



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

September 21, 2022

Via Email: HudsonAs@charlescountymd.gov

Charles County Planning Division
ATTN: Ashley Hudson, Planner I
200 Baltimore Street
La Plata, MD 20646

RE: Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Bryans Road Sub-Area Plan

Dear Ms. Hudson:

This memorandum provides comments from Fairfax County, Virginia regarding the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment for the Bryans Road Sub-Area Plan. These comments were coordinated with the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, the Department of Transportation, the Fairfax County Park Authority, the Urban Forestry Management Division, and the Department of Planning and Development Heritage Resources Branch.

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed Amendment to the 2021 Bryans Road Sub-Area Plan seeks to *“strengthen the residential and commercial core of Bryans Road, balanced with strategies that will protect and enhance the environment, culture and heritage of Bryans Road.”* Four guiding principles are proposed to implement the planned growth target of 30% new residents over the next 15-20 years:

- Minimize potential impact to environmentally sensitive areas by using environmental science to determine where development should be permitted.
- Work within existing and planned infrastructure (water, sewer, roads, and schools).
- Focus on areas close to existing and proposed community facilities.
- Support opportunities for flexibility in the scale, phasing, and type of development permitted.

The proposed land use map is structured with the highest density and mix of uses at the area designated as a Town Center, with density decreasing as development extends from the core. The land use categories proposed for the sub-area are low-, moderate-, and high-density residential, age-targeted residential, town center, airport employment and industrial, and open space and conservation. The Bryans Road Sub-Area is in western Charles County within an approximately 1.5-mile radius of the intersection of Livingston Road and Indian Head Highway.



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COMMENTS

The guiding principles and proposed land use map for the Plan Amendment would be consistent with the policies of Fairfax County for the Lower Potomac and Mount Vernon Planning Districts, which are located across the Potomac River from Charles County. East of Route 1, these two districts are generally planned for Low Density Residential, Suburban Neighborhood, Large Institutional Land, and Community Business Center, as shown on the Fairfax County Concept for Future Development map. The primary purposes of these areas range from “*ensure the preservation of environmental resources*” and “*public facilities infrastructure is to be provided at an acceptable level of service without substantial negative impacts to the natural environment*,” to “*where appropriate, supporting neighborhood-serving commercial services, public facilities, and institutional uses are encouraged*,” and “*encourage a mix of uses focused around a core area of higher intensity, such as a town center or main street in a pedestrian-oriented setting*.” ([Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Area IV, Area Plan Overview, Amended through 10-16-2018, Introduction, Pages 4-8](#)).

The recommendations in the proposed Plan Amendment for preserving and enhancing the environment would be consistent with the general objectives and policies of Fairfax County. The Occoquan Watershed encompasses nearly 41,000 acres south and southwest of the City of Fairfax and west of Cub Run, and includes the Occoquan Reservoir, one of the main drinking water supplies for Fairfax County. The Lower Occoquan watershed lies within a portion of the Lower Potomac Planning District and across the Potomac River from Charles County. This watershed has experienced relatively minimal development, which has resulted in a low overall impervious area. A major reason for the minimal development is because a majority of the northern portion of the Lower Occoquan lies within the Residential-Estate (R-E) zoning district, which was established to protect streams and ecological areas and to minimize impervious surfaces in order to protect water quality. The R-E district restricts development to single-family detached dwellings on large lots and allows other uses that are compatible with the open and rural character of the district.

The Lower Occoquan watershed also includes the Mason Neck area, which features the Meadowood Special Recreation Management Area, the Pohick Bay Regional Park, historic Gunston Hall, Mason Neck State Park, and the Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge. These areas, along with the low-density character of the remainder of Mason Neck “*has resulted in the preservation of a major wildlife corridor that extends from the state and federal lands on the peninsula through undeveloped portions of Fort Belvoir and into Huntley Meadows Park. ... The widespread distribution of severe development constraints, the presence of extensive areas of wetlands and other high quality wildlife habitats, the proximity to sensitive water resources including the Potomac River and other large tidal bodies of water, and the role of Mason Neck as a component of a major wildlife corridor require Mason Neck be managed to remain as an area of unique environmental sensitivity within Fairfax County.*” ([Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2017 Edition, Area IV, Lower Potomac Planning District, Amended through 02-23-2021, LP3-Mason Neck Community Planning Sector, Pages 110-112](#)).

Environmental policies within the Mount Vernon District include recommendations for projects to include low impact development (LID) practices, projects to restore riparian buffers and streams, outreach and education to improve residents’ activities that affect water quality, and encouragement of “living shorelines” along the Potomac River.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Carly Aubrey at 703-324-1380 or carly.aubrey@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Sincerely,

Leanna H O'Donnell

Leanna H. O'Donnell, AICP, Director
Planning Division, Department of Planning and Development

cc: Board of Supervisors
Bryan Hill, County Executive
Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive
Tracy Strunk, Director, DPD
Carly Aubrey, Senior Environmental Planner, DPD

LHO: CMA