Town Council And Planning Commission
Joint Work Session
Agenda Item 2.a.

Agenda Item: **Herndon 2050 Comprehensive Plan and Market Study and Economic Development Strategy - Project Update**

Meeting Date: February 17, 2026

Category: Discussion

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Description:
This is an overview of the Herndon 2050 Comprehensive Plan (Herndon 2050) and the accompanying Market Study and Economic Development Strategy in advance of the project's consultant's initial briefing with the Town Council and Planning Commission. During the upcoming session, the project consultants will provide an overview of the planning process and project approach, and seek early policy-level input to help guide the work at the outset. The meeting is informational and exploratory in nature and is not intended for formal action or decision-making. Herndon 2050 is a full rewrite of the Town's Comprehensive Plan with a planning horizon to the year 2050. It will serve as the Town's primary long-range policy document, guiding future decisions related to land use, transportation, housing, economic development, public facilities, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and community character. The plan will establish a shared vision, goals, and policy framework to support a thriving, inclusive, and resilient future for the Town.

The Market Study and Economic Development Strategy (MSEDS) is the town's first comprehensive market study and a companion effort that provides the economic and market foundation for Herndon 2050. It will assess current economic conditions, real estate market trends, fiscal dynamics, and regional competitiveness. The MSEDS will identify opportunities for business retention, attraction, redevelopment, and long-term economic resilience. In addition, it will ensure that the comprehensive plan's policies and growth strategies are grounded in market realities and fiscal considerations.

Both efforts are being developed in parallel through an integrated planning approach. Findings from the market and economic analysis will directly inform land use strategies, growth scenarios, and implementation priorities within the comprehensive plan. Public engagement, technical analysis, and policy development will be coordinated across both efforts to ensure consistency and alignment.

As part of this integrated effort, there will be the inclusion of two "Early Action Plans," serving as new small area plans for Downtown and the Metro area. The Metro Area Early Action Plan will look at the Herndon Transit-Oriented Core (HTOC) and Transit-Related Growth (TRG) holistically. Incorporating this work into Herndon 2050 presents a timely opportunity to revisit and modernize these area-specific policies, which were adopted at different points over the past decade, and to evaluate their assumptions in light of current market conditions, development trends, and community priorities. These plans will be developed during the early phases of the overall project.

The project will proceed through five major phases, beginning with the ongoing background research and existing conditions analysis, followed by more detailed technical exploration of transportation, utilities, land use capacity, and economic conditions. Subsequent phases will focus on community visioning and the development of alternative growth scenarios, leading to preparation of the draft, small area plans, comprehensive plan and implementation framework. The final phase will involve formal review and adoption by the Planning Commission and Town Council.

The Town Council and Planning Commission play critical roles in this effort. The Town Council adopted Resolution 25-G-47 to award the project on September 23, 2025. Preparation and adoption of a comprehensive plan is required under the Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2223, which assigns the Planning Commission responsibility for preparing and recommending a comprehensive plan to the governing body. Consistent with this role, the Planning Commission will serve as the primary steering body for this integrated effort, overseeing the planning process and providing guidance and feedback throughout each phase of the project. The Town Council will be briefed at key milestones, provide policy direction as the plans are developed, and ultimately take final action on adoption of the plans.

Public engagement will be conducted throughout the process using a multiphase and inclusive approach tailored to each stage and each element of the project. Community input will help shape the vision, evaluate trade-offs, and prioritize actions.

Together, Herndon 2050, the MSEDS and the accompanying small area plans will provide a cohesive framework to guide growth, investment, and decision-making over the next 10-20 years. The upcoming briefing is an important first step in engaging the Town Council and Planning Commission in shaping this long-term vision for Herndon’s future.

Background/Timing Impact:

The current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2008, and many of its assumptions no longer reflect present-day conditions. Since then, the Town has experienced significant changes, including the opening of the Silver Line, evolving residential and office markets, shifting demographics, and increasing pressure to balance growth with infrastructure capacity, fiscal sustainability, and community character.

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comprehensive market study and a companion effort that provides the economic and market foundation for Herndon 2050. It will assess current economic conditions, real estate market trends, fiscal dynamics, and regional competitiveness.

In addition to the town-wide comprehensive plan update, the planning effort provides an opportunity to revisit and modernize the Town's key Small Area Plans, including Downtown and the Metro area. These plans were adopted at different points over the past decade and reflect varying market assumptions, development conditions, and policy priorities. Integrating the development of two Early Action Plans into the Herndon 2050 and MSEDS process will allow the Town to revise these two small area plans and reassess land use, urban design, mobility, and place-making strategies for its most active and transformative areas, ensure consistency across planning documents, and align development guidance with current economic realities and long-term community goals.

On September 23, 2025, the Town Council approved Resolution 25-G-47 to award the contract for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan and Market Study and Economic Development Strategy to Agency Landscape + Planning. Working with the Agency are subcontractors: Cambridge Econometrics, CBRE, Neoniche, Landau Communications, Foursquare ITP, Gorove Slade, and Sherwood Civil Engineering and Sustainability Planning.

Timing Impact:
The project was formally initiated in November 2025 and is anticipated to take about 26 months, through early 2028. The MSEDS element of the project is anticipated to be completed within a year in the process. The anticipated conclusion of the Herndon 2050, and endorsement by the Town Council, will be early Spring of 2028.

Strategic Focus Area:
Secure and Interconnected Community
Environmental and Economic Sustainability
Good Governance
Thriving Community

Fiscal Impact:
The Town previously secured a $720,000 federal grant, representing 80 percent of eligible project costs, with a 20% local match of $180,000, for an originally estimated total project cost of $900,000. The Market Study and Economic Development Strategy component was initially estimated at approximately $200,000.

Following negotiations, the contract executed with Agency Landscape + Planning, Inc. is about $1.16 million. Project costs will be appropriated by the fiscal year as outlined below, with up to $720,000 of eligible incurred costs reimbursed by the Federal Highway Administration in accordance with the grant agreement.

Anticipated appropriations for the fiscal year are as follows:

FY26: $1.1 million (as approved in the FY26 budget)
FY27: $100,000

Legal Impact:
Preparation and adoption of a comprehensive plan is required under the Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2223, which establishes the statutory basis for long-range planning by local governments. Upon adoption, the Herndon 2050 Comprehensive Plan will become the Town's official policy guide for future growth and development. While not a regulatory document itself, the plan provides mandatory policy direction that informs and guides land use decisions, zoning and subdivision actions, transportation planning, capital improvement programming, housing policy, economic development strategies, public facilities planning, infrastructure investment, environmental protection, historic preservation, parks and open space, community services, and intergovernmental coordination. All subsequent planning, regulatory, and investment decisions of the Town are expected to be consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan, making Herndon 2050 a foundational document for shaping the Town's physical, economic, and social development through 2050.

Staff Recommendation/Next Steps:
This is a discussion item; staff has no recommendation.

Attachments:
1. Herndon 2050 Presentation