



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 6, 2020

TO: Phillip Niedzielski-Eichner, Chairman, Tysons Committee
Fairfax County Planning Commission

FROM: Chris Caperton, Deputy Director, DPD

SUBJECT: Tysons Core Team Assessment of the Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Chairman: As a follow up to the Tysons Committee meeting of November 5, 2020, you asked us to forward information related to staff's assessment of the current state of the Tysons Comprehensive Plan. The Tysons Core Team's position was developed in a series of meetings culminating in a final discussion on July 15, 2020. Please let me know if you have any questions about this, or any other Tysons-related work or projects. DPD looks forward to working with you and the Tysons Committee on future endeavors.

Summary

Staff overwhelmingly concurred that the Plan is working as is, has solid guidance for what the county hopes to achieve in Tysons, and includes the appropriate walkability framework (a topic we were asked to examine). Staff also overwhelmingly agrees that the present time is not ripe for a Tysons Plan Amendment. Allowing more time for Plan implementation is warranted; it would be prudent to wait until the last Plan changes have been adopted for 5 years or until we some key transportation studies are completed in order to inform changes. For example, the Route 7 BRT study and the Active Fairfax Plan (walking and biking) are currently underway. Further, the large number of planning studies currently underway has a limiting impact on staff capacity.

Assessing Plan Amendment Timing

Before starting a new Plan process, we should take additional stock on the success / limitations of the implementation of current guidance. We would like more data-driven decision making. The Tysons Annual Report is a good starting point and tool for discussing and demonstrating if/how the implementation is aligning with Plan recommendations (items like land use mix, etc. were mentioned) and trends. There may be opportunities to include micro-scale data in the Annual Report- specific improvements like sidewalks and crosswalks, missing links, bike lanes, etc.

Further, before embarking on a Plan Amendment journey, we might consider aligning future public facility needs with the recently authorized Plan Amendment for Public Facilities. Also, we do not yet



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know the long-term impacts of the pandemic, which could influence how the various agencies approach their public facilities planning/space needs. It was also noted that DPD should be the conduit by which the various agencies realize their identified public facility needs, not the entity that is trying to find public facilities to fit a particular development proposal.

Additional Considerations

Staff expressed a concern over possibly jumping to amend the Plan to “fix” things that appear broken, when, in fact, the Plan is a long-range vision that we are only 10 years (~20 percent) into. Interim conditions are an anticipated part of a long-term build-out. Regarding walkability and placemaking in Tysons – and the current conditions in Tysons – the focus should not be on amending the Plan, necessarily, but looking at how we can improve Plan implementation and interim conditions.

For example, the Tysons Community Circuit (recreational trail loop) is mentioned in the Plan, but without much detail. A Tysons Park System Concept Plan update could provide more guidance on the cross-section and expected amenities for this trail loop. Further, concepts like the Metrorail Green Artery, which is expected to increase connectivity and placemaking in Tysons, could be pursued with WMATA.

Staff will continue discussions on how we can improve interim conditions and overall Plan implementation to achieve better short-term outcomes for walkability and placemaking in Tysons.

At the appropriate time, some items may merit tweaking in future Amendments either for clarification, additional information, or updates based on current studies. Staff will continue to track potential Plan changes/items for future inclusion related to the following items:

- Land Use Map
- Transit Station Mixed Use
- Building Height
- Public Facilities
- Active Fairfax (walkability Plan)
- Route 7/BRT study
- Route 7/123, look at giving density to SW corner

cc: Supervisor Dalia Palchik
Barbara Byron, Director, DPD
Suzianne Battista, Acting Branch Chief, Urban Centers Section