

WESTMORE CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION

A volunteer-based civic association representing residents of the Autumn Woods, Joyce Heights, Pumpkin Place, Warren Woods & Westmore subdivisions in the City of Fairfax, Virginia

October 10, 2022

Brooke Hardin, AICP
10455 Armstrong Street, Room 207
Fairfax, VA 22030

RE: Kamp Washington Small Area Plan Amendment
Public Hearing, Final Action & Recommendation to City Council

Dear Mr. Hardin,

The Westmore Community has reviewed the modified draft plan amendment for the Kamp Washington Area, dated September 23, 2022, for the following items noted at the public hearing held on September 12, 2022:

- Transitions to adjacent neighborhoods and consistency in site development standards;
- Flexibility in design concepts;
- Inconsistencies, including but not limited to treatment of the Fern Street Connector, the water tower, and advisability of drive-throughs.

Following the public hearing, Westmore community members met on-site with representatives of Federal Realty, owners of the commercial properties immediately adjacent to Park Road and the Westmore communities. Several items were discussed which pertain to the issues to be reassessed during the deferment period.

Transitions to adjacent neighborhoods and consistency in site development standards:

Park Road is unique in the Kamp Washington area as 12 homes along this roadway between Chestnut Road and Fern Street directly face the commercial property to the north rather than back up to it as with other residential properties in the study area. It is also a low-lying area as Route 29 (Lee Highway) is elevated above Park Road. Given these factors and the decades of development that have completely ignored and, in some cases, degraded the boundary between the commercial and residential areas, the Westmore community supports an enhanced buffer to allow for a tree protective zone and a stormwater and amenity zone. At a recent site visit, we measured out the 25-foot tree protection zone and noted that it barely contained the critical root zone of the existing trees. Therefore, we support the modified 40-foot cross section as presented in the revised draft plan amendment. As noted in our conversations with the developer, we will continue to engage with them as their redevelopment plans evolve. We appreciate their willingness to discuss alternatives and the Planning Commissioners' willingness to consider the fact that Park Road is unlike any of the other residential scenarios within the study area.

Inconsistencies, including but not limited to treatment of the Fern Street Connector:

After much consideration and discussion of the Fern Street Connector over the summer, the Westmore Community supports providing only a pedestrian path north of Park Road. This was the item of most concern and discussion within the community. While others have supported this as a one-way north vehicle connection to provide a "convenient exit" for the community, that recommendation does not take into consideration the attractive nuisance it would be for us. This concern is based on our two ingress/egress points to Westmore, one at Rust Road and the other at Chestnut Street. Both these ingress/egress points are signed extensively to communicate vehicle limits and restrictions. However, these signs and regulations are often ignored resulting in property damage and vehicles getting stuck navigating our neighborhood roadways.

For example, Chestnut Street, is signed “No Trucks” on Main Street, Chestnut Street and at the commercial property entrance, yet those signs are ignored by truck drivers who use Chestnut Street as a convenient way to access the loading area behind Planet Fitness and Aldi. Demonstrating that signage was not enough to deter truck traffic, a headache bar was installed by the shopping center owners to further prevent trucks from entering. However, the bars were often knocked down when trucks defied the signage. The current owner, Federal Realty is undergoing their own headache regarding installation of a new deterrent bar over the entrance. Hopefully, they will be able to find a solution, though it is unlikely.

Additionally, Rust Road has many variations of signage including “Local Traffic Only” “Wrong Way” and “No Trucks” leading to the residential segment of Rust Road. Residents along Westmore Drive have had to help truck drivers reverse out of the neighborhood after they ignored the signage and realized they couldn’t navigate the one-way segment where Westmore Drive and Holly Street meet. If only signage proved to be enough to keep these scenarios from happening.

While we understand the concept of a “convenient” exit out of the neighborhood, it is these examples of blatant disregard of directives that lead us to believe that a short one-way vehicle exit from Park Road to Fern Street will be treated as a one-lane bridge in which cars will scoot through when the coast is clear ignoring any “Do Not Enter” signage. It is yet another attractive nuisance we would like to avoid. As stated during our community meetings, “We’re fine just taking the long way around... we do it already”

Flexibility in design concepts:

The Westmore Community supports flexibility in design concepts given the in-depth discussions on solutions to many of the issues raised will have to be worked through during the rezoning process. I hope we have demonstrated our willingness to engage with not only the property owners but city staff as well.

In closing, I wanted to sincerely thank Paul Nabti and Lyndsey Clouatre, the staff assigned to this plan amendment as well as the representatives from the consultants, Cunningham & Quill Architects and the other firms that worked on this endeavor. The Westmore Community appreciates the time and effort they gave to meet and discuss the details and items of concern. We also wanted to thank Federal Realty and Cooley LLP. We have already seen investment and improvement in the shopping center and feel we have established a good line of communication, which had been missing over at least the last 13+ years.

Thank you for your consideration in this manner,

Elizabeth Iannetta, President
Westmore Citizens’ Association

Cc: Planning Commissioners (via email)

Mark Angres, Chair
James Feather, Vice-Chair
Anthony Coleman
Paul Cunningham
Amir Eftekhari
Kirsten Lockhart
Matthew Rice

City Staff (via email):

Paul Nabti
Lyndsey Clouature