

CASE STUDY: Fauquier County Service Districts – Adding New Urbanism

More than 30 years ago, Fauquier County created nine service districts around its existing towns, including Warrenton, Bealeton, Marshall and New Baltimore. The districts total four percent (16,660 acres) of the county's land area, with the goal of protecting natural resources and the county's thriving agricultural industry by concentrating new development around existing towns and settlements.

Three primary zoning ordinances were employed to encourage housing and other development:

- restrict public water and sewer to the service districts
- apply sliding scale and mandatory cluster zoning in rural areas, and
- require major subdivisions in rural areas to have central water systems

At the same time, the County gradually reduced the potential build-out in the plan to match more realistic population growth rates reducing the projected rate from ___% per year to ___% per year in keeping with Virginia's average growth rate. As a result, Fauquier County managed to direct 83 percent of new development to the nine service districts between 1980 and 2000. In turn, the county eased pressure to develop prime farmland, contained the cost of upgrading county roads and eased the environmental impact of development in a rapidly growing region of Virginia.

Addressing Design and Interconnectivity Issues

Fauquier has been criticized for failing to plan better within the service districts, allowing a hodgepodge of strip shopping centers and car-dependent, low density subdivisions with poor interconnections.

Fauquier County's challenge today is to start to apply the tools of New Urbanism – mixed land uses and interconnected local streets with pedestrian-friendly access to shopping, jobs and public spaces – to increase the “liveability” within the service districts.

The county is preparing detailed new urbanist development standards for each of its districts and individual projects are starting to exhibit the principles of New Urbanism, including:

Vint Hill Farms/New Baltimore

The redevelopment plan for this 695-acre former military facility includes neo-traditional guidelines for a Village Center that will include restaurants, theater, retail and office space, apartments, condominium units and single-family homes. The core will be linked by internal and perimeter trails to a mix of residential and office/retail uses within a half-mile radius. To date, Vint Hill is home to 60 businesses employing 1,200 workers, 170 acres of parks and open space, and 120 residences, all within the New Baltimore service district.

Saint Leonard's Farm/Warrenton

The 850-acres at Saint Leonard's Farm connects to the Warrenton service district and serves as a green boundary to the rural area along Route 211 West. During rezoning, using the mandatory cluster ordinance 41 lots were clustered on the 50 acres closest to town (nearly double the property's by right density of 23 lots). The remaining 800 acres were placed under a perpetual conservation easement. The planned cluster lots will be served through public water and sewer, while preserving a valued open space gateway to the Town of Warrenton.