



Testimony for Seven Corners Task Force - Draft Plan for Seven Corners

Presented by Paul Bickmore, Planning Intern for Coalition for Smarter Growth*
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Members of the Seven Corners Task Force:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and for your hard work on a draft new plan for Seven Corners. We appreciate your commitment to revitalization through creation of a walkable, bikeable, mixed-use and transit-oriented community. Our comments focus on just three issues: the street grid, transit, and affordable housing.

Street Grid:

We believe that Conceptual Design #4 offers the most effective, community-friendly, and favorable economic development approach. We do not recommend variants of Concept #2 or #5. Concept #4 knits together Seven Corners across Route 50 with pedestrian and bicycle friendly bridges, it reduces interchange impacts through the use of diamonds, it disperses and reduces the traffic load at the main intersection of Route 50 and Route 7, and it maximizes the land available for productive economic activity.

In contrast, Concept #2 has too much impact on residential neighborhoods and Concept #5 includes ramps that will encourage higher speed driving, make conditions unsafe for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users, make traffic worse, and reduce the already scarce amount of land that can be redeveloped.

In order to knit Seven Corners together and for mixed-use, higher intensity land use to be desirable for living and doing business, people need to feel safe when walking throughout the entire community, not just in isolated pockets of mixed-use. While Concept 5 is estimated by Kittelson to be cheaper than the other concepts, it may not in fact be the most cost-effective, since it includes features that are hostile to pedestrians and will make mixed-use redevelopment less desirable.

Transit:

We concur with dedication of a lane of Route 7 to future light rail, streetcar or bus rapid transit and direct connection of this high capacity transit to the East Falls Church Metro Station via Roosevelt Boulevard. Consideration should also be given to dedicated lane transit on Route 50, and all of the transit routes should be seamlessly linked to the transit center in such a way that it minimizes walking and transfer times for riders.

We recommend that priority should be placed on bicycle, pedestrian and transit connections on Roosevelt Boulevard to the East Falls Church Metro Station, not on facilitating higher vehicle volumes. Given Arlington County's plan to redevelop their side of the station and the City of Falls Church's continued redevelopment on their side, Metro parking certainly will not grow, and may shrink. Priority should be on transit, bike and pedestrian access to the Metro

Affordable Housing

The draft plan proposes to redevelop what is currently a significant supply of market-rate affordable housing. We are concerned about the potential loss of affordable units and believe the plan should require the replacement of existing market rate affordable housing on a one-for-one basis through a combination of incentives for the private sector, state funds, county housing trust funds, tax increment financing, low-income housing tax credits, use of public land, and other tools. Provisions for density bonuses above and beyond existing incentives may be needed to ensure one-for-one replacement. For other residential redevelopments that don't impact existing affordable units, the county's inclusionary zoning policy should continue to apply. We recommend you look to the affordable housing policies adopted by Arlington for its Columbia Pike Corridor and the recent Council of Governments webinar on transit-oriented affordable housing (we've included a copy for you).

Collectively, we need to ensure that the new Seven Corners is a vibrant, diverse, and mixed-income community.

Thank you,

* Reviewed and approved by Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth