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RE: Transit-Related Small Area Plan – Final Report Draft Dec 6, 2023

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The following are recommendations for revisions to the Dec 6, 2023, draft of the Transit-Related Small Area Plan (draft “TRG SAP”) that should be made prior to the adoption of the TRG.

Recommendation 1: Avoid prescriptive design and dimensions in TRG SAP

Clarify in the TRG SAP that specific design direction (such as site design, architecture, open space elements, etc.) and dimensions (including setbacks; building heights and footprints; separation between buildings, etc.) are conceptual and intended to show general massing, hierarchy of uses, scale and proportion, but are meant to be refined and finalized as part of final site design developed in subsequent land use process in a manner that still respects the concepts and design principals generally described in the TRG SAP. While the concepts and intents described in the text and diagrams of the TRG SAP are appropriate, the following specific dimensions should be removed from the TRG SAP (and deferred to when proper site-specific design can be done):

- a. Setbacks from public ROW
- b. Private Roadway sections
- c. Metro Arrival Plaza Width and Massing (Retail Podium)
- d. Buffer/Berm separating TRG from the Downs.

Rationale – It appropriate to leave reasonable flexibility in the land use process to allow owners and the Town to work collaboratively on design solutions that still respect the planning and design objectives in the TRG SAP. The building designs and spatial relationships in the TRG SAP are untested from practical construction and market perspectives. Mandating what are acknowledged to be conceptual design details could have the unintended consequence of preventing practical and creative solutions and ideas that could be necessary to respond to still evolving market conditions and might otherwise have support of Town regulators, decision makers and stakeholders.

Recommendation 2: Revise requirements at park along the powerline easement.

There should be a differentiation between the other urban parks in the TRG (Triangle, Square, Fairbrook) and the linear park in the easement with respect to “development” fronting on the parks as shown in the TRG SAP. Specifically, residential and commercial uses should not be *required* to directly face powerlines.

Rationale - While it’s good to flip an existing constraint (such as the powerline easement) into an asset (like a park and roadway), the TRG SAP should not ignore the real impacts that the powerlines have on their surroundings. Specifically, residential and commercial uses facing and directly adjacent to the powerlines would become undesired spaces and fail economically. All buildings architecturally have a “front side” and “back side” (need for service, loading, parking, etc). The Plan seems to treat most facades as “fronts” resulting in significant constraints in development private parcels. The plan view on Page 40 shows very few “back” areas. Rather than prescribing that these buildings have “front sides” all around, it is appropriate to allow the “back side” (which is needed on at least one façade) to be located along already impacted frontage facing the powerlines.

Recommendation 3: Reduce prescriptive requirements related to parking location and design.

The TRG SAP’s goal of reducing the visible impact of parking garages is appropriate. However, overly restrictive rules will unnecessarily impact project feasibility and should be revised.

Rationale - Efficient parking garage design is critical to successful site solutions for retail, residential and commercial development. Overly restrictive rules on location and design of parking garages will limit good site design and impact the feasibility of projects. Specifically, the requirement to fully “line” parking on *all* sides is overly restrictive and does not acknowledge that “backs” of the building will exist. A more appropriate requirement would be to line parking with other uses at important locations, such as the ground floor of building “front sides” (as noted above) and allowing other design solutions, such as architectural screening or planting along other facades and floors of the garage. Further, a prohibition on all parking on the ground floor does not make sense. Often interior spaces (away from ground floor facades) are difficult to lease and therefore become an appropriate location for parking. This leaves the spaces along the ground floor facades as the appropriate place to “line” the parking with active uses such as retail, amenities and lobbies.

Recommendation 4: Clarify intent of cycle track along Herndon Parkway.

Project assumptions (page 7 of the draft TRG SAP) state that a two-way cycle track on the south side of Herndon Parkway is a previously approved project that is assumed to be implemented. However, the roadway section of Herndon Parkway (page 60) shows a two-way cycle track on *both* sides of Herndon Parkway. The TRG SAP should remove references and images showing a two-way cycle track on the north side of Herndon Parkway.

Rationale - It does not make sense to have two two-way cycle tracks Herndon. Further, a more appropriate location for a more well protected cycle track is along powerline easement.

Recommendation 5: Update Market Analysis Information Relative to Rental Apartments

Project assumptions (page 19 of the draft TRG SAP) state that it is expected that rental apartments will remain relatively stable in the near term.

Rationale – Market conditions have shifted and this assumption is no longer accurate. Investment returns for ground-up rental apartment development have deteriorated and projects may be infeasible in the near term.