

Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee
Prince William County, Virginia
Committee Recommendations
June 27, 2006

Subject: Caton's Ridge
Developer: Land Source Investments

Executive Summary

The Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee (the Committee) has reviewed the subject proposal. This proposal was originally brought before this Committee in June 2005 and again in November 2005; Mr. Mike Lubeley of Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich & Terpak, P.C. represented the developer/applicant, Land Source Investments. Currently owned by several family members of the Caton family, this ~30 acre property has combined zoning of B-1 and A-1, and is located within the Comprehensive Plan's Regional Employment Center, and the Parkway Employment Sector. Maintaining the B-1 zoning, the developer is proposing a rezoning request to revise the Agriculture, A-1, to Planned Mixed Residential, PMR. The entire development would consist of a mixed use of residential, retail, and office space. A site pad would be dedicated for a commercial purpose or restaurant.

The Committee considers this property to be an important strategic opportunity for business and economic development and employment opportunities for County residents. Located on Minnieville Road, its easy access to Interstate 95 makes it a prime location for office tenants. Additionally, this prime location along with the available acreage has the potential to draw consultants and contractors serving the federal government, Fort Belvoir, and Quantico, as well as offering excellent access for all non-governmental agencies and consultants. Furthermore, it is located near a quality residential community, offering convenience of commute, and quality of life for all tenants.

Upon evaluation and full consideration of the benefits this proposal will offer the Occoquan District and the County, the Committee finds it to be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan's Parkway Employment Sector largely due to the inclusion of the proposed residential units in an area long-dedicated for office use. According to the recent study conducted by Parsons Brinkerhoff at the behest of the County, this study concluded that PW County has current inventory or planned inventory to adequately satisfy residential needs for the next 30 to 35 years. This property is neither currently zoned nor planned for residential use, and as such would exacerbate the excess inventory as identified in that study. To further complicate the situation, Mr. Lubeley stated that only one office building would be built for the Engineering Groupe under this proposal, followed by all the residential units. Therefore it was concluded that this proposal would violate long-range planning, add significantly to an excess inventory of housing, and delay critically needed office space, all conditions considered completely unacceptable to the Committee.

Accordingly, the Committee requests that the PW Planning Commission delay acceptance of this proposal until concerns regarding the residential units can be addressed and mitigated. Should the elimination of residential units be a condition unacceptable to the developer, then the Committee would respectfully request that the Planning Commission opt for a Recommendation for Denial. A resolution to these issues should be achieved prior to a presentation before the PW Board of Supervisors.

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Introduction

Currently owned by several family members of the Caton family, this property has combined zoning of A-1 and B-1. The B-1 parcels adjacent to the Wawa gasoline and convenience store represent 2.68 acres of the approximate 30 acres under consideration. Mr. Lubeley explained that the owners have the "by-rights" privilege to construct any retail dwelling on a portion of the site currently zoned B-1, subject to current constraints, without community concurrence. However, they are proposing to rezone and develop the site into mixed residential, retail and office space and have sought the opinion of this Committee. The Engineer of Record for the owner, The Engineering Groupe, proposes to relocate their offices to this new development and will be the first office tenant. Excluding the Engineering Groupe building, the remaining proposed office space will contain retail on the ground floor. A commercial pad is dedicated for a restaurant. Over 220 residential units are proposed, most are condominiums located in 4 story structures with a club house and swimming pool as amenities. Live/work units, residential units with ground floor retail, is also proposed. Deck parking for residential and retail use is proposed.

Mr. Lubeley explained that the office space for the Engineering Groupe and all multi-story residential condominiums will be built first, as well as all site infrastructure. All remaining office and retail space will be constructed only upon firm commitment by a potential tenant; it was explained in both June and November presentations that there was little current demand for office space. But, the proffers would guarantee that no other use than proposed would be permitted.

According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, 890 acres have been identified for special use as defined by the Regional Employment Center Plan, stipulating, among other requirements, that development be dedicated for Class A/B office space. Additionally, this Plan limits total residential dwelling to 325 units. Currently approximately 280 units exist or have been approved for construction within this Sector. This proposal far exceeds the difference.

Observations and Concerns

The Committee in good faith worked with the developer at both meetings to suggest improvements to the proposal, and to their credit, the developer did improve site features. Subsequent to the November meeting however, the Committee learned of the Parsons Brinkerhoff housing inventory study, gained access to current office occupancy rates, as well as had an opportunity to further review the Comprehensive Plan, all of which has caused the Committee to reconsider the entirety of the residential component of the development.

The following details continue to be a concern to the Committee exclusive of all external zoning and Comprehensive Plan issues:

1. Per William Vaughan, Senior Research Manager for Prince William County Dept. of Economic Development, the vacancy rate of office space in the eastern end of PW County is 2.9% and 7.1% countywide. These statistics demonstrate the clear need for additional office space in the eastern region of the County. With occupancy rates running at 97%, it is anticipated that little space remains to lure major tenants with a

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large employee base requiring significant contiguous floor space. (This contradicts the premise used by the developer to concentrate on the residential aspects.) This high demand for office space if left unaddressed could drive potential tenants to Fairfax and Stafford Counties, bypassing Prince William entirely.

2. The construction preconditions of residential units erected before office is viewed as an unacceptable approach, particularly in light of the current trends in real estate markets.
3. Open space as acknowledged by the developer includes buffers, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, SWM ponds. While the buffers include vegetative material, all others seem to be contrary to the spirit of providing open space. Particularly noteworthy is the lack of play space beyond the immediate club house and pool should the residential units be built.
4. The site is extremely over-built and is covered by impervious surfaces. While SWM ponds are proposed to accommodate surface drainage, the Committee is very concerned about overall management of storm water.
5. The combined live/work units have been copied from the similar units built at the County Center by KCI. A recent site visit indicated meager occupancy, leading to Committee concern that this type of development is not popular, hence should not be repeated.

Closing

The Advisory Committee's approach to reviewing proposals practices the philosophy that any proposal should first bring value to the community, do no harm to the surrounding community, and improve the tax base. Unfortunately, the Committee views this proposal in its current configuration as violating these committee-held tenants for the aforementioned reasons. In fact, we view this proposal in its current form to cause grave harm to the strategic opportunities for business and economic development and employment opportunities for County residents. The Committee expresses great interest in working with the developer and owners to reach a mutually acceptable solution. However, the Committee feels that Comprehensive Plan's Regional Employment Center is well conceived and should be implemented without compromise. The Committee recommends that the Planning Commission seek resolution of these issues prior to the proposal being presented before the County Board of Supervisors.

This recommendation has been prepared by Jim Brighton and respectfully submitted on behalf of the Occoquan District Land-Use Advisory Committee by Gail Burda, Chairperson.