

## **Tysons Land Use Task Force Overview of Final Recommendations**

**Second Review Draft, August 5, 2008**

Imagine a Tysons Corner built for people, not cars. The Tysons Land Use Task Force has developed a long-term community vision for the future of Tysons Corner and detailed recommendations for its successful implementation that transforms Tysons from a textbook case of suburban sprawl to a true 21<sup>st</sup> century city that offers solutions to today's key challenges of growth, energy, environment, housing, and security.

This vision uses the planned four Metrorail stations as a catalyst in the transformation of Tysons Corner from its current auto-dominated structure. The Tysons Corner of the future will be a place where people live, work, and play, dramatically increasing the balance of residents to workers and providing affordable housing for the workforce. Tysons will be organized into eight distinct pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods of mixed use development connected to transit and with arts and culture incorporated throughout. The sea of parking lots will be replaced with underground parking and more local streets that invite and protect pedestrians with wide sidewalks, street level retail, facilities for bicycles, and efficient local transit to rapidly move people throughout Tysons. The environment will take center stage with new buildings constructed to green standards, planting of trees, and many new open spaces and parks.

This is a long-term vision and a complete transformation from Tysons as we know it today. It will take decades to achieve and require strong political will. It will also require a rigorous plan and structure for implementation very different from what has been done in the past to ensure that all needed infrastructure is in place and that the desired vision takes shape.

To achieve the vision, the Task Force recommendations direct the County to find an appropriate balance between the level of development that is necessary to provide the overall urban environment being sought, and the timely development of the infrastructure and amenities necessary for a well functioning city.

### **The Challenge: Overcoming Decades of Auto-Oriented Development**

Over the past 40 years, Tysons Corner has grown from a simple country crossroads to the nation's 12<sup>th</sup> largest employment center and one of the country's largest retail centers. It is by far the largest tax base in Fairfax County and a major economic force in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A positive future for Tysons Corner is important to millions of people.

Today's Tysons Corner is built for the car. With 167,000 parking spaces covering 40 million square feet, it has more real estate devoted to cars than people, and more parking spaces than its 17,000 residents and 110,000 workers combined. Its large

## **Tysons Land Use Task Force Overview of Final Recommendations**

superblocks and campus-style development are accompanied by widely separated buildings, few useful pedestrian pathways, and highly congested roadways. With nearly half its land covered by impermeable surfaces, there are few usable green spaces and serious problems managing stormwater, with over 70% of it flowing untreated and taking harmful chemicals into degraded local streams.

Tysons' auto domination is out of step with the energy conservation and environmental consciousness that is demanded of today's society. Traffic and pedestrian safety are serious concerns. Routes 7 and 123 are highly congested thoroughfares practically uncrossable by foot, and few comfortable pedestrian connections exist. As a result, virtually all trips, even those within easy walking distance, are made in cars and most end up on the major roadways due to few and poorly connected minor streets.

Residents and workers complain about Tysons' lack of pedestrian and bicycle access, traffic bottlenecks, lack of parks and public amenities, limited purveyors of basic needs amongst the myriad shopping, and the impacts of poorly managed growth on neighboring residential communities. Add to this the arterial barriers represented by the Beltway and the Dulles Toll Road, as well significant traffic passing through Tysons to other destinations, and it is clear to the Task Force that Tysons simply cannot move forward to accommodate more growth under its existing design.

### **The Opportunity: Metrorail in Tysons Corner**

With the finalization of plans to place four stations within Tysons Corner as part of the Metrorail extension to Dulles Airport and Loudon County, Fairfax County was presented with an opportunity to dramatically change and improve Tysons Corner. While the 1994 Comprehensive Plan had identified three potential metrorail stations, it failed to fully recognize the urban nature of the future Tysons or to take full advantage of a transit-based approach to planning. A decade of subsequent and continual piecemeal growth under the 1994 plan (without the presence of Metrorail) makes it clear why little of Tysons' positive potential was realized. Throughout its process, the Task Force has heard from many who were disappointed with the implementation of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. It contained many good ideas, sound objectives and important policies, but few of them were implemented. It clearly was time for both a new plan and a new approach to implementation.

