

MCA's Resolution on Tysons Corner Redevelopment

On May 5, the MCA Board of Directors passed a resolution on Tysons Corner redevelopment. The resolution expresses our Tysons Corner into a vibrant, 21st century mixed-use urban center but also urges certain changes in the proposed plan to protect our quality of life in McLean.

The MCA resolution, which is available on our web site, www.mcleancitizens.org, is quite detailed and written in the jargon of land use planners and developers for a reason: so as to inform the Fairfax County Planning support for redeveloping Commission and Board of Supervisors of our views on the numerous, detailed issues they will be deciding in the coming months that will affect our quality of life in McLean.

The new Comprehensive Plan for Tysons (Plan Amendment) seeks to convert Tysons into a dense urban area. It is probably the most comprehensive and complex Plan Amendment drafted in the last 30 years. Final Planning Commission markup of the Plan Amendment is May 27, 2010.

The proposed Plan Amendment would guide development over at least the next 20 years (i.e. to at least 2030). MCA supports a 20-year planning horizon. Tysons now has 46 million square feet (MSF) of developed office, residential, retail and hotel space and the current Plan allows Tysons to grow to 76 MSF. One option of the Plan Amendment, favored by MCA, would allow Tysons to grow to 84 MSF, at which time the Plan Amendment would be re-evaluated to ensure the needed infrastructure has kept pace with the new development. (The option to permit Tysons to grow to 84 MSF would permit Tysons' residential population to increase from the current level of roughly 17,000 to 100,000, and the workforce to increase from the current level of roughly 100,000 to 200,000.) The proposed Plan Amendment also contains a long list of public facilities (e.g., schools, parks, athletic fields, fire stations, police stations, etc.) and road improvements that are needed by 2020 and 2030. The scope, funding and construction of this supporting infrastructure is critical to Tysons' success and to ensuring that public facilities and roads outside of McLean are not overwhelmed; MCA has long advocated for its timely provision, including in our May 5 resolution. The MCA resolution also supports use of the successful Route 28 funding model, where landowners pay 75% of the infrastructure costs.

An important goal of the Plan Amendment is to concentrate most of the new development within a ¼-mile of the Metro stations (similar to Arlington's Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor), a planning objective MCA strongly supports because it increases Metro ridership and reduces vehicle trips. Good pedestrian and bike access into and throughout Tysons are two additional Plan Amendment requirements we support that will help shape Tysons and make it a place where people will want to live and work.

Two key performance measurements for the new Tysons will be how well the road network, both inside and outside of Tysons, is functioning and the ridership levels for Metro and bus transit. We wholeheartedly support such performance monitoring and consider it a requirement for good urban planning.

McLean Citizens Association Resolution
Tyson Corner Urban Center Comprehensive Plan Amendment
May 5, 2010

Whereas, in 2005 the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors established a task force to recommend changes to the Tysons Corner Urban Center (Tysons) Comprehensive Plan due to the deferral of 20 Tysons Plan amendments submitted in 2004 and in anticipation of the arrival of four Metrorail stations to Tysons; and,

Whereas, Tysons is located at the junction of VA 267 (Dulles Toll Road) and I-495 (Capitol Beltway) and the junction of two Virginia state highways, VA 7 and VA 123, and it borders McLean proper to the south; and,

Whereas, the proposed Tysons Plan amendment is one of the most comprehensive and complex Plan amendments ever considered by the county and represents many years of planning effort; and,

Whereas, Tysons currently has 18,500 residents and 112,600 employees and contains approximately 46 million square feet (MSF) of development, including 5.5 MSF of retail use, 27 MSF of office use and 10 MSF of housing; and,

Whereas, the planning objectives of the proposed Plan amendment include:

- Increased development intensity around the four Metro stations in accordance with generally accepted Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles;
- Significantly increased residential use including considerable affordable and workforce housing;
- Increased mixed-use development;
- Reduced single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips and high rail and bus transit utilization;
- Greatly increased pedestrian and bike access;
- A sustainable Tysons with restored streams, a green network of public parks, open spaces and trails, and green buildings; and;
- Adequate public facilities to support a dense urban center;
- Improving the existing transportation infrastructure to keep pace with the anticipated increased development and improving internal circulation;
- Protection of the existing, stable residential neighborhoods at the periphery of Tysons;

and,

Whereas the proposed Plan amendment defines a TOD area as being within 1/2-mile of a Metrorail station entrance and seeks to greatly increase development intensities inside the TOD areas by permitting the highest floor area ratio (FAR) within 1/8-mile of the stations and reduced FAR as distance from the station increases; and,

