



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 4, 2011

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Stella Koch, Chairman *Stella M. Koch*  
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

**SUBJECT:** EQAC opposition to a proposed Public Facilities Manual amendment addressing public street design requirements

I am writing on behalf of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council to voice our concerns about and opposition to the proposed Public Facilities Manual amendment to require an increase in public street widths. At the April 13, 2011 meeting of the Environmental Quality Advisory Council, EQAC approved, by a unanimous vote of the members present, a motion to oppose this proposed amendment.

Fairfax County has made considerable and commendable progress in recent years in support of the minimization of new impervious cover and its adverse effects, the reduction of impacts of existing impervious cover in the county, and the creation of community vitality through urban design.

We are concerned about the increased impervious cover that would result from this new requirement. Fairfax County has just finished all of its watershed plans and is moving towards modest implementation of projects. Adding more impervious cover, especially in the form of roads, where the impacts are often difficult to mitigate, will not benefit any of our stream protection efforts, support open space protection, or add to the county's quality of life.

With respect to high quality urban design, Fairfax County is focusing its efforts on revitalizing centers like Tysons Corner, Springfield and Merrifield. Development proposals in these areas are being scrutinized carefully in order to ensure that the neighborhoods that will be created will be both walkable and inviting to residents and employees. The incorporation of narrow streets within development designs will support such high quality developments, in that the provision of narrow streets will enhance the connectivity of these neighborhoods and will create a greater sense of community than would occur with wider streets. While we recognize that the Board of Supervisors could approve the use of narrower streets on a case-by-case basis during the zoning process and that urban road standards can be pursued in areas such as Tysons Corner where such standards will have been established through memoranda of understanding between the county and VDOT, we are somewhat troubled by the implication that not all

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communities in Fairfax County deserve the same consideration. Widening streets tends to increase speed through neighborhoods. At a time when we are working towards safety for all on streets and are implementing traffic calming measures, a blanket requirement to widen streets seems to be unreasonable.

We understand that a key concern driving the proposal to increase required street widths is the need to provide for sufficient mobility for fire trucks. We all have been in major cities and have seen fire trucks skillfully navigate narrow streets with cars parked on both sides. I was just up in Manhattan last month and was impressed with the skill and the tenacity of the driver of a fire truck that was being maneuvered through the flower district in Chelsea on 28<sup>th</sup> Street with cars parked on both sides of this narrow street. We are confident that the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department also has exceptionally skilled drivers and that these drivers would be able to continue to navigate our streets and the new narrower streets of an emerging Tysons Corner and other growth centers.

For the reasons noted above, EQAC does not support the proposed PFM Amendment for an increase in street width.

SMK:nhk

cc: Fairfax County Planning Commission  
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive  
David Molchany, Deputy County Executive  
James W. Patteson, Director, DPWES  
EQAC file, April 2011