

INTRODUCTION

Leesburg's original compact pattern of development reflected the town's status as a commercial hub of the county that was reached and traversed by foot, horse or ox. According to the Town Plan, development did not reflect the impact of the automobile until the 1940s, and its influence is found in the separation of residential areas from places of commerce; the creation of large residential lots with deep setbacks and off-street parking; large parking lots at remote stores conveniently reached only by car.

The automobile introduced whole new categories of municipal improvements that quickly became essential to the health and prosperity of the community: paved streets and parking areas, a motorized police force to protect public safety. Commerce depended upon attracting people in their automobiles. Growing sprawl, as people lived ever farther from supporting services, prompted the need to divert traffic around town as well as facilitating access to it.

Accommodation of the automobile drove all transportation planning -- It is no coincidence that the Virginia Department of Transportation was originally called the Virginia Department of Highways -- until awareness dawned that accommodating automobile traffic made no sense unless the intended destination was a place people wanted to go. As Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation noted in his 1997 address to the Boston 400, "A [town] isn't livable merely because it makes it easy for people to move around. Having an enjoyable or efficient way of getting there doesn't really mean much if 'there' isn't worth getting to." He quoted Lewis Mumford's observation that "[t]he time is approaching...when there will be every facility for moving about the city and no possible reason for going there." Originally the engine of our liberation, the automobile seemingly became our master and we its slaves.

The seeds of the traffic calming movement were sown in neighborhoods already struggling with the negative impacts of providing for automobiles at the expense of other modes of transportation and heedless of those various factors which combine to create the good life. As Mr. Moe noted, "Movement is a meaningful part of human life, but it's no more meaningful than coming to rest in a safe, supportive, pleasant, livable environment. Place matters. The mark of a livable [town] is that it balances the need for convenient movement with the need for truly habitable places, places worth caring about." The need to preserve the "livability" of our communities requires that the demands the automobile places upon us be balanced against the need to protect the quality of life of our neighborhoods.

In appointing the Residential Traffic Task Force, the Leesburg Town Council took the lead in acknowledging that development of a residential traffic management program will enhance the livability of our neighborhoods and promote the welfare of the entire community.

The Residential Traffic Task Force was guided by the principles that to play its part in making Leesburg an attractive, vibrant community, the transportation network should:

- * provide for vehicle and pedestrian safety
- * protect property values
- * include bicycle trails
- * promote the quality of life of the Town's residents
- * provide a balanced transportation network
- * allow convenient site access
- * meet acceptable levels of service
- * protect the economic viability of Leesburg's commercial areas

When balance is achieved, these threads weave a rich social fabric: Residential neighborhoods are safe and friendly places to live and raise children. Businesses attract the customers they need to prosper. Property values rise. The tax base expands. People are attracted to our town.

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The Residential Traffic Task Force was appointed by the Town Council January 11, 2000, and charged with developing a Residential Traffic Management Plan in which the following matters were addressed:

1. Traffic calming pilot program
2. Cut-through traffic restrictions
3. Multi-way stop sign policy
4. Through truck restrictions
5. "Watch for Children" signs
6. \$200 maximum penalty for speeding on residential roads
7. Identifying and reviewing Town Plan policies and ordinances that promote efficient transportation systems; analyzing the need to develop additional implementation strategies.

The Task Force consisted of Elizabeth Whiting, Chair, Susan Horne, Vice Chair, Wayne Henderson, Nancy Klimkosky, Steve Robin, John Ross, Jane and Heath Stockton, members; Planning Commission Chairman Gus Glikas and Town Councilman Mervin Jackson offered invaluable insight into the processes and realities of local government. Special thanks must be given to Tom Mason, Director of Engineering and Public Works, and Calvin Grow, Traffic Engineer, who assembled mountains of materials, sought out sources of information, and patiently answered questions; and also to Sgt. Bill Wolff, Capt. Jeff Vangilder and Chief Joe Price of the Police Department and to Kaj Dentler of Parks and Recreation. We could not have completed our task without their assistance.

We are pleased to present our report to the Town Council and to our fellow Leesburg citizens.