



# CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

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**DATE:** October 30, 2015  
**TO:** Mayor Tarter and Members of City Council  
**FROM:** Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation (CACT)  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Mason Row Project at Broad and West Streets

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## Introduction

On September XX, 2015, the City Council referred the sixth submission of the proposed Mason Row mixed-use development project to City Boards and Commissions for comment. The CACT discussed the project at its October 14<sup>th</sup> meeting following a presentation of the revised concept by the developer.

This memo responds to the City Council's referral and is intended to assist the City Council in their evaluation of the project.

## Comments

The proposed Mason Row project is much improved from earlier submissions. The CACT was pleased to see improved connections to the W&OD trail, a safer realignment of the trail crossing and the addition of a transportation management plan that outlines some of the tactics the developer may employ to mitigate the increase in vehicular traffic associated with the development.

Yet some issues remain and require further attention. Following are the transportation and mobility issues the CACT has identified. These comments are informed by the policy guidance found in the City's *Comprehensive Plan* (specifically *Mobility for all Modes, Chapter 7*).

### Parking and Vehicle Access

- City staff should examine whether too many parking spaces have been allocated for this project.
- The developer should consider designating a convenient area for taxi/Uber pickups.
- During construction, the developer will need to enforce that all subcontractors and workers do not park on residential streets.

### Transportation Demand Management Plan

- The submission of a transportation management plan (TMP) is a well researched and very positive development, but the current document is a list of tactics the developer *may* use. In our October meeting, the developer verbally committed to the following measures: two designated spaces for a car-sharing service, unbundling the residential parking, bus stop improvements (including a shelter), secure bike parking, a transportation information kiosk, a hotel shuttle, and various informational initiatives designed to promote alternate forms of transportation. City staff should work closely with the developer to finalize these commitments.

#### Impacts on Local Traffic and Parking

- The residents of Grove Avenue have been well represented in these meetings and their concerns have assisted this committee in our evaluation of the project.
- Residents of Park, Grove and West Streets can expect to see a substantial increase in traffic volume. Traffic calming measures should be considered for residents of these streets.
- Overflow parking can be expected on Park, West and Grove Streets and the City should consider implementing a residential parking program (e.g. permit parking) in order to mitigate the impact on residents, some of whom do not have driveways.
- The City should employ striping or other measures to ensure that queuing of southbound traffic on West Street does not block egress from Steeples Court.
- The addition of a traffic signal at the eastern end of the property may require the installation of a median. This median may prevent access to the merchants on the south side of Broad for traffic traveling westbound on Broad. Alternatives should be considered to prevent this outcome.
- The new traffic signal would be placed 250 feet away from the current signal at Broad and West, an intersection that currently experiences significant queuing during rush hour.
- The developer's traffic impact studies find that the level of service for all intersections near the project will be either improved or maintained. A third-party analysis of this data should be considered to ensure it is credible.

#### W&OD Trail Access and Connections

- The developer's proposed realignment of the W&OD trail crossing at West Street, two new crosswalks at Park/West and West/Grove, and a new sidewalk on the north side of West street represent a positive improvement from earlier submissions that will create stronger connections to the W&OD trail.
- Narrowing Grove Avenue on its approach to the W&OD trail crossing would both shorten the crossing distance for trail users and help to calm traffic on Grove Avenue.

#### Bicycle Access and Bicycle Parking

- The developer's designation of a space for Bike Share is a very positive step. Mason Row would lie at a central location in the City of Falls Church. The addition of a Bike Share station at this location would make the addition of Bike Share stations at the East and West Falls Church Metro

stations more likely. We would like to see a longer commitment to the Bike Share program from the developer.

- Additional bike racks and Class 1 bike storage are also a positive improvement from earlier submissions. City staff should ensure the proposed bicycle parking is adequate for both residents as well as employees and patrons of the commercial businesses.
- The City should consider the installation of sharrows or other bike facilities along Grove Avenue, which would serve as a direct connection to the West Falls Church metro. The addition of bicycle facilities on this street may also have the added benefit of calming traffic.

#### Pedestrian Access

- The addition of a traffic signal at the eastern edge of the property will facilitate the crossing of Broad Street but may negatively impact eastbound traffic flows on Broad Street.
- The City should maximize the amount of clear walkway space for pedestrians. Too many commercial properties in the downtown area do not have adequate walkway space, or have obstructions such as signs or patio seating. The CACT does not believe a 6-foot clear walkway will provide enough space to create a pedestrian-friendly streetscape. A goal of 10-foot clear would be more appropriate.
- The proposed building is significantly taller than the majority of commercial buildings in the City. A wider sidewalk may be necessary to offset the feeling of a building towering above. It may also be necessary for the City to redesign its current streetscape standards to better address these larger developments. For example, the City might want to address whether the current configuration of sidewalk planters work or whether one could be designed that is smaller and less obtrusive.

#### Bus and Rail Access

- WMATA is currently considering discontinuing the 3T line connecting the East and West Falls Church Metro stations. This potential reduction in service should be considered as shuttle service is planned, as well as whether the findings in the Traffic Impact Study will be affected.
- Any shuttle from the development should service not only hotel guests, but residents and employees too.
- City staff should ensure the shuttle does not use Grove Avenue to access the West Falls Church Metro station.
- Finally, as more large multi-use development projects are approved and come online in the City, we should re-examine the need for a shuttle bus system. This system would transport not only the residents, patrons and employees of these multi-use developments, but also residents, visitors and employees throughout the City.