Comments on Draft 3 of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment for Transforming Tysons, for the Planning Commission Tysons Committee Meeting of January 27, 2010

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I. Basic Principles

A. Guiding Planning Principles, page 7.

Change Principle 4 to "Reduce the time, cost, and inconvenience of accessing, moving within Tysons, and moving through Tysons, by promoting a functional and accessible system of pedestrian walkways, trails, shuttles, bike routes, a grid of streets, transit connections, and standard principles of trip reduction."

Add a new Principle 9: "Provide adequate facilities within Tysons so that the new population envisioned for Tysons will not burden the facilities and quality of life of surrounding communities, and refrain from committing Fairfax County taxpayers to paying for development in Tysons."

B. Circulator Alignments, page 15.

After the first sentence, add: "Frequent, affordable bus service to the new Metro stations must be available when any Tysons development more than ¼ mile from the Metro stations is in place and the Metro stations are operating."

C. Parks and Open Space, page 16.

In the third bullet on connectivity, include "athletic fields" in the list of venues along with pocket parks and public plazas.

D. Civic Infrastructure, page 16.

In the second sentence beginning "Essential civic infrastructure may include…," replace "may" with "must".

E. Implementation Entity, page 17.

The second sentence should be clarified to explicitly include some stakeholders who should be regarded as equally important to landowners. Replace "…charged with working in conjunction with Fairfax County agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders." with "…charged with working in conjunction with Fairfax County agencies, landowners, Tysons residents, surrounding communities, and other stakeholders." The concerns of Tysons residents and surrounding communities should not be treated with secondary importance.

F. Funding Strategies, page 17.

Add a concluding paragraph: "Use of any potential funding mechanism should not commit Fairfax County taxpayers to paying for development in Tysons."

G. Regulatory Framework, pages 17, 18.

Add the following paragraph either at the beginning or end of this section: "In the regulation of Tysons, Fairfax County government shall not yield its input to, or control of, the governance of Tysons, nor the input of the public to the governance of Tysons, including but not limited to land use and funding decisions."

H. Phasing, page 19.

Modify the third sentence to: "Block-by-block redevelopment must be balanced by having requisite infrastructure in place when needed, such as the Circulator System, the new grid of streets, parks and recreational facilities, schools and fire stations, and major road and highway improvements to service the new population."

II. Density

A. Recommended Intensities, pages 23,27.

The table comparing existing to future development, in the Staff Comment on page 23, has a Staff Recommendation which includes some bonuses, but not all. Table 1 on page 27 has recommended intensities without bonuses. Neither table accounts for any additional density that may be granted for provision of public facilities. These two tables provide useful information, except neither table provides a clear picture of what final densities may be approved, nor are they consistent with each other. The public should be able to see, and have the time to digest and comment on, a pair of tables like these two, but with total recommended densities, including all expected bonuses, public facility density grants, or other grants. This procedure should occur before this Tysons Committee votes on the Plan text.

B. Affordable and Workforce Housing, page 31.

The next-to-last bullet on this page refers to workforce housing being aggregated off-site and relegated to others to build. The Tysons residents with the least money are most in need of the Metro and good bus service, and should not be aggregated into ghettos. A new paragraph should be added right after this bullet: "The distribution of affordable and workforce housing among the density tiers should be the same as, or more centrally located than, the distribution of market-rate housing, and these two categories of housing should be intermixed within the tiers, not separated."

C. Affordable and Workforce Housing, page 32.

The first bullet on this page allows affordable or workforce housing to be delayed indefinitely, and should be shortened to say: "The workforce units should be provided concurrently with market rate units."

The second bullet allows cash instead of dwelling units, although "not desired". This should be stiffened by adding: "If cash contributions are accepted in lieu of a dwelling unit, the cash payments will be the same as the payments for the market-rate units in the same building or neighborhood."

III. Phasing, Traffic, and Cost Burden

Transportation Infrastructure, Table 8, pages 74, 75.

Along with this table, is needed another table showing how all of these transportation improvements will be paid for. Approval of any density increase in Tysons should be contingent on having a specific plan for paying for all of the needed supporting infrastructure, including these transportation improvements. Also, I did not see in the table, the sufficient widening of the Dulles Toll Road that will be needed.