

Attachment #2

Date of Meeting: November 18, 2008

**LOUDOUN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
ACTION ITEM
BOARD MEMBER INITIATIVE**

Item # 08

**SUBJECT: AMEND THE LOUDOUN COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE TO BETTER
MANAGE AND LOCATE LARGE RETAIL SALES ESTABLISHMENTS**

INITIATED BY: Supervisor Stevens Miller

ELECTION DISTRICT: Countywide

CRITICAL ACTION DATE: At the pleasure of the Board

RECOMMENDATION: Supervisor Miller is recommending that the Board of Supervisors consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to require a Special Exception for large retail establishments that exceed 75,000 square feet and further consider implementing additional standards related to design and impact mitigation as may be deemed prudent. Please see attachment #1 for relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance and possible language.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past decade, jurisdictions throughout Northern Virginia and the Greater Metropolitan Washington region have proposed and adopted amendments to their zoning ordinances to manage the size and location of large retail establishments, commonly referred to as “big box” stores. Loudoun County currently has no comparable legislation. As other jurisdictions have controlled the locating of large retail establishments, including Prince William and Fairfax Counties in Virginia and Montgomery County in Maryland, Loudoun has already seen an increased interest in large retail projects that have a more regional focus. In recent years Loudoun County has approved a number of large retail developments, particularly in the Route 50 corridor, such as Dulles Landing and the Arcola Center projects. While some projects may be compatible with wise growth strategies, the trend should be managed and the County should not assume that all retail developments are created equal. Loudoun County should be empowered to better manage where such large scale retail uses are permitted to protect smaller merchants, limit traffic impacts, promote walk-ability, and ensure compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods.

ISSUES:

Large retail establishments bring impacts to the areas where they locate. Supervisor Miller considers the careful and strategic placement of these establishments to be a quality of life issue. Retail centers that draw upon regional audience bring additional concerns relating to the traffic they generate, the environmental impacts they engender, and the appropriateness of their size and design within the surrounding area. Existing policies related to retail activities should be reviewed for their applicability to the nature of the Zoning Amendments this item contemplates.

Increasing square footage translates into more traffic. Engineers calculate estimated car trips based on type of retail and the square footage of gross floor area (GFA). Large sized stores have

a regional customer base and generate many more trips than a smaller store aimed at local neighborhoods. Given the fragile levels of service on Loudoun’s roads, the Board of Supervisors should consider the traffic impacts of large retail establishments and how to best ensure the allowance of a variety of retail uses while controlling for negative consequences related to traffic.

Similarly, large retail stores require large parking facilities creating massive impervious surfaces that often have environmental implications related to storm water runoff. Recently, the Board dealt with such a problem during a review of an outdoor sales component for a Wal-Mart in the Dulles Landing development.

Very large retail stores can become imposing and dominant through their sheer size, but also through the limited design standards used in their facades. The imposing size and monotonous design elements make it difficult for large retail stores to remain compatible or “fit-in” with surroundings that are comprised of anything other than additional large retail developments. The Board may also wish to consider additional standards related to design, similar to the Fairfax County Ordinance (attachment #3).

DRAFT MOTION:

“I move that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to review this items and the attachments to create options for amending the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance to establish a Special Exception requirement for large retail establishments in excess of 75,000 square feet or some other square footage recommended by staff. I further move that the Board of Supervisors direct staff to present options for these Zoning Ordinance Amendments to the first possible meeting of the Board’s Transportation and Land Use Committee.

ATTACHMENTS:

- #1 – Summary of Proposed Ordinance, relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance and suggested language for changes to the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance.**
- #2 – Fairfax County Staff Report, Proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Large Retail Sales Establishments**
- #3 – Fairfax County Zoning Amendment Regarding Large Retail Sales Establishments**
- #4 – Prince William County Zoning Text Amendment Regarding Large Retail Uses**
- #5 – Press Release from Montgomery County regarding Zoning and Large Retail Uses**
- #6 – Map displaying relative sizes of various large retailers.**

Staff Contact(s): Shaun Daniels, Staff Aide to Supervisor Stevens Miller