

MVCCA 2016-J01 (E&R-EDU-TRANS): Joint Resolution that Submits Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (MVCCA) Comments on the Fort Belvoir (Belvoir) Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) Project Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA)

1. **WHEREAS** the Fairfax County (County) Comprehensive Plan Recommendation No. 1 for the Lower Potomac Planning District LP4 states "Proposed development or redevelopment on Fort Belvoir should be undertaken in cooperation with the County; plans for this should be supported only if they are consistent with the County Goals and Comprehensive Plan"; and
2. **WHEREAS** the County Goals and Comprehensive Plan recommendations in LP4 for Parks and Open Space, Environment, and Heritage Resources must be addressed with respect to this project to determine consistency; and
3. **WHEREAS** the Mount Vernon (MV) District Supervisor relies on guidance from the MVCCA as the only District-wide community organization focused on environment and recreation (E&R), education (EDU), and transportation (TRANS) matters on development or re-development compliance with County Goals and Comprehensive Plans; and
4. **WHEREAS** Fort Belvoir outreach efforts announcing a 30-day public comment period (Nov. 13-Dec. 14, 2015, including the Thanksgiving holiday) apparently excluded direct contact with the MVCCA, MV District Supervisor, Fairfax County Agencies, Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), and neighboring communities resulting in inadequate time to provide substantive comments on this significant and very complex project before the public comment period closed; and
5. **WHEREAS** MVCCA review of the SEA indicates that various important education, environment and recreation (including historical and cultural resources), and transportation issues have been overlooked or inadequately assessed; and
6. **WHEREAS critical elements are missing** from the SEA and actions related thereto including:
 - a. Hydrological and biological studies of the area to ensure **no adverse impacts** on
 - i. Water flows in and out of Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) with whom Fort Belvoir shares a property boundary;
 - ii. Any area of Coastal Plain Depression Swamp on HMP and Fort Belvoir property;
 - iii. Rare plants and wildlife that are documented on contiguous HMP property and likely also occur on Fort Belvoir property;
 - b. Direct collaboration with the FCPA, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, and Friends of Historic Huntley to ensure protection of recently documented, publicly significant historical and cultural resources on contiguous HMP property that likely extend onto Fort Belvoir property;
 - c. Direct collaboration with the MV and Lee District Supervisors, MVCCA, Fairfax County Agencies, adjacent and nearby neighborhoods, and neighbors on all aspects of the project;

7. **WHEREAS** new housing units will likely produce significant numbers of school-age children; some will be assigned to a new on-base elementary school, though it is not clear if these students can be fully absorbed on-post, with middle school students assigned to already overcapacity Whitman Middle School; and

8. **WHEREAS** there will be increased traffic flowing onto Pole Road, aggravating existing turning hazards at the documented dangerous intersection of Pole Road and Jeff Todd Way; and

9. **WHEREAS** this project proposes to clear cut more than 5,400 trees on a 31-acre site that is environmentally valuable and strategically significant to this region of the Mount Vernon District adversely impacting:

- a. Water quality, through loss of storm water filtering and absorption functions;
- b. Quality of life, through loss of green space and the "urban heat island" effect;
- c. Rare plant and wildlife communities, through loss of strategically significant natural habitat (possibly including Coastal Plain Depression Swamp), documented to support numerous wildlife species; and
- d. Air quality, by eliminating the filtering and carbon sink functions performed by trees; and

10. **WHEREAS** our military should be housed in high quality, technologically advanced, and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods and homes to the maximum extent feasible. However, the draft design of the neighborhood does not appear to integrate smart growth principles, is not near public transit, and needs to devote attention to minimizing adverse environmental impacts and should thus include:

- a. Reduction of the environmental footprint;
- b. Increasing the buffer area around wetlands and **all** contiguous property boundaries including Huntley Meadows Park, Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge, and Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge to protect sensitive natural habitat, wildlife, and water quality;
- c. Designating Tree Save areas across the project site as well as off-site, so that this project would expand contiguous natural biological corridors between HMP, Jackson Miles Abbott Wetland Refuge and Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge; and

A. **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the MVCCA recommends that

1. A full Environmental Impact Statement be undertaken to address the critical information gaps and recommendations noted above; and
2. If it is found that the adverse environment and recreation, education, and transportation impacts are deemed too significant to adequately mitigate, then the project should be dropped, relocated or substantially redesigned;

- B. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the MVCCA requests that the MV District Supervisor
1. Work with our federally elected officials including Congressmen Beyer and Connolly, and the MVCCA to ensure that the MVCCA's requests described herein are implemented within the project design;
 2. Submit the comments to RCI within this resolution for written response;
 3. Strongly encourage the use of this resolution in decision-making by the Fort Belvoir Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) team, the Fort Belvoir Base Commander or her designee, or other Department of Defense officials; and
- C. **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the MVCCA requests that Fort Belvoir and the US Army:
1. Strongly seek out opportunities to assist cash-strapped Fairfax County Public Schools; this could be through equipment donation, partnerships, mentoring, and / or, perhaps, providing bus service to students living on base to access on- and off-base schools; and
 2. Collaborate with VDOT to evaluate and implement measures to reduce the high accident rates at the Pole Road and Jeff Todd Way intersection, to include the placement of a traffic light at this critical intersection.