

Services key to growth

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No one can look back 10 years into Fauquier's history without noticing the business and residential growth in the county's service districts.

It is over these designated growth areas, where public utilities either are provided now or are planned in the future, that most developmental battles are won or lost.

Over the last decade, six of the county's nine service districts increased in size. Some, like Remington, showed modest increases. Others like Opal expanded rapidly.

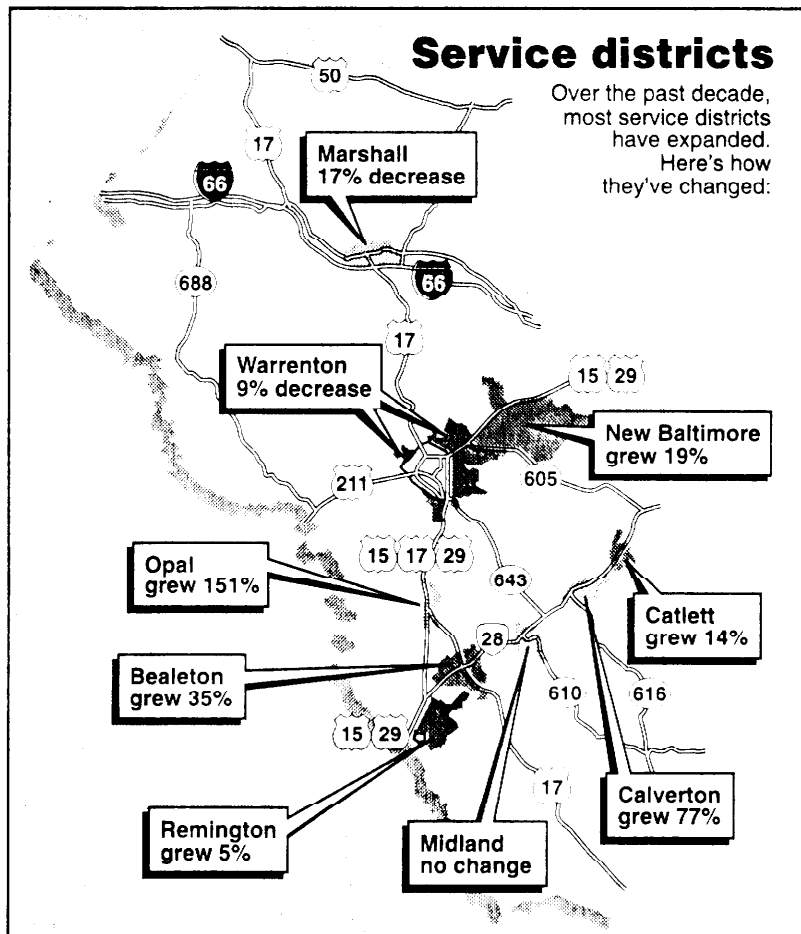
Planning a service district involves anticipating needs, says Fauquier Planning Director Al Goldsmith.

"The sizing and shaping of a service district is not an exact science," Goldsmith said.

"You have these people trying to get land in a service district so it will increase the value of their land and other people who think they [the service districts] are too large already," Goldsmith explained.

Service districts are sized and shaped according to the needs for residential, commercial or industrial development in a given area, along with other factors, he said.

But different people see different needs. And planners must often weigh



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Source: Fauquier County Comprehensive Plans - Fauquier Planning Department

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the competing goals of encouraging healthy economic growth with preserving the county's rural beauty.

Preservationist groups argue that expanding the service districts is the last thing the county should be doing.

Kitty Smith, a vocal preservationist, said "I think it would behoove us to shrink the service districts to some extent and have a green belt around them to keep them from expanding."

Smith credits the county's strict land-use regulations and open space requirements for keeping most growth (near 75 percent) in the service districts.

But Smith says more needs to be done:

"In the last Comprehensive Plan, the planned densities [of the service districts] were increased . . . The idea was to increase the densities but shrink the area, but when it came time to do so, the politi-

cal will evaporated."

Providing services

County officials say the real problem is not expanding service districts, but rather the lack of services in some.

Five of the county's nine service districts remain without public sewer or water service or both. And the battle over public utilities has kept developers and preservationists at odds for years.

To make the service district concept work the county needs to provide them with services and make sure they're desirable places to live, Goldsmith said.

"We have many attractive places to live. The problem is we have limited services. You need the mixed-use development that can bring a variety of things, and there comes the rub."

Because of the absence of full public utilities — New Baltimore, Catlett, Calverton, located on the county's eastern border, have become almost a sea wall, holding back the wave of growth from expanding Washington area suburbs.

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