



City of Alexandria, Virginia

*301 King Street, Suite 2300
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TO: MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL
FROM: COUNCILMEN KRUPICKA AND SMEDBERG
DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 2010
RE: BEAUREGARD CORRIDOR PLANNING ISSUES

Last year as we considered accelerating re-development planning on Beauregard Street in order to facilitate development of commercial space for entities that support the BRAC project, we expressed the same concern. Unless transportation issues are resolved, it makes no sense to go forward with a new zoning plan for the far West End of the city. After countless community meetings and transportation studies it has become clear that the City is not ready to move forward with any re-zoning in this area. All necessary transportation options require further design work, multiple years to implement and a clear funding source. We are asking our colleagues on the City Council and the Planning Commission to table all plans for higher density on the far West End until we devise a workable and viable transportation plan

Alexandria's primary transportation issue is not vision or planning. We have a well-conceived transportation master plan that calls for significant upgrades in mass transit around the city and throughout the region. The citizens we talk to know that high quality transit is needed for BRAC. It is a necessity for quality of life issues beyond BRAC. It is needed to assure our urban community functions into the future and it is the engine for continued economic growth. But with a virtual elimination in state transportation funding, limited federal funding and no dedicated local funding, it becomes clear that we are unable to implement our transportation plans. We cannot let the development cart get before the transportation infrastructure horse. It is time to put the brakes on re-zoning until we can show the citizens of Alexandria that we are serious about implementing the transit plans that are primary to the quality of life in Alexandria.

Many excellent suggestions and ideas have emerged from the Beauregard planning process: expansion of the Winkler preserve; creation of more neighborhood shopping opportunities; expansion of parks and creation of more pedestrian friendly neighborhoods. But these initiatives cannot proceed if we can't implement the necessary transportation improvements.

Work is ongoing to coordinate city transit plans with Arlington and Fairfax. Congressman Moran was able to provide funding, first requested by Councilman Krupicka, to do more detailed work on how to better integrate Arlington and Fairfax's transit system, currently planned to stop at the Northern Virginia Community College, into Alexandria. Design work is continuing to bring essential improvements to the Seminary Road interchange that will alleviate concerns and improve transportation flow. Until we achieve a degree of certainty around these specific improvements as well as other transportation issues, we should not contemplate further zoning.

Furthermore, it's clear from the community conversations surrounding BRAC and West End planning, that the city must work with the Army to replace open space lost by BRAC. We believe that open space should be secured well before any zoning changes are considered for the West End or we risk increasing density while losing open space in the process. Finally the Affordable Housing Master Plan should be completed before we move forward with any re-zoning that would potentially remove significant tracts of market-rate housing for moderate income residents of the City.

Some may characterize this approach as anti-business. We believe, however, that adding density without adequate infrastructure and a well conceived transportation plan is anti-business. We are currently faced with the economic uncertainty that prevents the implementation of the needed infrastructure for the Van Dorn and Landmark mall plans. The transportation upgrades for Eisenhower Valley as part of a Van Dorn metro zoning study are impossible given this current economic climate. If we proceed to allow increased density without the assurance that we have planned for both adequate infrastructure and transportation we are guilty of misguided and some might say reckless governance. As we have done in Potomac Yard, we owe it to the residents of Alexandria who live in one of the nation's fastest growing and most dense cities to create a transportation infrastructure before we move forward with major rezoning changes.