FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2006

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
Walter L. Alcorn, At-Large
Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District
Kenneth Lawrence, Providence District
Rodney Lusk, Lee District

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:
John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District
Frank A. de la Fe, Dranesville District
Suzanne F. Harsel, Braddock District

STAFF PRESENT:
Fred Selden, Director, Planning Division (PD), Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)
Deborah Albert, PD, DPZ
Leanna Hush, PD, DPZ
Sandy Stallman, Fairfax County Park Authority
Keith Goodman, Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Richard Stevens, Fairfax County Department of Transportation
Barbara J. Lippa, Executive Director, Planning Commission Office
Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk, Planning Commission Office

OTHER COMMISSIONER PRESENT:
James Hart, At-Large

OTHERS PRESENT:
SEE ATTACHMENT A

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Chairman Walter L. Alcorn convened the meeting at 7:08 p.m. in Conference Rooms 4/5 of the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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Chairman Alcorn announced that the Committee was meeting again tonight to continue gathering information upon which to base guiding principles for transit-oriented development (TOD) in Fairfax County. He noted there had been no changes to the strawman document dated September 27, 2006.

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Commissioner Lawrence announced that at tomorrow night's Planning Commission meeting, October 5, 2006, a public hearing on RZ 2004-PR-044 and FDP 2004-PR-044, Tysons Corner Holdings LLC and Tysons Corner Property Holdings LLC, would be held. For the benefit of those present tonight who were interested in this case, he said he would defer the decision on this matter at that time for approximately one month.

Responding to a question from Becky Cate, Commissioner Lawrence said this case would not be deferred until after the TOD committee had made its final recommendations to the Planning Commissioner and Board of Supervisors.

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Chairman Alcorn said at the meeting on September 27, 2006 there had been discussion on the applicability of the guidelines, what modes of transportation should be considered transit-oriented, and if the process and the implementation of the guidelines should be addressed separately. He said these issues needed further discussion and noted that other issues, including phasing, mix of uses, and adequate public facilities, had also been raised and needed to be discussed.

Chairman Alcorn said phasing would be discussed first.

Ms. Hush noted that there were two issues concerning phasing of development that needed to be addressed: (1) mix of uses and the possibility that development might need to be revised due to market conditions; and (2) phasing development to minimize the impact on the surrounding community.

Sally Ormsby said she thought only the unique characteristics of TOD should be included in the Policy Plan because it was not necessary to repeat guidelines that applied to all development.

Jeffery Fairfield, Esquire, pointed out that Area Plans addressed phasing of development.

Becky Cate said if phasing was not included in the guidelines, a reference should be made that it was addressed in the Policy Plan, identified by page and paragraph number. She said if it was not, people might think phasing did not apply to TOD.

Commissioner Lawrence pointed out that a synergistic mix of uses was unique to TOD and necessary for the success of a TDM program and to mitigate the impact of high density on surrounding infrastructure. He said if residential development was phased it could have a negative affect on these goals

Ms. Ormsby commented that if it was desirable to address phasing of some kind, it should be mixed-use phasing. Commissioner Lawrence replied that if residential development was phased, the opportunity for carpooling would be reduced in proportion to the amount of phasing and would negatively affect TDM strategies.

Ms. Cate said surrounding development, not just the transit-oriented development, should be considered when determining if retail development could be supported.

Dr. Jody Bennett commented that she had researched other transit-oriented developments across the country and found that the type of retail was very important because there were only so many times a person would to stores such as The Gap and Talbots. She said developers did not want to commit to the type of retail because they did not know what the market would support, but at the same time, the community was asked, in good faith, to assume that vehicle trips would be reduced because retail was within a walkable distance.

Ms. Ormsby said transportation facilities should be required to be in place before transit-oriented development was allowed to proceed.

Ms. Cate said the impact on other public facilities, such as schools and parks, had to be considered also. She said the amount of money developers were asked to proffer for schools might not be adequate or appropriately directed. Ms. Cate said park facilities were ignored and if they were not within a walkable distance, people would drive to them, circumventing the goal of TOD.

