

Edward Duangrat  
6301 Buffalo Ridge Road  
Falls Church, VA 22044

January 13, 14

Dear Chairman and Members of the Seven Corners Land Use and Transportation Task Force:

The first house I grew up in is the one next door to the office building that is now the temporary Woodrow Wilson library, 6066 Leesburg Pike. I learned how to ride a bike in the parking lot of the church across the street, Rt. 7. The construction of that office building prompted my parents to move out of Falls Church. That was some 40 years ago.

About 30 years ago, we were living in Springfield but returned to Falls Church to build our first family business in the Glen Forest Shopping Center. It was a very modest mom & pop shop. Back then, it was not an ideal location for business, but it was what we could afford. We made it work.

Over the years, we have seen the neighborhood thrive and grow. Falls Church now attracts "big box" retailers and we have not one, but two Targets to choose from, a Border's Books & Barnes & Noble, and I have seen Circuit City migrate from one side of Rt. 7 to the other.

About 7 years ago, while living in Springfield, we came across a golden opportunity to move back to our roots in Falls Church and to live near our work. This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity because the builder had built two, single-family homes on one lot at the end of a quiet cul-de-sac. My sister and I would literally be next-door neighbors!

Immediately, we knew that this property in Falls Church is where we will raise our families, children, dogs, and reside for a lifetime. While purchasing these two homes would be a financial stretch, we were willing to work relentlessly to afford our "American Dream". We used our life's savings and like many Americans at the time, financed the rest with two sizeable, yet remarkably hassle-free mortgages!

Little did we know that within a couple of years, we would live to see American automakers and major banks taking government bail-outs, if they weren't already out-of-business. The Border's Books and Circuit City I mentioned are now relics of the past. We lost a neighbor on Buffalo Ridge Road and several homes on Castle Drive were in foreclosure.

After a nationwide real-estate market adjustment, and many under-water mortgages later, we are fortunate to still be in our homes today, but barely. My brother-in-law, Tim, and I are not here tonight as we work from 10 to 10, often 6 days a week, to make this happen. But at the end of the day, we have a smile on our faces because we know will be coming back to our "Home Sweet Home"- our own quiet oasis, just a stone's throw away from the congestion of Rt. 7 that seemingly exists 7 days a week. I know most of our neighbors are in the same boat.

I am not asking you to feel sorry for us, but rather, understand that we are vested in this community with our homes and our hearts. Through our respective businesses, Tim and I regularly sponsor and donate to the local Mason District schools. We have nothing against schools in general, but rather our concern is the County's potential oversight or disregard of the residents whose lives will be adversely impacted by conversion of the Leesburg Pike office to a school.

Now, we learn of another series of proposals that would destroy homes and place a major road next to our home. I implore the "powers-that-be" to empathize on the issue of altering our residential street. Undoubtedly, any cut-through whereby our yards would be seized and a street paved to create a link between the Rt. 7 and Buffalo Ridge Road, is simply a bad idea for all parties involved.

This would effectively diminish what little separation exists between Rt. 7, a major thoroughfare and literally our doorsteps. Consequently, congestion and crime would follow as transient traffic passes through. I can only cringe when I think of my 2 and 4 year-old nephews and our two rescue dogs playing in the front yard, which would no longer be a stone's throw away, but essentially on the fringe of Rt. 7! I also doubt any one of us could survive the hit all of this would have on our property values, again!

It seems what little benefit there is to be gained by creating an adjoining street, would be negated by the subsequent influx of traffic. Our residential street can barely handle two-way traffic between two neighbors, let alone being open to the public at large. There will inevitably be random cars using the neighborhood as a shortcut. Case in point, the Public Storage parking lot that has unwittingly become a cut-through between Sleepy Hollow and Rt. 50. This will expose both residents and school children to pedestrian accidents. One proposed road would also displace land that could otherwise serve as parking space for the school. Instead, there will likely be an overflow of illegal parking, people loitering, and littering in the neighborhood.

I ask you to imagine yourselves in our shoes and to consider the disruption that such an undertaking would have on you, your family and neighbors. After all, eminent domain could happen to any one of us. It has been said that 80% of people grow up to live within a 20-mile radius of where they were born. This is the case for my sister and I, and many of us here. This is not happenstance, but can likely be attributed to the fact that despite the hustle and bustle of Rt. 7, the residential neighborhoods of Mason District remain a historic, quaint and safe place to live. I truly hope things remain this way. Thank you for hearing me out.

Sincerely,  
Edward Duangrat