

## The Washington Post

# Developers call for new regional entity to guide area's growth

By Lisa Rein  
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Real estate and academic leaders called Thursday for a new regional entity with the power to tax and guide decisions on how the Washington area should grow in the next 20 years.

The leaders spoke at an event to introduce the new 2030 Group, which consists of prominent developers. The group says it does not want to replace other government and industry groups devoted to regional cooperation, but that without a wider sphere of influence for business leaders who can fight the fragmentation of the District, Virginia and Maryland, Washington's long-term economic prosperity will be threatened. They said the new organization should consist of local civic government and business leaders.

"Benign neglect is not a solution," said Jacques S. Gansler, who leads the Center for Public Policy and Private Enterprise at the University of Maryland. "We have to create a vision of regional engagement. We need to stop talking about why we need regional connections . . . and get going."

The challenges are well-known. Commuters stew in gridlock because

roads and public transit have not kept pace with Washington's growth. The demand for housing makes ownership unaffordable for many workers. Some of the region's school districts are stellar, some mediocre.

If the states and the District don't share money and ideas to address these issues, Washington will not be able to absorb the 1.6 million new jobs, a roughly equal number of new residents and 700,000 new homes predicted for the area by 2030, group members said.

"The future is very bright," said Stephen S. Fuller, director of George Mason University's Center for Regional Analysis, who came up with the numbers. "We're just not organized enough to be making decisions about it."

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The 2030 Group provided few answers Thursday, saying that its work of reaching out to elected officials and civic leaders was just starting. A public forum is planned for September at the University of Maryland.

Gansler said the group does not envision "replacing the governing structure" of Montgomery or Fairfax county or any other jurisdiction. But he acknowledged that local governments "will have to give up a little of their authority and a little of their resources" for a regional entity to succeed. To raise money to pay for new roads, public transit and other public works projects, higher sales taxes, real estate taxes or other business taxes could be necessary, he said.

Robert E. Buchanan, a partner at Gaithersburg-based Buchanan Partners, a commercial real estate developer, said the area's local governments have yet to develop specific policies that lay out how many single-family homes, condominiums or affordable-housing units they will need in the future.

Based on responses from a series of focus groups conducted with area residents last month, the 2030 Group concludes that the Washington community "is fairly pro-growth," according to its promotional materials. That many would disagree with that conclusion only further assures the group's members of

the need for a new entity.

"We have to take a much more active role in what we do," said John T. "Til" Hazel Jr., a developer who shaped much of modern-day Northern Virginia. "Basically, the political world is controlled by the anti-growth people. We can't let the antis control the world."

The Greater Washington Board of Trade, a group of business leaders, greeted the 2030 Group with skepticism, questioning the need for another effort that could compete with it and with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. "I'm not clear yet what they're trying to achieve," board President James C. Dinegar said. "On the most important regional issues, transportation and emergency preparedness, the region has been getting better at playing together."

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