

# SSPA Retrospective

Planning Commission Land Use Process  
Review Committee  
January 20, 2022



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



# SSPA Retrospective Discussion

- 1 Outreach Update** **25 min**
  - Stakeholder Interview Highlights
  - SSPA Survey Results
- 2 Ongoing Discussion/Questions and Next Steps** **35 min**

# Retrospective Timeline



# SSPA Retrospective Themes - October 2021



**Inclusion and Community Engagement**



**Timeline and Prioritization**



**Task Force & Staff Resource Demand**



**Nomination Criteria Adjustments**

# October 12, 2021 - Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors' Feedback

- Supportive of Retrospective and a comprehensive review of process
- Long range planning should focus on community's vision for the future, incorporate data and trends, Strategic Plan, and equity goals
- Need for greater balance between long-range planning initiatives and site-specific projects
- Overall SSPA timeframe and resource demand disproportionately intensive great; needs to be streamlined and more responsive
- Development speculation remains an issue with current process
- Community engagement and education needed earlier in process

# SSPA Retrospective Outreach

## Stakeholder Interviews

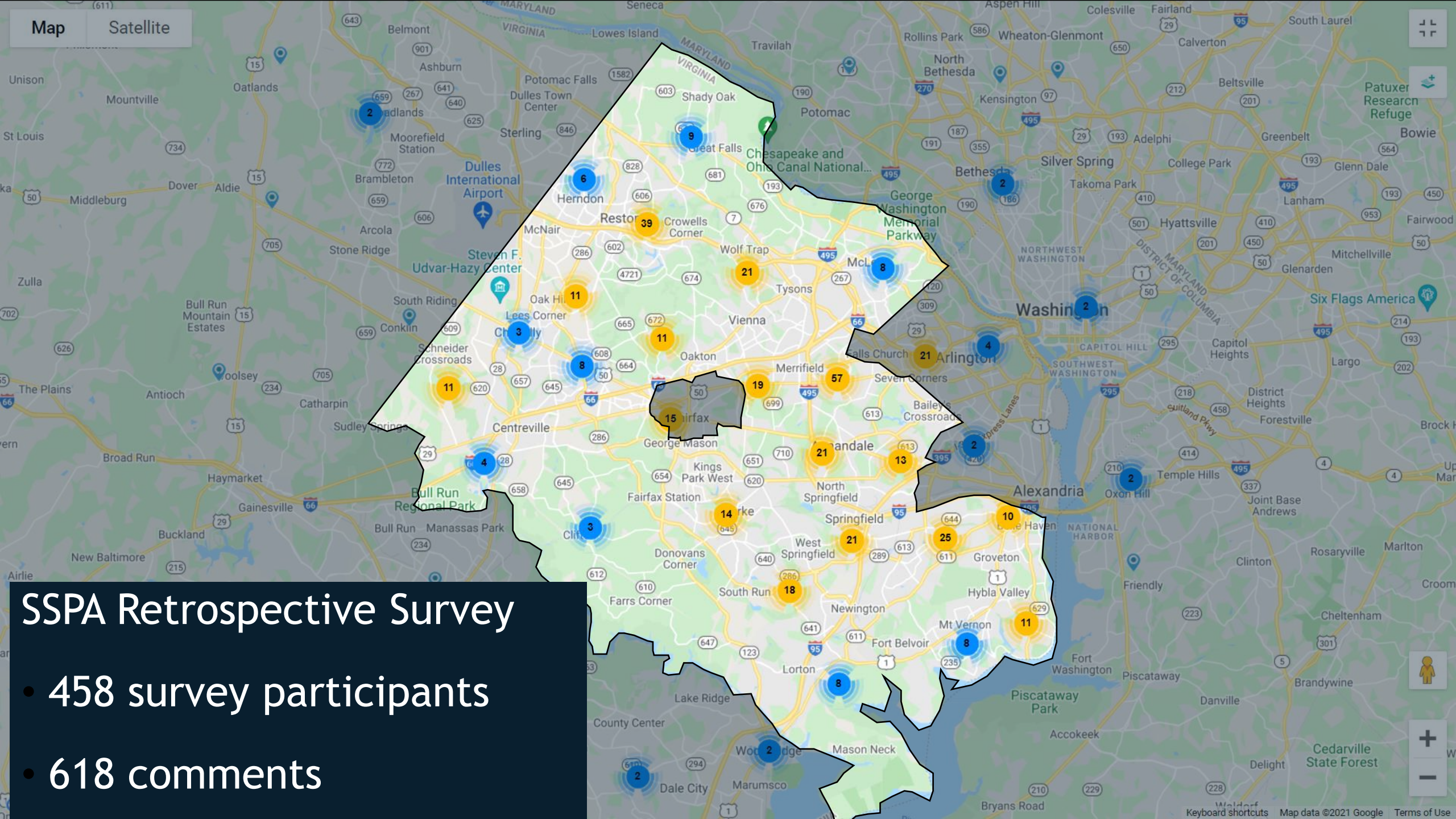
- Task Force Chairs / Vice Chairs: Providence/Merrifield, Lee, Sully, Mount Vernon, Mason, and Dranesville/West Falls Church Task Forces
- NAIOP Focus Group
- Land Use Attorney Working Group
- Land Use Aides
- Surrounding Jurisdictions, including Alexandria, PG County, Montgomery County, Arlington County, PW County, Loudoun County

