

Article from The Independent

3033 Chain Bridge Road

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The aging AT&T campus in Oakton stands at a crossroads, poised for a dramatic transformation that could reshape the character of this Fairfax County community. After decades as a corporate office space, this 33-acre property is now the subject of an ambitious mixed-use development proposal that exemplifies the broader challenges and opportunities facing our suburban communities as they adapt to changing workplace dynamics and housing needs

A proposal to redevelop the AT&T site at 3033 Chain Bridge Road that would require a change to the Comprehensive Plan continues to spur controversy among Oakton residents two years after it was submitted and as a Board of Supervisors decision approaches. Readers can join in the discussion with Oakton residents on the [Options for Oakton and Smart Growth for Oakton's public group](#).

An affiliate for prospective developer, EYA, first filed for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan as part of the County's 2022-23 Site Specific Plan Amendment process. EYA seeks to change the zoning of the site from its current 0.4 FAR (floor area ratio, a measurement of density) to 1.0 FAR.

EYA has held over 25 ongoing community meetings, including with local homeowners. These meetings resulted in the reduction of the number of originally planned homes and the addition of green spaces. EYA also points to improvements it is planning to make to some pedestrian and bicycle routes and its inclusion of affordable housing units. As it currently stands, EYA says it plans to build 854 units and 120,000 square feet of retail.

Nonetheless, according to representatives of the Greater Oakton Community Association (GOCA), the organization hears frequently from residents who are concerned about the added stress this development would add to an already difficult traffic environment. "Residents also worry that the additional development already underway across from the site on Chain Bridge Road will compound these issues," said Lauren Crum, co-chair of GOCA.

Oakton resident Beverly Dickerson commented in a letter she sent Supervisor Palchik with a copy to GOCA, "If the planning process will take a broader view of the impact of this and other nearby proposed developments, the community can better understand the full range of consequences and make more informed decisions about the project's feasibility and required mitigations". She added that she thinks it important that no recommendations be made regarding the property until the broader impacts have been studied and addressed.

The community's concerns are substantiated by the traffic study commissioned by EYA as required as part of its proposal. The study by Gorove Slade Associates identified seven nearby intersections that

scored failing grades on VDOT's rating criteria. Area parents also note that their children are unable to walk to school at the nearby Oakton Elementary due to unsafe conditions for pedestrians.

Three local groups, Options for Oakton, Smarter Growth for Oakton, and a coalition of the leaders of nearby homeowners' associations, stood up specifically in response to the proposed new development. These groups, along with GOCA, have been talking with the County in hopes of protecting what they see as the community's interests before decisions are made on amending the Comprehensive Plan.

Some groups, such as Fairfax YIMBY (Yes In My Backyard), Fairfax Coalition for Smarter Growth, and Fairfax Families for Safe Streets are enthused about the proposed installation of more pedestrian and bike-friendly byways, as a way to further their vision of a region less dependent on the automobile. At the same time, according to Shelley Deutch, co-chair of GOCA, concerned residents say that the distance of the proposed development from the metro, its proximity to I-66, and the developer's interest in attracting people from outside the development to support the retail it proposes make fewer automobiles an unrealistic goal.

Planning officials say that mitigation for traffic and other issues would come as part of the subsequent rezoning applications process. At a recent open house, they laid out the next steps in the process, which they said include a virtual public meeting to review the recommendations of the Planning Commission, scheduled for January 28th, a Planning Commission in person meeting on February 26th, and finally a vote by the Board of Supervisors on the planned amendment on March 18th. Should that pass, the project would advance to the rezoning review.

The development's website is located at [3033 Chain Bridge Road](#). GOCA's website is located at [Greater Oakton Community Association](#). We have reached out to the City Council to get their thoughts about this development. Our readers can share their thoughts in the comment section.