

Loudoun County:

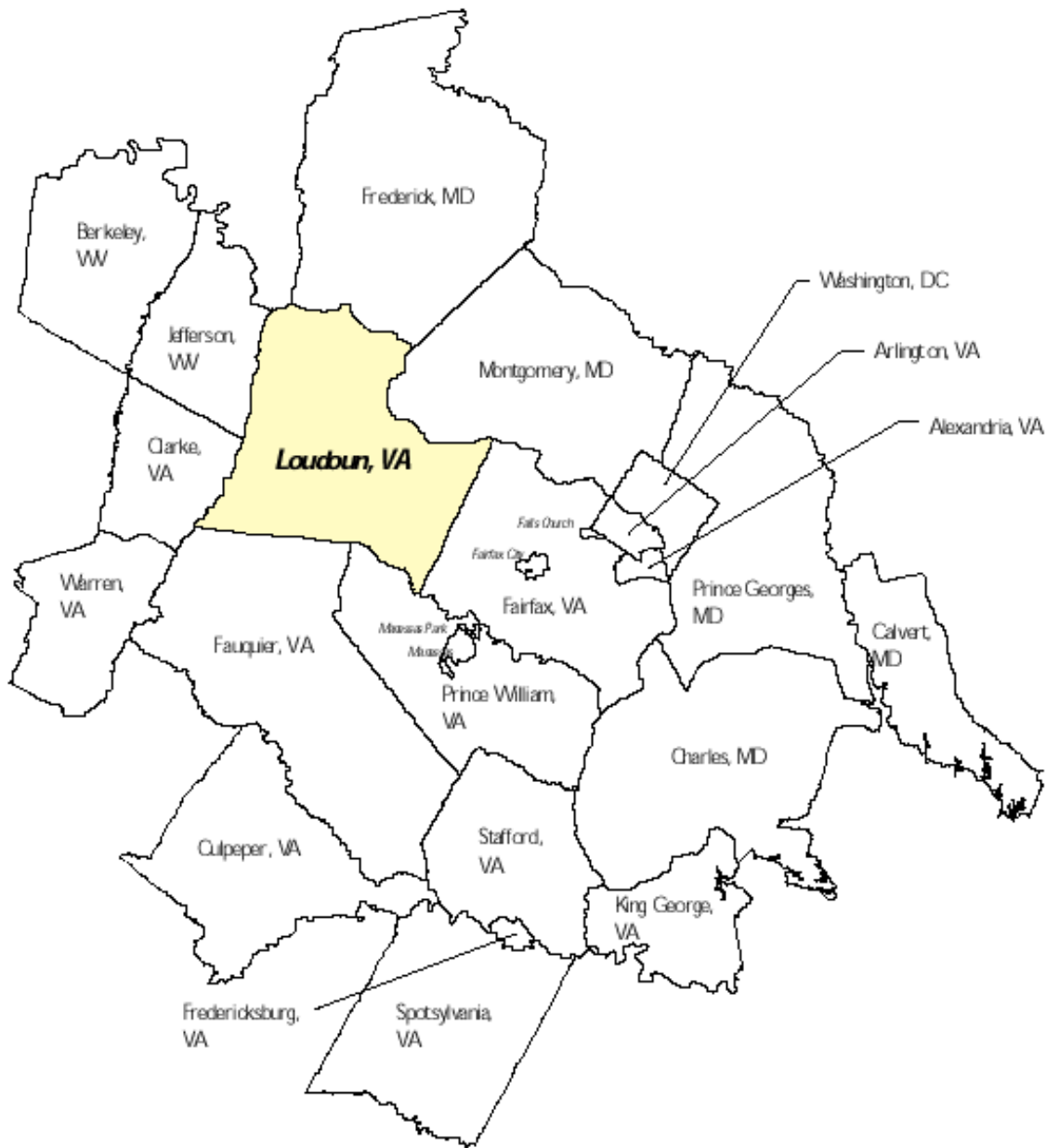


A CASE STUDY IN **UNBRIDLED** GROWTH

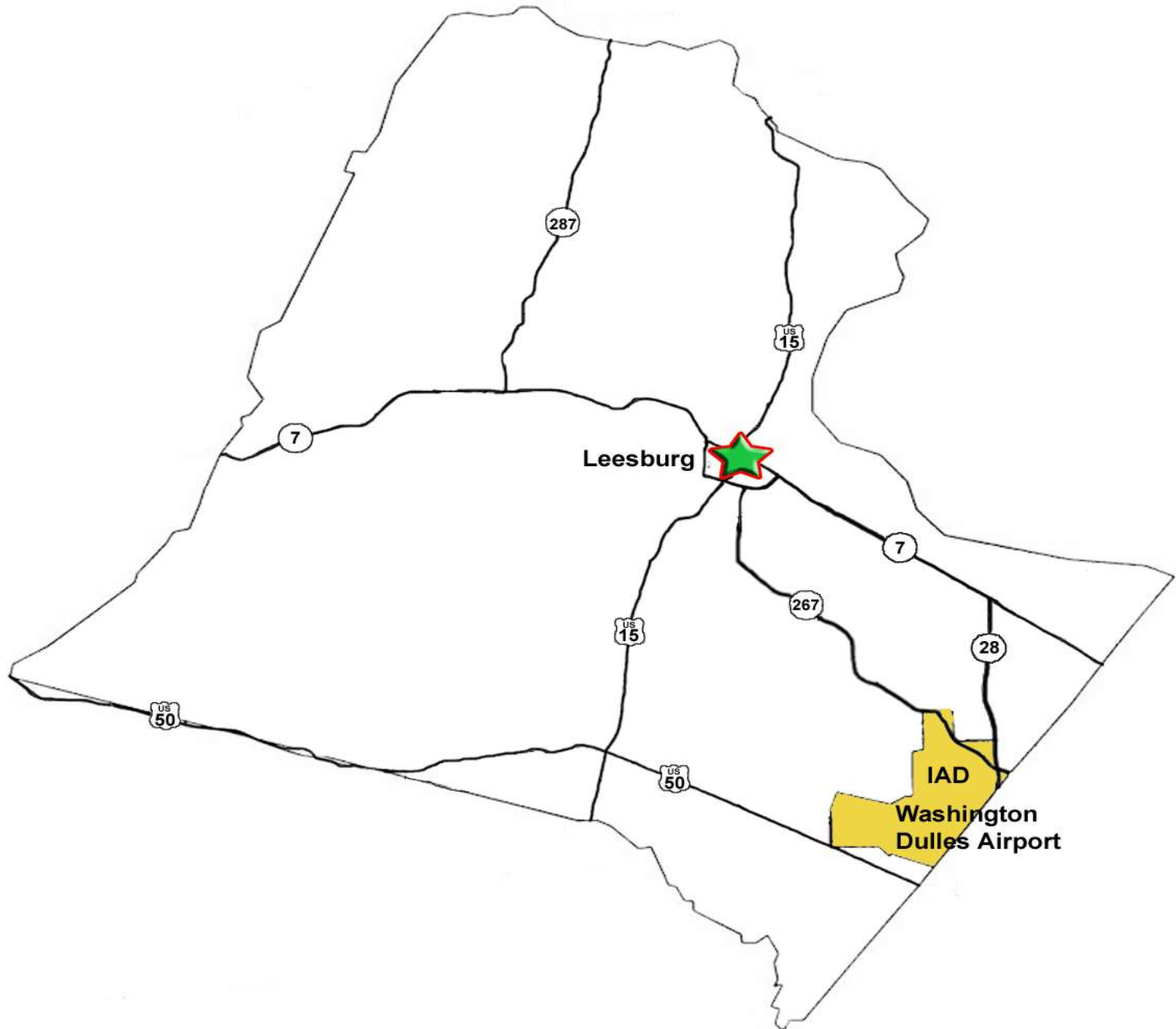
Jim Burton - Supervisor, Blue Ridge District