### **The Response: Engaging the Community and Planners Together**

In May 2005, The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors recognized that "Tysons Corner is the economic engine driving Fairfax County to and through the 21st Century, and the conditions established by this Comprehensive Plan update must continue to foster the economic vitality of our urban center." In response, the Board appointed a Task Force of stakeholders and citizens to update the 1994 plan to:

1. Promote more mixed use;
2. Better facilitate transit-oriented development (TOD);
3. Enhance pedestrian connections throughout Tysons;

## **Tysons Land Use Task Force Overview of Final Recommendations**

4. Increase the residential component of the density mix;
5. Improve the functionality of Tysons, and;
6. Provide for amenities and aesthetics in Tysons, such as public spaces, public art, parks, etc.

Ultimately expanding to include 36 members, the Task Force represented the wide range of community interests and perspectives essential to planning for the future of Tysons Corner. The Task Force called upon help in this process from throughout the County and throughout the country. The process included extensive support from county planning and transportation staff and engaged expert planning, transportation, and public participation professionals from around the country in an in-depth process to design a new Tysons around transit and ensure that the community's voice was heard and incorporated. The Task Force also worked closely with the 30 different agencies and organizations in the County responsible for implementing and managing the services and infrastructure that would be necessary in Tysons Corner. Meetings and presentations were also conducted with the many state and regional authorities responsible for transportation-related changes in Tysons including the Virginia Department of Transportation, Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project, and HOT lanes.

The Task Force has studied the issues and conditions in Tysons Corner extensively, and looked at examples of how transit oriented design communities have been designed and implemented in areas throughout the country. Experts were invited to Task Force meetings to provide detailed presentations on virtually every topic associated with effective planning including housing, growth, transportation, transit, stormwater management, the technology of people movers, transportation demand management, and transit-oriented design. To study these topics in more detail, the Task Force organized six committees who met regularly, interacted with County organizations and relevant experts and developed detailed information and recommendations for Task Force review. These committee topics included transportation, affordable and workforce housing, implementation, livability and walkability, landowner coalitions, and communication.

The Board of Supervisors also directed that the Task Force involve and incorporate the views and concerns of surrounding communities, citizen groups, smart growth activists, businesses, employees, environmentalists and other special interests, in addition to landowners and developers. To do this, the Task Force held over 150 public access meetings throughout the process, starting from the very beginning and long before any actual plans were drafted. An extensive web site, regular fact sheets, and in-depth media coverage kept the public informed. This broader public input helped to shape the direction of the recommendations from the very beginning. Some key events included:

- In early 2006, 20 meetings were held with hundreds of stakeholders to identify the key values that should be considered in the planning process. A detailed report was prepared and distributed.
- The results of the 20 meetings helped to shape the eight guiding planning principles that directed every aspect of planning. These guiding planning

## **Tysons Land Use Task Force Overview of Final Recommendations**

principles were presented for public comment in the summer of 2006 and finalized that fall.

- In spring 2007, the Task Force conducted a series of five hands-on workshops to get input on potential growth patterns in a future Tysons. Additional meetings were held at area employers to get the input of commuting employees who were less likely to attend workshops.
- Three additional workshops were conducted in summer 2007 to get additional public input on the desired characteristics for a future Tysons Corner. Again, additional meetings were conducted for area employees as well as web-based opportunity for input. The results of these workshops were used directly in the development of two prototypes to be used in evaluation of possible futures for Tysons.
- In the fall and winter of 2007, the Task Force sponsored a series of educational workshops, bringing in noted experts from around the region and the country on issues of transit-oriented design, density, and implementation.
- In early 2008, a final set of workshops was conducted to get public input to the design prototypes. Additional meetings were held for area employees and on-line input was also sought. This final set of input was used to help the Task Force develop its final recommendations.
- In addition to these scheduled workshops and seminars, dozens of additional meetings were conducted with major homeowners associations and other groups throughout the area to provide briefings, updates, and respond to questions.
- Over the course of three years, the Task Force has met at least twice per month. All Task Force meetings are open to the public. At times of special interest topics, meetings have been held in larger venues to invite public questions and comment. Supervisors and planning commissioners have participated in and attended the vast majority of Task Force events.

