

9 November 2006

Dear Task Force Member,

The PlaceMaking Team is pleased to be selected as your consultant team for *Planning and Urban Design for Tysons Corner*. We are excited by the opportunity to collaborate with the Task Force and with Fairfax County to help chart a course for a new Tysons Corner.

The PlaceMaking team has a strong and established history of integrating transportation and land use to create communities of lasting value. Our team of PB PlaceMaking, Robert Cervero, McLarand Vasquez Emsiek & Partners, Bay Area Economics and Placeways brings national and global leadership in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) planning and implementation at many scales. The team's powerful set of 3-D modeling, visualization and scenario building tools will allow for the rapid testing of implementable scenarios.

Our team will provide you with a unique blend of west coast-based international experts, bringing a fresh look at Tysons Corner, and a Washington, DC team, bringing a strong local presence, deep familiarity with TOD in the Washington region and an understanding of Tysons Corner. Assignments of this scope, complexity and importance are truly rare. The PlaceMaking Team will work hand and glove with Fairfax County and the Task Force to craft a consensus around a great plan for Tysons Corner.

The following summarizes our basic approach to the project and some of the methods we will use to help you develop a new vision and a plan and implementation tools for a new Tysons Corner. Further details and a chance to discuss our approach and role in this project will be part of our appearance at your Monday, November 13 meeting. We look forward to seeing you then.

A New Tysons Corner

Fairfax County is in the midst of exploring what a new Tysons Corner could be. It is a daring and ambitious enterprise.

One America's most successful suburban edge cities, Tysons Corner's growth and prosperity have been a wonderful achievement for Fairfax County, for Northern Virginia and for the Washington, DC region. But Tysons' success has not been without serious consequences – most notably, the traffic congestion and accessibility problems its massive scale has evoked. Even with the Metrorail extension and four new stations, Tysons Corner's potential to sustain substantial further growth requires a new approach and a new development framework.

There are many questions to answer in pursuit of such a new approach. Tysons is one of the key economic engines for Fairfax County, but will gridlock chase future development away and cause existing uses to decline? Will the 20 APR submissions now pending in the form they are proposed only intensify current problems? The transformation of Tysons Corner as a more “urban” environment is already officially established. But what exactly does “urban” mean in this specific context? What should be the final results – physical, economic and environmental – of any revised policies? How does Fairfax County assure itself that any desired outcomes will really come true over time?

Achieving such ambitious changes may seem daunting. Yet there are numerous national and regional examples of successful transformations of established suburban centers that can inspire and inform a strategy for building a new Tysons Corner. Our team has been part of many of these transformations. We know from experience what the ingredients are of a healthy, economically viable, vibrant, and livable urban center.

But we also know that each opportunity requires its own path to success. How to get from the present environment to a specific solution that will create the best outcomes for a future Tysons Corner is not yet apparent. This process must listen to and respect all of the various opinions about Tysons' future that will come from the various stakeholder groups who have an interest in its success. This process must also provide a way to reconcile and synthesize these various outlooks and desires and lead to a plan that wins widespread, enthusiastic support and the commitments of resources, both public and private, needed to make the desired future a reality.

This is an opportune time to pursue such vision:

- A strong and expanding regional economy is promoting growth throughout the Washington, DC region. Northern Virginia is one of the prime beneficiaries.
- Metrorail extension with four new stations will result in smoother regional access.
- Much developer interest in Tysons Corner now exists, as seen in the scale of the pending Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan amendments.
- There is growing interest in creating 18-hour urban mixed use environments as attractive places to invest in, to live in and to visit.¹

¹ PriceWaterhouseCoopers and ULI in their joint annual publication, *Emerging Trends in Real Estate*, have made this point pretty strongly.

- There are many encouraging examples of other transit-supported regional center transformations in the DC area – New Carrollton, Silver Spring and West Hyattsville in Maryland, and the inspiring success story of the regeneration of Arlington County based on its four Orange Line stations.
- Urban scale mixed-use centers associated with transit are a proven commodity in the DC region. Few major developers need to be sold on this transit-based model of urban development.

