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Pressure Mounts to Allow Homes Near Dulles Metro

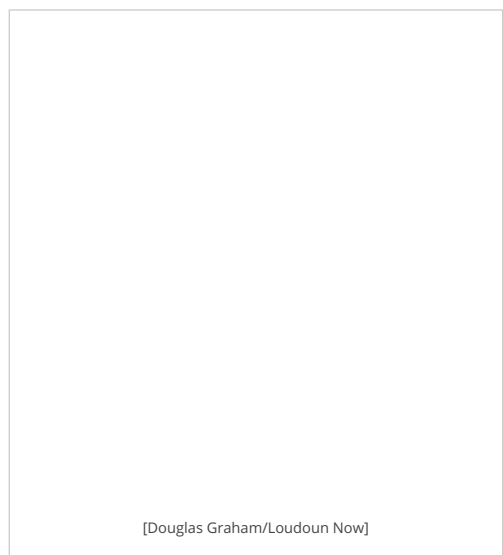
📅 2016-10-27 👤 Renss Greene 💬 4 Comments

As Loudoun County leaders develop plans for two Silver Line Metro stations along the Dulles Greenway, letters from business interests have begun pouring in, trying to push supervisors to open up the area around Dulles Airport for homes.

The Loudoun Gateway station sits at the intersection of the Dulles Greenway and Rt. 606, at the northern edge of airport property. That puts it squarely inside the loudest part of the county's Airport Impact Overlay District, where as a matter of policy the county has long forbade residential development. Even the planned Metro station under construction at the airport terminal is not expected to hear as much plane noise because it is not under a runway flight path.

Supervisors have received position papers and letters from the Dulles Area Association of Realtors, the then-president of the Dulles Corridor Rail Association, the Northern Virginia Building Industry Association, the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce, mixed-use development expert and George Washington University Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis Chairman Chris Leinberger, the county's own Economic Development Advisory Commission, and even the Antigones, a family with a stake in upwards of 260 acres of real estate neighboring the Loudoun Gateway station.

All wrote of the need to allow residential development around Loudoun Gateway.



[Douglas Graham/Loudoun Now]

"If the current zoning recommendation that prohibits residential

development for Loudon Gateway/Route 606 is maintained, the major investment in this Metrorail station will be a very expensive 'park and ride' parking deck," Leinberger wrote. "There will be little if any development generated and Loudoun County will have squandered a major opportunity."

Leinberger and others argue that the noise contours around the airport, which are based on a 1993 study, are out of date, and that modern homes can be built with insulation and windows that block out noise when inside. Several have called for new noise studies, and point to more recent environmental impact statements that have showed that the high-noise zone around the airport is much smaller than depicted in the county's planning documents.

Lars Henriksen, chairman of the board of the Dulles Area Association of Realtors, said DAAR understands the biggest change to the Silver Line plan is the deletion of multi-family houses near Loudoun Gateway.

"We also understand that the current noise contours are based on a study performed in 1993," Henriksen wrote. "Since that time there have been changes in aircraft noise, airline operations, and Dulles Airport operations which may alter the noise contour lines."

It's a familiar argument—the same questions come up around any residential plan around the airport, including most recently a proposal by nonprofit organization Windy Hill Foundation to convert the Old Arcola



Upcoming Events

MAY 14 Thu 6:00 pm Planning Commission Work Session @ Loudoun County Government Center (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/planning-commission-work-session/?instance_id=21613)

7:00 pm Livestream: History on Tap @ Loudoun Museum (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/livestream-history-on-tap/?instance_id=21550)

7:00 pm Livestream: Thursday Throwyo wit... (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/livestream-thursday-throwyo/?instance_id=21498)

MAY 15 Fri 8:00 am 2nd Annual Plant-A-Thon @ JK Community Farm (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/2nd-annual-plant-a-thon/?instance_id=21538)

4:00 pm Drumming Class: Jay Forbes @ Facebook Live (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/drumming-class-jay-forbes/?instance_id=21525)



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encompasses the Metro stations and is meant to pay for the county's contributions to the Metro system, will not develop adequately without allowing the construction of more homes. If the tax district underperforms, taxpayers countywide will be on the hook for the estimated \$22.9 million a year contribution to Metro.