## Participating Agency Interviews:

- Departments of Planning & Development, Transportation (FCDOT), Neighborhood and Community Services, Health, Parks, DPWES Wastewater, Urban Forestry Management

## Public Survey Open Nov - Dec 2021

- Public Participants
- Nominators / Development Industry
- Task Force Members



# SSPA Retrospective Survey

- 458 survey participants
- 618 comments

# Nomination Eligibility Criteria



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT





# Task Force Chair and Vice Chair Interview Highlights

- The lack of property owner buy-in was an issue
- Early neighbor engagement by nominators can help inform their proposals

# Development Industry Interview Highlights

- Requiring a rezoning or concurrent processing with the site-specific plan amendment would help expedite the overall development review timeline
- However, a path for property owners to do visioning work with the community before a rezoning is submitted is also needed (non-concurrent)

# Fairfax County Participating Agencies Interview Highlights

- The level of detail provided in the nomination statements was inconsistent, and more information was typically needed to fully understand the proposals
- Additional information, such as conceptual plans, would facilitate staff and community review

# Highlights from Other Jurisdictions

Many jurisdictions do not evaluate long-range plan changes at an individual site level

When neighboring jurisdictions had an equivalent process for site-specific amendment review, submissions typically included:

- Property owners' agreement
- Fees
- Concurrent entitlement case, or if visioning work was needed, individual proposals were considered in the context of a broader area plan update

# Survey Highlights

Which of the following changes to the nomination criteria could result in clearer, more understandable, and better-developed nominations? *Multiple options may be selected.*

	Community	Nominators	TF Members
<b>Conceptual Site Plan</b>	65%	69%	62%
<b>Pre-Submittal Nominator Engagement</b>	80%	42%	71%
<b>Letter of Intent to File Rezoning</b>	38%	58%	40%
<b>Owner's Signature</b>	37%	44%	40%
Submission Fee	26%	22%	31%
Other	7%	14%	7%
Keep the existing criteria only	6%	19%	7%

# Inclusion and Community Engagement



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



# Highlights from Task Force Chair and/or Vice Chair Interviews

- Diversity of views/perspectives were well represented on the task forces
- Views of surrounding neighbors need to be better accommodated through the process
- Need for earlier community engagement and plain language
- Need for greater understanding of staff and task force roles

# Fairfax County Participating Agencies Interview Highlights

- Greater emphasis should be placed on education and capacity building (including outside of regular cycle, such as a land use college or citizen planning academy)
- There is a need to ensure input from those who are directly impacted by a proposed change (immediate neighbors and other stakeholders)
- Different types of outreach could work for each phase (screening vs study phase)
- Task force membership should ensure those who are impacted, and other stakeholders are equitably represented
- Length of process commitment can negatively affect Task Force member participation



# Development Industry Highlights

- There is a difference between type of community engagement and timing for SSPAs compared to Board-authorized site-specific amendments
- Current engagement (task force model) leads to more detailed review of negative impacts, but with less discussion of benefits of proposals

# Highlights from Other Jurisdictions - Virginia

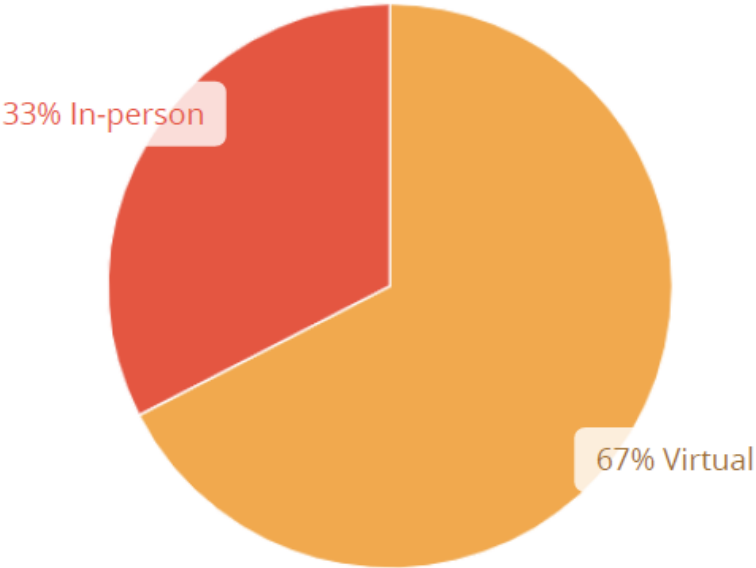
Inclusion and Community Engagement	Arlington Co.	City of Alexandria	Loudoun Co.	Prince William Co.
Do they have an equivalent process for site level plan amendments?	Similar (in first year)	No. Master Plan Amendments are submitted with and function as an entitlement	No	Yes, for residential uses only
How often are changes considered?	6 months	As needed with entitlement	N/A	Annual
How are proposals screened?	PC Committee	N/A	N/A	Staff analysis / BOS Meeting
How is community engaged during review?	PC Committee	N/A	N/A	Can speak at BOS meeting
Who can nominate changes to the plan?	Developers / property owners	N/A	N/A	Owner / Contract purchaser

