

Proposed PC RESOLUTION – Transportation and Green/Open Space/Other Concerns

Whereas the BOS passed a resolution of intent in 2017 to develop an action plan in partnership with Habitat to redevelop Southwood for both affordable residential uses and business uses;

Whereas the BOS in FY 20-22 continued the partnership with Habitat for Humanity using the Team Approach with a focus on quality community and non-displacement;

Whereas the Planning Commission in review of the rezoning application for Southwood Phase I has identified and would like to communicate the following concerns regarding transportation open space and other items in Southwood, therefore be it resolved that the Planning Commission offers the following considerations for the Board of Supervisors in its review of the Southwood Application:

Transportation

A transit center is neither proposed nor provided as a component of the proposed commercial area or elsewhere. Furthermore, if the commercial area develops in the location proposed and a transit center is added to the current design configuration, it would occur at some distance from the core where the core Southwood future owners are to be housed. A more central location (see 1 Housing...ROA) with associated attractive transit center would better serve the Southwood Community.

Neighborhood Center: Auto-Centric or Multimodal

Should the neighborhood center be located on the periphery along Old Lynchburg Road in an auto-centric manner or located more centrally in the Southwood Community? The Comprehensive Plan calls for a multimodal “neighborhood center” with a height of 1-3 stories and located ¼ mile from the edge to make it a more neighborhood-oriented walkable community with access to public transportation.

Private Streets

Are private streets destined to be a future cost to either residents through HOA fees or the County if the developers or residents petition for an exception to become public streets?

Parking

Is parking adequate? Parking of 1.5 spaces per residents appears inadequate in this dispersed suburban development.

Green/Open Space

The Code of Development notes that it is important to the resident community to preserve and honor the streams and other natural features that surround much of the site. And the design proposes to do that by designating Blocks 1 and 2 along the perimeter of the site as green

space. Yet the Code of Development also notes that utilities will need to be located in stream buffers and built across steep slopes. Also, stormwater facilities are shown in both green space blocks in the concept stormwater plan. And the table of non-residential uses on page 11 of the COD shows various other uses allowed in Blocks 1 and 2 by-right, including electric and gas lines, wireless service facilities, and farmer's markets—which could be a fine use for green space in some cases, but which can also include large, new structures and land disturbances that can run counter to the idea of minimizing environmental impacts. Table 7 on page 15 of the COD is also confusing in this regard. It indicates that roughly 2 acres of Block 1 will be *preserved*, and that close to 6 acres of that same block will be *conserved*. Block 2 is similarly divided between preservation and conservation. Yet there is no indication of how those terms differ from each other, or what they even mean in the context of the Code of Development. The Code of Development leaves an open question about just what can and will be built in the green space, begging the question of whether the green space will embody the importance the residents place in preserving and honoring the site's sensitive ecological zones. The Code of Development needs to be clarified in this respect so that commitments and expectations are clear.

These clarifications will not require major changes and should not stall this positive project. But they are important to nailing down key environmental commitments—and showing that Albemarle County can build affordable housing in the Development Areas and at the same time protect sensitive environmental resources in these areas.

Stormwater Management

The plan states it will discharge volume to streams and buy “off site” credits as allowed by state law. However, this means that the quality of local streams will decline – only one section of stream has been protected and could still suffer from high volumes of runoff.

Active Recreation

Amenities are too vague, insufficient and non-committal. 4,900 square feet distributed across Blocks 5-8 is still too small. Tot lots, structured recreation and facilities are needed for a development of this scale. Blocks 1 and 2 are drawn as green space but allow for other uses to occur, which may disturb it.

Buffer and Built Form/Spatial Organization

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that a buffer be along the road. However, when a 4- or 5- story building is placed in the buffer, it actually destroys this buffer for blocks 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

In addition, when a forest is removed and thinned down to the width proposed, trees tend to fall as they are not adapted to wind impacts. Trees shown in renderings, if planted, will take 70 years to provide the same function for screening, stormwater uptake, particulate matter removal and aesthetics. Finally, the surrounding neighborhoods have distinct rural

characteristics and are set back from the road – this development design dramatically changes both the density and built form/spatial organization of the area irreparably.

By approving the application with the center located on Lynchburg Road and on the periphery of the community, and by removing the buffer, this development will alter the character of the area, and could establish a precedent for this scale of development all along Old Lynchburg Road.

Providing for Impacts on Transportation and Schools

While Habitat is the developer of record, other builders/developers will be involved in this project. Given a majority of the overall development will be market rate or above, should proffers be considered when the county – Supervisors or EDA – are in partnership with an applicant? Given the impact of this development as a whole, could the cost of the impacts on transportation and schools be lessened through proffers, offers or agreements?