Fairfax County Planning Commission Tysons Committee Comment Session
March 11, 2010

Response to Tysons Corner Center Urban Center Draft Plan Amendment,
Dated January 15, 2010

By Mark Strauss, FXFOWLE

Slide 1: Cover Slide

Slide 2: Introduction

Good evening. My name is Mark Strauss, and I am the Senior Partner in Charge of Planning at FXFOWLE. We have been retained by SAIC as architects and planners for its National Headquarters site in Tysons Corner. At FXFOWLE, we have been involved in the planning and design of numerous transit oriented projects, and we are proud of our international reputation for designing excellent communities and buildings. I have some literature to leave behind that will introduce you to our work.

I want to commend the County on its tremendous effort to create a new more vibrant, mixed-use Tysons Corner. On behalf of SAIC, we support the intent of the amendment to create a sustainable and active mixed-use environment that capitalizes on the area's future relationship to the silver-line Metro extension.

SAIC, is a leader in science, technology and engineering and is highly experienced in driving and meeting the challenges of change. The transformation of Tysons Corner into a walk-able, mixed-use, transit-oriented urban center for Fairfax County is a matter of county-wide and regional significance; and is also critical to the growth of SAIC in Fairfax County. Moving its headquarters to Tysons Corner in 2009 and planning the redevelopment of its 18+ acres at the new Tysons Central 7 Metro Station between Route 7 and Greensboro Drive are just the most recent examples of SAIC's commitment to a vibrant future for Tysons. SAIC has participated in the advancements of the new Tysons' vision and the formation of a special tax district to support the extension of Metrorail and TYTRAN. SAIC has followed with interest the technical discussions of this Committee.

Based on our experience with transit oriented development across the country, we recommend that the plan language be drafted to insure flexibility at the time of implementation to allow applicants, staff, the Planning Commission and the Board to respond to market conditions and physical realities over time and to insure that the Goals and Objectives of the plan are implemented. We have identified several areas where we believe more flexibility is warranted, including:

- Park Requirements
- Street Hierarchy and Widths

- Intensity
- Building Heights
- Consolidation

Slide 3: Parks and Open Space

We agree that parkland is a vital component of a community. Additionally, we believe that how parkland is provided and its relationship to adjacent properties is one of the keys to achieving the urban design goals of the Plan. How much parkland is provided adjacent to the Metro is an important consideration in activating street life and encouraging pedestrian linkages between neighborhoods. Too much open space can promote disconnected buildings, which is the opposite of the Plan's intended objective.

The parkland formula in the January 15th Draft would require approximately 22% of our site to be publicly accessible parkland. We believe that this amount of open park space in a site adjacent to the Metro will not have the desired effect, especially in an area where there is a significant amount of existing development that will remain.

We propose that for projects within one-half mile of the Metro a contribution to a Tysons park fund be permitted in lieu of providing a portion of the required park space. This will ensure that the County can develop the types of parks appropriate for the community. Additionally, we propose that private recreational green spaces created on the roofs of buildings and parking podiums that support the recreational needs of residents and users should also be credited to the park space requirement.

Slide 4: Street Width

To support a pedestrian scale and a walkable environment we suggest re-examining some of the street-width requirements. We envision a downtown street scaled to the character of King Street in Alexandria, rather than a wide thoroughfare, such as K Street in Washington, as essential to creating an active and vibrant urban environment without creating barriers to accessing the Metro or building expansive impervious surfaces. Flexibility in designating street sections will also increase the likelihood of them being built in a manner that will integrate them with existing development.

Slide 5: Intensity

We support the Planning Staff's recommendation that the highest intensity of uses be created near Metro Stations. However, we believe that the step down from 4.75 FAR in Tier 1 to 2.75 FAR in Tier 2 is too great to encourage redevelopment that supports transit use and the creation of an urban hub at the Metro station. In Bethesda Maryland, where we are currently involved with multiple redevelopment projects, the difference in FAR between the zone closest to the Metro and the next adjacent zone is only 1.0 FAR. An increase in density would be concentrated in an

area within a ¼ mile of the Metro Station and within the nationally recognized distance that most people are willing to walk to transit. With this in mind, we propose increasing the intensity in Tier 2 FAR from 2.75 to 3.75 FAR.

Slide 6: Building Height

We support the Planning Staff's recommendations that the tallest buildings be located near the Metro Stations. However, in the case of Tysons Corner, it is a reality that there are a significant number of existing buildings immediately adjacent to the Tysons Central 7 Metro station that will remain. Many of these buildings represent a sizeable investment and will likely remain for decades to come. From a sustainability perspective, one of the greenest strategies is to preserve existing buildings. Preserving these buildings will limit the opportunity to create new development with significant height and presence in Tier 1.

For this reason, we believe that there should be flexibility to move heights within a district to allow preservation of existing buildings and still permit the construction of a signature towers in close proximity to the Metro station.

Consolidation

Lastly, we believe that additional consolidation should not be a requirement for property owners who control 15 acres or more. The goal of consolidating property to create a grid of streets and improve design is laudable, but larger land owners can do so already.

Slide 7: Conclusions

Thank you again for all of your work to create a plan that is intended to transform Tysons Corner into a vibrant, pedestrian oriented community. I appreciated this opportunity to discuss our recommendations for revisions to the Planning Staff's Plan. To recap, after studying the SAIC site and applying the recommendations in the January 15th Draft Plan we recommend:

- Amending Park Space Requirements
- Allowing Greater Flexibility in Street Hierarchy and Widths
- Increasing the Intensity in Tier 2
- Increasing the Height Limit in portions of Tier 2
- Reducing the Consolidation Requirement to about 15 acres

In conclusion, we want to encourage drafting language that will allow Tysons to evolve into the vibrant community all involved in this considerable effort imagine. We look forward to working with Fairfax County Staff and the Planning Commission.