



# Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

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February 18, 2014

Patrick Sullivan  
Director of Community Development  
Town of Purcellville  
221 South Nursery Avenue  
Purcellville, VA 20132

**RE: Catoctin Creek Towne Center**

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

We have reviewed the rezoning, comprehensive plan amendment, and special use permit applications for the project referenced above (plans dated October 1, 2013 and revised through January 15, 2014) and offer the following comments.

Background

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority owns and operates the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park (W&OD Trail), which borders the subject property. This 45-mile long, 100-foot wide, linear park property traverses Northern Virginia between Shirlington in Arlington County and Purcellville in Loudoun County. The park features paved and unpaved multi-use trails, interpretive exhibits, wayside areas, and parking for trail users. The W&OD hosts an estimated two million visitors a year and was designated a National Recreation Trail in 1987 by the U.S. Department of Interior. The W&OD Railroad features make the park eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Site Access at Maple Avenue

The W&OD Trail was acquired and developed with assistance from the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund. If the Park Authority grants a permanent interest in the park, such as that necessary for road improvements outside of existing right of way, the conveyance constitutes a "conversion of use" under section 6(f) of the LWCF Act. The U.S. Department of Interior, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Park Authority must approve the conversion.

In addition to the LWCF requirements, Park Authority policies state that in no event shall any road be widened within park property unless it meets the following criteria: the Park Authority would gain substantial benefits outweighing all adverse impacts; or, it is a public roadway shown on the comprehensive transportation plan of the jurisdiction and is an essential component of the planned road network required for development of the region; and, in all cases involving the W&OD Trail, a grade-separated crossing must be established at no cost to the Park Authority.

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The plans show site access from Maple Avenue that ties in near the park boundary and a proposed right turn taper from Maple Avenue into the subject site. A left turn lane into the subject site from Maple Avenue may be required by VDOT. Impacts of this intersection on the W&OD Trail crosswalk must be addressed, including adding a third lane of traffic for trail users to cross. Also, vehicles queued across the crosswalk waiting to turn into the site would be a serious safety hazard for trail users that maneuver around stopped vehicles and potentially into oncoming vehicles approaching from the opposite direction.

#### Driveway Access to Mercke and Mason Properties

The adjacent 3.5 acre Mason property, and the 2 acre Mercke property (PIN: 487-10-9228) which is part of the subject site, do not front on a public street and currently are accessed via an at-grade driveway crossing of the W&OD Trail. At-grade vehicular crossings of the W&OD Trail are a serious safety hazard for the public and should be eliminated where feasible. Therefore, as conditions of approval, the Town should require that a public access route be provided to the Mason property via the subject site and the Town should prohibit access to the subject site via the existing driveway crossing of the W&OD Trail<sup>[KR1]</sup>. Proffer 2(b) should be revised so that additional entrances that impact the W&OD Trail are subject to the Park Authority's approval in addition to the Town's and VDOT's approvals.

#### Buffers

The subject site shares an approximately 1,000 foot boundary with the W&OD Trail and will be highly visible to park users. The impacts of neighboring uses along the 90 miles of park boundary, as well as non-park uses of the property, greatly diminish park users' experience. The applicant's Statement of Justification states that the W&OD Trail will be buffered as shown on the CDP; however, the size of a buffer is not shown. The Park Authority believes that significant setbacks and landscape buffers should be provided given the project's impacts on this narrow regional resource. Also, the outdoor event area has the potential to impact W&OD Trail users and through trail traffic if event patrons and activities overflow onto the park property. Therefore, the event area must be designed and buffered to mitigate this potential impact. Proffer 1(b) should be revised to add the W&OD Trail to the last sentence: Utility equipment and loading docks shall, to the maximum extent practically feasible, be screened from view from any public street *and the W&OD Trail*.

#### Connector Trail

The Park Authority supports the trail connection to the W&OD Trail from the subject site as shown on the plans, subject to meeting the Park Authority's minimum requirements for slope, sight distance, safety, drainage and other criteria. The project sponsor will be required to obtain a permit from the Park Authority and the licensee will be responsible for construction of the entire connection and its perpetual maintenance. The permit will require public access for trail users and cannot be for the sole use of patrons of the subject property.

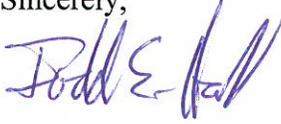
#### Sanitary Sewer Force Mains

The plans show two proposed sanitary force mains crossing the W&OD Trail at the subject site's western boundary. The project sponsor shall not encroach onto park property for any purpose prior to, during, or after construction unless the Park Authority approves a permit for the activity.

The force mains must be installed by tunneling or boring underneath the park property and trail continuity must be maintained at all times during construction.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please contact me at 703-352-5900 if you would like to discuss our comments in more detail.

Sincerely,



Todd E. Hafner  
Director of Planning and Development

c: Dan Kaseman, NVRPA Board Member  
Joan Rokus, NVRPA Board Member