

BULLETIN

SRL's Core Concerns

With Loudoun County's Draft 2020-2040 Comprehensive Plan

Insufficient Effort to Address "By Right" Development

- Loudoun's rural areas are a large part of what makes the quality of life in our county so special. Nearly everyone in Loudoun says they want to save and enjoy them.
- Yet, the speed at which we are losing rural land continues to accelerate. USDA's Agricultural Census confirms that we lost another 13,000 of farmland between 2012 and 2017.
- On our current path, County planners project that we will lose the bulk of our rural areas to residential development over the next 20 years.
- The County's current land use policies are allowing this tragedy to take place.
- The loss of rural land is driven by "by right" development – particularly the right to build "cluster subdivisions" on existing farms, woodlands and fields. This requires no notification, oversight or approval by the Board of Supervisors or anyone else.
- The Board assures citizens that it intends to protect rural areas. Its recent decision to set up a small fund to support conservation easements was a small step in the right direction.
- However, this is far from sufficient. Unless the County takes additional concrete actions to address "by-right" development soon, good intentions won't matter. It will be too late.
- We are disappointed, therefore, that some supervisors have expressed opposition to fair and reasonable proposals that would make a real difference – such as "Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)" and "Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)" programs.
- If supervisors don't believe that PDR and TDR programs would work, then we need to hear what other options they have in mind.
- Failure to act represents, in effect, acceptance of the loss of our remaining countryside. The time to take some kind of firm action is long past. More lip service will not help.

Inattention to the Fiscal Bomb:

- The population of the eastern part of the County doubled between 2000 and today, putting tremendous strains on our roads, schools and other public infrastructure.
- As a result, the County's budget exploded. Under the current Capital Investment Plan (CIP), county taxes are funding over \$800 million in road projects, compared with just \$7 million ten years ago (an increase of 11,000%).
- If we allow development to continue at the same pace in the west, taxpayers will need to foot billions more dollars in new infrastructure costs in the coming decades.