### **Achieving the Vision**

Early in the planning process, the Task Force realized that Tysons could not simply evolve from its current form. Real success could only come about through a radical transformation. While recognizing that such a transformation would take decades, the Task Force understood that no transformation was possible without a grand vision to identify what that long-term future would look like.

In addition, the Task Force recognized that the historical process to plan, review, and implement developments on a project-by-project basis independent of surrounding properties would not provide the opportunity to achieve the community's grand vision for Tysons Corner. A new planning process is needed to achieve common standards and design objectives that serve to integrate projects and implement plan elements that cross property boundaries. Thus it is not enough to present the vision, but also to create a new approach and tools to ensure its realization.

**Tyson's Land Use Task Force  
Overview of Final Recommendations**

The actual form and timing of development will be greatly affected by market conditions, availability of infrastructure, the necessary phasing of development and amenities, a combination of public and private resources, as well as political will. It will require a high degree of cooperation and coordination among Fairfax County, the Commonwealth of Virginia, residents, landowners, developers, employers, workers, and the surrounding communities.

Recognizing this, the Task Force is presenting to the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission a grand long-term vision for a completely transformed Tysons Corner that will not likely be fully realized for 25 years or more. We are confident that the recommended specifications for detailed plan amendments will guide the appropriate staff and experts in creating final comprehensive plan language to implement that vision. Most important, presented in the report are two key elements essential to future success.

**1) A Clear Framework for Articulating a Long-Term Vision**

The Task Force is presenting a vision for Tysons Corner with a number of detailed characteristics that are essential to success. The vision presented will not be realized for several decades and the exact phasing and details of future development cannot be fully characterized today. However, the Task Force has identified a wide range of key components that must be achieved if Tysons is going to serve as a functional urban center for Fairfax County, effectively managing its share of projected regional growth.

**2) An Approach to Comprehensive Planning and Implementation**

The Task Force also presents a comprehensive approach to planning and implementation designed to create the proper focus on compliance with the amended plan, coordinate individual projects, and achieve the desired community benefits.

**Recommendations: Creating a Framework and Approach for Building the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tysons Corner**

The Task Force final report contains a wide range of detailed recommendations. Creating the recommendations began with building a consensus on the critical elements necessary for establishing a transit oriented, pedestrian supporting, environmentally friendly, residentially defined urban center. The summary of key recommendations below represent those items that are essential to future development. While the exact details of each will evolve over time, none can be ignored.

**1. Create A People-Focused Urban Setting**

**Guiding Principles**

- Dramatically change the jobs/residents balance to encourage more people to both work and live in Tysons
- Create mixed-use, transit oriented neighborhoods which promote pedestrian, bike, and transit as key transportation choices

## Tysons Land Use Task Force Overview of Final Recommendations

- Discourage the use of cars and surface parking
- Retain compatible transitions at the edges to adjacent residential neighborhoods

### Policy Changes Required

- Create urban standards to guide all aspects of Tysons Corner development and implementation.
- Strengthen targets for affordable housing.

