

Fairfax County Franconia Community Conversations
John Lewis High School Cafeteria, Springfield, VA 22150
Saturday, April 13, 2024, Noon-2 p.m. (in person)
Monday, April 22, 2024, 6-8 p.m. (in person)
Online Comments (virtual)

Summary of Community Feedback
Prepared by UFacilitate

Traffic and Infrastructure Concerns:

- Increased traffic congestion expected due to the development of affordable housing.
- Lack of infrastructure improvements, such as road capacity enhancements, pedestrian crossings, and bike lanes, to support additional housing units.
- Safety issues related to traffic accidents and inadequate road conditions, including dangerous intersections and unsafe pedestrian crossings.

Proximity to Potential Hazards:

- Concerns about placing affordable housing near gas stations, which may pose safety risks such as exposure to benzene and increased cancer risk.
- Issues with the site's location near Franconia Road, including safety hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists due to traffic and road conditions.

Community Preference for Alternative Uses:

- Desire to allocate the property for community-oriented purposes rather than residential development, such as community centers, senior centers, or expansions of existing facilities like fire departments and tutoring centers.
- Preference for preserving the property as open space or returning it to the volunteer fire department due to concerns about contamination and traffic congestion.

Insufficient Amenities and Services:

- Lack of essential amenities in the vicinity, such as grocery stores and public transportation options, making the location unsuitable for affordable housing.
- Concerns about the capacity of existing services, such as fire departments, to accommodate additional housing units without adequate infrastructure improvements.

Safety and Environmental Risks:

- Potential safety hazards associated with the site's proximity to petroleum stations, traffic congestion, and inadequate road conditions.
- Environmental concerns regarding land contamination and its impact on the suitability of the property for residential development.

Share one alternative use to housing.

1. Emergency Services:
 - Expansion or relocation of fire stations and police stations to ensure public safety.
 - Consideration for women's shelters to address community needs.
2. Housing:
 - Provision of affordable and workforce housing to meet diverse socioeconomic requirements.

3. Recreational and Educational Facilities:

- Establishment of various community centers, recreational centers, training centers, senior centers, teen centers, art centers, parks, dog parks, skate parks, green spaces, playgrounds, fitness centers, sports facilities, tennis courts, swimming pools, daycares, libraries, museums, history museums, and culture centers to cater to different age groups and interests.

4. Mixed-Use Development:

- Integration of mixed-use developments combining housing with retail spaces such as grocery stores, businesses, food banks, farmers markets, and nonprofit organizations to fulfill resident needs.

5. Infrastructure and Public Services:

- Addressing traffic congestion and safety alongside capacity planning to accommodate population growth.
- Improved infrastructure including bike lanes, pedestrian-friendly areas, public transit options, and accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Conducting impact studies to assess the development's effects on transportation and community resources.

6. Transportation and Accessibility:

- Expanding bike lanes and walkways to promote alternative transportation methods.
- Ensuring access to amenities and services for people with disabilities.
- Conducting impact studies to evaluate the development's effect on transportation and community resources.

7. Additional Considerations:

- Integration of public safety facilities, educational institutions, and health/social services hubs like clinics, mental health support, and legal aid.
- Provision of various amenities including sports facilities, pools, walking trails, and art centers.

Overall Community Priorities:

- Improvement of infrastructure and public services to keep pace with growth.
- Development of a variety of community amenities to enhance residents' quality of life.
- Increased accessibility and transportation options for all residents.
- A mix of housing options alongside essential services and social support.

Share one community amenity with housing.

1. Transportation and Accessibility Improvements:

- Addressing concerns about parking availability, pedestrian safety, and access to public transportation.
- Incorporating ideas such as shuttle services, bike lanes, improved sidewalks, crosswalks, bus stops, and walkways.

2. Community Services and Amenities:
 - Fulfilling the desire for on-site amenities including grocery stores, community rooms, parks, gyms, daycare facilities, green spaces, playgrounds, dog parks, sports facilities, community centers, recreational centers, senior centers, and libraries.
3. Infrastructure and Safety:
 - Addressing concerns related to proper ventilation, stormwater management, security measures, and the impact on existing infrastructure capacity.
 - Considering improvements such as increased parking space, traffic calming measures, improved lighting, and potential fire stations.
4. Mixed-Use and Mixed-Income Development:
 - Exploring mixed-use development with a combination of commercial and affordable housing options.
 - Considering design elements like income-adjusted housing, townhomes, rent-to-own options, energy-efficient homes, brick townhouses, and one- or two-story homes.
5. Community Engagement and Neighborhood Compatibility:
 - Ensuring resident involvement in the planning process and prioritizing amenities that benefit the entire community.
 - Emphasizing the importance of blending the development with the existing character of the neighborhood and considering long-term maintenance.
6. Specific Considerations:
 - Addressing concerns about housing density, green space preservation, safety measures, and infrastructure improvements.
 - Considering amenities like farmers markets, food banks, retail stores, science centers, and access to glass recycling.

Share one mobility improvement.

1. Safety and Accessibility:
 - Prioritization of pedestrian safety through improved sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and traffic calming measures.
 - Concerns and suggestions regarding unsafe bike lane conditions and accessibility for people with disabilities.
 - Emphasis on traffic lights, overpasses, widened roads, and traffic control measures to enhance safety.
2. Enhanced Public Transportation and Alternative Modes of Transport:
 - Consumer demand for a range of transportation types including shuttle services to metro stations, and expanded public transportation options.
 - Support for bike lanes, mobile scooters, and alternative transportation modes to reduce reliance on cars.
3. Traffic Congestion:
 - Concerns about traffic congestion, especially on Franconia Rd., with suggestions for improved traffic light timing, additional lanes, and overpasses.

4. Alternative Modes of Transport:
 - Support exists for encouraging van pools, biking, and walking through better infrastructure (lanes, paths, sidewalks).
 - A comprehensive study to assess future needs for all transportation modes is desired.
5. Sustainability and Future Planning:
 - Alignment with sustainability goals by promoting eco-friendly transportation options and reducing car usage.
 - Calls for long-term investments in infrastructure upgrades that prioritize sustainable transportation options.
6. Community Amenities and Infrastructure:
 - Various community amenities such as parks, dog parks, community centers, fire stations, playgrounds, teen centers, gyms, and senior centers are mentioned.
 - Identification of areas deemed not suitable for housing development.
7. Comprehensive Planning:
 - Calls for comprehensive studies and assessments to evaluate future transportation needs and integrate various transportation modes.
 - Suggestions for regulating density, improving infrastructure, and providing informational resources in multi-family developments.

Share one recreational activity.

1. Community Gathering Spaces:

Strong desire for affordable and accessible community centers, teen centers, and performance venues (outdoor stages, amphitheaters).

Support for cultural placemaking initiatives through art studios, galleries, murals, and public art installations.
2. Outdoor Recreation and Park Spaces:

Highlighted needs include green spaces, parks, walking trails, dog parks, community gardens, pickleball courts, fitness stations, and skating rinks.

Integration of existing green spaces and connecting them is a priority.
3. Amenities for All Ages:
 - Desired amenities include playgrounds, senior centers with activities, teen centers, art/cultural spaces, and sports facilities.
 - Emphasis on accessibility to all amenities for people with disabilities.
4. Community Centers and Multi-Use Facilities:

Demand for various community centers, senior centers, recreational centers, community rooms, and multi-use facilities.

Exploration of existing facilities (schools, libraries) for potential expansion or repurposing.
5. Sports and Fitness Facilities:

Support for sports facilities such as tennis courts, pickleball courts, basketball courts, exercise stations, swimming pools, and fitness centers.
6. Mixed-Use Development:

Interest in mixed-use development concepts like town squares and retail stores integrated with recreational spaces.

7. Additional Notes:

Mixed opinions on larger facilities like amphitheaters and water parks.

Support for various initiatives like after-school programs, archery ranges, food banks, childcare facilities, YMCA, libraries, and museums.

Other comments/Share outs:

Meeting Format:

- Residents appreciated the open format that allowed for diverse voices and local concerns.

Community Needs and Existing Building:

- Concerns about parking and safety at the current location were raised.
- Ideas for renovation included incorporating Koinonia (local non-profit), a fire station, a teen center, and a community garden.

Traffic Concerns:

- Residents requested a traffic light at Tammy Dr. and Franconia Rd. and a larger traffic study.

Transparency and Community Engagement:

- Concerns included lack of clarity on data used for housing decisions, limited engagement before the project, and insufficient survey promotion. Residents requested better communication and inclusion of local expertise.

Affordable Housing:

- While some support affordable housing, concerns existed about density, data transparency, and prioritizing existing disadvantaged residents.

Financial and Ownership Concerns:

- Residents questioned:
 - Taxpayer responsibility for upkeep and ownership of rental units.
 - Developer land purchase process and tax rebates.
 - The project's financial implications (public funding, taxes, mixed-use development).

Transparency and Community Engagement:

- Requests included:
 - Transparency on received emails, addressed concerns, and previous meeting outcomes.
 - Disclosure of decision-making studies and public access to them.
 - Improved public notices for meetings to enhance engagement.

Site Usage and Development Plans:

- Suggestions included:
 - Mixed-use development with a police station and community space in the existing structure.
 - Clarification on the rationale for 120 units, their makeup, and suitability for small families.
 - Information on zoning criteria and exceptions for the development.

Impact Studies and Environmental Concerns:

- Residents requested impact studies on:
 - Green space, traffic, safety, schools, public transportation, and landscape compatibility.
 - Ongoing projects like Top Golf.
- They also sought clarity on residency criteria (rent control).

Community Amenities and Facilities:

- Interest included:
 - Hybrid community amenities (parks, playgrounds, green space, parking).
 - Community facilities like adult daycare, recreational spaces, and multi-use areas.
 - Public spaces catering to diverse needs and enhancing quality of life.
 - Specific requests included a lazy river, facilities for people with special needs, and a farmers market.

Additional Considerations:

- Questions were raised about:
 - Addressing needs of low-income residents.
 - Long-term benefits for taxpayers with high-density housing.
 - Project compliance with the county's comprehensive plan.
 - Bus stop and crosswalk improvements.