10 December 2009

The Metro D.C. Area



Loudoun County, Virginia



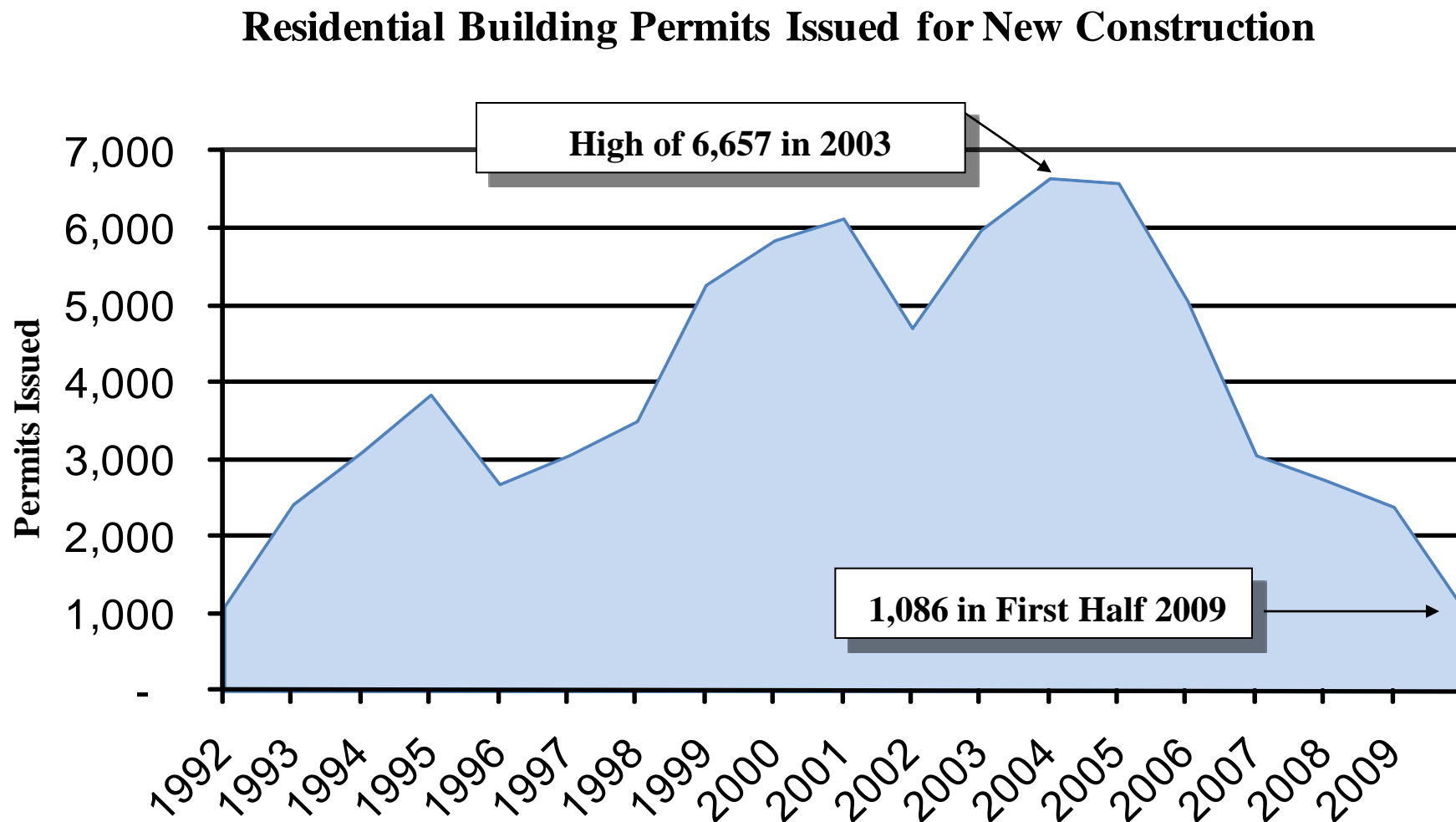
**What Does Unbridled
Growth Look & Feel Like?**

Background

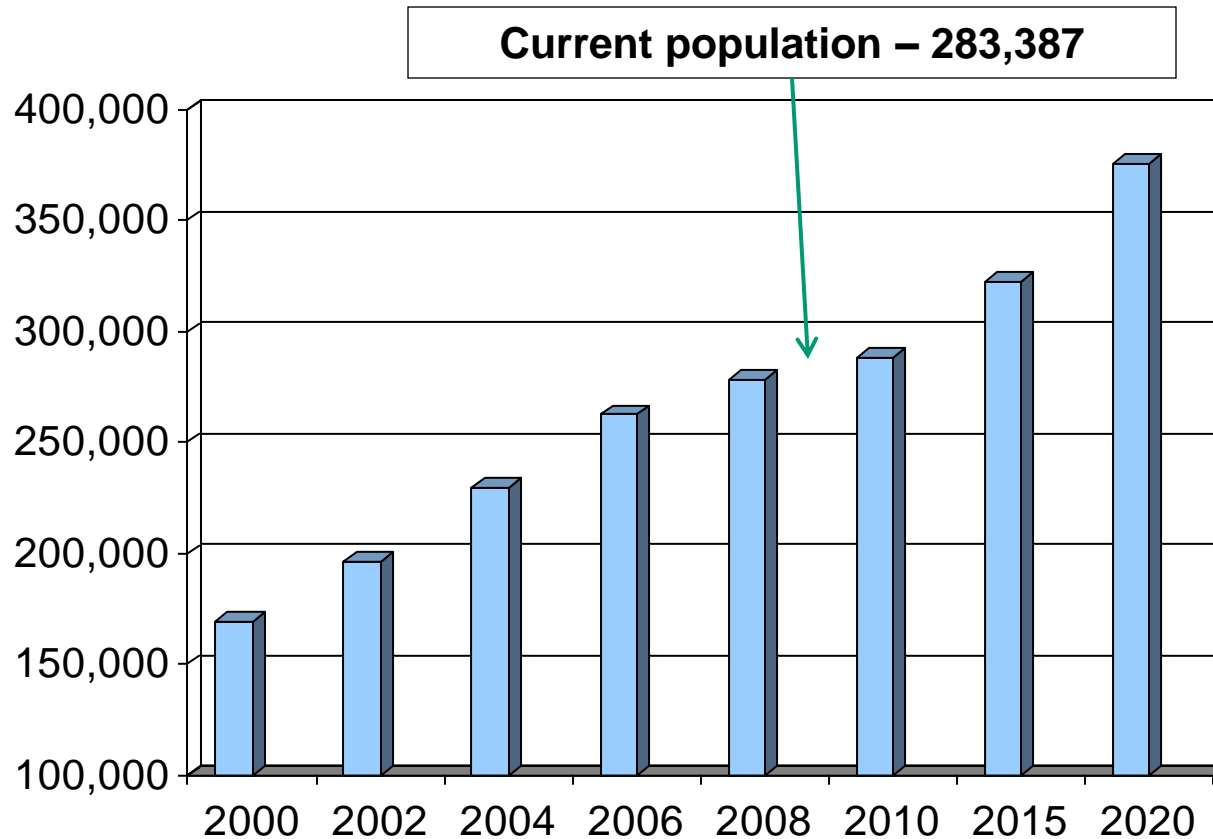
- In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the Boards of Supervisors approved numerous large residential projects.
- By 1995, Loudoun had a backlog of approved, but unbuilt residential units approaching 50,000.
- These units could be built at any time the development community desired.

THUS THE STAGE WAS SET

Residential Building Permits Issued for New Construction



Rapid Population Growth



- **12,600 new residents every year**
- **113,788 new residents since 2000**
- **375,615 total residents by 2020**

The Costs Of Unbridled Growth

- Environmental:
 - Air & Water Quality Decline
 - Degradation of Rivers, Streams, Steep Slopes, Habitats, etc.
- Social / Cultural
 - Rural/Suburban clash
 - Change in Median Household Income Distribution
 - Traffic Congestion
 - Increased Crime, Arrival of Gangs
 - Newcomers **DEMAND** higher levels of service and can afford to pay higher taxes for them
 - Changes in Volunteer Model
 - Constant School Boundary Changes
- Financial:
 - Skyrocketing Debt
 - Increased Property Taxes

Traffic Congestion

Too many people for the road network.

