**
Prince William
Conservation Alliance**
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Comments for the Coalition to Protect Prince William Town Hall, April 30 2022

I’m Kim Hosen with Prince William Conservation Alliance, a nonprofit organization that has been working in PWC for 20 years to support sustainable communities, promote environmental stewardship, and create opportunities for residents to act locally and participate in decisions that affect the quality of their lives and the future of their communities.

We are lucky to live and work in such an environmentally and culturally diverse area. PW is rich in natural resources… it’s the only locality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that spans from tidal wetlands to a mountain, and protects a Rural Crescent. Together these create a unique landscape within the DMV. That is the foundation of the County’s appeal.

We are here today with other like-minded organizations speaking to support preservation of key environmental, cultural, and community assets, today and for generations to come.

Right now the County is considering land use proposals that represent the largest land use change the County has considered in well more than 20 years.

The Digital Gateway proposal would replace more than 2,100 acres of Rural Crescent fields and forests with data centers. Approximately ±1,800 Rural Crescent acres in Nokesville are now proposed for industrial development. The current Comp Plan update also proposes to double residential densities in the RC, with higher densities proposed for approximately 4,000 acres of villages, hamlets and cluster development.

If these are approved, the enormous loss of green space would have lasting, detrimental impacts on resources that protect quality of life for all Prince William residents.

PWC is lucky to have not one but two national parks – Prince William Forest Park and Manassas National Battlefield Park. Data centers are proposed at the borders of both. These very special areas not only provide exceptional recreation and wildlife watching opportunities, they attract more than a million visitors and contribute $120 million to our economy every year.

The Rural Crescent is important to the quality of life for all PW communities. It protects 40 miles of Virginia Scenic Byways, significant historic resources, cool wineries and breweries, unique agricultural uses such as goat yoga and a hydroponic farm, and the streams and wetlands that protect groundwater and the Occoquan Reservoir, which provides clean drinking water to 40% of the region’s 2.5 million population, including east PW residents.

It directs community infrastructure investments to the development area, where most people live and public services are already in place. It is the County’s best tool to manage sprawl development. This is why east PW Supervisors voted in favor in 1998.

PWC Watershed Management staff recognizes that the RC is important, saying the “proposed Tech Flex Long Range Land Use classification to allow data centers would result in a “dramatic change to the land use with associate far reaching impact to natural resources. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Comprehensive Plan remain unchanged.”

Fairfax Water also submitted comments expressing strong concerns saying that, given the magnitude of the proposed changes, they strongly recommend a Comprehensive Study to (1) assess the individual and cumulative impacts from the proposed development, and (2) identify opportunities to prevent water quality degradation in the Occoquan Reservoir.

Citizens have also submitted strong comments in support of comprehensive studies.

PWCA supports studies and community involvement before decisions are made. I appreciate the opportunity to join you tonight for a community conversation and look forward to the discussion. Thank you.