"Eliminating residential development from the available mix of uses at a station will severely inhibit the prospects of attracting commercial business, economic investment and therefore realization of tax revenues," wrote the Economic Development Advisory Commission.

County staffers have disputed that argument. At a Board of Supervisors' finance committee meeting in September, county budget, transportation and administration staff members defended the county's policies and plans. Although the county may face a Metro funding shortfall because of anemic gasoline sales tax revenues, staff members say these short-term bumps in the road shouldn't be measured against the county's long-term forecasts.

"There is a fiscal benefit to Loudoun from Metro coming here, and this benefit should be realized over time through things like employment growth, development around the stations, increased property values and higher densities," Management and Budget Director Erin McLellan said at that meeting.

Of these business groups, only the Loudoun County Chamber of Commerce has written in support of the county's existing policy.

"The Chamber encourages harmonious growth of Washington Dulles International Airport and the County by recognizing the current zoning in the Airport Impact (AI) Overlay District, contained in the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance, which forecasts the ultimate build-out conditions of the Airport," the Loudoun Chamber wrote in a policy statement. "The Chamber supports carefully-considered, Airport-compatible residential uses in the vicinity of the Airport."

And so far, supervisors are sticking to their guns.

Staying the Course

"I don't think it's well understood what the nature of that 1993 study is, versus the environmental impact statements that have been done more recently," said Supervisor Matthew F. Letourneau (R-Dulles), whose district includes the airport and Loudoun Gateway station. "The 1993 study was at full buildout of the airport, which includes another runway and 40 to 50 million passengers a year, of which we're at 50 percent of that capacity right now. I guess the question to them is, do they really think that the full buildout potential of Dulles Airport has changed from 1993 until now, and if so, what has changed?"

Letourneau has been a vocal defender of the county's airport noise policy. He said that although technology and flight paths can change, they don't always change for the better. A recent upgrade to flight traffic control at the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority's other airport, Reagan National, has created new flight paths and with them new noise complaints, he said.

Plus, Letourneau said, Dulles is meant to be a 24-hour airport and as the airport grows, overnight operations could grow, too—"how are you going to feel about planes at three in the morning?"

And despite developer concerns that more housing will be needed to attract development at Loudoun Gateway, Letourneau said the county may actually have the opposite problem. The county has already approved millions of square feet of commercial and mixed-used development at the county's future Metro stations, Letourneau said, and may only see a fraction of what's already been approved in the next few years.

"I have a real concern that we are going to actually create too much competition between projects," Letourneau said. "Yes, the market will sort things out, but it certainly didn't help the development at Kincora that One Loudoun was around and flourishing."

(https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/a-taste-of-breaux-virtual-tasting-2016-vieux-carre-and-2016-petit-verdot/?instance_id=21569)

MAY 16 Sat

all-day In-Home Dance Date Night for Cou... @ Dance King Studios (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/in-home-dance-date-night-for-couples-virtual/?instance_id=21614)

8:00 am 2nd Annual Plant-A-Thon @ JK Community Farm (https://live-timely-1rcrtefryp.time.ly/event/2nd-annual-plant-a-thon/?instance_id=21539)



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Opinion

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Editor: Wearing a mask to prevent community spread of covid-19 should be everyone's responsibility. First let me say, I don't

Letter: Emerging by Jim Kelly, Sterling

2020-05-13 0

Letter: Steve Wolfson & Sheila Dixon, Step Up Loudoun

2020-05-12 0

Letter: Mitch Turner, Hamilton

2020-05-12 1

Featured Nonprofit

"If there was genuine concern in the market that our tax districts were not going to happen, that would not have happened," Letourneau said.

Supervisor Suzanne M. Volpe (R-Algonkian), who chairs the board's Transportation and Land Use Committee, said now is not the time for another study.

"If we were, as a county, to want to initiate another study, it would cost at least \$1 million, and it would take two years," Volpe said. "Do we want to hold up this entire process of the Silver Line Comprehensive Plan Amendment, that we've been working on for several years now, to wait for a study?"