From “Edge City “to “Real City”

The County has a great opportunity to use the coming of mass transit as part of a long term strategy to intensify and reorganize the fundamental character of Tysons Corner. The Arlington County experience with using transit as a support for the urban development changes around its four Orange Line stations is a good example of how this interaction of transit and land use decisions can work. Nevertheless, the benefits of the coming of transit will not happen automatically. Transit can facilitate significant change, but an improved road circulation system must also be part of the solution to today’s problems. Retrofitting the current road network with its lack of connectivity and efficiency will remain one of the supreme challenges in the creation of a new Tysons Corner.

Any plan text amendments aimed at changing Tysons from an “edge city” to a “real city” must include written and visual depictions of the desired ultimate outcomes and a clear strategy for attaining them. These desired outcomes must:

- Embody the *Guiding Planning Principles* adopted by the Task Force;
- Be sensitive to market realities;
- Solicit widespread stakeholder support and commitments; and
- Ensure the area retains its economic vitality while creating opportunities for mixed-use infill and redevelopment.

This last point cannot be emphasized enough. Raising the real city and livability aspects of Tysons must be accomplished in ways that not only maintain but also enhance its economic development. A new strategy for Tysons must be executed in a manner that allows existing businesses to remain and not suffer the disruptions or erosion of their viability that have marked too many urban redevelopment efforts.

Similarly, the goals to protect and enhance existing neighborhoods should not be interpreted to mean that residential should continue to be separate enclaves on the edges of a new urban environment. Such areas ought to be better connected to the opportunities and amenities of the new Tysons which will also feature integrating new residential uses as part of the new "real city" urban fabric.

The goal of regenerating Tysons is not to create a massive redevelopment project that merely results in new and more intensified versions of its present edge city characteristics. The type of attractive, amenity rich mixed-use urban environment that the Planning Principles of the Tysons Land Use Task Force calls for requires a good deal of attention to detail. The sheer size of Tysons Corner makes it nearly impossible to effectively plan for the desired changes that the Planning Principles call for if this area is treated as one big project. Tysons needs to be a series of district plans that recognize

and celebrate the different types of places in Tysons that hang together under an overall strategy.

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) will be a central theme of the areas of Tysons served directly by the four new Metrorail stations. The identity of each TOD needs to be thought about and understood at a number of scales:

- *TOD within the region:* How will the TOD in Tysons fit within the reality of numerous other TOD efforts within the Washington DC region? How will the TOD compete within the regional real estate market for investment?
- *TOD as part of the corridor:* What is the TOD's relationship to the other stations in Fairfax County and elsewhere in Northern Virginia? How will they feed off of and reinforce each other?
- *TOD as part of the community:* How will the four Tysons TODs complement/reinforce/add value to the neighborhoods and employment centers that they serve?
- *TOD as a distinct Place:* What is the distinct identity of each of the four TODs? Is it a destination? A place to pass through? Primarily an employment area? What does the station contribute to the identity of the TOD? The Community?

This emphasis on TOD cannot come at the expense of the future well-being of the existing core of Tysons and other land uses within the overall 1,700 acre study area. It serves little purpose to pour in resources and energy to promote TOD within Tysons Corner, while paying insufficient attention to what needs to be done elsewhere in the study area.

Whatever the ultimate delineation and content of the various districts of the new Tysons, an important change that must occur is a process and pattern for its regeneration that avoids the scattered randomness of change that has marked much of Tysons development to date. Such randomness is symptomatic of a business-as-usual approach to resolving Tysons' current deficiencies.

A priority of our approach is to more carefully define the problems that this process will attempt to resolve based on deeper analysis of the roots of Tysons' current stresses. A better future cannot be attained if today's problems are not well understood, are misinterpreted or issues of less significance are attended to while root causes go untouched. The process must distinguish short term concerns from chronic long term problems and assess priorities and phasing by determining which issues deserve to be attacked first. In doing so, we will establish a clearer picture of what the Comprehensive Plan amendment process needs to accomplish.

Scenario Building as a Foundation for Consensus

Building consensus and support for the changes outlined in the Planning Principles requires a powerful vision of new urban possibilities – a “good story” of a better Tysons. Such a vision should be more than a list of pleasant ideas and goals that are not rooted in real possibilities and that ignore the difficulties of attaining them. Furthermore, a vision of a new Tysons needs to be clearly expressed as a physical depiction of the end results of implementing its primary goals.