Commissioner Lawrence responded to questions from Dr. Bennett about not allowing a second phase of a project to be built if TDM goals had not been met. Ms. Cate pointed out that density could not taken back if goals were not met and a developer should be required to build more roads or devise with some other solution to address transportation needs and not be let off the hook after three years.

Chairman Alcorn said the need for phased TDM commitments, wherever possible, should be added to Number 16, Phasing of Development, and methodology questions would have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Commissioner Lawrence commented that he thought the consequence of not meeting TDM goals needed to be addressed. Dr. Bennett said a monetary penalty accomplished nothing. Commissioner Lawrence agreed that the goal was a successful TDM program, not money and asked how that could be done.

Dr. Bennett suggested that the County consider using a different methodology for calculating TDM goals, pointing out that Ontario calculated it differently than Urban Trans.

Ms. Cate expressed skepticism about the way TDM goals were calculated, citing the Vienna Metro West development as an example.

Mr. Selden cautioned against focusing on the specifics of a particular project. He noted that areas around each rail station in Fairfax County had a zoning designation which allowed a certain type and amount of development. He pointed out that if nothing had been done around the Dunn Loring Metro Station, office use could have been developed by-right, creating a greater

impact on traffic. He said higher intensity development was necessary to get a better balance of uses around stations, each of which had existing zoning and its own constraints. He said the Metro West development was an anomaly and was not going to be the norm in the County, including the new stations at Tysons. He explained that if nothing was done to change the zoning around transit stations, there would be no residential or service retail uses. He said he agreed with Ms. Cate's comment that the surrounding areas should also be considered when planning transit-oriented development. He said in some cases surrounding areas were walled off from the Metro Station and if service retail uses were established it would not be easy to get to them on foot.

Responding to a question from Dr. Bennett, Mr. Selden said when reviewing applications staff looked at opportunities to foster connectivity but pointed out that there were limitations about what could be done on someone else's property.

Chairman Alcorn asked for comment on Number 15, Infrastructure and Public Facilities.

Dr. Bennett expressed concern about approving higher density because a developer was going to provide expensive amenities that would only benefit that particular development. Ms. Cate agreed and used inward open space as an example of an amenity that was not usable to surrounding residents. Mr. Selden said it was not completely accurate to say that density was used to offset development. He said in some cases, higher density development was approved to achieve certain things, such as parcel consolidation and road improvements. He remarked that the Comprehensive Plan consistently tried to achieve certain objectives that, without incentives for flexibility of use and higher intensity, would not likely occur.

Dr. Bennett said she hoped that "transit area" would be defined, noting that Commissioner Lawrence had suggested that it only pertain to rail. Commissioner Lawrence said he suggested starting with heavy rail but not necessarily ending there and that guidelines for light rail should also be developed.

Jeffery Fairfield, Esquire, said he represented a landowner who was planning transit-oriented development within the quarter-mile and half mile-radius, but felt discouraged from continuing that pursuit because the second draft of the strawman indicated that the radius from a platform had gone from a half-mile to a quarter-mile. He said TDM commitments had been made with phased density and a substantial portion of the site would be dedicated for public and park use. Mr. Fairfield pointed out that in 2001 density bonuses had been added to the Plan which included both half and quarter-mile radius bonuses. He said the quarter-mile seemed to be a policy shift.

Inda Stagg said she was surprised also to see this revision to the strawman language. She said the Comprehensive Plan, specific to Metro stations, indicated that a quarter-mile circle and a half-mile circle were generally considered to be in the realm of influence of a Metro Station. She said she would like to see something in the language about the half-mile circle.

Chairman Alcorn noted that no decision had been made yet on the distance.

Ms. Ormsby commented that there were several places in the Comprehensive Plan which indicated that higher intensity should be within a quarter-mile of the platform and taper down to the pre-existing zoning at a one half-mile.

