

Planning Commission shifts Forest Lakes road

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Wednesday, August 29, 2007

A large Albemarle County neighborhood notched another victory Tuesday night with the Albemarle County Planning Commission.

Residents in the Forest Lakes neighborhood, made up of 1,400 homes and located north of Charlottesville off U.S. 29, have expressed several concerns about the Places29 plan, a guiding tool for what the future of the fast-developing U.S. 29 corridor should look like.

Laid out in a series of colorful maps, Places29 suggests how land could be used during the coming decades and proposes a road network to cope with the growth that county officials say is inevitable.

The commission appeased Forest Lakes residents Tuesday by moving a road that would serve as an entrance and exit into their neighborhood. As proposed, the road would have passed by a mobile home park, and residents in Forest Lakes didn't want to pass through the park going to and from U.S. 29. They were also worried about the road's effect on their property values if it were built.

Planners will now shift the road to the north [*typo - should say south*], avoiding the park.

"Nobody wants to come in and out of a trailer park every day," said Scott Elliff, a board member of the Forest Lakes Community Association.

Judith Wiegand, a county planner, said the road would not be put in until the mobile home park redevelops, likely into something else. Elliff said, however, that residents don't buy that.

Commissioners also agreed.

"If it doesn't matter, then just move it," said Marcia Joseph, the commission's chairwoman.

The commission's recommendations will be sent to the Board of Supervisors, which will discuss the plan next week and ultimately make a final decision. That decision, however, isn't expected until fall, after a series of public meetings to discuss the plan in September.

Elliff said the county has so far responded to the community's wishes. "The theme is, the county listens on these things," he said.

Several months ago, residents presented the Board of Supervisors with a petition signed by 850 residents in opposition to a proposed connector road that would have taken traffic off U.S. 29 and into Forest Lakes. County planners and the commission later made changes to the road.

It's likely not the last time that the issue of parallel roads to U.S. 29 becomes a heated subject. The parallel roads are a key part of the plan, planners say. They've been designed to provide alternatives to the notoriously congested U.S. 29 corridor. County commissioners, supervisors and planners say those roads will be key so a growing population doesn't clog what some refer to as "downtown" Albemarle.