Whereas, current Fairfax County policy establishes the TOD boundaries by walking distance from the station platform and the proposed Plan amendment establishes the TOD boundaries by absolute distance (as the crow flies) from the station entrances, resulting in considerably larger TOD areas; and,

Whereas, larger TOD areas result in diminishing rail ridership and increased vehicle trips because the lengthening distance to the rail station becomes less conducive to walking; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment advertises 7 different options for establishing density levels within the TOD and non-TOD areas of Tysons, and three of these options would set no FAR limits; and,

Whereas, some of the 7 density options would provide bonus FAR density for green buildings, affordable housing and contributions towards public facilities; and,

Whereas, the proposed bonus FAR density for green buildings built to LEED Silver, Gold or Platinum or equivalent standards would range from 2-10%; and,

Whereas, green buildings are in demand in the marketplace and developers must adhere to LEED standards in order to be competitive, and this makes unnecessary bonus FAR density for green buildings; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment recommends building heights of up to 400 feet within 1/8-mile of the stations to accommodate high intensity development in the TOD areas while allowing for the provision of adequate open space and the dedication of land for the grid of street and public facilities; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment recommends minimum consolidations of 20 acres before rezoning approval in order to ensure the provision of land dedicated for the grid of streets, parkland and public facilities; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment advertises 2 options for a planning horizon, either 20 (2030) or 40 years (2050); and,

Whereas, county land use planners project Tysons could grow to 84 MSF of development by year 2030 with a population of 44,400 and 166,700 jobs, and grow to 116 MSF of development by year 2050 with a population of 102,900 and 193,000 jobs; and

Whereas, VDOT does not plan its road network beyond 20 years; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment recommends numerous transportation improvements in order to accommodate 84 MSF of development by 2030, including, but not limited to:

- Widening Gallows Road to 6 lanes,
- Widening Routes 7 and 123 to 8 lanes,
- Widening the Dulles Toll Road by 2 lanes out to Reston Parkway,
- Constructing additional ramps to the Dulles Toll Road,
- Constructing a ramp over I-495 connecting Jones Branch Drive to Scotts Crossing Road
- Substantially increased bus transit service;

and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment further recommends the construction of roughly 10-12 miles of new roads within Tysons to establish a grid of streets that relieves congestion on Routes 7 and 123 and improves internal circulation; and,

Whereas, the county submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) a Chapter 527 Traffic Impact Analysis that provided a description and extensive analysis of the proposed road network improvements; and,

Whereas, VDOT provided an Evaluation Report of the Tysons 527 Traffic Impact Analysis that acknowledged the broad scope of the transportation plan and commented that the proposed Plan amendment did not provide guidance on how to remediate traffic congestion problems should any of the transportation improvements not be implemented, or should the travel demand management or transit mode splits be less successful than planned; and,

Whereas, the cumulative net tax revenue from 2010 to 2030 at build out of 84 MSF is projected at \$1.2 billion (in 2010 dollars); and,

Whereas, the projected cost of the transportation improvements between 2010 and 2030 is \$1.388 billion, not counting the transit costs; and,

Whereas, VDOT commented in its Evaluation Report that, “...it is clear that significant public sector funding would also be necessary to achieve phases of the vision for the future of Tysons. It is common knowledge that public funding availability is a current concern in Virginia and, specifically, Northern Virginia.”; and,

Whereas, county transportation planners modeled the planned 2030 road network and, notwithstanding the above recommended transportation improvements, project severe congestion at 84 MSF of development by 2030; and,

Whereas, preliminary results of an ongoing study of the proposed expansion of the Dulles Toll Road revealed numerous problems with both the widening and the construction of new ramps, such as lack of right-of-way, environmental impacts, high construction costs, the need for Federal Highway Administration approvals and enabling legislation from Richmond; and,