Mr. Fairfield said an important component in determining pedestrian connectivity to a transit station was not only the distance but the ease and appeal of the walk which had not been addressed. He said he would like to see flexibility in the language to acknowledge that TOD could occur within a half-mile radius with certain conditions.

Ms. Cate commented that research indicated that walking dropped off past a quarter-mile.

David Gill, Esquire, said Area Plans defined the walkable distance and he thought this process should focus on what made TOD unique.

Chairman Alcorn agreed and said the purpose of this effort was, in part, to provide guidance for the review of specific rezoning applications. He said because Area Plans could be changed in accordance with Policy Plan guidance, and it was important to get the Policy Plan language right.

Chairman Alcorn asked for suggestions for the agenda for the next meeting.

Roger Diedrich said he would like to see "mix of uses" more fully defined and suggested establishing maximums and minimums for types of uses that would create the desired synergy. Chairman Alcorn said even if a number was not included in this document, perhaps it should indicate that there was an expectation of minimum and maximum of types of uses in Area Plans. Ms. Ormsby asked if anyone knew of research about this in other areas of the country. Ms. Cate said Arlington County had successful standards. Chairman Alcorn asked staff to address this issue at the next meeting.

Chairman Alcorn said that discussion of a quarter and half-mile radius would be continued at the next meeting to be held on October 12, 2006 at 7:00 p.m., in conference rooms 2/3. He noted that a new strawman would be available on Wednesday, October 11, 2006 and would be e-mailed to the TOD distribution list.

Chairman Alcorn said the committee would also meet on November 1, 2006, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., in the Board Conference Room. He said hopefully the strawman could be finalized at that time. He noted that once this process was completed, staff would develop formal language for authorization by the Board of Supervisors, after which a public hearing would be held by the Planning Commission. He said a workshop would most likely be held after the advertisement.

In response to a question from Ms. Ormsby, Mr. Selden said that the new language would go into the Land Use Section of the Policy Plan. She then asked if the current Policy Plan could be revised to delete duplication. Chairman Alcorn replied that the duplication would probably remain when this process was completed. Mr. Selden pointed out that the purpose of this process was not to revise the Land Use Section of the Policy Plan, it was only to address TOD.

Ms. Ormsby said she was concerned that citizens interested in this process would not see the language that would be sent to the Board of Supervisors for authorization. Chairman Alcorn said that could be discussed at the next meeting.

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.
Walter L. Alcorn, Chairman

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For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio recording which can be found in the Fairfax County, Virginia Planning Commission Office.

Minutes by: Linda B. Rodeffer

Approved on: November 1, 2006

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Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk
Fairfax County Planning Commission

Attachment A – Attendance List

TOD ATTENDANCE
October 4, 2006

Albert, Deborah	DPZ
Alcorn, Walter	PC
Baker, Searcy	Diamond Properties
Bennett, Jody	Hunter Mill Defense League History
Broyhill, Linda	Reed Smith LLP
Cate, Becky	PDC
Cetron, Ari	Connection Newspapers
Diedrich, Roger	Sierra Club
Fairfield, Jeff	Launders Trust
Gill, David	McGuire Woods
Goodman, Keith	FCDOT
Hart, James	PC
Hopkins, Nancy	PC
Hush, Leanna	DPZ PD
Lawrence, Kenneth	PC
Lippa, Barbara	PC staff
Lusk, Rodney	PC
McKeeby, Elizabeth	Walsh Colucci
Ormsby, Sally	FFC Citizens Cmte Land Use/Trans.
Riveros, Albert	Sleepy Hollow
Rodeffer, Linda	PC Staff
Selden, Fred	DPZ PD
Stagg, Inda	Walsh Colucci
Stallman, Sandy	FCPA
Stevens, Richard	FCDOT
Zahm, Hillary	Cooley Godward

ATTACHMENT A