- G. A yard waste program that keeps most yard waste in a homeowner's yard through grass-cycling, yard waste composting, and other methods that reduce the overall waste stream.

XII. HUMAN SERVICES (1990, 2013)

The LWVFC supports:

- A. Enhancing the coordination and efficiency in planning, funding and evaluating the delivery of human services;

- B. Strengthening consultation on human services issues among City boards and commissions, the City Council, and the City Manager;
- C. Providing effective liaison with local representatives to regional human services bodies;
- D. Improving effective coordination between public and private providers of human services.

XIII. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (1995, 2013)

In order to meet the needs of the present without compromising the well-being of future generations, the LWVFC believes that Falls Church government and citizens should:

- A. Address the long-term implications of our development and infrastructure decisions and practices;
- B. Explore participation in programs that support sustainable development;
- C. Integrate principles of sustainable development into the Comprehensive Plan and other planning policies and procedures, and follow the principles of sustainable development in City and school development projects;
- D. Revise the zoning code to reflect the principles of sustainable development as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and City Area Plans;
- E. Foster business development policies and procedures that support sustainable development;
- F. Encourage inter-jurisdictional planning that supports sustainable development.

XIV. REVENUE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH (2005, 2013)

The LWVFC supports:

- A. Expansion of local revenue-raising alternatives that allow for reduced dependence on the real estate property tax;
- B. Annual assessments of real estate and tangible personal property based on 100% of their fair market value. Assessment methods should be equitable, straightforward, transparent, and efficient to administer. Taxpayers should have explicit rights for administrative and judicial appeals;
- C. A tax system for our local government that reflects community goals and values and that provides adequate revenues to support them.

XV. INTER-JURISDICTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS (2007, 2013)

The LWVFC believes that:

- A. Inter-jurisdictional arrangements for housing and human services should be based on documented needs, mandates, effectiveness and expense;
- B. Periodic review of all arrangements with other jurisdictions benefits the City and its citizens;
- C. In view of the responsibilities placed on the citizens who represent the City on inter-jurisdictional bodies, effective communication between these representatives, City Council, and City staff should include:
 1. City orientation of individual representatives when appointed;
 2. A point of contact within the City government, who will consult with representatives when appropriate;
 3. Periodic reporting by representatives to City Council;
 4. Consultation with representatives in City budget planning related to the representative's work.

XVI. ARTS IN THE CITY (2011)

- A. The League of Women Voters of Falls Church believes that cultural activities within the City of Falls Church benefit both the City arts and business communities and contribute to the attractiveness of the City as a destination, and recommends the following:
 - 1. The business and cultural community should create partnerships around specific cultural events such as pre- and post- theater dinners and other commercial activities of the business community and other groups;
 - 2. The arts and business communities should recognize and further explore activities that benefit both. For example an artist's recent expenditure of \$6700 for a gallery opening constituted money spent almost entirely within the City.
- B. The League believes that City support of cultural activities defines the City as a place that respects its cultural and historical past, present, and future; and that such support should be encouraged in both tight and easier fiscal times, and recommends the following:
 - 1. The EDA, whose job it is to market the City, should more aggressively support the cultural activities of the City in order to attract businesses, artists, and patrons of the arts;
 - 2. The City should establish a line-item in the budget to support CATCH, a City entity that publicizes arts/history events and provides a structure for implementation of a City grant program for the arts;
 - 3. As fiscal circumstances permit, additional City resources should be allocated to market City events, such as Memorial Day activities, the Fall Festival, City concerts, and Watch Nights;
 - 4. As fiscal circumstances permit, the City should offer tax incentives to individuals and to arts-related organizations as part of the "Arts and Cultural District" designation;
 - 5. The City and the Falls Church Public Schools should work together to ensure that the schools as community resources are available for community-wide arts and cultural activities.
- C. The League believes the City should encourage businesses to be creative in including public art or cultural activities as part of their business plans, and recommends the following:
 - 1. The City should make clear to developers the type of arts-related proffers that would best serve the City's commitment to arts and culture;
 - 2. The City should consider ways to make unutilized space available to arts organization and encourage developers to permit temporary use of unleased commercial space until more permanent tenants can be found.