

TESTIMONY ON TYSONS CORNER
DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMMENDMENT

My name is Stella Koch, and I am speaking today on behalf of Audubon Naturalist Society, the organization for which I work.

I would like to thank the members of the Planning Commission for their tireless efforts over the past months to sort through the proposed Tysons Task Force Vision and the Strawman Draft Comprehensive Plan language. I commend you.

I have five very brief comments to make:

On the Integrity of the Plan

Unlike many plans where a piecemeal approach may work, Tysons Corner redevelopment is different. This plan must be implemented as a whole or it falls apart. Without the internal grid of streets, transportation inside of Tysons does not work. Without an integrated network of sidewalks and paths, and inviting shops and storefronts, people do not want to walk to destinations. These are but two examples of what must occur for Tysons to succeed. The Tysons Vision must be implemented as a whole.

On Density

Because of the need for all “pieces” of the Tysons Corner plan to be present in the implementation, density decisions must be made to drive that outcome. If insufficient density allotments in the four outlying parts of Tysons induce by-right development and the lack of contribution to the grid of streets or any other part of the plan necessary to the success of Tysons, the plan fails. Therefore, the planned development intensities in Tysons Corner must be sufficient to achieve and sustain the essential elements envisioned by the Tysons Corner Land Use Task Force.

On the Environment

The environmental requirements for Tysons are sound and basic. The language of the plan seems broad enough that we will be able to incorporate new ideas as they mature: requirements for bird-friendly building to the extent feasible, incorporation of newly-evolving LEED-like requirements for landscape and site design, etc. If Tysons is to remain exemplary, new and innovative environmental expectations must be added in future years. It is important that the plan language be open to future innovations

On Stormwater

We have four streams in Fairfax County that have born the brunt of lack of stormwater controls during the development of Tysons. The Vision document has some exceptional goals for stormwater. Due to recognition of cost and land constraints, those vision goals have been significantly reduced. At a minimum we must support the retention of the first inch of rainfall as this replicates the good forested conditions for about 80-90% of all storms and require that all development meet the two LEED requirements for Stormwater, one is for quantity and one is for quality. These will not place Tysons in the forefront of places dealing with stormwater retrofit and stream restoration but they are adequate at this time.

On Fear

One can only look at the rather horrific effect that the spillover traffic from Tysons Corner has had on surrounding neighborhoods. It is easy to understand those neighborhood concerns about growth at Tysons. However what that means is that we must make sure that Tysons becomes a true transit-oriented redevelopment and that we mandate and engineer the reduced automobile usage associated with other TOD places like Arlington. Fear created by the very reality of past development failures should not prohibit us from doing the right thing now.

I thank you for this opportunity to comment. I have enjoyed very much working with you over these past months on the Tysons' Plan.

Stella Koch, Virginia Conservation Associate
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