

**League of Women Voters of Falls Church
Support Positions
Edits and Additions Approved by the Board
as of November 9, 2011**

I. Planning

The League of Women Voters of Falls Church supports the ongoing implementation of a Comprehensive Plan, which affords a coordinated approach to meet the present and future needs of the city's residents. Future development should:

- A. Encourage the continuation of the small-town atmosphere of the community;
- B. Enhance the physical appearance of the city in buildings and landscape design;
- C. Consider the impact of traffic flow on the city;
- D. Encourage density around transportation hubs.
- E. Require Planning Commission review and approval.

II. ZONING (1970, 2007)

The LWVFC believes zoning ordinances should be strictly interpreted and enforced, 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;
- C. Stabilization and protection of residential areas should be a major consideration in the review of any 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 positively affect the capacity of the city's infrastructure;
- 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 on any major development project.

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

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)

Commercial/business development in the city should:

- A. Emphasize greater business development in commercially zoned areas;
- B. Encourage land consolidation and mixed business uses;
- C. Provide greater employment opportunities and increased city revenues;
- D. Have positive impact on the capacity of the infrastructure;
- E. Incorporate design, massing, scale, site layout and uses that conform to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

V. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978, 2007)

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)

The LWVFC supports a mixture of uses in order to provide housing in business and transitional areas in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. The city should encourage restoration, renovation and redevelopment of commercial property as follows:

- A. Public improvements should be constructed as stipulated in negotiated contracts;
- B. Rezoning should be allowed only in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan;
- C. Changes in parking ordinances should reflect proximity to transportation hubs;
- D. Parcel consolidation should be encouraged;
- E. Design concepts should conform to the latest approved City of Falls Church Design Guidelines.

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

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

The League considers the city's continued financial contribution to NVCC to be an important part of the city's responsibility to the Region.

- B. 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

C. 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)

The LWVFC supports:

- A. Land acquisition for recreational purposes and open space within the city;
- B. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

X. TRANSPORTATION (1983, 2007)

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)

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 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.

XII. HUMAN SERVICES (1990)

The LWVFC supports a consolidated Commission for Human Services to:

- A. Enhance coordination and efficiency in planning, funding and evaluating the delivery of human services;
- B. Strengthen consultation on human services issues among city boards and commissions, the City Council, and the City Manager;
- C. Provide effective liaison with local representatives to regional human services bodies;
- D. Improve effective coordination between public and private providers of human services;
- E. Reduce the demand on city staff for support of numerous boards and commissions.

XIII. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (1995)

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;
- D. Revise the zoning code to reflect the principles of sustainable development as set forth in the Comprehensive Plan;
- E. Foster business development policies and procedures that support sustainable development;
- F. Encourage inter-jurisdictional planning that supports sustainable development.

XIV. CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH (1997)

Since the LWVFC believes that demographics are an important tool to be used in the public decision-making process, we support:

- A. Ongoing collection of demographic information using such tools as the U.S. census, school census, surveys and needs assessments;
- B. Timely input of demographic information in the city's Geographic Information System;

C. Improved dissemination of demographic information such as an annual report to citizens.

XV. REVENUE ALTERNATIVES FOR THE CITY OF FALLS CHURCH (2005)

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.

XVI. INTER-JURISDICTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS (2007)

The LWVFC believes that:

- A. Inter-jurisdictional arrangements for housing and human services should be based on documented needs, mandates, effectiveness and expense;
- B. There should be a mechanism in place for periodic review of all arrangements with other jurisdictions;
- C. In view of the responsibilities placed on the citizens who represent the city on inter-jurisdictional bodies, more effective communication between these representatives, City Council, and city staff should include:
 - 1. City orientation of individual representatives when appointed;
 - 2. An organizational point of contact within the city government, including periodic consultations when appropriate;
 - 3. Periodic reporting by representatives to City Council;
 - 4. Expectation that such representatives be included in relevant city budget discussions.

XVII. 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.