

Redevelopment of North Woodbridge Draft Implementation Plan

BACKGROUND

In May of 2010, the Prince William County Board of Supervisor officially designated North Woodbridge as an Urban Mixed Use (UMU) area. Centrally located between Interstate 95, the Occoquan River, and the Woodbridge VRE Train Station, these 160 acres offer a setting for the redevelopment of the area through a mix of high-density residential, office, and commercial/retail buildings together with open space, parks, and recreational amenities along the Occoquan waterfront. Once completed, North Woodbridge will be the third waterfront community on the Occoquan River Crescent, joining Old Town Occoquan and the neo-traditional golf and marina community of Belmont Bay.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMENITIES

North Woodbridge's location provides residents and businesses with access existing and planned infrastructure, including immediate access to Interstate 95, U.S. Route 1, Route 123, and the VRE commuter, Amtrak, and planned high-speed trains. The area includes multiple free commuter lots; bus service to Washington, D.C. and Tysons Corner (free), and an entrepreneurial, self-managed "slug" commuter system. The three area marinas are being considered for the possible launch of:

- third, high-speed, Amtrak rail line to carry passengers from Richmond to Washington, D.C.;
- commuter ferry service (high-speed catamarans) traveling North-South and East-West along the Potomac, Occoquan, and Anacostia Rivers;
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along dedicated Route 1 lanes during rush hour; and
- High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes along Interstate 95 (in conjunction with existing dedicated carpool ("slug") lanes.

The quality of the local education system is a key asset. The Prince William Public School Division is one of the finest in the nation, as exemplified through test scores, school rankings, scholar and teacher recognition, and school-based specialty programs. Higher education and workforce development programs are easily accessible. In addition, the two higher education institutions provide lifelong learning and workforce training opportunities as well. The existing Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) Woodbridge Campus is within five miles of the planned George Mason University satellite campus at Belmont Bay, the Potomac Environmental Research and Education Center.

Health care is another critical piece of community infrastructure that is available in the area. Woodbridge is home to Sentra Potomac Hospital, a 183-bed, not-for-profit community hospital. It offers a range of medical specialties, a highly qualified medical and clinical staff, and state-of-the-art technology in a community-oriented environment.

Two fire stations are located within three miles of North Woodbridge. High quality and efficient firefighter and emergency medical services are provided through a combination career and volunteer system. The Prince William County Police Department has been nationally accredited for over 23 years. Currently more than 650 full-time personnel provide police service to the County.

North Woodbridge offers varied recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike. Situated on the Occoquan River, it provides a variety of waterfront activities. An 8-mile stretch of the 700-mile Congressionally-recognized Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) runs from Old Town Occoquan through North Woodbridge, into the adjacent Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and South to Rippon Lodge and Leesylvania State Park.

SITUATIONAL UPDATE

The North Woodbridge Comprehensive Plan Amendment approval by the Board of County Supervisors was a major step forward in the redevelopment and revitalization of North Woodbridge. During the last two and half years, the community, private citizens, developers, and county staff, developed a vision of a New North Woodbridge and a Master Plan for the area. Our next step is the development and implementation of a strategy that will result in investment and redevelopment in the area. As the Eastern Gateway to Prince William County, this area will redevelop as a mixed-use, transit-oriented destination center with a sense of place/community.

Several studies have been recently completed, are on-going, or planned/funded for this area. Major aspects of the redevelopment efforts have been reviewed by several national and regional consultants. Completed studies include:

- The Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments completed the “Sustainability of Mixed Use Development around Woodbridge VRE Station” Study in June, 2009. The study was conducted by the Parsons Brinckerhoff, PlaceMaking Group. Their recommendations for density and mixed use parallel those recently adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.
- The Department of Defense’s Office of Economic Adjustment completed the “The BRAC Sandwich Study” in June 2010. URS Consultants, Inc. found that due to BRAC actions, increased congestion is coming faster than expected.

North Woodbridge is being hit especially hard. The Consultants recommended extending Route 1 to as many as 10 or 12 lanes. Realizing this was not a viable option for the community, they recommend looking at how changes in land use and transit options could mitigate the effect of the BRAC realignment.

- The Virginia Department of Transportation is about to finalize a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Feasibility Study in September 2010. Preliminary results were presented to the BOCS in conjunction with the BRAC Study and indicate that full implementation of Bus Rapid Transit that includes additional buses and a bus-only lane is not justified without increased population density. The study suggests a phased-approach to the roll-out of BRT as planned density levels (and population increases) occur in follow-up to 2011 BRAC actions.