The directing vision for a new Tysons must appeal to and achieve the energetic support of the many different audiences that constitute the full range of stakeholders with an interest in Tysons Corner's future. These various interests include:

- The Tysons Land Use Task Force as the primary client
- Landowners and developers as the primary implementers of these desired changes, whose primary interest is in making them successful economic enterprises
- The owners and operators of existing businesses within Tysons who may fear being sacrificed to the ambitions of others
- Adjacent communities and the neighborhoods most directly affected by any significant changes within Tysons
- Advocates and sponsors of Metrorail extension who need a plan for a Tysons that enhances the viability of their project – especially as measured in ridership and cost effectiveness
- Fairfax County – the ultimate sponsor and enabler of an implementable plan for the new Tysons

Typical “visioning” exercises never move much beyond documenting the often conflicting wishes and prejudices of the various stakeholders that can be enticed to participate in them. Merely collecting different goals with no way to evaluate or resolve them is the paltry result of too many of these efforts. A much different process for establishing a workable vision and an implementable plan for the new Tysons – scenario building and testing – is therefore a crucial stage in our approach.

Defining and evaluating scenarios is a process that differs from the typical visioning process in several key ways. Different scenarios are constructed to represent the different interests and desires of the wide range of stakeholders and other interests directly affected by this project. Rather than mash together conflicting goals and priorities, the development of different scenarios openly recognizes them and investigates what types of different outcomes would result from implementing the varied priorities.

In addition to representing different priorities, a group of scenarios also provides a range of plausible futures. They are plausible because they are rooted in analysis of real trends and feasible choices. Each scenario integrates future trends – the forces that seem to be driving change in multiple directions – with complementary priorities and desires. They distinguish between which of the driving forces are inevitable and unlikely to be affected by our actions from those that can be influenced by choices under our control. Some of the forces will work in opposite directions. Similarly, some of the values of different groups may reflect strongly opposing viewpoints. Each scenario therefore becomes a different “story” about the future.

The different scenarios will result in different Urban Center Models that embody different solutions for a more urban Tysons. These differences are highlighted by testing each scenario for how it would affect a variety of concerns. These include where and how to develop new homes and jobs, and whether there is enough space to accommodate what is expected.

In addition to documenting their land use impacts, the scenarios can also be evaluated for additional impacts, such as determining what will happen to travel behavior and traffic congestion or to environmental quality, how many new schools and parks a scenario

with a significant residential component might need, how many additional police and fire department staff, and how well the County will be able to provide (and pay for) such services. By examining these results, the Tysons planning process can work towards a consensus on a “preferred alternative” and which actions will best move Tysons in a generally desired direction. These actions get built into the final plan which is then a better guide on how to get us where we want to go.

Once a preferred alternative is agreed upon, the process must turn to examining what changes in the local planning arsenal will be needed to support its implementation. The current zoning and guidance is too timid to achieve the goals that have been articulated so far. The 1994 Tysons Corner Comprehensive Plan deals with issues at the macro and micro scales, but is missing a mid-level scale of intervention, such as interparcel and subarea concepts. Not the least of today’s deficiencies is the absence of effective images, drawings, and other aesthetic guidance for achieving developments of the highest quality.

Based on the above, the final result for Tysons Corner that gets incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan will be distinguished by three qualities:

Tangibility: Visualization of features of the new urban possibilities will have been conveyed through 2-D and 3-D mediums and there will be less chance that the preferred alternative will disappoint when it is eventually constructed.

Feasibility: All the possibilities developed into scenarios must pass market viability tests and be compatible with the needs of Fairfax as a whole. Such feasibility testing helps to determine the optimal development levels to strive for.

Certainty: The final plan amendments should include definitive guidelines and implementation measures to ensure the new Tysons gets built as envisioned.

This last quality especially deserves a good deal of attention.

Certainty is key for obtaining the needed developer interest and investments. The new Tysons can become the landmark center of Fairfax County and thus command a premium in the real estate market place. However, this will not happen as hoped for if the process to achieve it is too risk-laden and threatened by delay, obstruction or endless negotiation. Such a process will divert interest to other regional development opportunities.