Whereas, the widening of the Dulles Toll Road is needed by the time Tysons achieves 60 MSF of development or by the year 2020; and,

Whereas, the monitoring and counting of vehicle trips in and out of Tysons will be critical to characterizing the performance of the transportation network and the cumulative impact of new development over the next 20 years; and,

Whereas, the planned growth in Tysons will require the following new public facilities between 2010 and 2050:

- Two elementary schools (2030 and 2050),
- Expansion of a local secondary school (2050),
- Community library (2030-2040),
- Two fire stations (2020 and 2040),
- Satellite police station (2020),
- Performing arts center (2030-2040);

and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment recommends a minimum of 20 athletic fields within Tysons; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment requires 20% of residential units within the TOD areas be dedicated to affordable housing; and 12% in the non-TOD areas; and,

Whereas, the proposed Plan amendment offers 5 options for phasing development with transportation improvements and infrastructure; and,

Whereas, the Planning Commission has not yet made its recommendation on phasing; and,

Whereas, the McLean Citizens Association has long sought development triggers that ensure new development does not exceed the carrying capacity of the underlying infrastructure;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the McLean Citizens Association supports the Comprehensive Plan for Tysons proposed Plan amendment subject to the following conditions:

1. The Plan amendment establish a planning horizon of 20 years,
2. In accordance with intensity option 3A, no FAR allocation be established within ¼-mile of the Metro stations and, as a prerequisite to any redevelopment within this area, a Plan amendment in full compliance with Tysons planning objectives and architectural guidance, a rezoning application and a development plan be approved,
3. Any density above a 4.75 FAR approved within the ¼-mile TOD area be limited to three years after approval of such density with time extensions granted only for applicants actively seeking zoning approvals,
4. No density be transferable outside the ¼-mile area,
5. A 2.0 FAR be allocated within the ¼-mile to ½-mile TOD area and the FAR for the non-TOD areas of Tysons remain at the current planned intensities,
6. The minimum consolidation for redevelopment be set at 20 acres to secure the dedication of land for public facilities, parks and the grid of streets,
7. The Plan establish the use of triggers to implement a phased approach to the redevelopment of Tysons such that the amount of total development stays in balance with the available infrastructure,
8. A replanning threshold of 84 MSF, which is inclusive of any density bonuses, be established that is contingent on expansion of the Dulles Toll Road by year 2020, in a manner that comports with the VDOT Evaluation Report, provided however, until the Dulles Toll Road is expanded, a lower, interim replanning threshold be established that takes into account the limited number of access ramps and the projected inadequate capacity of the 8-lane Dulles Toll Road,
9. A monitoring system be established to monitor and enumerate on a continuous basis vehicle trips into and out of Tysons that is sufficiently automated to make the trip count data useful and readily available to county transportation planners;

and,

Be it further resolved that the McLean Citizens Association opposes the granting of bonus density for green buildings; and,

Be it further resolved that the McLean Citizens Association opposes the artificial and disadvantageous expansion of TOD areas by measuring distance as the crow flies from the

displaced station entrances and strongly urges the county to apply the current TOD policy in Tysons that uses walking distance as measured from the station platform; and,

Be it further resolved that Tysons be planned and developed as a complete and self-sufficient urban center including, without limitation, building at the time needed 20 athletic fields within Tysons, as well as the public facilities; and,

Be it further resolved that the Comprehensive Plan require every feasible effort to protect the quality of life of the surrounding communities and also provide for adequate sidewalks and commuter buses and other means of access to Tysons and the Metro stations from McLean and other edge communities; and,

Be it further resolved that, prior to granting increased density for Tysons, the Board of Supervisors establish a public facilities cost recovery plan, similar to what has been used successfully in the Route 28 corridor (e.g., a 75-25 split between landowners and other funding sources) that will ensure the cost burden is borne primarily by the land owners who will benefit from this development and not passed on to the average county taxpayer.

cc: John Foust, Dranesville Supervisor
Jay Donahue, Dranesville Planning Commissioner
Benjamin Wiles, Staff
Fairfax County Planning Commission
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors