

Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities 2004 Highlights

During the past year, WRN focused on building visible constituencies for a more livable region - through public and decision-maker education, and targeted outreach to communities and groups whose interests are often overlooked. No other organization focuses on social equity as an integral component of smart growth; exploring ways to bring the benefits of transit-oriented development to low-income people and communities.

Transit-Oriented Development

In partnership with the Council of Governments, D.C. Department of Transportation and the Town of Capitol Heights, WRN convened Walkable Community Workshops conducted by national pedestrian experts at three Metro stations in Washington, D.C. and Prince George's County: Fort Totten, Minnesota Avenue and Capitol Heights. In response, D.C. officials are expediting key pedestrian improvements and building design changes. In the Fort Totten area, D.C. Department of Transportation Director Dan Tangherlini has made both short and longer-term improvements to the pedestrian environment a priority, including the reconstruction of the dangerous intersection at Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue. WRN has also convinced the Metro transit authority to revise plans for a new Metro Police station to better connect the building to the street and support a safer pedestrian environment. At the Capitol Heights Metro station, WRN worked with Prince George's County officials to identify actions to improve walking access to the Metro station, and make the site more attractive for joint development. At Minnesota Avenue Metro station, WRN has worked with D.C. Office of Property Management to modify the design of the proposed Government Center to be more focused on the Metro station itself and create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Throughout the region, WRN remains a prominent voice for well-designed pedestrian-oriented development projects and plans, including proposals for the Vienna, Shady Grove and West Hyattsville Metro stations.

Affordable Housing

WRN's report, *The Affordable Housing Progress Report: What the Washington, D.C. Region's Jurisdictions Can Do to Combat the Crisis*, on the region's housing needs and solutions was widely covered on television and radio, and in area newspapers. Advocates and public officials have used our study to push for stronger measures to address the problem. WRN was credited by local activists with catalyzing Fairfax County's efforts to address its housing affordability problems. In Arlington County, housing activists used the release of the report to leverage support for affordable housing guidelines adopted by Arlington two weeks later. In Montgomery County, elected officials promoting reforms to the County's Moderately Price Dwelling Unit program prominently cited WRN's report. In D.C., we helped lead the Affordable Housing Alliance's efforts to launch an inclusionary zoning proposal and to shape the agenda for the D.C. Comprehensive Housing Strategy Task Force.

Transportation

WRN worked to keep our region's governments committed to the Metrorail and bus system by advocating for funding for all operating and capital budget shortfalls. We supported efforts by some Metro board members to hold down fare increases for bus riders. We actively participated in several D.C. task forces examining parking and traffic issues, and we continue to recommend demand-management, enhanced transit service and pedestrian environment improvements as priorities in transportation studies.



**Creating great streets
and communities
around Metro**

**Spotlighting regional
affordable housing
shortfalls and
solutions**



**Shoring up Metro funding
and holding down fares;
promoting Transportation
Demand Management**

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Education

Following WRN's well-received fall 2003 forum series, *Housing for the City*, which examined affordable housing issues in D.C., we launched a spring forum series, *Design Matters: Building Livability*, focusing on innovative urban design techniques in transit-oriented development. WRN Forums bring together a cross section of the region's concerned stakeholders to discuss innovative approaches to smart growth. The spring series speakers included: John Torti, leading New Urbanist architect and president, Torti Gallas and Partners; Roger Lewis, architect, professor, and Washington Post Columnist; Dan Burden, national pedestrian expert; Seth Harry, New Urbanist designer and retail development consultant; Geoffrey Ferrell, national expert on form-based codes; Tim Lynch, Executive Director of the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization. WRN also hosted *Making Metro Work: addressing Metro's funding crisis* a forum with Metro Board chairman Robert Smith and Arlington County Board member Chris Zimmerman, moderated by Bruce DePuyt, Host of Newschannel 8's "Newstalk."

Our fall 2004 forum series, *Housing Strategies for a Smart Growth City*, was created to bring key policy and funding issues into sharp focus. This four-part forum series addresses current dilemmas and opportunities for building and maintaining affordable housing and mixed income neighborhoods in the District of Columbia and the region. In October, we hosted a discussion on D.C. neighborhoods' housing needs with Oramenta Newsome, Director of Washington, D.C. Local Initiatives Support Corporation; Retta Gilliam, Executive Director of East of the River Community Development Corporation and Martha Davis, Director, Shaw Housing Initiatives, Manna Community Development Corporation. Our November inclusionary zoning forum hosted Ellen McCarthy, D.C. Office of Planning; John McIlwain, Urban Land Institute; and Nina Dastur, Center for Community Change.

WRN's newsletter *Intersect* is e-mailed and faxed to well over 1,000 civic activists, business leaders, elected officials, and community list serves. We continue to receive positive feedback about the relevance and timeliness of *Intersect* articles. *Intersect* provides smart growth news for the Washington region, covering critical issues ranging from Dulles rail to D.C. affordable housing debates.

This year, WRN awarded the first annual *Livable Communities Leadership Award* to Arlington County Board member Chris Zimmerman. WRN established the *Livable Communities Leadership Award* to recognize individuals for outstanding leadership in helping the Washington, D.C. region accommodate growth while creating diverse, livable communities, and protecting the environment. We were proud to recognize Mr. Zimmerman's many accomplishments and leadership in the fields of transit-oriented development, transit and affordable housing.

Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities

Created in 1991 by leaders in environmental, bicycle, pedestrian, transit and urban planning, the Washington Regional Network for Livable Communities (WRN) incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1996. WRN's mission is to create and sustain a network of diverse, walkable communities linked by quality transit, laced with parks, and surrounded by forests and farms, with the District of Columbia as the hub of the region. Through targeted education, outreach, and policy advocacy, WRN promotes transportation investments, land use policies, and neighborhood designs that enhance existing communities and protect the environment of the Washington, D.C. region. WRN helps urban communities capture the benefits of smart, equitable growth.

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Informing civic leaders and public officials about smart growth solutions



Retta Gilliam, Cheryl Cort, Oramenta Newsome



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