



Jefferson Manor Citizens Association

JMCA
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2005/6 Board

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Jefferson Manor Citizens Association (JMCA) Position Paper

RE: A.J. Dwoskin & Associates et al., Area Plan Review Nomination (05-IV-23MV)

March 1, 2006

Background:

The owners/managers of the Huntington Station Shopping Center and Jefferson Gardens Apartments have jointly submitted a proposal to amend the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan as it pertains to their site. The site is bounded by North Kings Highway to the east, Fort Drive to the south, Monticello Road to the southwest, and existing residential lot lines to the northwest and north. The Huntington Area Plan within the Comprehensive Plan currently recommends and allows for redevelopment of the site with up to a maximum of 445 residential units, or approximately 45 units per acre, and up to 87,000 square feet of retail space. The site as a whole currently features 48,707 square feet of retail space and 67 apartment units. Dwoskin et al. propose amending the plan to allow for redevelopment with a maximum of 750 residential units and up to 75,000 square feet of retail space. In addition, the Area Plan currently calls for redevelopment to include "a plaza or other public space that is oriented to the Transit Area [Huntington Metro Station] in terms of character and location"(IV, 89), along with tiered maximum height limits that range from 150 feet closest to the Metro station to 55 feet along the east side of Monticello Road. It also requires that redevelopment of the site meet several "Transit Development Area" criteria that include pedestrian improvements and other items. The proposed amendment would slightly alter the height limit tiers to extend the 55-foot-height-limit buffer along Fort Drive, maintaining a maximum of 150 feet for the site. It would also maintain, slightly alter, or clarify language currently in the plan regarding public space, pedestrian circulation, and design considerations. Dwoskin et al. have presented to JMCA preliminary plans for mixed-use redevelopment of the site assuming an amended Comprehensive Plan.

Position:

JMCA supports the character and intent of the proposed redevelopment, as a mixed-use community focal point that would be appropriate for the area surrounding a transit station but also would fit the context of the existing neighborhood. JMCA also welcomes changes to the Huntington Area Plan that further emphasize compatibility with the existing neighborhood, pedestrian safety, and orientation of the site toward North Kings Highway. In addition, JMCA welcomes the leadership of Dwoskin et al. in developing and advocating plans to improve the North Kings Highway corridor in general to promote pedestrian activity and safety and help the corridor better serve the neighborhood (these transportation improvement proposals are evaluated in a separate position paper). JMCA recognizes the desirability of locating high-density residential development near Metro stations; however, it is not clear that the maximum densities currently set in the Comprehensive Plan inhibit high-quality, mixed-use redevelopment on this site, as asserted by Dwoskin et al. It is also unclear that current plan requirements for redevelopment on this site would not suffice in ensuring that development would be appropriate for the area. If high-quality, mixed-use redevelopment of this site will not happen without changes to the Comprehensive Plan, then JMCA would support the proposed amendment. However, there is substantial concern among neighborhood residents about the impact of large numbers of new residential units on cut-through traffic and congestion, public services such as schools, and the area real estate market, and a smaller number of new units would be preferable. Again, JMCA welcomes the prospect of improvements to this area, and we look forward to working with County staff and with Dwoskin et al. on clarifying the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and refining a redevelopment plan for this site. JMCA has recently completed a process of establishing neighborhood priorities as redevelopment occurs, and will be providing input in this undertaking based on these priorities and concerns.