



Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, VA 22306

703-768-2525 www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark>

Federal Tax ID # 54-1338505

February 6, 2023

Rodney Lusk, Supervisor, Franconia District

Email: Franconia@fairfaxcounty.gov

Daniel Lagana, Planning Commissioner, Franconia District

Email: Daniel.Lagana@fairfaxcounty.gov

Copy to: Matt Renninger, Supervisor Lusk Chief of Staff

Email: Matthew.Renninger@fairfaxcounty.gov

Members of the Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County

Email to clerktotheBOS@fairfaxcounty.gov)

Members of the Planning Commission, Fairfax County

Email to: plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov

RE: Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Comments on SSPA CPN22-LE-007

Dear Supervisor Lusk and Planning Commissioner Lagana:

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park strongly urges Fairfax County to reject SSPA CPN22-LE-007. The development proposed on Sheridonna Lane is in direct opposition to the Comprehensive Plan recommendations for the property and would degrade the already compromised Dogue Creek Watershed, which includes the highly significant natural resources and wildlife habitat of Huntley Meadows Park.

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park has approximately 400 active members. Many hundreds more express their strong support through donations. The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park was created in 1986 to support, advocate for, protect and defend Huntley Meadows Park and its diverse users.

Although The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park acknowledges the need for housing in the Fairfax County, this location is **not the right place for high-density housing**. Huntley Meadows Park is the crown jewel of the Fairfax County Park Authority, and this development has the potential to seriously threaten the park. The property at issue is directly adjacent to the park and to Dogue Creek, which flows into the park. Beyond the direct impacts on the downstream areas of the park, impacts to the water quality have the potential to effect upstream areas indirectly, by degrading the quality of the wildlife corridor that links the park to the Potomac via Fort Belvoir.

As noted above, this project is inconsistent with current planning documents—hence the need for the SSPA process. For example, the County's Belle Haven, Dogue Creek and Four Mile Run Watershed Management Plan states:

There are 888 acres of wetlands in the Dogue Creek watershed, primarily located in Huntley Meadows Park in the Mainstem and Barnyard Run WMAs. The large areas of undeveloped land on Fort Belvoir Military Reservation and Huntley Meadows Park help to protect the overall quality of the mainstem of Dogue Creek.

The Stream Physical Assessment indicated that 50 percent of the stream channels were either unstable or experiencing active bank erosion. Habitat was determined to be primarily in the fair to poor range. In comparison with the rest of the County, the Dogue Creek watershed is in the lower range of quality.

The proposed development will not improve water quality as claimed. Further, the park's hydrology would be permanently changed, resulting in irreparable damage to the park's natural resources, some of which are rare and globally threatened. Significant negative impacts to the park's wetlands like there were the reason that the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1990 rejected Fairfax County's proposed extension of South Van Dorn Street (in conjunction with the Lockheed Boulevard Connector project), which would have passed through this same neighborhood. (A copy is attached.) We also note that on February 5, 2019, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors agreed to remove from the County's Plans (Comp Plan, Bicycle Plan, and other County Plans) the conceptual paved bike trails (transportation corridors) proposed in this same region of the park due to the significant adverse impacts to the park's hydrology and natural resources. The video of that decision is available in the Board of Supervisors meeting archives and includes comments by then-Supervisor McKay.

The addition of 8 acres of impervious surface and the clearing and excavating for building and road construction will be deleterious to Dogue Creek. The negative effects of the development will far outweigh any promised restoration of the flood plain and RPA. Moreover, the reference in the application to "Addition of berm to control 100-year flood plain" is troubling—"controlling" the 100-year flood plain appears to be a euphemism for reducing the size of the flood plain and building in it.

Development in a floodplain and RPA is in opposition to the County's newly adopted Resilient Fairfax Plan, which states: "Resilient Fairfax is a plan and program to help Fairfax County adapt and become more resilient to changing conditions and climate change-related hazards such as extreme heat, severe storms, and flooding."

We hope that, in light of these facts—and your genuine concern for the environment and its importance to the County— you will reject this nomination and instead give the fullest measure of your support to the preservation of Dogue Creek and Huntley Meadows, two of Fairfax County's most valuable environmental treasures. Although we think the existing facts are sufficient to reject the nomination, in no case should the County consider granting it without objective environmental analysis. In any case, the best solution would be for the County to purchase this property for the health of Dogue Creek and Huntley Meadows Park, to protect downstream properties in the watershed, and to proactively improve climate resiliency.

Thank you for considering these written comments. In addition, we request an opportunity for members of our board to discuss this issue in more detail with the appropriate County officials. And please keep us apprised of any developments with respect to this nomination. We can be reached at friendsofhmp@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Benjamin C. Jesup
President
Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



United States Department of the Interior

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NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
1100 OHIO DRIVE, S. W.
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Mr. J. Hamilton Lambert
County Executive
County of Fairfax
4100 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, Virginia 22030

Dear Mr. Lambert:

Based on our recent conversation, and understanding the concerns of the county in finding a balance between the demands for transportation and the preservation of your open-space resources, we have enclosed the documentation and findings we discussed regarding our decision concerning the proposed construction of Lockheed Boulevard through Huntley Meadows Park.

We hope that you will concur with our rationale in denying the county's request for conversion of this portion of the park for road purposes. We feel strongly that in this instance the protection of these unique natural resources must take precedence, and feel confident that, ultimately, this decision will be accepted as one that was made in the best public interest.

In arriving at this decision, we have come to view the park in a different perspective and look at what is occurring within it from the cumulative effects of development outside the park. Our conclusions are based on the extensive information, documentation and studies that have resulted from the environmental assessment which the county prepared. We have enclosed a brief summary of the findings which outline the rationale for our decision.

We feel that there is nothing to be gained by additional expenditure of the county's financial resources to develop further data, hold public hearings and prepare environmental impact studies that will ultimately conclude what is already evident. That is, Huntley Meadows Park is presently demonstrating increased signs of stress from urban development and the risk of irreversible damage to the wetlands from the construction of Lockheed Boulevard across their water source is too high to permit the project to go forward. Furthermore, steps should be taken by the county to retroactively correct the increased storm water runoff from upstream subdivisions that are threatening the park resources before irreversible damage occurs.

Sincerely,

Regional Director, National Capital Region

Enclosure