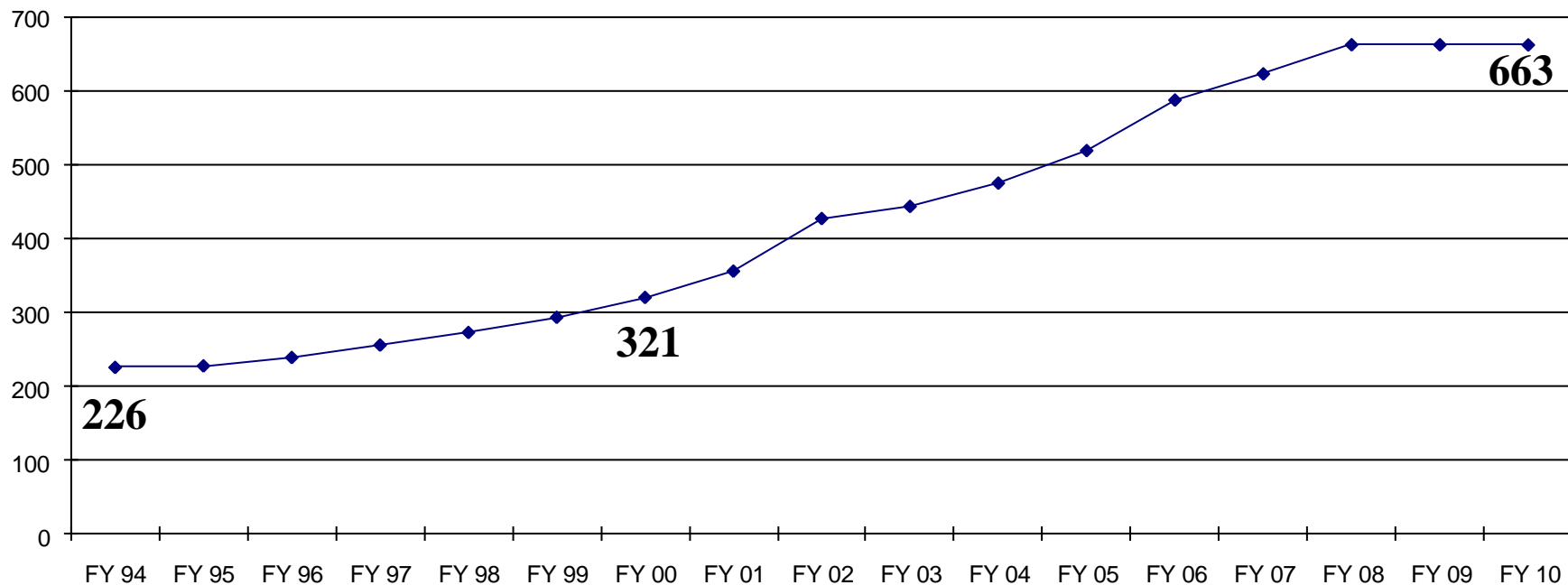


- Over 50% of Work Force Commutes East on Three Corridors.
- Non-Resident Through Commuters Contribute to Congestion
- State Fails to Meet Its Road Building Responsibilities.
- No County Debt Capacity to take over meaningful levels of construction – nor fund those services for which it is legally responsible.
- Not enough right-of-way to build the necessary lane miles anyway.

