



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 19, 2013

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Stella Koch, Chairman
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

Stella M. Koch

George Lamb, At-Large member
Environmental Quality Advisory Council

George W. Lamb

SUBJECT: EQAC concern about the need to apply urban development standards more broadly across Fairfax County

EQAC shares the concerns that were brought to Stella Koch's attention by Supervisor Hudgins regarding transit-oriented development design and pedestrian accessibility at and near the county's transit stations. In response to these concerns, at its March 13 meeting, EQAC engaged in a conversation with staff from the Departments of Transportation and Planning and Zoning as well as the county's broader Environmental Coordinating Committee. The discussion focused on the new Wiehle-Reston East station and surrounding development projects but was intended to be generally applicable to all transit station areas. The outcome of the March 13 discussion was awareness that the urban design guidelines that were carefully created for Tysons Corner, as the county's urban center, are not currently being applied in transit station and revitalization areas. While Tysons is indeed a special area, the transit areas in particular are mini urban districts with highly valuable public transit investments. In order to maximize the potential for these areas, they also need to be designed with an urban focus and the associated amenities necessary to create an exciting and vibrant community.

Our specific concerns about the current Wiehle Avenue development include the following:

- Parking requirements are still focused on minimum numbers of spaces. They do not reference the urban maximum space approach that could be effectively implemented around the transit stations. The parking maximum approach encourages multi-modal transportation versus single mode, high-density parking.
- The road network that is being provided in this area includes roads that will be higher in capacity than what EQAC feels would be appropriate for an urban road network. In particular, the grid streets inside the development are two lanes in each direction, with no street parking. In a May 2012 presentation from the Fairfax County Department of Transportation to the Board of Supervisors on proposed countywide urban

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transportation design standards, the design for an Urban Local Street called for one lane in each direction with on street parking.

In the same presentation, the justification for on-street parking per the proposed design standards stated: “On-street parking is required on most streets to create a more useable street frontage that serves street-level commercial retail, and to create side friction that reduces vehicles speeds, thereby maintaining a more pedestrian friendly street.”

It is recognized that the Wiehle Avenue development is already under construction and that it is difficult to retroactively apply the Urban Transportation standards. EQAC feels, though, that there should be a consideration of whether there may be measures that could be taken at this point to fix any pedestrian safety/accessibility problems that may be associated with the design of this development.

We further stress our strong recommendation that the Board of Supervisors direct that there be a consideration of the application of urban parking and transportation standards to other urbanizing areas outside of Tysons Corner.

References:

1. Report To Board Of Supervisors on Tysons Corner, October 2012
2. Fairfax Forward Staff Report, March 19, 2013
3. County of Fairfax, Virginia, County-wide Urban Transportation Design Standards
Board of Supervisors Transportation Committee May 8, 2012

SMK:GWL:nhk

cc: Edward L. Long, Jr., County Executive
David J. Molchany, Deputy County Executive
Fred R. Selden, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning
Thomas P. Biesiadny, Director, Department of Transportation
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