

September 2009

To Members of the Planning Commission:

This is in response to your request for public comment on the potential to change the current Places 29 plan in order to expand the growth area along Route 29 north.

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Forest Lakes Community Association (FLCA). Forest Lakes comprises 1,400 homes and approximately 5,000 residents, and represents the majority of the people who live in the area covered by the north section of the Places 29 plan for which you are seeking comment. We have been involved periodically in developing and commenting on specific elements of this plan over the past several years, and were surprised to learn, second hand, that this question was being revisited by the Planning Commission.

We oppose any expansion of the growth area at this time, and support the overall Places 29 plan as currently written.

1. Expansion of the growth area could add substantially to traffic and congestion and overload the existing transportation network in our area, especially with the likely use of the property for additional “big box” retailing.
2. Given the substantial amount of property that is already zoned/planned for commercial and/or residential development in this corridor, including phase 2 of the Hollymead Town Center and the Northpoint Development further to the north. Enabling added development is not necessary and is unwarranted at this time.
3. Building the westside new road network is a critical prerequisite to enabling any further development. Any plan to expand the growth area must first ensure that there are concrete plans and firm funding commitments for Berkmar Drive Extended and a new westside bridge over the Rivanna River.
4. Rezoning to permit added development and density, whether commercial or residential, in the area directly across Route 29 from Forest Lakes would involve added erosion and siltation into Lake Hollymead, which is owned by FLCA (and another homeowners association). We have already been significantly harmed by prior failures to adequately regulate and oversee activity for the now existing Hollymead Town Center. Tons of silt have been deposited in Lake Hollymead – reducing the quality of our lake and leaving us to foot the clean-up bill which is estimated at more than \$1 million. While promises were made by the then-owners to address the situation, nothing was ever done, and ownership subsequently changed such that it became impossible for us to hold anyone accountable for this issue. Before any further expansion of the growth area these existing, unfunded costs, and the costs of additional remediation need to be directly addressed. We supported the recent action by the Board of Supervisors to tighten development procedures, but the issue of siltation and the impacts on those who live downstream remain, and these responsibilities need to be met regardless of any future changes in ownership of properties in this locale.

The Planning Commission can of course entertain requests for rezoning and adding to the growth area at some future point in time, after the considerations detailed above have been addressed. We would be happy to be involved with analyzing and commenting on such requests at that time.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to you.

Scott Elliff

Member, Board of Directors, Forest Lakes Community Association