

**From:** Tom Loftus, EHI [mailto:tom@equitablehousing.org]  
**Sent:** Friday, February 19, 2016 3:08 PM  
**To:** Gwen Kennedy  
**Subject:** NEAC draft recommendations for public input

Dear Ms. Kennedy:

Congratulations to NEAC on its excellent draft recommendations regarding Loudoun County's need to improve its nighttime economy. The Committee has stated cogently the importance of developing urban, walkable, live/work/play communities—especially in the future Metrorail areas—to become more attractive to Loudoun's desired workforce.

Our organization, the Equitable Housing Institute (EHI), focuses on the “live” part of live/work/play communities. We emphasize the importance of balancing job growth with housing opportunities for those employed, as close as feasible to their jobs. Communities that achieve the best balance stand the best chance of attracting and keeping employers and their workers—especially “Millennials.”

The generally recommended target standard for a community is one housing unit for every 1.5 jobs, according to a recent American Planning Association (APA) advisory. Recommended jobs-housing ratios for urban communities are discussed in EHI's memorandum, Loudoun County's Metrorail-Related Housing Needs (copy attached, pp. 8-11). (A copy of that memorandum also is posted on EHI's website, at <http://www.equitablehousing.org/images/PDFs/LoudounMetrorailRelatedHousingNeeds-hyperlinked.pdf>. Copies have been sent to the Board of Supervisors and the Dept. of Planning.)

Sufficient housing opportunities should be permitted and encouraged by County zoning as close as possible to jobs and services, so that the maximum number of workers may walk or use public transportation to get to work, shopping, and appointments. Otherwise, those commuters increasingly clog the highways—burning needless amounts of fuel, personal time and money, while driving to and from sprawling, remote residential developments.

Participants in the public planning workshops last Spring and Summer concerning development near the future Metrorail stations supported that concept overwhelmingly. About 90% agreed that Metrorail areas should have one or more walkable, mixed-use centers, similar to Reston or One Loudoun. The “Community Workshop Scenario” that those participants generated calls for more than 22,000 new housing units (at full build-out) to accompany intensive commercial development (including roughly 42,000 jobs in office, retail, etc.)—more jobs than envisioned by the other scenarios presented at those workshops. (The study area planning consultants' reports do not explain how their final recommendations, which envision less than half that much housing, and about 15,000 more jobs, are preferable or even realistic. The County's Dept. of Planning & Zoning will be making its own analysis of housing and commercial development levels.)

The market demand for multi-family housing units in Eastern Loudoun is so strong that the County need only allow responsible private developers to build enough such units—without any public money—to effectively increase the stock of housing in the County that is affordable. Although market-rate units in Metrorail station areas doubtless would be pricey, satisfying the market demand there would increase the supply of housing in the County overall sufficiently to make it substantially more affordable. In order to allow some lower-paid County and private-sector employees to live near their jobs, the County should consider inclusionary requirements (as jurisdictions such as Fairfax County have used successfully) for large, multi-family buildings that will be built near Metrorail.

A tight housing market is inflationary. More residents fall below the poverty line, and others must do without other basic goods and services (health insurance and sufficient food, for example), in order to pay their housing costs. Continued suppression of the supply of multi-family housing units for Loudoun's workforce would lead to much lost economic development and after-hours vitality in the station areas, because most of workers' income and leisure time is spent near where they live, rather than near where they work. Ultimately, many businesses continue to move closer to where their workforce has to live.

Any net costs incurred by the County as a result of permitting jobs-housing balance in Metrorail areas would be minor, compared with the massive increases in net tax revenue associated with the anticipated commercial buildup. Further, increased housing and transportation costs to Loudoun residents, as a result of exclusionary housing policies, would likely exceed any potential tax savings associated with those policies. For specifics on the points raised above, and others, please see EHI's memorandum.

We'll note just one quibble—the paragraph entitled “Defining Housing Diversity” appears twice in the section on “Housing Diversity & Affordability.” Other than that, NEAC has produced a most impressive draft!

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Loftus, President  
Equitable Housing Institute  
P.O. Box 1402  
Vienna, VA 22183  
(O) 703-938-2930  
(E) [tom@equitablehousing.org](mailto:tom@equitablehousing.org)  
(W) <http://www.equitablehousing.org>