



January 24, 2023

Henrico County Board of Supervisors
P. O. Box 90775
Henrico, VA 23273-0775

Dear Chairman Thornton and members of the Board of Supervisors:

We, at the Partnership for Smarter Growth, are concerned about the proposed Arcadia development and the rezoning of Nelson farm. This proposed development has understandably received significant pushback and concern among residents in the area who have worked for many years to offer a sustainable approach to development in the Route 5 Corridor that ensures preservation of agriculture, historic and scenic character, and tourism value.

PSG, a 20+ year old non-profit, has supported these community efforts including leading a bus tour with the county to highlight the benefits of a more sustainable approach.

While we support adding housing to our region, it needs to be in the right place and at the right scale. This particular site is a productive farm in one of our region's most historic corridors with connections to Native American, Colonial, enslavement, Civil War, and Emancipation history. Meanwhile, Henrico has many aging inner suburban areas that need investment in walkable, mixed-use development with better access to transit. Our main concerns include:

- The county is currently reviewing and updating its Comprehensive Plan and this project is jumping ahead of that process.
- The number of units is 60% higher than permitted by the current Comprehensive Plan, which itself went beyond what many local residents wanted to see for this rural and historic corridor. It is also nearly four times what is permitted by the current Agricultural Zoning.
- The county has never completed the Small Area Plan for Varina that was called for in the last Comprehensive Plan and is not addressing the preservation goals and strategies in the Route 5 Corridor Plan.

- The SMX-PD zoning is inappropriate for this development proposal. This zoning designation is meant to provide a unified community rather than isolated subdivisions. This proposal as it stands would be an isolated, leap-frog development that is cut-off from existing communities that include retail and services.
- The significant increase in zoning and conversion of a large farm about 7 miles from downtown will create a precedent for levels of growth that would lead the county to convert scenic Route 5 into a four-lane, divided highway, forcing potential closures and reconstruction of the Capital Trail, as well as degrading the cycling experience and tourism value of the trail.

The potential economic cost to taxpayers from leapfrog development can be significant, including roads, water, sewer, schools and other services. A balanced, preservation, agriculture and tourism-oriented strategy for the corridor would provide a net benefit to taxpayers.

Fair public process is important. Therefore, it is essential that the county do more to engage the community in the comprehensive plan update and undertake a small area plan, and to do so before allowing major rezonings like Arcadia to proceed.

Therefore, we support and concur in the community request that this proposal be denied. You have ample legal and procedural grounds to do so, and you will create a great opportunity to work with your residents on a shared vision for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stewart Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stewart Schwartz

President