### Specific Recommendations

- 1a. Create defined neighborhoods.** The future of Tysons is envisioned as eight distinct neighborhoods, each with its own identity, arts and culture, parks, residences, and jobs. Venues and destinations will be created where people want to spend time in the evenings and on weekends, defining Tysons as a more complete place.
- 1b. Create a balance between jobs and residents.** Jobs could increase from 110,000 today to as much as 200,000 at the end of the 30-year planning horizon. This needs to be balanced by building housing for up to 100,000 residents compared to 17,000 today. This will dramatically improve the ratio of jobs to residents and keep more people living where they work.
- 1c. Identify and enforce design guidelines.** Specific and detailed aesthetic and planning guidelines have been proposed to help to create a sense of place and pleasing environment.
- 1d. Create accessible urban streetscapes.** The new urban design will create smaller blocks throughout Tysons with a focus on pedestrian and bicycle access. The grid of streets will include complete sidewalks that allow people to safely walk throughout Tysons enhanced by shade trees, pedestrian amenities, and underground utilities.
- 1e. Promote mixed use development with street-level retail.** People will be able to engage in routine errands, find restaurants, entertainment, and shopping all within walking distance of their homes, offices, and transit. Ground floor retail and convenience services are essential for residential buildings.
- 1f. Aggressively promote the development of workforce housing.** Much of the workforce at Tysons cannot afford to live in or close to it, making for long and expensive commutes. The task force recommends creating density incentives to push the County policy for affordable and workforce housing beyond the current 12% to 20% of the housing that is constructed.
- 1g. Design community services for an urban environment.** Police and safety services, libraries, health, and recreation facilities and services will be adapted to serve people quickly and effectively in an urban setting and must be implemented commensurate with growth.

## 2. Redesign the Transportation Network with a Strong Focus on Transit

### Guiding Principles

**Tysons Land Use Task Force  
Overview of Final Recommendations**

- Create a multi-modal transportation system that provides diverse and accessible transportation choices encourages people to get out of their cars and into walking, bike, and transit
- Move people through and within Tysons efficiently
- Create greater connectivity to regional roadways and transit

**Policy Changes Required**

- Change current parking requirements to reflect an urban environment and discourage automobile usage.

**Specific Recommendations**

- 2a. Create a fine grid of streets.** Transform the current superblocks into manageable streets to keep local traffic off major roadways and create more pathways for traffic flow and a safe, accessible pedestrian and bicycle environment.
- 2b. Use “complete streets” design principles.** Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.
- 2c. Create extensive bicycle lanes and facilities.** Residents and workers will be able to travel by bicycle on dedicated on-road facilities, making use of bike racks, bike lockers and other facilities at residential, retail, and commercial areas.
- 2d. Plan development to provide access to transit.** Future citizens will have the option of leaving their cars behind and accessing most areas of Tysons by rail or local connectors, and walking, biking, or using either a dedicated circulator system or local buses. Most development will occur within walking distance of Metro stations and along the circulator route and most areas of Tysons will be within walking distance of either a circulator stop or Metro station.
- 2e. Implement form-giving circulators.** A major supplement to the Metro system will be a series of local circulators that will move people to and from Metro along a dedicated right of way. The system will be frequent and fast. Residential, retail and commercial development will be encouraged within easy walking distance of the circulator routes, allowing people alternatives to driving.
- 2f. Create neighborhood transit and pedestrian connections.** To supplement the circulator system, local transit, such as bus or trolley, will serve other areas outside of walking distance to Metro or the circulator. People living in surrounding neighborhoods beyond Tysons will have the option of using the neighborhood transit system to reach the many attractions in the more densely developed areas of Tysons and also take advantage of increase non-motorized connections from Tysons to surrounding neighborhoods.
- 2g. Implement an aggressive parking strategy.** The extensive free parking throughout Tysons encourages automobile trips and single occupancy vehicles. Current County parking requirements are based on suburban development and need to allow for lower parking minimums. Overall, there will be less and more expensive parking to encourage the use of other modes of transportation.

### 3. Place a Strong Focus on the Environment

#### Guiding Principles

- Conduct all redevelopment to provide a new standard for environmental stewardship in an urban center
- Restore the existing environment to high environmental standards
- Provide citizens direct access to a wide variety of natural environments

#### Policy Changes Required

- Strengthen requirements for green buildings
- Develop urban standards for parks
- Strengthen requirements for managing stormwater runoff

#### Specific Recommendations

**3a. Develop and connect parks and green space throughout Tysons.** The new Tysons will incorporate 160 acres of new parkland in restored streams, green spaces, trails, and neighborhood parks, creating a green network throughout Tysons. It will also include a large signature park space to serve as a central gathering space and cultural venue.

