



August 12, 2014

Seven Corners Revitalization Task Force
John Thillmann, Chairman

Dear Chairman Thillmann and Task Force Members,

The Lake Barcroft Association (LBA) would like to submit the following comments in response to the overall revitalization plan and proposed area plan revisions. Lake Barcroft is the largest of the communities in the Seven Corners area with more than 1,000 homes. The homes in Lake Barcroft were built at the same time that Seven Corners was originally developed and there has been a strong connection between the two for more than sixty years.

LBA recognizes and supports the critical need to re-plan and modernize the Seven Corners area in a manner that fosters greater diversity of uses, transportation choices and economic opportunity. The LBA Board and the community would like to acknowledge the Task Force's efforts to set the stage for this transformation.

LBA believes that any increase in the current approved density in the Seven Corners Planning Area should be driven by what is necessary to support the community's long term vision for Seven Corners. LBA supports development densities that are consistent with other non-Metro developments in Northern Virginia and no more than the proposed November 2013 recommendations of the Task Force, particularly for the Sears site which should have no more than 385,000 sq ft for residential, 134,000 sq ft for retail, and 200,000 sq ft for office/hotel.

This is particularly true of the Leesburg Pike Village Opportunity Area (aka the Sears site). LBA was deeply concerned over the "conceptual" level of intensity suggested by the developer of the Sears site (i.e., in excess of 800 units) as recently as last month. However, we understand that while other parties and staff recommendations have indicated a desire for those higher densities, we were pleased to learn that the Task Force has re-affirmed its support for the original November 2013 recommendations at its July meeting.

The LBA community supports a comprehensive density plan that takes a holistic view of the Opportunities Areas (A1-A3, B, and C) and the supporting infrastructure. As such, we encourage the maximum commercial and residential densities to be focused in the Town Center area (Area B, A-1, and A-3). And lower "Buffer" densities in the Areas C & A-2. This is in alignment with the Guiding Principles 3 & 4 (* source: PA 2013-I-B2 Seven Corners)

- This is specifically true of the Opportunity Area C (Sears site); where we feel that a “buffer” zone is needed between the town center and the residential neighborhoods for both traffic and ecological reasons. We firmly believe that Leesburg Pike alone cannot support high density at Opportunity Area C (Sears site), as well as support access to a Town Center in Area B (Seven Corners Center). Concentrating the density targets on Area B is well supported by the traffic & infrastructure plans that provide increased road and public transportation access to Opportunity Area B and Area A-3.

Transportation improvements are the key to adequately supporting the development anticipated for implementing the vision for Seven Corners successfully. The long term transportation improvements identified by staff as part of the Task Force process should be prioritized so that at a minimum the improvements listed in the bulleted items below are either funded or in place concurrent with or prior to the beginning of anticipated redevelopment. In this prioritization it is important to focus on those improvements which do not require action by either the City of Falls Church or Arlington County. These include:

- The new 4-way intersection at “seven corners” for Sleepy Hollow Rd/Wilson Blvd & Leesburg Pike
- The proposed over-crossing between Castle Rd and Roosevelt Rd. This should be designed to avoid the existing shopping center in order to expedite construction.
- The proposed over-crossing from Castle Place to Hillwood Ave.
- The newly designed access to Rte 50.

Traffic impacts on the neighborhood roads are a major concern for Lake Barcroft. Managing and mitigating cut-through traffic is a primary concern. To minimize the negative impacts from cut-through traffic any development at the Leesburg Pike Village Opportunity area or in the Transitional Areas along the south side of Leesburg Pike should restrict access solely to Leesburg Pike directly.

- Existing neighborhood streets, including Juniper Lane, Patrick Henry Dr., Buffalo Ridge Road, and Shadeland Dr. should be closed to vehicular access from any new development.
- Patrick Henry Dr. – south of Leesburg Pike -- will likely have more traffic therefore it should be monitored for negative impacts and traffic calming strategies should be prepared for application if needed.
- Plans should also be developed to monitor, mitigate or eliminate the potential for cut-through traffic on other roads in Lake Barcroft including but not limited to: Beachway Drive, Waterway Drive, Dearborn Drive, Crosswoods Drive, Whispering Lane; Lakeview Drive and Blair Road.

The impact of the planned development on the schools in the local pyramid is of paramount concern. All the schools in the pyramid are currently projected to be over capacity before any new students are generated by future development. The opening of Upper Baileys and the new elementary contemplated at Bailey's Crossroads will address some of the projected shortfall. LBA feels that the Task Force report should – at a minimum – include a projection of how many classrooms, at each level, will be required as the proposed development thresholds are built out. We are concerned that the current school report study that was conducted does not accurately reflect the middle and high school needs and does not adequately account for the “unplanned overcrowding” that is currently occurring in the pyramid.

Similarly, any future need anticipated for the delivery of other public sector services should be identified in the Task Force's final report so that these can be considered in future rezoning within the Seven Corners area. These could include new police substations; fire & rescue stations; public health facilities; parks and community centers.

LBA strongly encourages the Task Force's efforts to encourage high-quality design and sustainable development that limits adverse impacts on the environment and the community. LBA is especially concerned with potential negative impacts on the Tripps Run watershed and urban forests that protect its water quality. We urge maximum protection from development impacts especially in Opportunity Area C (Sears site) as stormwater and runoff from that area flows into the Tripps Run watershed. This includes:

- Mitigating impacts from impervious surfaces by every means possible, including stormwater BMP practices that maximize infiltration to protect the natural hydrology that support our urban forests.
- Planting of forested buffer strips, as many urban trees as possible, incorporating as many green spaces, roofs, and rain gardens as possible.
- Maximizing urban street trees and parking lot/rain garden islands, and adding numerous pocket and linear parks and green spaces will go a long way towards that and the ultimate success of this project and water quality of our streams is directly correlated to the amount of forested land in a watershed.

Finally, LBA believes there is a need for the Task Force to articulate specific guidance for the implementation of the area plan revisions. We note that other area plan revisions – including Tysons and Merrifield – have included such guiding language. While such language is advisory, it has proven to be a helpful tool in translating the visions of those respective task forces and those in the community into zoning language. Implementation language in the Task Force report has also proven useful in articulating important community objectives in redevelopment - such as the need for green space, public space, public art and environment protections – that are strongly supported by the community but not well defined in the proposed plan language.

Sincerely,



James C. Kilbourne
President
Lake Barcroft Association

CC: Marianne Gardner
Director, Planning Division
Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning
Marianne.Gardner@fairfaxcounty.gov

Elizabeth Hagg
Deputy Director, Fairfax County Community Revitalization
Elizabeth.Hagg@fairfaxcounty.gov

Penelope Gross
Mason District Supervisor
Mason@fairfaxcounty.gov