# Highlights from Other Jurisdictions - Maryland

Inclusion and Community Engagement	Montgomery Co., MD	Prince Georges Co., MD
Do they have an equivalent process for site level plan amendments?	No. Areas not addressed through area Master Plans processed through zoning map amendments.	Not for individual sites. Developments typically processed through zoning text amendments.
How often are changes considered?	N/A	N/A
How are proposals screened?	N/A	N/A
How is community engaged during review?	N/A	N/A
Who can nominate changes to the plan?	N/A	N/A

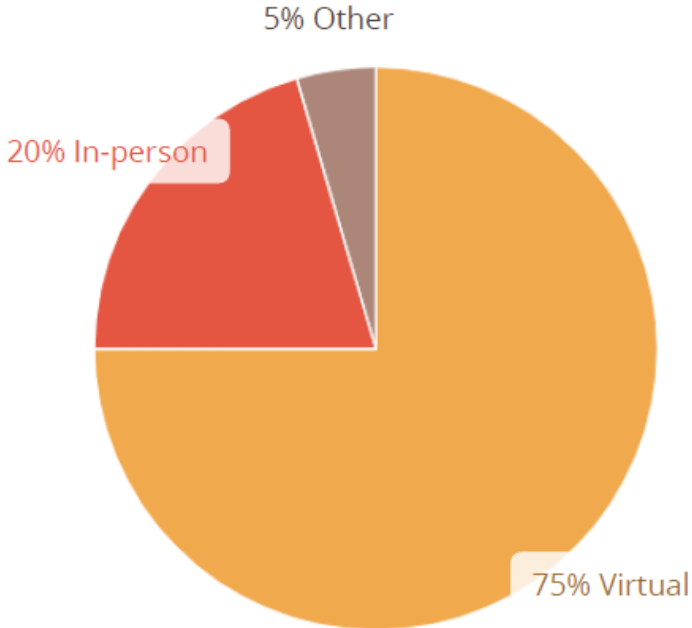
# Survey: At this point in time, do you prefer to engage in community planning efforts via in-person meetings, or virtually?

Task Force Members



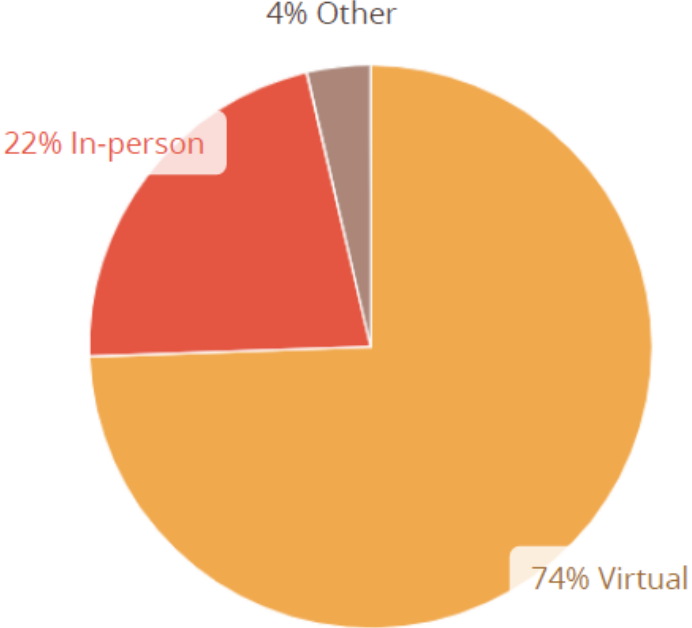
46  
Participants

Community Participants



150  
Participants

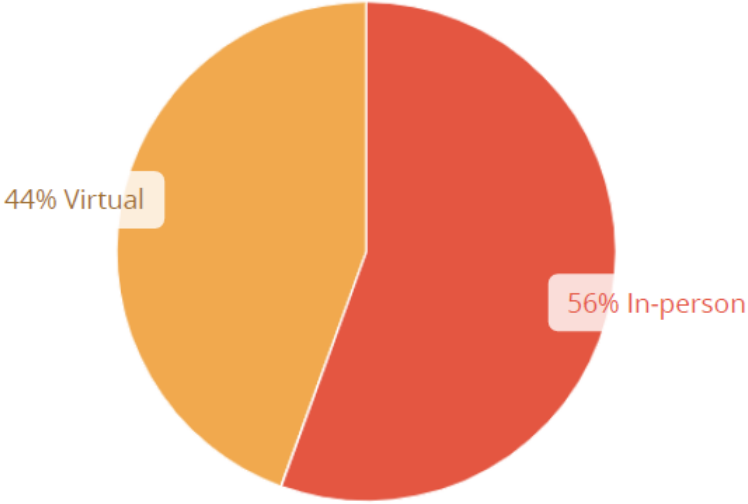
Nominators / Industry



47  
Participants

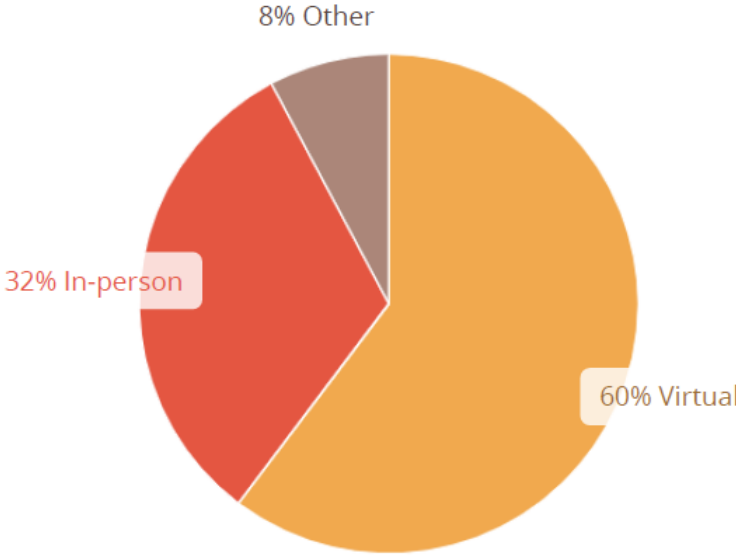
# Survey: In the future, would you prefer to engage in community planning efforts via in-person meetings, or virtually?

Task Force Members



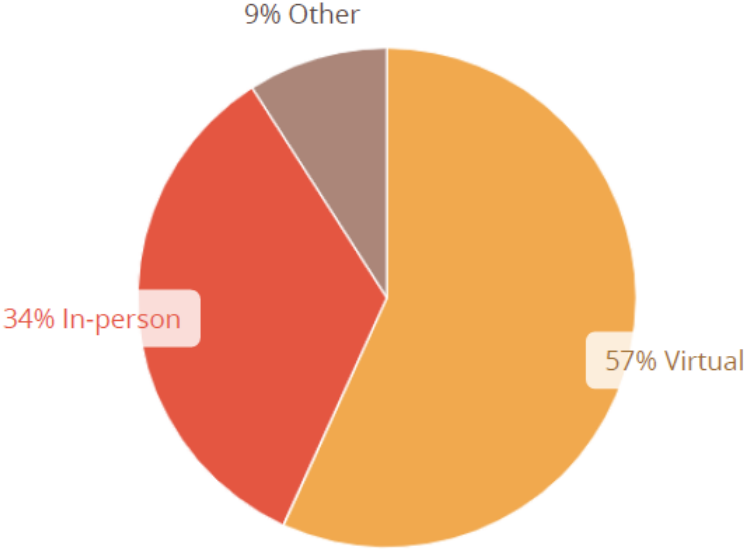
46  
Participants

Community Participants



150  
Participants

Nominators / Industry



47  
Participants

**Survey:** Select your top three engagement methods based on your preferences for community planning efforts. *Please select only 3 responses.*

	Community	Nominators	TF Members
Attending targeted community meetings for nearby residents	60%	49%	64%
Receiving regular email updates	45%	49%	44%
Attending regularly scheduled (bi-weekly) task force meetings	22%	35%	76%
Attending open houses before the nomination period begins	42%	30%	38%
Taking community surveys	41%	30%	13%
Attending open houses during the process	26%	33%	24%
Writing letters to staff, the task force, PC, and/or BOS	20%	28%	4%
Testifying at PC and BOS hearings	14%	19%	11%
Other	1%	2%	0%

**Survey:** What are the most effective ways for you to hear about community planning efforts? *Multiple options may be selected.*

	Community	Nominators	TF Members
District newsletter	42%	27%	57%
Staff contact	38%	43%	48%
District contact	30%	25%	46%
Comp Plan Listserv	24%	43%	57%
Facebook	31%	18%	7%
County Website	14%	34%	22%
News Article	28%	23%	20%
Nominator Contact	16%	16%	13%
NextDoor	22%	11%	20%
Flyer or Poster	14%	5%	11%
Other (Twitter, Youtube, etc)	17%	7%	7%