Sheriff FTE's

193% Increase in 16 Years

FTE's

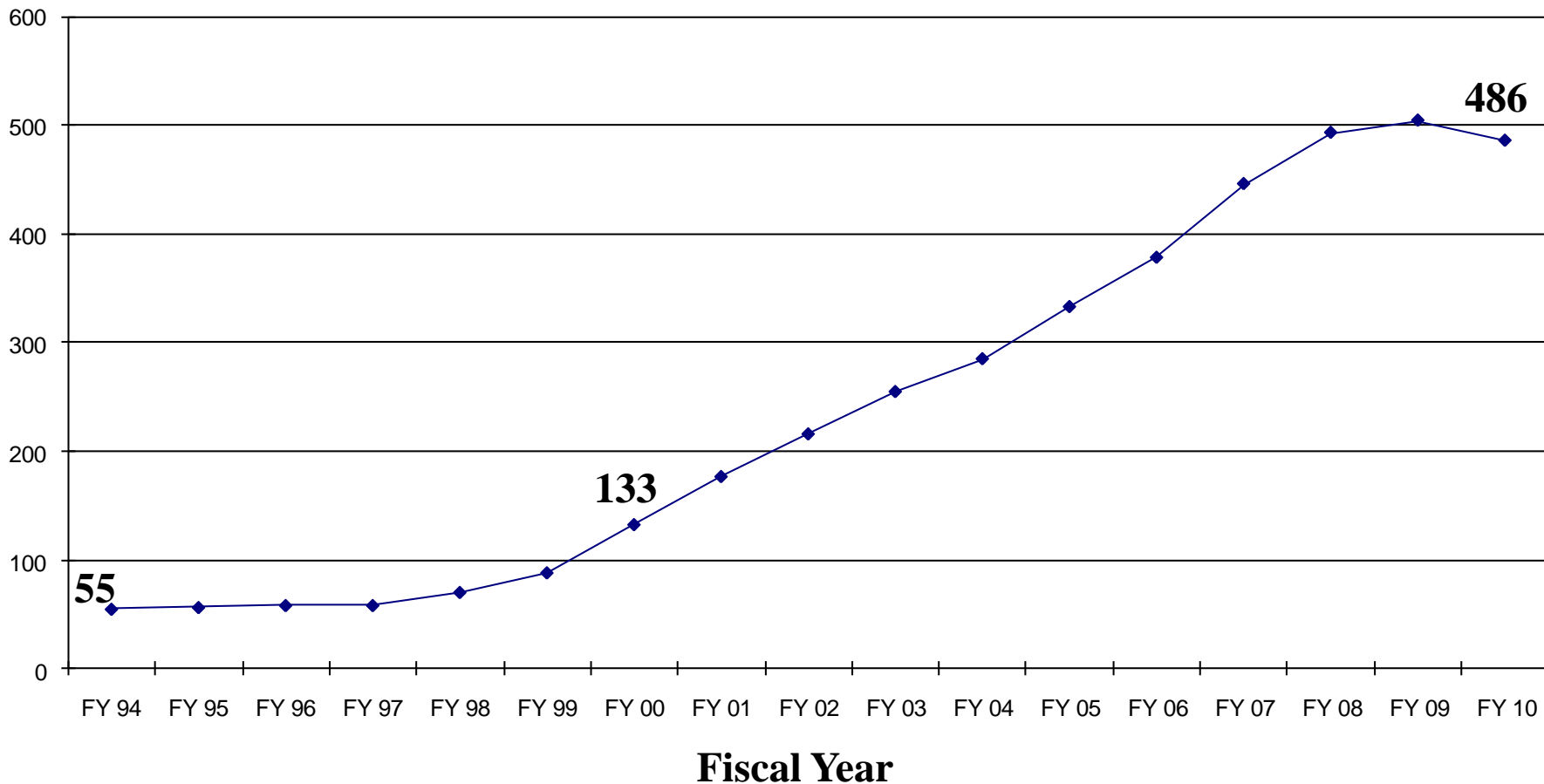


Fiscal Year

Fire & Rescue FTE's

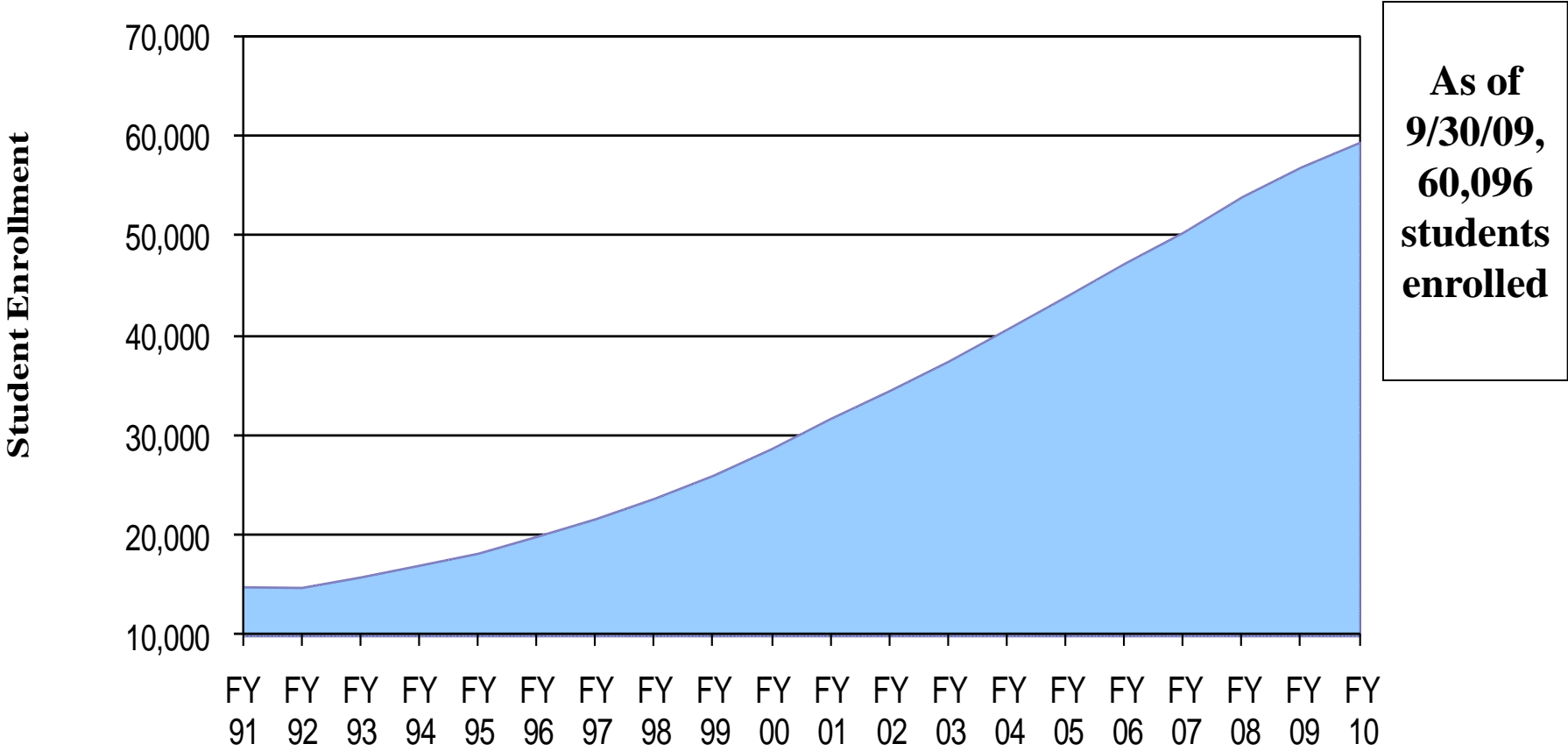
783% Increase over 16 Years

FTE's



Student Population

303% Increase in 16 Years



Source: Loudoun County School Planning Office

Overcrowded Schools

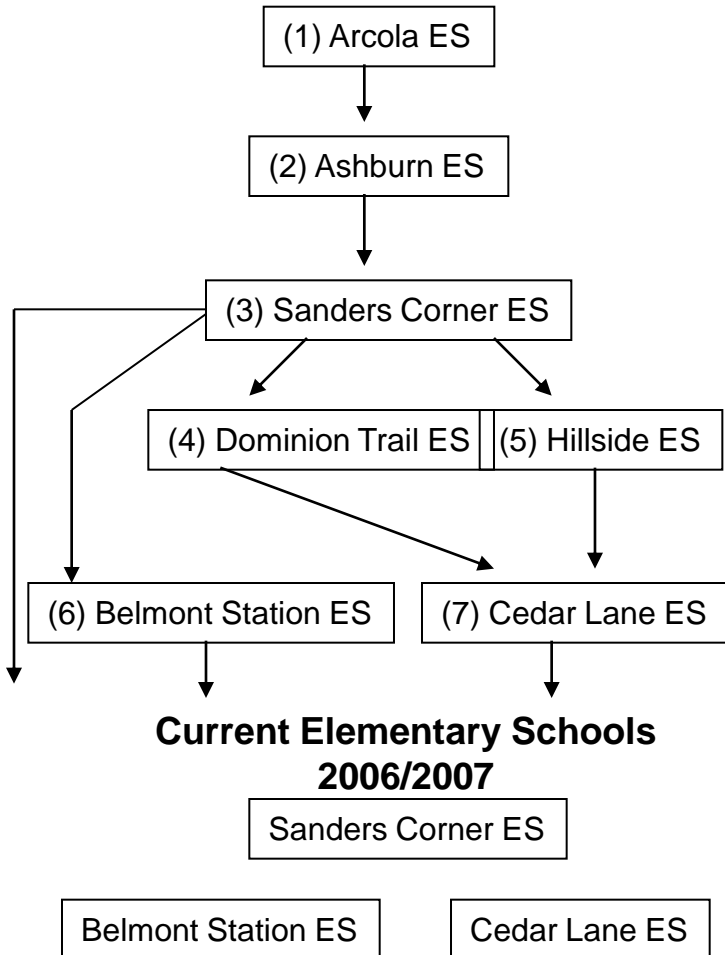
Recent housing slowdown may provide short term breathing room, however...

- We have opened **45 new schools** since 1993
- The School Board has proposed **another 17** for a cost of just under **\$1 billion**.
- They are not getting any cheaper:
 - Elementary: **\$23 million**
 - Middle: **\$53 million**
 - High: **\$83 million**
- Further costs: boundary changes and additional teaching staff with each new school.

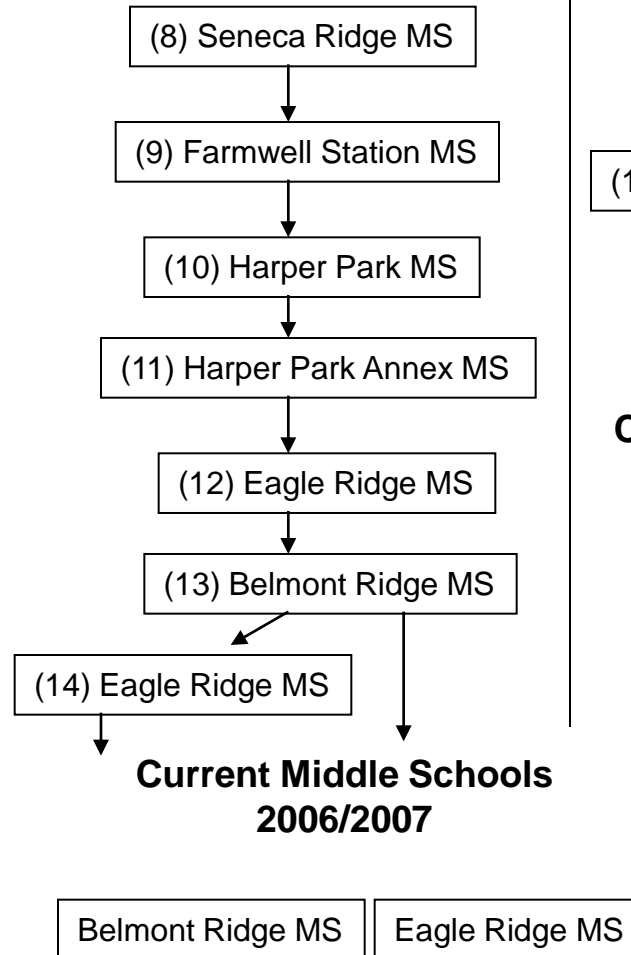
Social Costs: Ashburn Farm (1988/89 – 2006/07)

