



## Piedmont Environmental Council & Coalition for Smarter Growth



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### **42,000 More Houses in Eastern Loudoun Would Mean Over 400,000 More Trips on Northern Virginia Roads**

#### **Supervisors & Citizens say NO to Developers' Wish List**

Today, a network of smart growth, conservation and civic groups were joined by elected officials in challenging developer sponsored proposals for a record 42,000 houses, which would permanently change the face of Loudoun County and undo years of citizen involvement in the adoption of the last comprehensive plan.

The groups released a map detailing the location and impact of the 20 proposed development projects. The 42,000 houses on about 10,000 acres would be nearly 3 times the housing stock of the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park.

“How big are these proposals? Too big. We need to address our existing traffic problems and school overcrowding, not build 3 to 4 more Leesburg’s or 7 more communities the size of South Riding in Eastern Loudoun,” said Andrea McGimsey, with Campaign for Loudoun’s Future.

The group’s initial analysis, based on data from Loudoun County and Virginia Department of Transportation, indicates that the 20 proposals would generate at least 400,000 additional car trips each day. This is the equivalent of 14 times all daily trips on Route 50 or almost six times the daily trips on traffic choked Route 7. The development would also attract an additional 23,000 school children.

“42,000 more houses would put at least 400,000 additional car trips on roads that are already at a standstill. It would be traffic disaster for not only Loudoun County, but for Prince William and Fairfax. All Northern Virginia residents and businesses would feel the impact,” noted Stewart Schwartz, Executive Director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

Developers, including several that made significant financial contributions to elect new board members last year, have asked Loudoun County to substantially increase the density for 20 different projects mostly in Eastern and Central Loudoun. Their requests would fundamentally change the County’s existing comprehensive plan that guides the location, amount, and type of new development in the county. If approved, the 20 proposals would add at least 42,000 units to the 39,000 units that are already approved but not yet built. Together, these would double the number of households in Loudoun County, currently at 83,000.

“Amendments should be for small changes not to rewrite the growth plan for Loudoun County. These aren’t amendments, they are 3.5 new towns the size of Leesburg,” said McGimsey.

Several developers that made significant financial contributions to elect new board members last year, are among those pushing for expedited approval of the 42,000 houses.

“It appears that developers are running the county and that is just plain wrong,” noted Susan Klimek Buckley, a Sterling resident who founded the Eastern Loudoun Schools Association. “As candidates, our supervisors promised to better manage growth. In hindsight, it seems like those were just code words for more development at taxpayer’s expense. I guess the developers knew the real meaning of those words when they contributed tens of thousands of dollars to some of the supervisors’ campaigns, but the citizens were betrayed.”

During last fall’s election, the Washington Post noted the ardor with which several developers were engaging in the campaign. Writing about developer Greenvest and its CEO, Jim Duszynski, reporter Mike Laris wrote, “The company officials also are pursuing their fight [for more development rights] on the political front...and company executives are important campaign donors. ‘We’re in support of regime change,’ Duszynski said.” (Washington Post, 8/17/2003)

Greenvest is now the largest speculative landowner in Loudoun County, with about 5,500 acres. The company represents almost 35% (12-15,000) of the 42,000 additional houses developers are proposing.

“Regime change is a word for change by force. The contribution of nearly a half million dollars does not entitle you to undo three years of citizen involvement in a legitimate comprehensive planning process. It is undemocratic,” said McGimsey. “These applications should be rejected. The developers can adhere to the legally adopted comprehensive plan and join citizens when it is time for the next regular plan review cycle.”

### **Speculative Development and the Sales Tax Debate**

The map released today [at [www.LoudounsFuture.org](http://www.LoudounsFuture.org)] shows the link between the hotly debated Western Transportation Corridor, an outer beltway that would run from Leesburg to Quantico, and the proposed development projects. The bulk of the proposed projects flank the highway route, which has long been a pet project of the development community. The same Supervisors encouraging these applications pushed in January to put the highway back on the plan. Citizen outrage prompted the Supervisors – perhaps temporarily – to table a vote on the highway.

“During the sales tax debate, we made clear that the inclusion of the Western Bypass in the tax package was intended solely to fuel development and we mapped the land under developer control,” said Schwartz. [Map available at: [nosprawltax.org](http://nosprawltax.org)] “Yet, proponents kept insisting that the sales tax had nothing to do with new development, even as developers provided most of the \$2 million that went into the campaign. We believe the connection is clear now.”

The groups urged the Planning Commission to reject the 20 density increases citing the traffic impacts as well as the underhanded and conflicted nature of the requests.

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At [www.LoudounsFuture.org](http://www.LoudounsFuture.org), You can find:

- Maps showing the location and size of the 20 requested density increases and their relation to the Western transportation corridor
- Initial assessment of the traffic the proposals will generate
- Comparison of the size of the proposed 42,000 units with other local communities