# Timeline and Prioritization



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT





# Task Force Chair and Vice Chair Interviews Highlights

- The process turned out to be lengthier than initially expected
- Screening is a useful tool, but should be conducted expeditiously (less than 6 months)
- Information presented during Implementation phase could be compressed into fewer meetings
- The timeline impact of external factors (such as TIA review) should be anticipated from the onset
- Clarification needed on how to prioritize and address broader policy and areawide issues (tree canopy, stormwater, etc) with implications beyond the formal study area

# Development Industry Highlights

- The 4-year cycle is too long, does not keep pace with changes in the market, and encourages speculation
- A more frequent cycle would potentially provide more opportunities for better-formulated nominations
- Timeline for Board-authorized amendments is more streamlined and predictable for concurrent proposals
- Broader plan flexibility would reduce the demand for SSPAs (which would require resources for policy work)

# Fairfax County Participating Agencies Interviews Highlights

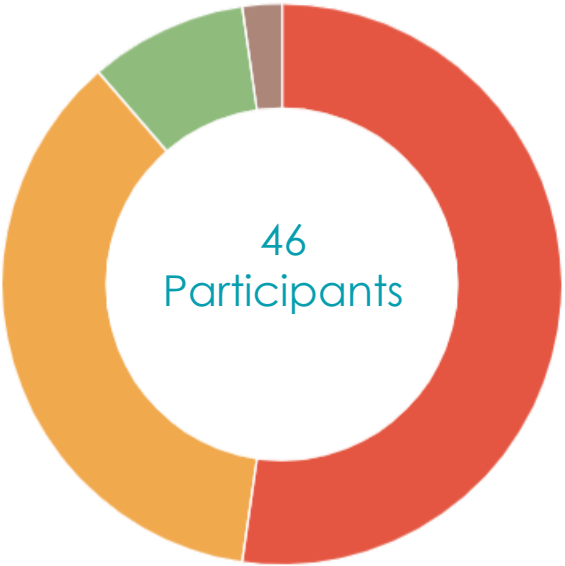
- With limited staff, it is difficult to prioritize both SSPA and additional Board-authorized amendments, which are also competing for time with other studies and policy work
- Approximately 45% of land use planners' time is spent on site-specific amendments
- Greater prioritization given to policy and special studies could reduce need for site-specific level of analysis

# Highlights from Other Jurisdictions

- Long range planning efforts are focused on policy work and small area master plans
- If site-specific process exists, amendments are generally:
  - Few in number
  - Reviewed quickly and concurrently with a development application or,
  - Reviewed in the context of a broader area plan study

# Survey: Please provide your thoughts on the SSPA cycle's overall length.

Task Force Members



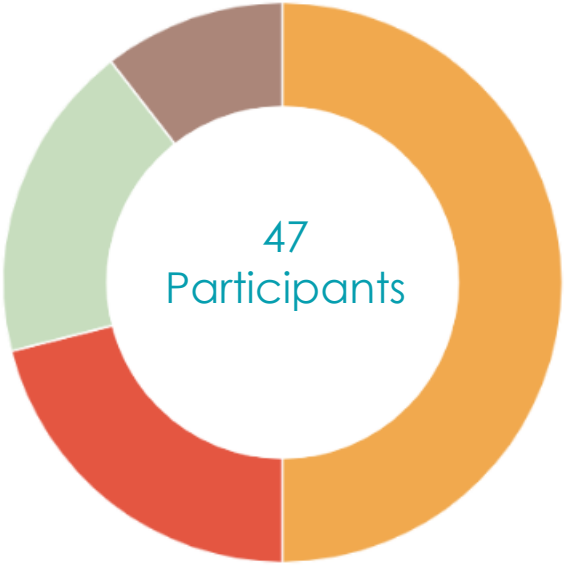
- 52% ...about right.
- 36% ...too lengthy.
- 9% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 2% ...too short.

Community Participants



- 33% ...about right.
- 28% ...too lengthy.
- 28% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 10% ...too short.

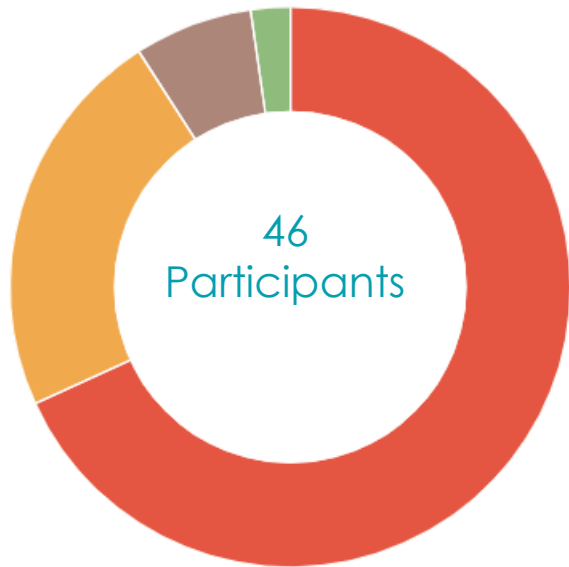
Nominators / Industry



- 50% ...too lengthy.
- 21% ...about right.
- 18% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 11% ...too short.