Prince William County and regional organizations continue to look for additional funding sources to address other issues facing the area. Among the funding planned or in place:

- Congressman Connolly has requested \$8 million to construct Phase I of the North Woodbridge Interchange as a High Priority Project under the reauthorization of the surface transportation legislation.
- Congressman Connolly has requested an earmark of \$500,000 for Phase I of the North Woodbridge Interchange as part of the 2010 Transportation Department Appropriations legislation currently moving through Congress.
- Congressman Connolly has introduced federal legislation to conduct an engineering feasibility study to extend Metrorail from Springfield to North Woodbridge. A public workshop is being planned in North Woodbridge in November on this subject.
- The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) will apply in July for \$5 million in federal funding under President Obama's Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) that could be applied to additional planning needs in North Woodbridge. SCI is a joint effort of the US DOT, EPA, and Department of Housing to foster mixed-use, transit-oriented projects like North Woodbridge.
- Prince William County received an Urban Development Area (UDA) planning grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation for \$250,000. This money is to be used to develop policies, transit options, and plans for the County's Urban Development Areas.

- Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) is actively seeking TIGER II (stimulus) funding for the Commuter Ferry Market Analysis Study, estimated at \$300K. The grant application requires a 20% match of the funds.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To ensure we continue to move forward on the redevelopment of North Woodbridge, the following activities are planned over the remainder of 2010 and beyond. Your strong support of these activities is requested.

Capital Hill Visits – July, September 2010

The objective of the visits to lawmakers is to request Federal financial support for the North Woodbridge Interchange. Meetings will be scheduled with Senators Warner and Webb and Congressmen Connolly, Moran and Wolf. Currently VDOT needs an additional \$17 million to complete the project. Congressman Connolly has requested \$8.5 million for the construction of Phase I efforts. Participation by the business community is paramount to the success of these Hill visits.

North Woodbridge Public-Private Partnership Finance Symposium (Property Owners and Investors) - September, 2010

The objective of the symposium is to identify and assess all available financial tools that could be leveraged for the redevelopment efforts of North Woodbridge. Policy and finance experts on Tax Increment Financing, Business Improvement Districts, Industrial Development Authority, and the Public-Private Transportation Act will discuss the pros and cons of each of these vehicles as it relates to North Woodbridge. Participants will work to design a sustainable community.

Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) Cooperative Agreement – September, 2010

The objective of the event is the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the federal, state, and local government; private sector land donors; and volunteer associations involved in the completion of the 8-mile portion of the PHNST in Woodbridge. The MOU is expected to be signed between Prince William County, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Capital Region National Park Service and U.S. Department of the Interior. The signing will free up federal dollars to assist in the completion of the trail and would be considered a significant accomplishment. The trail will provide an added recreational and educational amenity and enhance its destination point profile (particularly if it provides public access to the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. A million dollar pedestrian walkway over Neabsco Creek and the Metz Wetlands is being considered on the Southern portion of the trail in Woodbridge.

Commuter Ferry Stakeholder Meeting – October 2010

The objective of the Commuter Ferry Stakeholders meeting is to take the findings of the feasibility study and apply them on a regional level. Commuters and tourists from Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. will benefit from this daily service on the three river system in our area. The first task facing the regional group will be to find funding for a market analysis. This is important to North Woodbridge because it provides an additional transportation option and enhances the area as a destination location.

VDOT Public Hearing on North Woodbridge Interchange – November 2010

The purpose of the Public Hearing is for the Virginia Department of Transportation to receive comments on the revised design plan for the interchange. If the additional \$17 million dollars in funding is secured, construction can begin in 2014. If there are significant design changes, cost and construction timelines will be altered. It is important to have public and private comments to show community interest in making this a priority project for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Extension of Metrorail Workshop – November 2010

The purpose of this workshop is to bring area decision-makers together to build a consensus plan on the extension of Metrorail to Prince William County. Identification of funding, cost effectiveness, route options, and Federal authorization will be discussed. Participants will include Federal, State and local elected officials from Prince William and Fairfax County, business leaders, and civic associations.

NAIOP Bus Tour - May 2011

The objective of the bus tour in North Woodbridge is to orient and market the area to the membership of the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, the leading trade association for developers, owners, and investors. This tour is recognized as one of the most successful commercial real estate bus tours in the United States.