

Statement at Mason District Council Forum on Seven Corners Redevelopment

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The proposed redevelopment would be the most dense concentration of floor area in Fairfax County, 7.7 million sq ft in 6-12 story buildings with enough space for 6000 apartments. In an Aug 29 meeting with community representatives, task force Co-Chairman John Thillman reportedly stated that the 7.7 million sq ft figure originated with Seven Corners property owners as their estimate of what would be profitable. That's fine for the property owners, but what about our issues?

For example, a major community issue in any implementation of the plan is evident in the new Bailey's Upper Elementary School. We are sending 700-800 of our children in grades 3 through 5 to the county's first urban-design school in a converted 5-story office building with no gym and no green space located smack against busy Leesburg Pike.

- Does this environment provide a productive, stimulating school experience for these young children?
- Who among us would send their children to such a school if a traditional neighborhood school with a gym and green space were available, and what does that tell us about our property values?
- If Bailey's Upper is the best that we can do for current students, on what basis are we prepared to invite another 6000 households into our school district?

Stepping back, the new Bailey's school seems a harbinger of our demise. It seems that we cannot survive as a suburban community. Instead, we are destined to become an urban community, a city, and accept the consequences. How have we let this happen to us?

There is much that can be said against the composition of the task force and the process used to drive to a high-rise plan for Seven Corners. But the commentary largely would be pointless. The plan is what it is. From here, the plan goes to the Planning Commission and possibly the Board of Supervisors. What they do with it will depend, in part, upon whether we, the community, accept the plan or reject it.

The community now has a choice to make, and it is a simple one. Do we want Seven Corners to continue as a thriving suburban shopping area serving our community or do we want it transformed into a dense urban center of 6-12 story apartment buildings. These 2 choices are the only choices, there is no middle ground, and the community should choose one or the other rather than let others make the choice for us. To this end, I would like to propose three activities:

- First, would you all here tonight please *neatly* sign the sign up sheet so that you can be contacted later, in particular, regarding the date of the Planning Commission hearing expected early next year.
- Second, as soon as you have decided your position on the plan, to accept it or to oppose it, please e-mail the Planning Commission (plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov) with that information. This will help them understand the community's position. *Be sure to include your name and address in the e-mail to show that you are a county resident.*
- Finally, would Mason District Council please consider conducting an on-line survey of the community to help us, the community, better understand our position on this important issue.

Thank you.