# Survey: Please provide your thoughts on the SSPA cycle's screening phase length.

Task Force Members



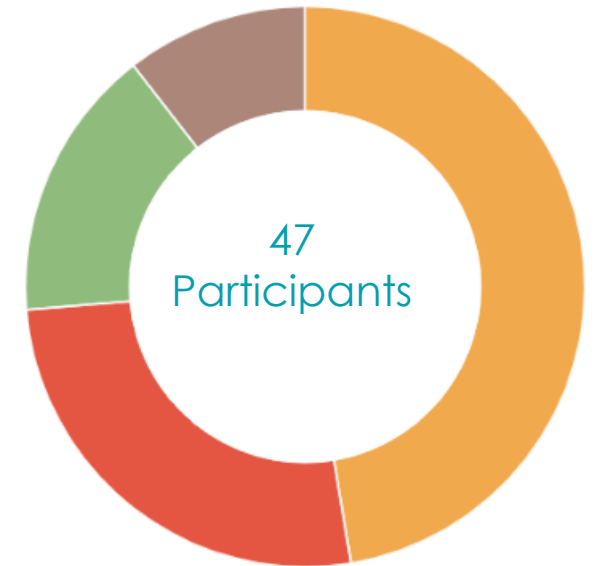
- 68% ...about right.
- 23% ...too lengthy.
- 7% ...too short.
- 2% I do not have an opinion about this.

Community Participants



- 49% ...about right.
- 23% ...too lengthy.
- 17% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 11% ...too short.

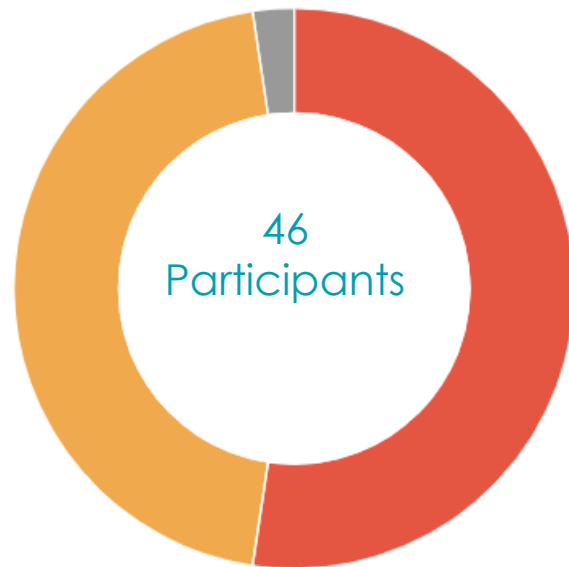
Nominators / Industry



- 47% ...too lengthy.
- 26% ...about right.
- 16% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 11% ...too short.

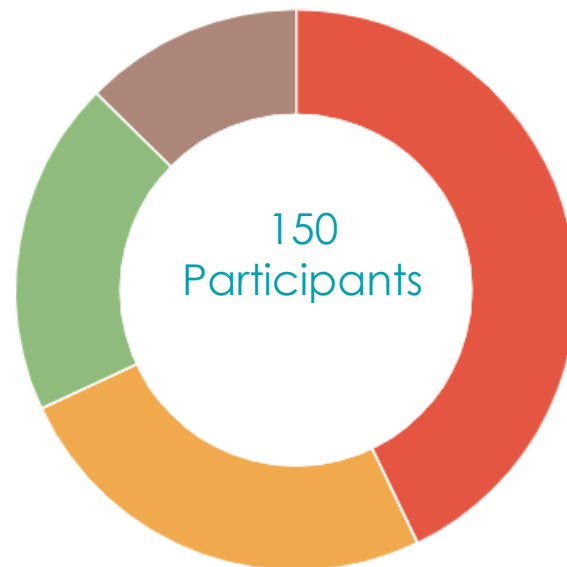
# Survey: Please provide your thoughts on the SSPA cycle's implementation phase length.

Task Force Members



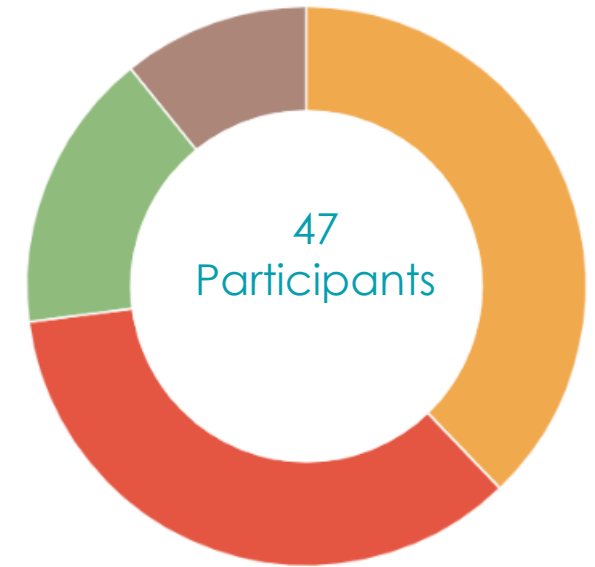
- 52% ...about right.
- 45% ...too lengthy.
- 2% Others

Community Participants



- 43% ...about right.
- 25% ...too lengthy.
- 19% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 13% ...too short.