17 Schools in 18 Years

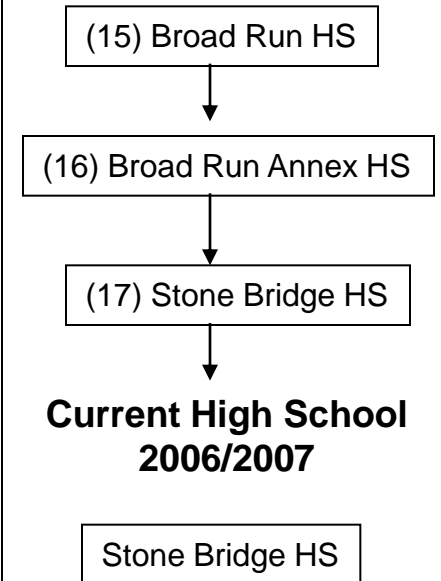
Elementary Schools



Middle Schools



High Schools

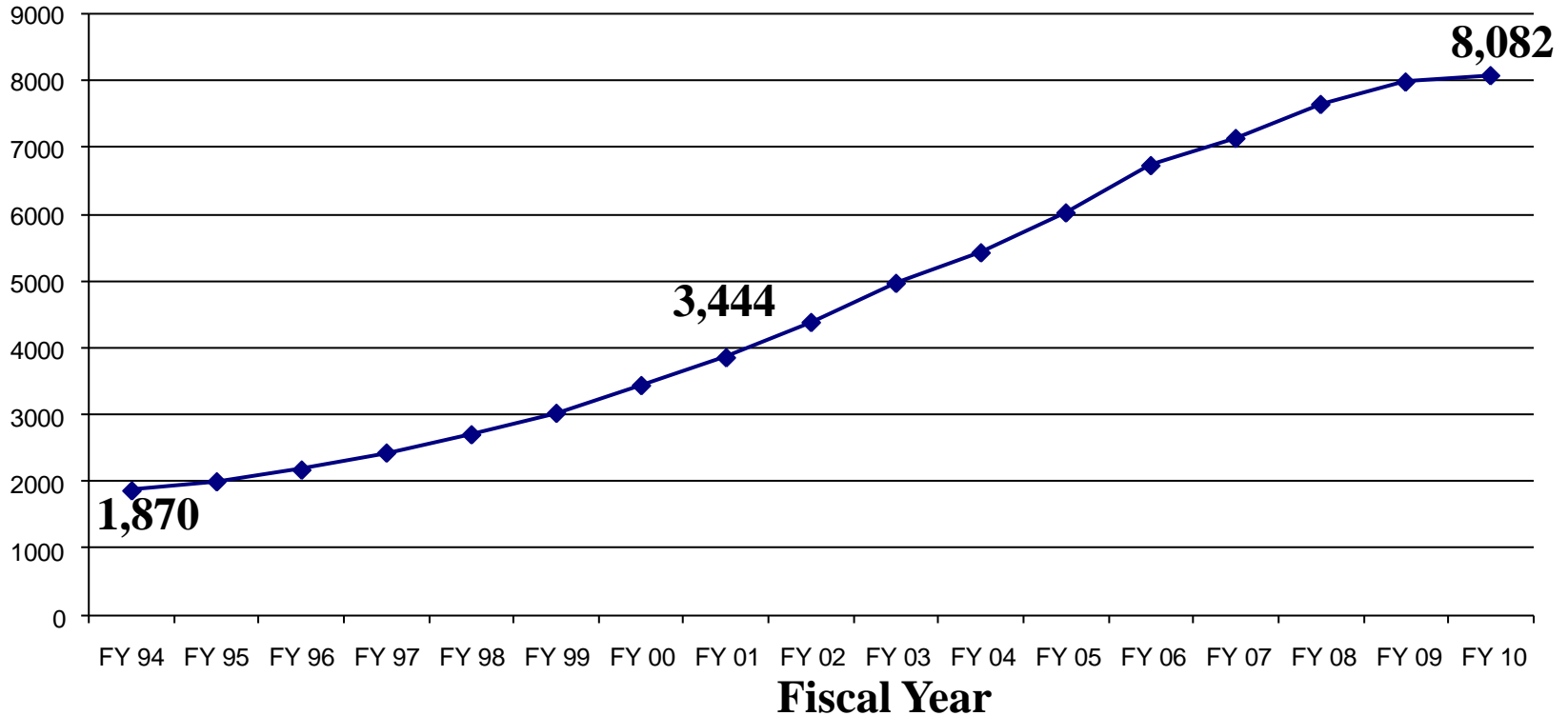


Parents Fed Up!!