Certainty is important for the surrounding communities and other stakeholders, such as existing business owners and operators most directly affected by changes within Tysons. If they do not know what will land on their doorstep, they will be very inclined to opposition and, if not successful in their opposition, to resentment and resistance.

Certainty is also important for Fairfax County. As the provider of key services and as the broker between public interests and private interests, the County will benefit if it is not constantly caught between conflicting interests. Certainty in planning and implementation for the new Tysons enables the County to more effectively plan for capital improvements and to count on increased revenues and other benefits. Certainty also enables the County to use building the New Tysons as an asset for attracting more widespread economic benefits for the County as a whole.

Overall Proposed Process

Introduction

Our approach to the technical work and relationship between tasks is shown in the flowchart below. The diagram highlights an overall flow of the effort needed for this project. Our presentation on November 13 will elaborate on this process.



The following is an overview of the tasks associated with this process.²

Task 1 – Utilize Background Information and Mobilize

Task 1.1 – Review and Utilize Background Information: Review the extensive amount of background material to become quickly familiar with all of the key issues affecting Tysons Corner and to facilitate the development of Urban Center Model(s) to be done under Task 2.

Task 1.2 – Visualization/Spatial Analysis Dataset Needs: This task will gather the datasets needed for the full range of visual tools that will be part of the project and set them up and test them to ensure their quality and completeness are sufficient to complete the project.

² The full details for our proposed work scope can be found in our original RFP submission and our responses to follow-up questions received from the selection committee.

Task 1.3 – Hold Initial Meetings and Orientation Tour of Tysons Corner Area

This series of meetings will ensure that the consultant team will hear at first hand the community's interests and gain a thorough understanding of the vision it has for Tysons Corner. These meetings include:

- a. Project Kick off Meeting with Agencies:** To introduce the consultant planning team to relevant agencies and key stakeholders.
- b. Coordination Meeting with The Perspectives Group:** An independent meeting with The Perspectives Group will review and agree upon the general approach for conducting community outreach in conjunction with the technical planning process. The Perspectives Group will have unique perceptions regarding this project stemming from its role as a convener and facilitator of a series of community dialogues regarding Tysons Corner.
- c. Task Force Kick Off Meeting:** To introduce ourselves to the Task Force, review the Work Plan and start the dialogue on key issues and concerns.
- d. Additional Stakeholder Interviews and Meetings:** To give the technical planning team a feel for the political environment that surrounds the study, to allow them to fully understand the input generated during the community dialogues, and to tailor a planning process that will lead to a consensus on the specific elements of the Comprehensive Plan Update.
- e. Tour of Tysons Corner area with staff:** To familiarize the team with details of the Tysons Corner area and get stakeholders' perspectives while in the field.

Task 2 – Develop Urban Center Models (Alternative Scenarios)

This task includes doing a base case test as a precursor to developing alternative scenarios. This will set the stage for testing out tools and models, for better understanding the implications of the currently pending APRs and developing the criteria that will be used to evaluate all the scenarios.

Task 2.1 – Set up Visualization Model: Create a digital 3-D model of the project site depicting existing structures in the specified region, as well as of proposed structures, grades, streets, sidewalks and landscaping features for one or more scenarios.

Task 2.2 – Market Analysis and Analysis of Driving Forces: The market analysis will provide a framework for evaluating the potential for various types and levels of new development, as well as potential changes in the use or redevelopment of existing structures. It will include identification of current market trends and opportunities, an assessment of the implications and opportunities that arise from future projections for population and employment growth, lifestyle trends, the County's economic development strategies, and changes in the sectors comprising the County's and the region's economic base. The results of this work will be compiled in a Market Assessment Report that identifies current and future development opportunities and provides a range of potentially supportable new development and specific recommendations on development product types. Beyond the market analysis, the team will analyze the broader array of forces driving changes in the region and in comparable, maturing edge cities.

Task 2.3 – Organize Values by Stakeholders: Part of developing the evaluation criteria is organizing the values articulated by the various stakeholder groups. This information will be organized into a matrix that specifically identifies these stakeholder

groups and their interests. The stakeholder group interests will be checked against the input collected during individual interviews and small group meetings with “critical” stakeholders. This matrix will become one input into basic concepts for land use, urban design, transportation, and policy recommendations for specific sites in the Tysons study area.