Nominators / Industry



- 38% ...too lengthy.
- 35% ...about right.
- 16% I do not have an opinion about this.
- 11% ...too short.

# Task Force and Staff Resource Demand



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT





# Task Force Chair and Vice Chair Interview Highlights

- The virtual setting for South County SSPA made the demands more manageable than in-person meetings
- Enhancing land use planning education, including clarifying the Task Forces' role and influence from the onset of the process, would better prepare them (and potentially reduce the overall number of meetings needed)

# Fairfax County Participating Agencies Highlights

- There is a redundancy of review between screening and implementation phase
- Greater level of analysis is requested during screening than originally intended
- Task Force establishment and meeting preparation is a significant staff resource demand
- The current North/South oscillation limits the total number of Task Forces that require staffing at any given point in time
- In the future, a more frequent submittal period, either with North/South oscillation or countywide, would need to be paired with a different model for community engagement and enhanced eligibility criteria

# Discussion



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



# SSPA Retrospective

## Goals for Revised Process



### Increased Inclusion and Community Engagement

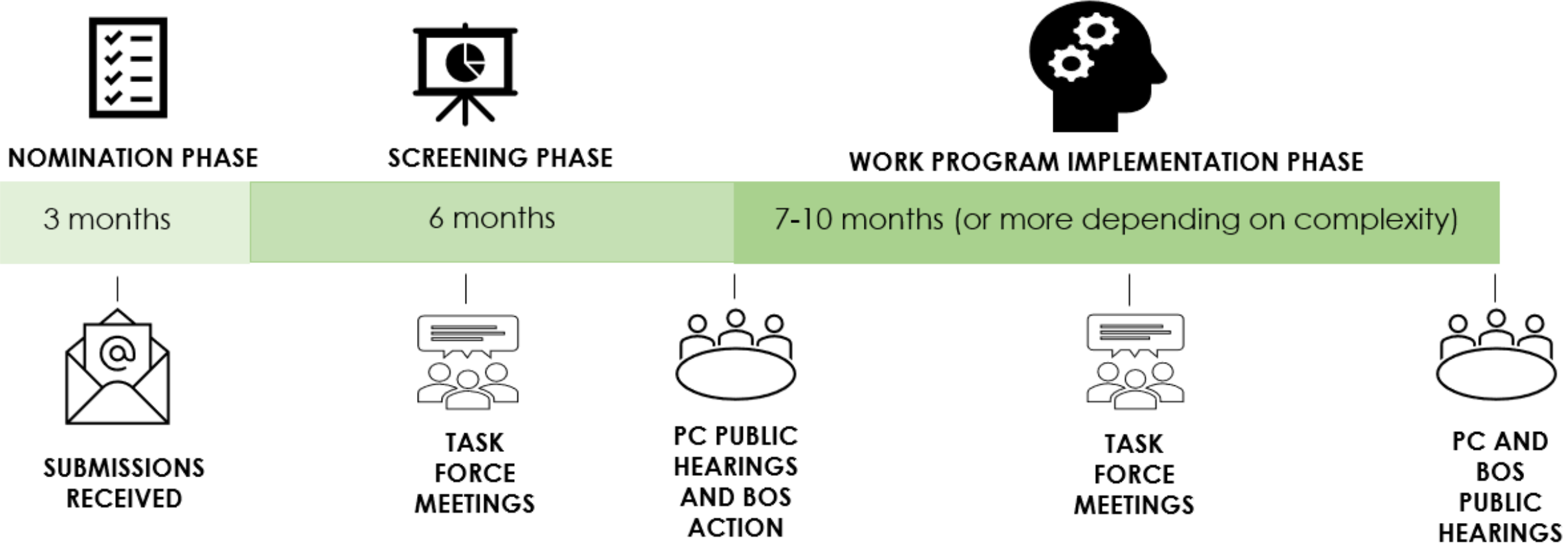
- Starting earlier in the process
- Inclusion of most affected stakeholders



### Better balance of staff, community, PC, and Board resources

- Increase priority on policy issues and special studies
- Adjust nomination criteria to facilitate review
- Shorten timeline

# Current SSPA Timeline



# Inclusion and Community Engagement Questions

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks to the current Task Force model as it relates to community engagement?
  - During the screening phase?
  - During the implementation phase?
2. What are the benefits and drawbacks to developing a formal Task Force recommendation?
  - During the screening phase?
  - During the implementation phase?
3. How can those most affected by the nomination be better brought into the process?
4. Could an alternative engagement model (without a formal recommendation), such as community meetings or open houses, achieve similar objectives:
  - During the screening phase?
  - During the implementation phase?