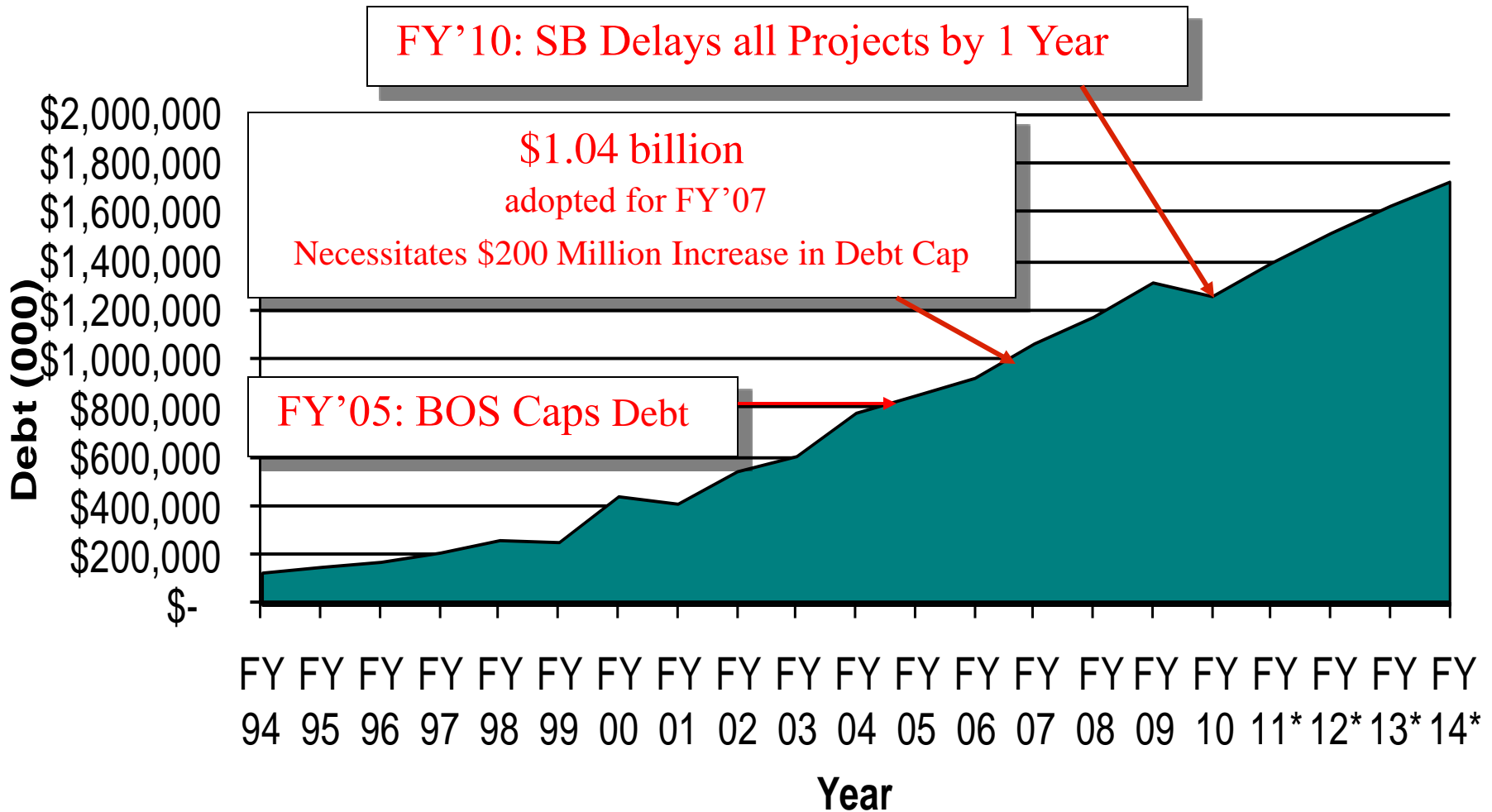
School FTE's

332% Increase in 16 Years

FTE's



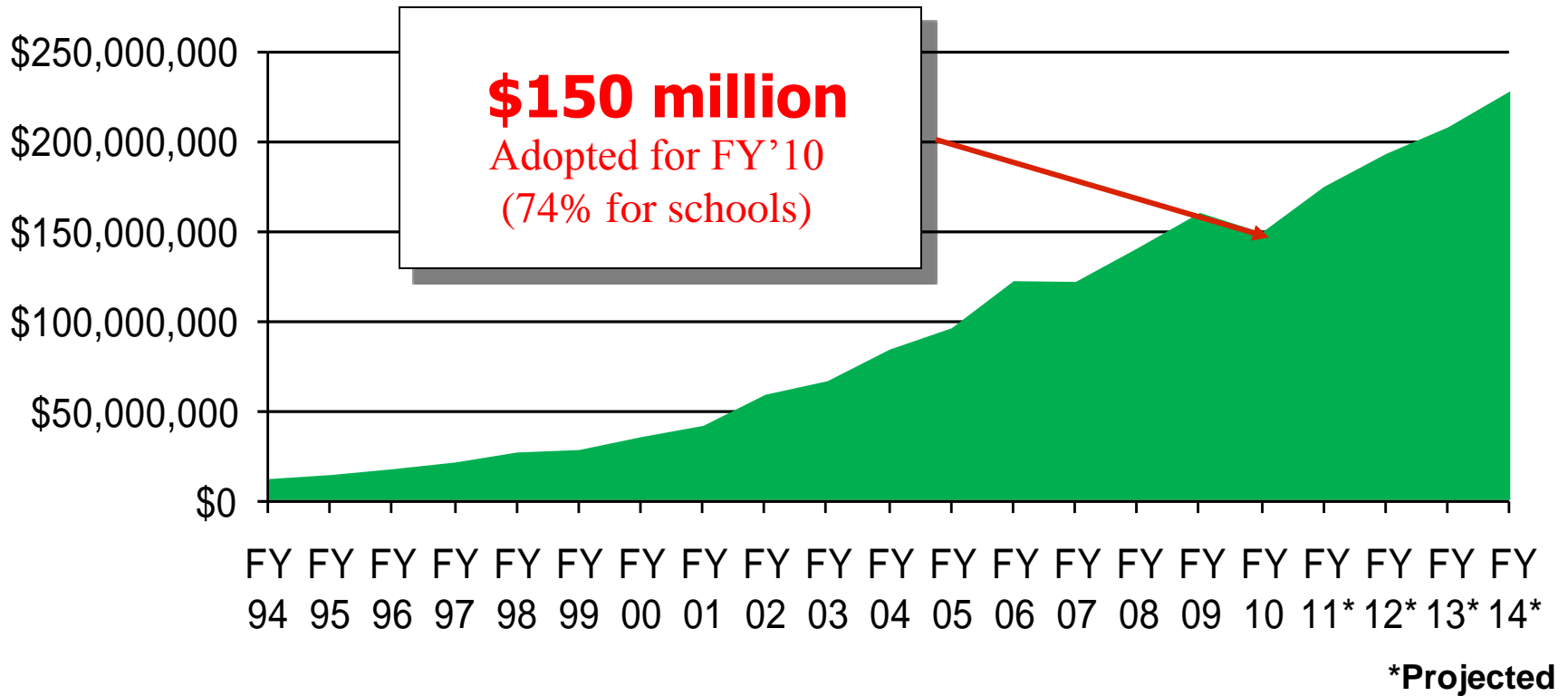
Net Tax Supported Debt



*Projected

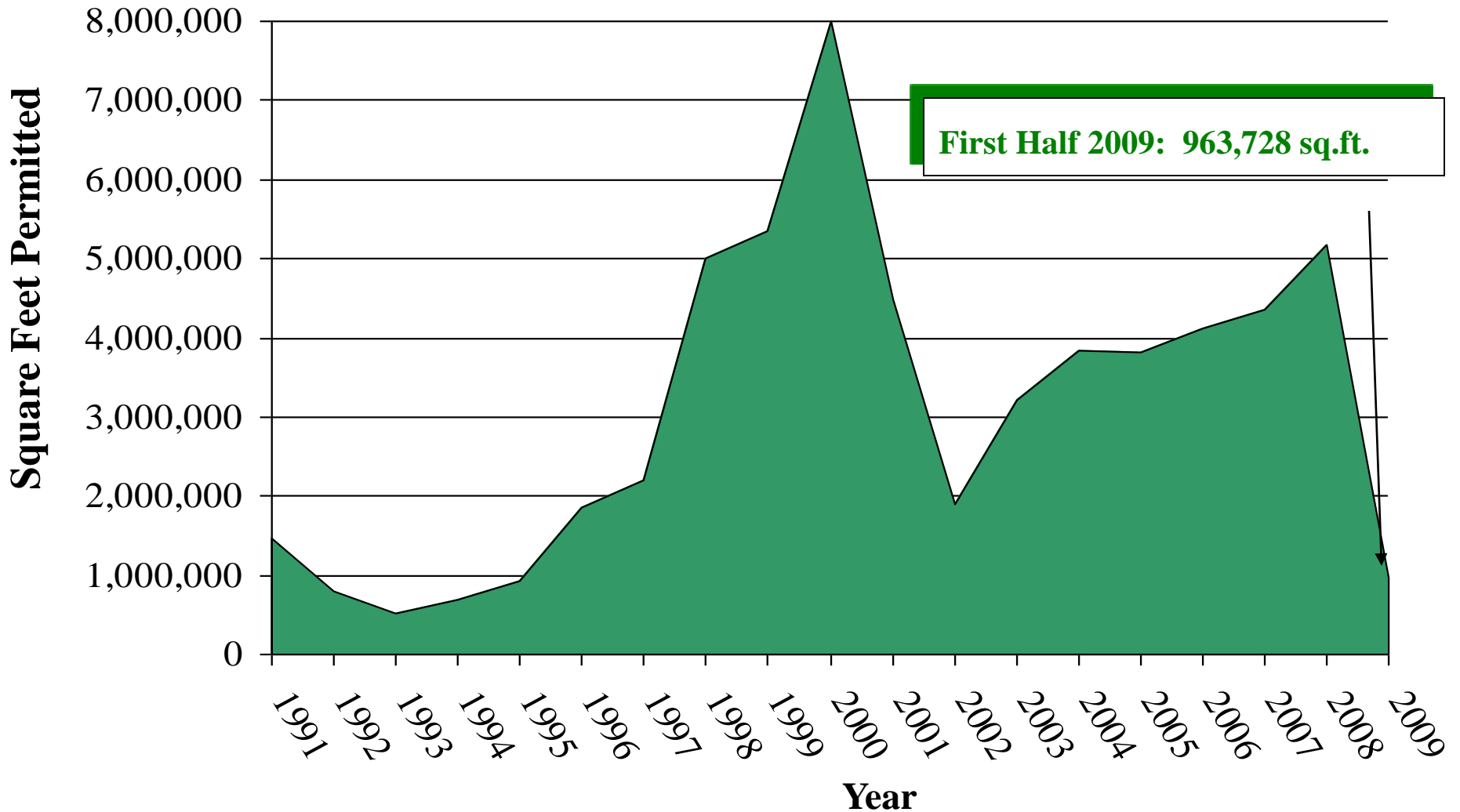
Source: Adopted FY'09, FY'10 Budgets

Annual Debt Service

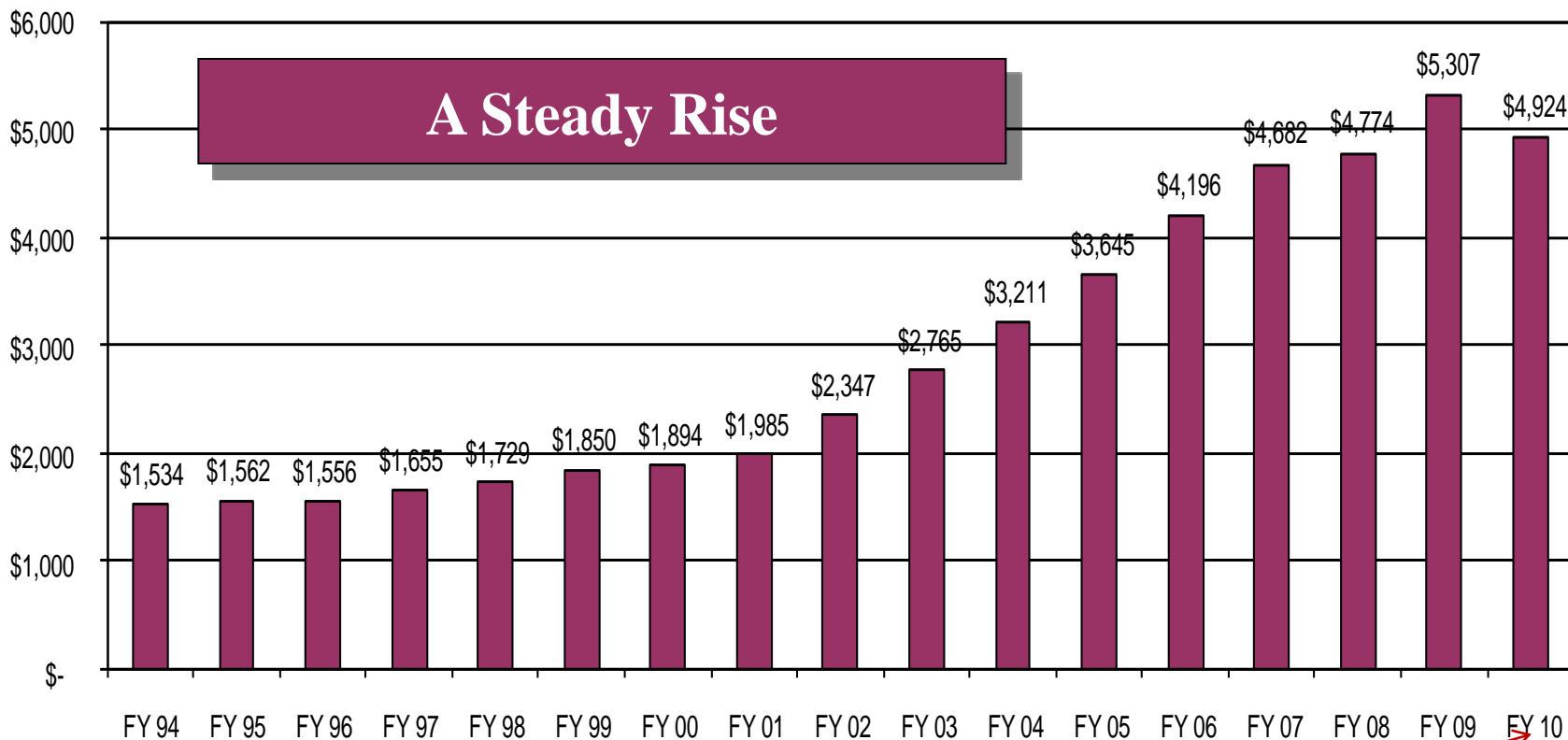


Before any enhancements or tax rate cuts, the bond holders must be paid.

