

Testimony Regarding Comprehensive Plan Amendment 2015-I-J1, Graham Park Plaza
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Hearing
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1. Purpose:

The following comments are provided on behalf of Holmes Run Valley Citizens Association, which represents a community of 636 homes located one and one-quarter miles southeast of Graham Park Plaza shopping center. The purpose is to emphasize the requirement for a comprehensive assessment of traffic impacts of the proposed rezoning of the shopping center. A companion three-page paper with relevant background has been submitted electronically.

2. Proposed Intensity of Redevelopment Is Excessive

Graham Park Plaza is planned for and has been developed as a community-serving shopping center. The proposed amendment would introduce a new use, mid to high-rise apartments.

The proposed redevelopment would not affect the eastern 40% of the site. The western 60%, an area of 11.7 acres, would be redeveloped with 342,000 sq ft of residential, retail, and office uses. The floor area ratio on the redeveloped portion of the site would exceed 0.70. The county's Planning 101 video tutorial states that floor area ratios appropriate for suburban shopping centers range between 0.30 and 0.35. The proposed 0.7 floor area ratio on the 11.7-acre redeveloped area would be excessive; it would exceed the appropriate intensity limit by more than 100%.

3. Redevelopment Would Increase Traffic Generation by Approximately 50%

The staff report argues that the traffic volume generated by the redeveloped site would be about the same as the traffic that would be generated if the site were fully developed in accordance with the current plan. The current plan allows up to 297,500 sq ft of retail floor area. But the floor area currently on the site is only 277,700 sq ft and 28% of this floor area is vacant or grossly underutilized. Only 200,000 sq ft of floor area is actively in use at the shopping center (277,700 x 0.72). **It follows from the staff report analysis that the traffic generated by the redeveloped site would be expected to exceed the traffic currently generated by 50%. Again, the redeveloped site would generate 50% more traffic than the site currently generates.** Consequently, a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the increased traffic is required.

4. Deficiencies of the 2010 Traffic Impact Analysis for Bailey's

Recent experience discourages confidence that the county will provide the Graham Park Plaza traffic assessment required. In 2010, the county developed a new plan for Bailey's Crossroads that featured a realignment of Seminary Road to intersect with Columbia Pike. The state-required Chapter 527 traffic impact analysis (TIA) was deficient in that it considered **only one-half** of the planned redevelopment. Notwithstanding the inadequacy of the analysis, on 20 Sep the Board decided to

purchase the Landmark Atlantic property in order to provide a piece of the right of way for the Seminary Road realignment. Presumably, the county plans to purchase the property with transportation funds, then to hold a portion of the property for a road segment and use the remainder for Supervisor Gross's \$125 million county office building.

On 15 Nov, I asked Chairman Bulova for the basis upon which the Board is prepared to purchase the right-of-way recognizing that the feasibility of the realignment has not been demonstrated by a competent traffic analysis. She has not responded to my inquiry.

5. Deficiencies of the 2015 Traffic Impact Analysis for Seven Corners

The Chapter 870 TIA supporting the 2015 Seven Corners plan amendment similarly is deficient but for different reasons. The reasons are enumerated in the companion paper submitted electronically.

Neither the Bailey's nor the Seven Corners traffic analysis has the appearance of a serious effort to provide a reliable concept for traffic management. The analyses more nearly appear to be efforts to justify county plans for redevelopment. The same should not be the case at Graham Park Plaza.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed intensity of redevelopment of the west side of Graham Park Plaza is excessive; it is more than twice the intensity normally associated with suburban shopping centers. The redevelopment would increase traffic generation at the site by 50%. A principal community concern is that the traffic increase would overwhelm Arlington Boulevard and Graham Road as well as the neighborhoods and streets surrounding the shopping center.

The county should provide a comprehensive assessment of traffic impacts of the proposed rezoning. Results of the assessment should be made available online for public review in a readily understood report published not less than 45 days prior to any Board hearing on rezoning. The deficiencies of the Bailey's and Seven Corners traffic analyses should be avoided.

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