# Resource Questions

1. How could the current timeline be amended to free up resources for other types of planning work (policy studies, small area plan updates, etc.)?
2. Is a PC public hearing on the nominations needed during the Screening Phase? Would a PC committee workshop provide a better forum to accomplish the screening phase task?
3. What process alternatives should be considered for the screening phase?
  - Screening conducted by:
    - PC Committee Workshop
    - District PC and Board member
    - Staff
  - Screening-level information limited to:
    - High-level (fatal flaw) land use assessment to determine what should proceed
    - Other?

## Resource Questions (cont'd)

### 4. Should the eligibility criteria be amended?

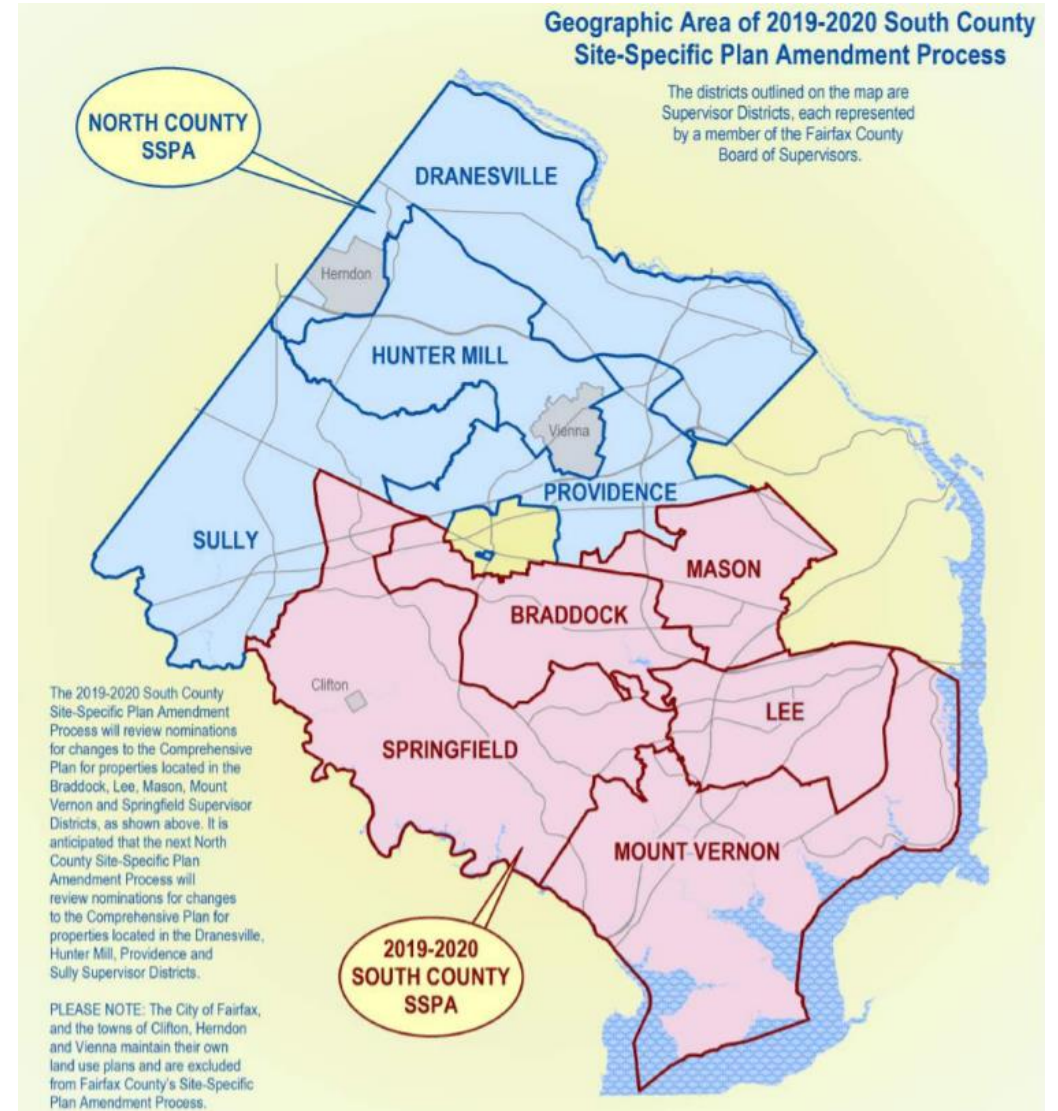
- property owners' signature
- concept plan
- early nominator engagement
- letter of intent to file a rezoning
- fees



# Organizational Questions

With the preceding considerations in mind:

1. Should the two-year North/South County review oscillation be retained?
2. Would a two-year county-wide review be beneficial?
3. Other?



## Next Steps

- Further consideration of the issues and questions
  - Forum for discussions
- Board Land Use Policy Committee meeting scheduled for February 15<sup>th</sup>