Nonresidential Construction Trends



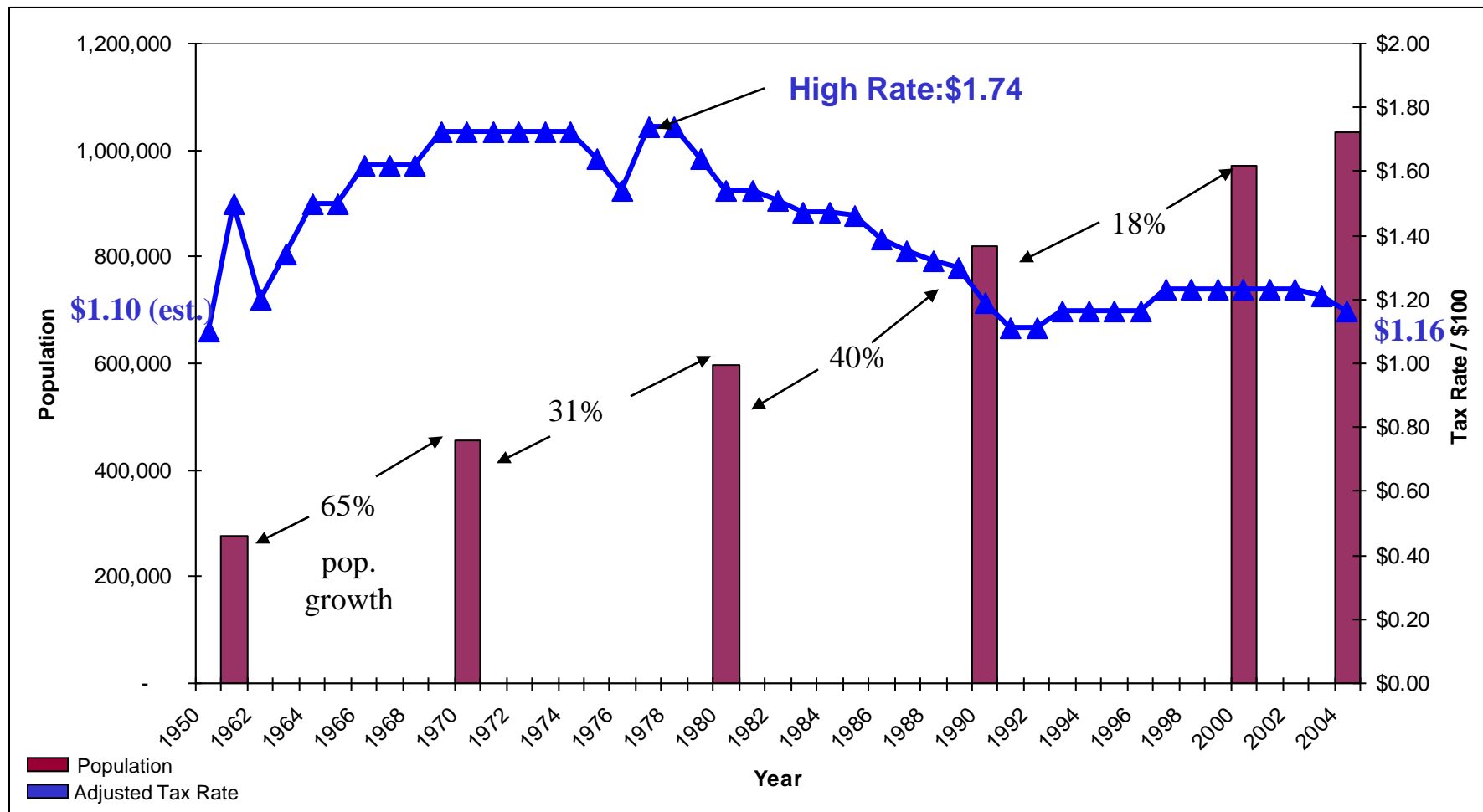
Average Annual Homeowner Tax Bill



- Stimulus Funds
- Pay Freezes
- Lay-Offs

Source: Loudoun County Adopted FY'08, FY'10 Budgets

The Fairfax Experience



Source: Fairfax County Tax Office

In 1997 citizens and officials asked:

SO WHAT CAN WE DO
TO SLOW THE RATE OF
GROWTH?

Answer:

...very little in the near term...

Growth Control Initiatives

- *Moratorium on Building Permits* - **NOT ALLOWED**
- *Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance* - **DENIED BY STATE LEGISLATURE**
- *Developer Impact Fees* - **DENIED BY STATE LEGISLATURE**
- *Affordability Index (ties number of annual building permits to County's ability to take on new debt)* - **DENIED BY STATE LEGISLATURE**

THE MESSAGE SENT

TO: Loudoun County

FROM: State Legislature and the Development Community

***“YOU ALREADY HAVE THE
TOOLS TO CONTROL GROWTH
IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE
TO USE THEM”***

(and so we did)

