

Marshall agrees: plan would devastate small-town feeling

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The county Planning Commission

has scheduled a work session for the comprehensive plan chapters on transportation and public facilities and utilities after about 150 people turned out in Marshall for a public comment session on March 26.

Speakers at the hearing told the commissioners that they feared the long-term plan for transportation in the Marshall area would take away the community spirit of Marshall.

The transportation plan for Marshall shows a series of collector roads ranging from two to four lanes around the center of the community of Marshall. The map shows a road stemming off of Route 55 down to Route 710 and another road branching off of Route 55 and connecting with U.S. 17.

"It looks like something that was planned 20 years ago," said Janet Whitehouse, a member of the Piedmont Environmental Council. "It's an outdated form of transportation."

Mrs. Whitehouse was among those present who opposed the roads bypassing Marshall, saying that they would draw business away from Marshall and destroy the community spirit.

"We know from collective experience ... that what will happen is that all this is going to be targeted commercial along these interchange areas and you're going to end up having subdivisions being planted like little mushrooms all around," said Andrea Wright, a real estate broker who lives in Fox Run.

Whitehouse and others said they would prefer to see the urban design concept, which promotes pedestrian traffic and alternatives to cars with walkways and bike paths, to the plan in the draft transportation plan presented.

"It's going to take away all of the business from Main Street and we are going to end up as a ghost town," said Ms. Wright.

With this plan, said Mrs. Whitehouse, "no one will ever be able to walk or ride a bike or have any kind of country life. We don't want to take the bucolic beauty of this area and demolish it as they have done in Manassas."

"We want the service district area — the area that they have slated for residential — of Marshall to be integrated into the existing village," said Kitty Smith, a member of the PEC.

"It's very important to get this draft right," said Richard Williams & Dynerman. "If growth warrants development, developers want to follow guidelines. In this instance, the answer is not to let the rules of the market decide, but rather have the rules for the market to follow."

Williams criticized the plan for lacking specifics for road types. He presented an alternative proposal that includes roads that run parallel to Main Street in Marshall, setting up a grid road system.

"I think we're going to take a look at it and see what we can do," said Richard McNear, assistant county administrator who added that it may be difficult to implement.

The Planning Commission scheduled a work session for 5 p.m. on

"We want roads that will make us a real town," said Ms. Wright. "We don't want to do away with Marshall."

The public hearing was one of three additional hearings around the county scheduled by the commission after a light turnout at its first public hearing.

After the commission makes reviews to the plan and considers public comments, it will make its recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, which must also conduct a public hearing on the chapter transportation and public facilities and utilities plans.