Task 2.4 – Develop Scenario Evaluation Criteria: This task will provide the team and the Task Force with the opportunity to convert their Guiding Principles into more specific performance measures. These criteria (sometimes called Indicators or Measures of Effectiveness - MOEs) will be used to evaluate the base case and subsequent scenarios. These MOEs (which will evolve during the study) will be established with the Task Force before new scenarios are worked up to avoid “stacking the deck” by different stakeholders in favor of particular scenarios.

Task 2.5 – Build Trends Base Case: To understand the implications of the current Plan on build out, we will document how the application of current policies, guidelines and regulations and a market driven future will likely play out to 2030. This base case will be a useful measure against which the alternative scenarios can be compared. A 3-D depiction of the base case will also be prepared.

Task 2.6 – Evaluate Base Case Outcomes: This task will apply the model evaluation of the base case to document valuable lessons about the trend line future of Tysons Corner that can be inputted back into the development of other scenarios and their evaluation. This evaluation may also allow us to infer the impacts of the APRs, if built out.

Task 2.7 – Area and Site Analysis: Area and site analysis is crucial to clearly understand and explain the many characteristics of the various subareas of Tysons Corner. The team will build on the urban design assessment work done to date to provide an analysis of existing conditions that covers:

1. Urban Form & Architecture
2. Districts, Neighborhoods, and Nodes
3. Significant Features
4. Special Places
5. Open Space & Circulation
6. Visual Analysis of Underutilized Uses
7. Opportunity Sites
8. Environmental Considerations

Task 2.8 – Create Alternative Scenarios (Urban Center Models): This task will develop and refine various scenarios that represent alternative futures. An explanation of the components of the scenario building process can be found in the summary of our approach in the first part of this memorandum. The results of the different scenarios will be presented spatially and will define the different subareas within Tysons, as well as programmatically to explore what uses, intensities and other features are contained within each subarea. Various implementation options will be built into the scenarios. We envision three to five essentially different scenarios, each of which will likely have several internal variations.

A report will document the approach/methodology for formulating the Urban Center Model(s), as well as provide descriptions of each Urban Center Model in text, tabular and 2-D and 3-D visualization formats. The report shall provide a level of detail that clearly communicates each model and shall also provide notable differences in the character of each model.

Task 3 – Analysis of Alternatives

Task 3.1 – Set up CommunityViz Indicators: CommunityViz formulas, models, and analysis components will be used for assessing the performance of each scenario relative to indicators of interest. The indicators to be studied may possibly include:

- Economic impacts, such as tax revenue and cost of services.
- Environmental impacts, such as water use, water quality and auto emissions.
- Transportation impacts, such as Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) estimates.
- Summary data, such as dwelling units, population, commercial floor space, and distribution of uses.

Task 3.2 - Analysis of Alternatives: This task will test a full range of implications of implementing the various future alternatives for Tysons Corner and compare these expected outcomes against each other.

Task 3.3 – Selection of Preferred Actions and Direction: Review of the results of the Task 3.2 evaluation of the alternatives will lead to the selection of a “preferred alternative” Urban Center Model (UCM) for further refinement and evaluation. Our team will work with the Task Force and County staff to select a preferred alternative based on a consensus about a UCM that can secure an optimal level of benefits for Tysons Corner. This preferred alternative may be one of the UCMs evaluated in Task 3.2 or a hybrid of the original alternatives that incorporates the most favorable aspects of two or more of the original alternatives. This preferred UCM will then become the basis for the Plan Text Amendment for the Tysons Corner Urban Center.

Task 4 - Community Outreach

Task 4.1 – Development of Community Outreach Plan: A community involvement process must be designed that unveils and manages differences of opinion, as well as identifies common ground as a means to generate consensus on the specifics of the Comprehensive Plan. PB PlaceMaking routinely approaches urban planning as a collaborative enterprise. Our planning processes integrate public and stakeholder involvement into the technical planning process to ensure a successful plan outcome that is accepted by the affected community. PB PlaceMaking will work closely with The Perspectives Group to define a process that builds on the base of community involvement that has taken place on the project to date and enhances the process with activities and tools to broaden public awareness and involvement in the plan. The overall Community Outreach Plan will be coordinated with the shifting of the emphasis of the study from defining broad principles to focusing on specific strategies for integrating TOD into Tysons Corner and meeting the principles outlined for the Plan by the Task Force.