Metro is expected to begin service in Loudoun in late 2019 or 2020. Volpe said at this point, landowners around the future Metro stations need certainty from the county.

"This is something that somebody should have brought up five or ten years ago, or even three years ago," Volpe said. "Maybe if they had brought it up the day that we did the original motion... when we initiated the Silver Line CPAM, then the board could have had a discussion. But you're now asking us to do it when all sorts of studies have been done.

County Chairwoman Phyllis J. Randall (D-At Large) pointed out that the county's near-term plans for the Silver Line stations are all interim uses—the county is looking forward to construction around those stations decades from now.

"What we do now, if it's an interim use, may or may not be there if it's there in 20 years," Randall said. "We're looking at this thing at a 2040 buildout, so those interim uses will go away, and at that time, if it is appropriate to build inside the [airport noise district] at that time 20 years from now, we can do that."

"Who knows?" Volpe said. "100 years from now we may have cars that don't even go on the road anymore. We may have those floating things from Star Wars. But you can't make plans based on that. You've got to plan for what you know."

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Editorial: Getting the Line Right

Before the emergence of the internet, before rocket engineers and genetic scientists set up shop in Loudoun, before federal contractors ... Continue reading



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Loudoun County Authorities: No Charges Filed In Dog Shooting Death

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 **Tuesday, May 21, 2019**
Morning Minute

00:00

4 thoughts on "Pressure Mounts to Allow Homes Near Dulles Metro"

-  David Dickinson
-  2016-10-27 at 9:32 am
-  Permalink

That's a pretty construction photo. Don't see that often.

What developer/realtor doesn't want more housing. It is the crack habit that keeps on giving (profits). Of course they will lobby for it.

But it would be unwise to change. Housing in these areas will bring untold decades of headaches and never-ending complaints from residents.



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international jumbo jets are taking flight at all hours. Not good. Also, having worked near the airport, you can't even hear yourself think when one of these takes off and you are that close. They are deafening. Another noise study??? The things are crazy loud. No study needed. Of course, I'm sure they will hire "I never met a development I didn't like" Stephen Fuller to find out that you can hear a pin drop when one of these technologically advanced planes take off.

Star Wars Speeders? I don't think so. But autonomous cars are a very real threat to metro. 40 years from today, metro will be like those vacant shopping malls we see strewn across America.

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Citizen A



2016-10-27 at 10:22 am



[Permalink](#)

No study needed. Come stand in my yard in Ashburn when the planes are on the flight path over my house. If houses are built in that location there will be complaints from very unhappy residents. Common sense should prevail here. If you live near an airport, there will be noise from planes. The developers interested in building homes there can build them for themselves and then live there if they want them so much. I doubt they'd be interested.

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virginia_sgp



2016-10-27 at 11:29 am



[Permalink](#)

We need to be encouraging folks to travel to Loudoun for work. With Dulles just a stone's throw away, why not attract a large university? Janelia and other research centers would benefit. Having metro access to a university, like George Mason in Fairfax, is a huge draw. It allows local residents to commute instead of living on campus.

In Boston, all of the universities were on the T (BU, Harvard, MIT, Northeastern, etc.). It's not a competitive disadvantage to be near other universities, it's a plus. Gauge Virginia Tech's interest in starting a tech campus in NOVA. None of the local schools are focused mainly on technology. All of the tech companies in Reston would be big supporters. At least give it a go.

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Ashburn_bedroom_county



2016-10-27 at 4:41 pm



[Permalink](#)

There is lot of development going on county near this airport and Metro area. Board member are either off real issue in Ashburn about traffic with so many development going on in Ashburn. all green trees are removed to make room for thousands of residential house or data center. there is no real job growth. Ashburn has turned into bedroom city.

Board should not listen to this developer who have no interest in county or their residence except their development. if developer are saying new houses can have sound proof houses that means developer do not

Are you often called upon to share important information about your specific areas of expertise? Or would you liked to



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take a look at regan national airport. what developer has left residence with.

<http://wtop.com/alexandria/2016/06/va-residents-pack-meeting-increased-noise-near-airport/slide/1/>

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