

Premier Circle ([ZMA2020000011](#))
Planning Commission Public Comments
Piedmont Environmental Council
December 15, 2020

Comments to be verbally presented during public hearing portion of meeting

For nearly fifty years, the Piedmont Environmental Council has championed smart land use and conservation. PEC recognizes that the vitality of our towns and cities and the health of our environment are closely linked, and we bring rural, suburban and urban interests together to plan for the region's future. By encouraging investment in attractive, livable urban growth areas, we relieve pressure on the rural area. We advocate for growth where it makes sense, reducing the number of miles that people drive, in order to reduce fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and traffic.

PEC supports low-income housing in our urban areas that provide housing located in close proximity to jobs and everyday services, resulting in lowered transportation costs for residents and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. PEC agrees with the staff recommendations; and we highlight staff's concerns related to:

- Private roads should be avoided, as they could cause significant fiscal impacts to future residents, especially with low-income housing. PEC recommends that the county require the interior roads be built to the appropriate standards for incorporation into the public network. If this is not possible, due to the 80% concurrence requirement in the road maintenance agreement, PEC recommends denial.
- Adequate pedestrian facilities are not available for future residents and property users to safely cross Route 29 in this application. Given the proposed commercial and residential density of this project, PEC recommends that the county seek proposals that incorporate pedestrian facilities across and along Route 29. In order for this proposed Neighborhood Model District (NMD), as well as future projects, to have the appropriate pedestrian connectivity to the county's urban area, it is paramount that pedestrian facilities be included in this proposal.

The Places29 Master Plan highlights 12 principles for both new development and redevelopment in the Master Plan Area; the first three principles being:

- Pedestrian Orientation;
- Neighborhood Friendly Streets and Paths; and
- Interconnected Streets and Transportation Networks.¹

In her recent presentation, "[No One is Expendable](#)", Angie Schmitt detailed the findings of her book, "Right of Way", written to address pedestrian deaths in America related to race and class disparities. Her book and associated research highlighted multiple case studies throughout the United States, detailing the impacts of limited pedestrian facilities on minority and low-income populations. Many of the cases she describes bear an uncanny likeness to 29 North.

¹ [Places29 Master Plan](#), p.6

Low-income housing is integral to creating the vibrant community envisioned in Places 29. But in that pursuit, please take into consideration the need for our streets to be safe and built to an appropriate standard for all residents. Thank you for taking the time to listen to PEC's comments this evening, and for considering our recommendations regarding incorporation of public road standards and pedestrian facilities associated with this rezoning.