A draft will be developed soon after the PlaceMaking Team meets with The Perspectives Group and conducts the series of interviews and kick-off meetings discussed in Task 1. The Community Outreach Plan will respond to the challenges and ideas for community outreach identified through these meetings. It will include a brief description of community outreach techniques and approaches, including concepts for reaching out to the public, making information available on the web, as well as through more traditional distribution methods, and a series of interactive sessions and events, such as those we describe in this proposal. After review by the Department of Planning and Zoning and the Task Force, this Plan will be refined and made available for public review and information as appropriate. In addition, each phase of community outreach will include a report that summarizes the resulting community input. In Task 5, in which we will develop plan text recommendations, the outreach results shall be utilized in the refinement of the preferred Urban Center Model.

This process will be implemented as a seamless part of the Technical Approach, as described throughout this proposal. All outreach efforts shall be tightly focused on a particular issue or aspect of this planning process in order to effectively receive community input.

Task 4.2 – Technological Support for the Public Outreach work: As part of a multi-stage collaborative decision making process, interactive CommunityViz 3D models and impact analysis from tasks above will be used to support team and Task Force work sessions, as well as in-person support for public meetings

Task 5 – Develop Plan Text Recommendations

Fairfax County has invested considerable time and effort into planning for Tysons Corner. The Major Objectives for Tysons Corner contained in the Plan, the key themes and values expressed by the public early this year, and the Tysons Land Use Task Force Draft Planning Principles indicate a relatively consistent public policy view of what should be done in Tysons Corner.

Task 5.1 – Draft Plan Text Amendments: This task will provide the Task Force with a draft set of recommended amendments to incorporate the priorities and implementation recommendations of the preferred alternative into the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan. The recommendations will:

- Clarify the link between broad planning policy and the more detailed planning concepts and implementation measures that support it;
- Modify the land unit and sub-unit structure to relate to the new land use and transportation elements of the plan and to be organized according to neighborhood areas;
- Identify the critical plan elements that are essential for the plan's success along with secondary elements that will enhance it; and
- Address implementation steps and phasing of public/private improvements.

The primary role of the Comprehensive Plan amendments is to:

- *Present the Tysons Corner Vision* in a clear and compelling way that will encourage and motivate government, the private sector, and area stakeholders to act.
- *Describe Comprehensive Plan Objectives* to demonstrate how they clearly support the Planning Principles.
- *Provide a Tangible and Feasible Implementation Program* to translate the broad plan policy into actions that can be successfully applied to development on the ground.
- *Present the Key Comprehensive Plan Elements*, which use text, graphics, and diagrams to give clear and specific guidance for future development in the following areas:
 - a) Land Use
 - b) Urban Design
 - c) Open Space and Community Amenities
 - d) Residential Use and Affordable Housing
 - e) Transportation
 - f) Infrastructure and Public Facilities
 - g) Environmental Quality
 - h) Finance and Implementation

Task 5.2 – Technology Products: This task will supply the results of the work and will document the knowledge needed to continue using the analysis. These results will include the:

- Final 3-D models
- Final analysis
- Final reports
- Contact information and instructions for future questions and support

Conclusion

The PB PlaceMaking Team believes that the process summarized above lays out a reasonable course for accomplishing the goals of the project. We have suggested innovative ways to address the key needs of the project, such as in our recommendation for a scenario development and evaluation process to fully explore, discuss and choose among various potential alternative futures.

We also recognize that, as the project moves forward, some of the assumptions of the approach or some of the priorities articulated by key stakeholders may acquire deeper, more complex meanings that require adjustments to the tasks and techniques outlined in our RFP. Consequently, throughout our collaboration with the Task Force and the County, the PB PlaceMaking Team will be receptive to suggestions for adjusting the process outlined above. Our team will also be positive in suggesting adjustments to the process as needed to better serve the overall purpose of the project – the adoption of a broadly supported, inspirational and effective plan for a new Tysons Corner.