



# The Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association

## ISSUE BRIEF

### IMPROVING LOCAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING

**VAPA supports appropriate local and regional authority to plan for and implement livable communities across the Commonwealth.**

Planning and land use control are two of local government's most important functions. Improved planning is borne from better technical assessment and enhanced public involvement, two essential elements of empowering sound community decision making.

All localities should be guided by a strong comprehensive plan that is developed through active participation of the members of the community. It is a goal of VAPA to advance ethically and technically sound planning as part of the decision making process.

Reliable data and technical analysis empowers political leaders and community members to appropriately assess the tradeoffs associated with various policy options. Sound planning includes an understanding of the technical assessments and value judgments, blending both appropriately to recommend a direction that moves a community toward the best place it can be for its citizens.

VAPA believes that the General Assembly should enhance local government's ability to implement carefully developed comprehensive plans by authorizing a complete spectrum of land use and growth management tools and should allow localities more creative, locally initiated, planning and land use mechanisms.

VAPA supports legislative proposals that advance the science and technical accuracy of data used for sound analysis of policy choices.

VAPA supports legislation that enhances regional planning to address problems of greater than local significance. Such planning must occur in an environment of inter-jurisdictional cooperation -- cooperation between localities, and between localities and the state.

VAPA supports the requirement that state agencies comply with local comprehensive plans and local land use regulations and policies, subject only to override by the Governor or the General Assembly.

VAPA supports the adoption of an urban policy for the commonwealth. A policy that supports growth management while encouraging economic development and redevelopment of blighted land or land that no longer meets the community's goals as defined through its public planning process.



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VAPA also supports efforts by the Virginia Rural Prosperity Commission to enhance the economic vitality of rural Virginia, including the creation of the Rural Center. The Center's focus is education, research, economic development activities and advocacy for rural counties in Virginia. These activities can promote better planning by improving the data available to rural community decision makers and empowering citizens to be involved in local and regional policy development.

## **MAKING GREAT COMMUNITIES HAPPEN:**

VAPA will support state-level planning policies that make Virginia and its communities the best place to live, work and play. Sound planning offers a key to making Virginia the best place it can be for all Virginians. Every region requires planning that promotes good jobs in livable communities. Faster growing regions have the added need for planning that recognizes pressures that are unprecedented in Virginia's history. Good planning actively involves the people of a community in the process; it combines their input on what is "valuable" for a good community with the technical facts brought by professionals and scientists. Sound planning includes an understanding of the differences between technical and value judgments and blends both appropriately to recommend a direction that moves a community toward the best place it can be for its citizens.

## **ADVOCATING FOR GREAT COMMUNITIES:**

In our efforts to advocate for sound planning policies, regulations, and practice in Virginia, our diverse membership is available as a resource for information and expert testimony regarding planning practice in Virginia. Likewise, through our parent organization, APA, we can provide information regarding planning practice through the United States. VAPA is ready and willing to assist as needed.

To contact the VAPA call or mail: Eldon James, Legislative Consultant, (540) 775-5422; FAX: (804) 644-5640; E-mail: [Eldon@EldonJamesAssociates.com](mailto:Eldon@EldonJamesAssociates.com) or Sue Rowland, Legislative Consultant, (703) 626-7392; FAX (804) 644-5640; Email: [Sue@SueRowlandConsulting.com](mailto:Sue@SueRowlandConsulting.com)