1999 Election

8 of 9 County Supervisors Elected on a Slow Growth Platform

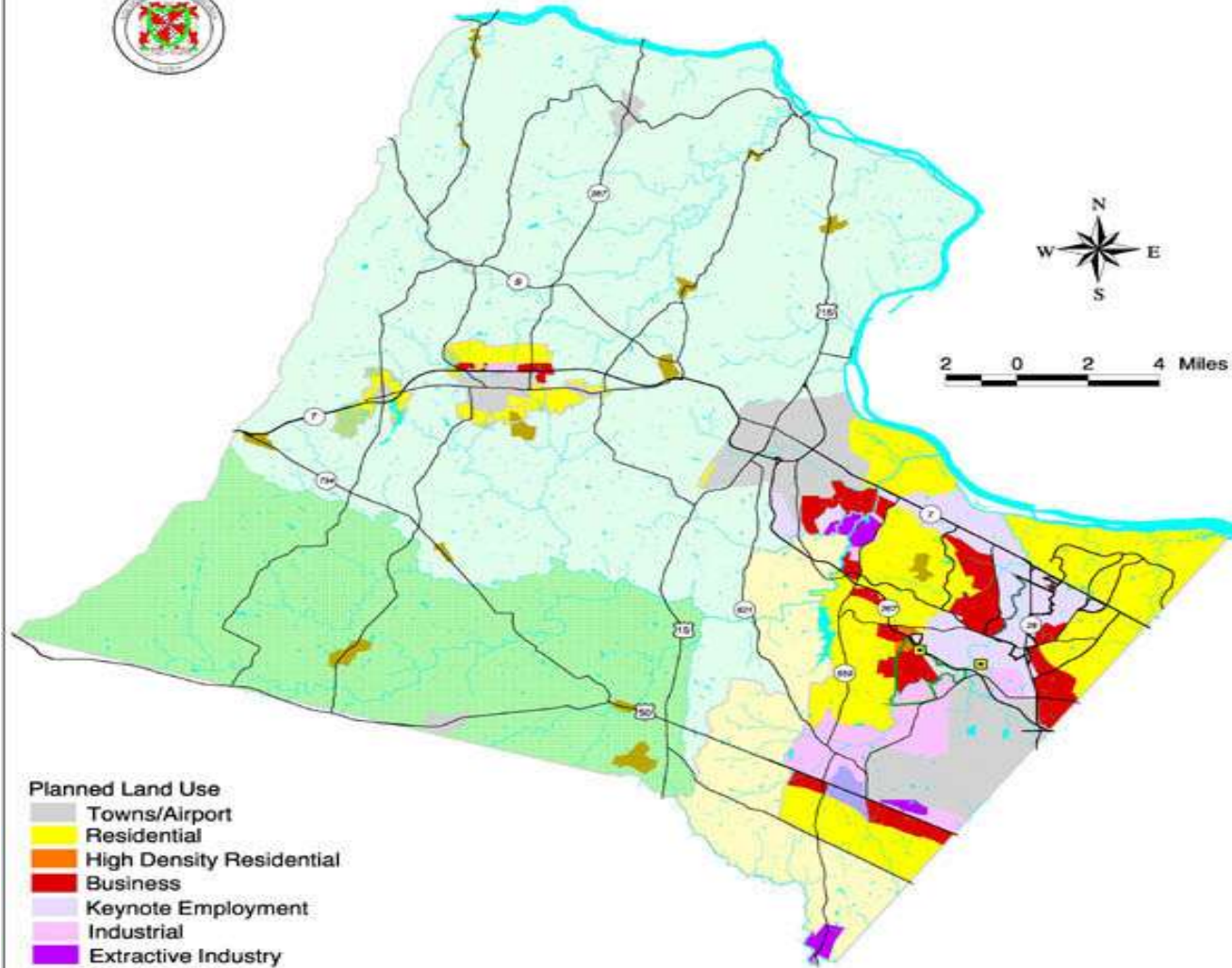
• *Actions Taken:*

- ✓ Denied 7 Major Residential Rezoning
- ✓ Revised Comprehensive Plan to Reduce Future Residential Units by 83,000 – completed July 2001
- ✓ Revised Zoning Ordinances and Zoning Map (reduced density, but added by-right uses to promote rural economy) – completed January 2003

• *Consequences:*

- ✓ 7 Lawsuits on the Denied Rezoning
- ✓ 206 Lawsuits on Changes to Zoning Ordinances and Map

Planned Land Use



Planned Land Use

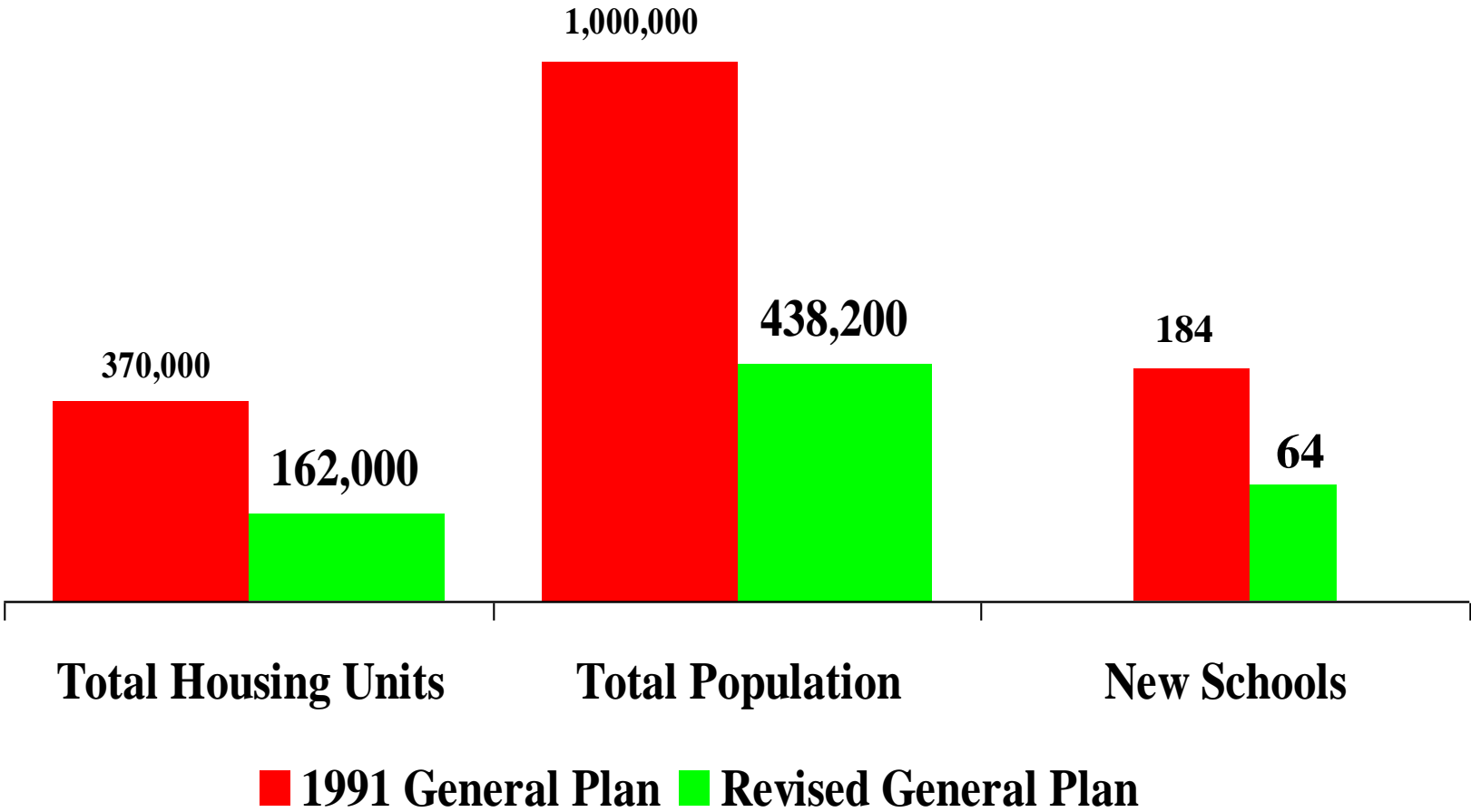
- Towns/Airport
- Residential
- High Density Residential
- Business
- Keynote Employment
- Industrial
- Extractive Industry
- Corridor Retail
- Rural Village
- Transition
- Rural (Base density 1du/20 acres)
- Rural (Base density 1du/50 acres)
- Rural (Within Town JLMA)
- ★ Urban Center

- Major Roads
- Potential Transit Node Locations
- Destination Retail Areas
- Special Activities Area
- Policy Areas

Notes:

This map was created for the Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan Review (CPRW) 2000-2020. Data are subject to change. This map represents generalized planned land use and does not reflect existing zoning or land use. For illustrative purposes, the centerline of highways and the Outer Boundary are shown as boundaries between Planned Land Uses. This is not meant to imply that the Comprehensive Plan supports the development of any land use within the right-of-way. Source: Loudoun County Planning Department and Office of Mapping and Geographic Information.

Effects of General Plan Revisions on Build-Out



Pendulum Politics: 2003 Election

6 of 9 Supervisors Elected Running on Fuzzy Land Use Positions and Heavily Financed by the Development Industry

•*Actions Taken:*

- ✓ Settled Rezoning Law Suits to Plaintiffs' Benefit
- ✓ Revoked Environmental Controls
- ✓ Opened Up Transition Area to Central Water and Sewer
- ✓ Increased Rural Area Densities
- ✓ Accepted for Processing 28 Developer-Initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments for 60,000 additional homes
- ✓ Loaded Land Use Advisory Committees with Development Industry Appointees
- ✓ Approved Almost Every Rezoning That Came Before the Board

Reaction

- **Enormous Public Outcry**
- **Corruption Investigations**
- **FOIA Requests**
- **Lawsuits**
 - **Defamation of Character**
 - **Conflict of Interest**
 - **FOIA Production**
- **General Assembly passes limited impact fee legislation**
- **Board Majority Caves**
 - **Largest CPAM's Defeated**
 - **Partial Rural Downzoning (December 2006)**
- **More Pendulum Politics: Public Replaces Development Advocates with Slow Growth Activists (Again)**

Current Situation: Paying the Piper

Financial Crisis Slows Growth, but Leaves County with Fewer Resources to Accommodate Pent-Up Demand for Services, Infrastructure

- **Subprime mortgage crisis deflates value of residential portfolio in 2008; value of commercial portfolio begins falling in 2009.**
- **Housing slowdown brings with it a whole new set of problems:**
 - ✓ Foreclosures / Abandoned Properties / Unfinished Infrastructure
 - ✓ Blight
 - ✓ Violent Crime
- **State assistance for roads, schools, constitutional offices disappears**
- **School population continues to grow, but not in clusters with open seats**
- **No group willing to accept alterations in past levels of service**
- **Still have a backlog of approved, but unbuilt, houses approaching 41,000**

Will Your County Be Next?

