

COMMENTS OF JAMES H. EDMONDSON, 7804 ARIEL WAY, McLEAN, VA 22101
TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S TYSONS CORNER SUBCOMMITTEE, WALTER
ALCORN, CHAIRMAN.

MARCH 11, 2010

1. I am a 29-year resident of McLean Hamlet. I grew up in the Tysons Corner area, and I continue to marvel at the changes. I am also a real estate developer specializing in affordable housing with a great appreciation of the task the Task Force and your committee have undertaken. I hope we are all around to see much of the vision in the nascent plan implemented. My comments are aimed at bolstering the plan. I view it as an essential ingredient for northern Virginia's long-term economic and social health.
2. As a member of the Virginia Board of Health, I am a bit disappointed in the plan's failure to encourage more residences with a little greater densities short distances away from the Metro stops. People are willing to walk further from their homes to transit than they are to walk from transit to their jobs. This would seem to support allowing somewhat higher housing densities up to a half mile or more from the stops. We will never address childhood and adult obesity, the causes of as many societal health problems as smoking, until we make walking more common in TOD than cars. Please take this into account by differentiating between residential and commercial densities slightly beyond 1/4 of a mile from the stops, perhaps up to a half mile. Developers should have that option in times when residential development makes more economic sense than commercial development.
3. I believe that the aggregation of affordable units will be hugely significant in the delivery of affordable and workforce housing in Tysons. Just to make sure, I use that term to mean permitting market-rate residential developers to off-load their affordable and workforce units from high-rise developments to other landowner/developers, who will put them in developments that are primarily or solely for low- and moderate-income households with lower densities on less expensive land within Tysons Corner. As you plan for affordable housing units, particularly in aggregated projects, please reduce the number of required parking spaces. Moderate-income households will be more inclined to use transit, so fewer cars should be the norm. There are attractive designs now for four-story apartments with surface parking that get up to 48 units per acre.
4. Please completely resist the temptation to think of "aggregated developments" as something likely to be unsightly or depressing to neighborhood property values. That is certainly not the case. I have shown many of you at one time or another examples of such properties with marvelous curb appeal.
5. Please make it explicit that, when workforce units are aggregated, that project will not require an additional percentage of ADUs beyond what is being transferred from a market-rate development to the affordable development.
6. There remains no reason to link size of affordable or workforce units to the size of market-rate units in a development that has both. A difference of 100 sq ft in a

1-BR workforce unit will not demean those units; nor will 200 sq ft in a larger unit. Similarly, when a developer transfers his responsibility for affordable units to an accepting developer, the size requirements as currently drafted should not apply. A developer of an all-affordable project will have to build to meet the reasonable demands of his renters and buyers, so the “market” for that type of product should and will set the parameters.

7. The language in the draft regarding a preference for on-site affordable units seems to imply a possible penalty for aggregating. I hope that is not the case. Please make that explicit.
8. Finally, the implementation entity, whatever its final form, should be encouraged to facilitate aggregation and perhaps to be a prime sponsor of aggregated units. It will have many financing advantages for doing so.

Again, thank you for your service. Please consider each of these points in your final review of the staff's draft plan