

September 3, 2018

Board of County Supervisors
Prince William County
1 County Complex Court
Woodbridge, Virginia 22192

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board,

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Rural Crescent. It has, for the most part, served its intended purpose, yet we are once again considering major changes that could fundamentally alter it. That is not the desired outcome for a clear majority of your constituents. It is time to embrace it and make it work – for everyone.

As you are aware, the Planning Office has delayed indefinitely providing you the results of staff's analysis of the 2014 Rural Preservation Study recommendations. The groups represented below see this as a positive action and an excellent opportunity for you. We now have an opening by which we can all get the horse back in front of the cart!

We believe that getting citizen involvement and input on the impact of the recommendations of the study at the earliest stage of staff analysis will provide you a more holistic view, from concerned citizens across the entire County, of the potential ramifications of implementing the study's recommendations. Engaging citizens up-front and getting their opinions on possible effects first will eliminate the extra step of staff trying to incorporate that input after the fact, saving limited staff resources.

While we appreciate the excellent analytical resources and capabilities available with staff, citizen input, experience, and expertise must be brought to bear very early on in any process whose potential outcomes will impact all in Prince William County. Therefore, we ask the Board of County Supervisors to take this opportunity to reset the County's approach to the evaluation of the Rural Preservation Study and its recommendations for changes to the County Comprehensive Plan.

First and foremost, all parties must acknowledge that the Rural Crescent is not the problem, it is the solution that has allowed the County to maximize the benefits of infrastructure investments. Any changes should be considered through this lens. We recommend that the Board direct staff to take the following steps before resuming this process:

1. Publish a reasonable timeline to ensure a process that is open and accessible to the community.
2. As previously stated, put the horse in front of the cart. Before recommending changes, we ask that staff present all recommendations proposed in the study to

the community and gather public opinion. After public meetings and being informed by citizen input, staff can then complete their analysis of the recommendations.

3. Rural Crescent issues have obviously resonated with residents from across the county. Every effort should be made to reach residents countywide and ensure that they understand how any changes to the plan could affect them no matter where they live. We can, and will, assist in this by using our civic association contacts to bring citizens to the table to be educated on the study and its recommendations.
4. The Comprehensive Plan creates a vision for the entire County. Because changes to one section of the plan affect the rest, the Rural Crescent must be evaluated in the context of the overall plan.
5. Special attention must be given to the stated Occoquan Policy regarding public sewer, including how increases in housing density in the rural area could affect that policy.
6. More attention must be given to the investigation of successful programs in other jurisdictions that incentivize and encourage agribusiness and protection of open space. Experts should be consulted and included in public meetings.

We believe strongly that the process followed to date has not been transparent and will not provide you with the holistic input you need to make informed decisions on so many critical topics. When done correctly, this revised process will be one that is respected and embraced by all. We stand ready to work with all stakeholders to achieve these positive results.

Sincerely,

Mid-County Civic Association (MIDCO)

Prince William Conservation Alliance (PWCA)

Woodbridge, Potomac Communities Civic Association (WPPCA)

Lake Ridge, Occoquan, Coles Civic Association (LOCCA)

Advocates for the Rural Crescent (ARC)

Nokesville Civic Association (NCA)

cc: Prince William County Planning Commission

Mr. Christopher Price, Deputy County Executive

Ms. Rebecca Horner, Director of Planning

Mr. Phil Campbell, Assistant to the County Executive and Clerk to the Board of County Supervisors