**3b. Require green building standards.** All new buildings in Tysons will achieve LEED silver certification by 2013 and a bonus density will be provided for LEED certification above this minimum requirement. All buildings constructed after 2025 will be required to be carbon neutral.

**3c. Restore existing streams.** Scotts Run, Old Courthouse Branch, and other streams in Tysons will be restored to create spaces for recreation as appropriate, maintain environmental protections, and to preserve and enhance buffers to surrounding residential communities.

**3d. Use green streets design principles.** Streets will use vegetated facilities to manage stormwater runoff at its source and creates a sustainable stormwater strategy that meets regulatory compliance and resource protection goals.

**3e. Implement rigorous stormwater management.** Tysons will effectively manage surface water by requiring detention, infiltration, and low impact development techniques to be used during redevelopment. The current estimate of 49% impervious surface in the two major watersheds must be decreased to 10% of the total area of Tysons. Stream restoration and runoff reduction should combine to equal that of forested conditions.

**3f. Set aggressive goals for automobile independence.** The goal is to reduce vehicle miles traveled per resident of Tysons to 10 miles per day, or about one-third of the regional average.

### 4. Create an Approach and Authority for Implementation that Provides the Authority, Flexibility, Accountability, and Resources Necessary to Achieve the Vision

### **Guiding Principles**

- Create an approach that guides and coordinates individual projects, urban infrastructures and public amenities to achieve the overall vision
- Assure that public infrastructure is in place to support all redevelopment within Tysons and that growth and needed support are balanced over time
- Create new methods of public private partnerships and creative funding to address the collective needs of the vision
- Consistently interpret and implement design guidelines to create a successful urban place
- Ensure that developers are required to support the area wide needs for non-motorized transportation, greenspace and parks, environmental stewardship, civic infrastructure, and public and community arts

### **Policy Changes Required**

- Improve the means of evaluated zoning changes to bring speed, clarity and predictability to the process
- Develop new tools and mechanisms to finance infrastructure improvements and public amenities

### **Specific Recommendations**

**Create a new Implementing Authority.** The authority will be established by the Board of Supervisors to work in conjunction with, and supplemental to, the Fairfax County process to oversee, manage, and implement future development and assure that overarching goals and objectives of the new comprehensive plan are implemented.

#### **Powers and responsibilities of the implementing authority should include:**

- Work with Fairfax County to develop new Zoning Ordinance language and categories to address the unique requirements of this urban downtown
- Work with Fairfax County to develop new Urban Standards for determining appropriate infrastructure needs
- Develop and enforce a set of design guidelines to reflect the “vision” and to supplement the comprehensive plan and the zoning codes as necessary to further define the new urban “downtown”.
- Research and develop annual five-year plans to recommend priorities and appropriate phasing for necessary infrastructure and public amenities.
- Participate in the zoning process through design review to insure that applications are integrated with surrounding properties, and are in accordance with the design guidelines, the Comprehensive plan and zoning.
- Continuously monitor and review the plans, zoning codes and development progress and recommend any changes as necessary.
- Plan and implement initiatives, to complement and supplement those of the county, in order to enhance the quality of life in Tysons Corner, for example
  - Implementation of common elements like schools, parks, and libraries.
  - Transportation enhancements such as the construction and operation of circulators and other transit not provided by government.

**Tyson's Land Use Task Force  
Overview of Final Recommendations**

- Improving streetscapes through landscaping, sidewalks, lighting and street furniture.
- Enhancing public safety with security staff, organizing public watch and information programs, and security cameras.
- Enhancing the physical environment with programs to control litter and graffiti and maintaining common landscapes.
- Providing cultural and recreational activities.
- Raise and expend funds for all of the types of improvements and initiatives to be carried out by the authority. Funding mechanisms to be created and used by the authority could include:
  - Tax Increment Financing
  - County, State & Federal funding.
  - Improvement Districts.
  - Additional capital development authorities.
  - Public-private partnerships
  - Transfer of Development Rights
  - Pro-rata contributions by developers
  - Other forms of borrowing and grants.