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Statement to Planning Committee on Tysons

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Preserving Olney Park

My name is Darren Ewing. I am here tonight to talk about preserving and enhancing Olney Park (**M2 McLean COMMUNITY PLANNING SECTOR**),of the FAIRFAX COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, 2003 Edition AREA II **McLean Planning District**, Amended through 7-11-2005 which abuts the southeast part of Tysons along Magarity Road.

My wife and I have lived in Olney Park for many years settling in the Olney Park subdivision on the Eastern most edge while in graduate school, where we are now happily raising our son. We have a beautiful community Park at the end of our street. I serve as President of the Olney Park Civic Association currently as well as serve as the Second Vice President of the McLean Citizens Association. Also, I have lived in Fairfax County my whole life. Having grown-up in Great Falls and I am a proud product of the county public schools.

Olney Park is a stable residential area which is comprised of long-established, single-family residential neighborhoods on flat lots with a developed grid of streets. Olney Park has more than 75 homes and 225 residents and is an excellent place to raise a family. Our neighborhood has a wide variation of single family housing units and those homes are at generally low price points,. And this provides for a large part of the limited amount of the affordable housing for the Tyson's area.

Across Magarity Road from Olney Park is the southeast edge of Tysons, which the Vision Report of the Tyson's Task Force calls the "East Tyson's" District. East Tysons abuts Olney Park. The Vision Report describes this border area the "East Side" as a "transition" area (a NON -TOD district) and calls for types of development that would mitigate the impacts on Olney Park, it specifically states that "The East Side district is envisioned first and foremost as a residential district… The district could have a distinct residential quality, where neighbors could socialize in one of the many pocket parks located throughout the district". As an "edge district," it would have lower densities than other parts of Tysons, enabling it to serve as a transition area between the higher density stations in the core of Tysons and the adjacent neighborhoods outside Tysons.

I recommend the plan text indicate that the north side (Tysons East)of Magarity Road as the location of open space and landscaped buffer areas which mitigate the impact of this planned

new development and improve the appearance of the community. Landscaped buffers are strips of land that are intensively planted with trees and shrubs (often including berms) and are generally recommended on parcels of limited land area where such parcels abut existing low and medium density residential development

The Vision Statement is consistent with the Policy Plan of County. In Appendix 9 of the Policy Plan, the County set forth several means of effecting a smooth transition from Tyson's to the adjacent established neighborhoods. The Policy Plan states: "Developments should fit into the fabric of their adjacent neighborhoods . . . ." though some compatible difference between the old established adjacent neighborhoods and the new development are contemplated. The Policy Plan states that the County should consider the bulk and mass of the new housing, lot sizes, setbacks, and architectural elevations and materials. We support those guidelines.

However, the Policy Plan and the Vision Report provide **guidance only in general terms and not specifics**. We urge that the Planning Commission devise Plan Text for the East Tyson's District that lays out the specific developments, features and other means that will assure the transition.

We urge the Plan Text for the East Tyson's District provide for townhouses where open space and landscaped buffers are not an option; along the north side of Magarity Road, limited to 35 feet in height, this is the current Comp Plan language on height limitations along Magarity road should be retained at the least and strengthened is preferred in the plan text for Tyson's East. (Such a proposal of townhouses envisioned including these heights and intensity along Magarity Road at Anderson road are now before the County for site-plan review.) These townhouses and open space and landscaped buffers will make a pleasing viewscape for Olney Park and others and would blend well with the single family cottages of Olney Park, not dominating these residences of Olney Park.

We also urge that the townhouses along Magarity Road should be extended north for four or five city blocks and several city blocks wide, with front and rear entrances and garages accessed from a rear alley, making an attractive residential neighborhood within Tyson's, similar to Old Town Alexandria or Georgetown. This townhouse neighborhood would provide single family residences for those couples with children who prefer to live in an urban area but also want more room to raise their children.

Residents of this townhouse neighborhood would be close enough to walk to work in the offices and other commercial areas of Tyson's south of Route 123, which exist now and will be expanded with the build-out of Tyson's. Also, this development should include space for a variety of retail shops that are necessary to support the townhouse neighborhood and Olney Park. Close-by retail will encourage people to walk to shop and reduce the number of auto trips.

Further, we urge that Magarity Road remain a 2-lane road striking the Comp plan language calling for it to be expanded to 4 lanes. Magarity Road handles 50% of all Pimmit daily trips. Current Plan language requiring D Level of Service at Magarity intersections should be retained. The current road has steep hills and sharp curves that cannot be fixed and the sight distances

are too poor to support the current level of service, also children currently have to cross the street to access the Elementary School on the other side of Magarity Road.
Widening Magarity to four lanes would make it a thoroughfare that would attract heavy commuter traffic, seeking a way to work around the major arteries when they are congested during peak rush hours and Magarity dumps into Great Falls Street a 2 lane road, which would create more congestion at that intersection. Busy auto traffic, jamming four lanes on Magarity, is incompatible with the Policy Plan objective that this urban edge of Tysons will make a smooth transition to the established adjacent neighborhood of Olney Park. Four lanes of busy traffic will form a barrier that cut offs the Olney Park residents from the urban Tysons and prevents our walking to the retail shops or the urban amenities that the Tysons Vision report has promised.

Also, Magarity will become a traffic-clogged busy by-pass if West*Group builds the loop through East Tysons as planned with one of the two east-west legs being Magarity Road. We urge that, instead, this loop be contained entirely within the East Tysons urban area. This loop should have two east-west streets within the East Tysons urban area.

The Vision seeks to encourage the creation of many new jobs in Tysons. Many of the new workers who fill those new jobs will live in Olney Park. We urge that Tysons landowners recognize that the affordable housing of Olney Park is a fundamental building block for the growth of Tysons; and that the quality of life, already established in our neighborhood, must be preserved.

It is important that adequate screening, buffering and other design measures be incorporated into new development to mitigate any adverse impacts, and to maintain an "edge" to define the limits of the Tysons Corner Urban Center.

The residents of Olney Park are wary of the proposals of the Tysons Vision Report because we know that the proposed huge increases in density will produce traffic congestion on Magarity Road and other streets of Olney Park. But some of us also believe that the adjacent urban areas might even enhance the quality of life of Olney Park, but only if the Planning Commission carefully plans the development of these adjacent urban areas.

We thank the Planning Committee for this opportunity to present our views.

Respectfully,

Darren T. Ewing, MBA