



Kingstowne Residential Owners Corporation

5/15/2024

RE: Franconia Governmental Center Redevelopment

Dear Supervisors:

Kingstowne is the largest HOA in the Franconia District and one of the largest associations in the County with 5,367 homes and approximately 17,946 residents. On behalf of the Board of Trustees for the Kingstowne Residential Owners Corporation, the purpose of this letter is to register for the official record the strong objections of Kingstowne residents to any transfer of the property of the Franconia Governmental Center to the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) for the purpose of building a subsidized rental project.

While appreciative of the efforts of the Board to ensure appropriate outreach, coordination, and consultation to garner public input and perspective, we are extremely dismayed that despite your clear intent, this has not occurred. We think that Kingstowne has proven that we are objective, rationale partners, that, when worked with in a collaborative manner can work toward common-sense solutions that better our community and the County as a whole. Unfortunately, the prioritization of local constituents' needs does not seem to be happening in this case.

Specifically:

1. **Community meetings were not conducted to foster engagement** – The history of problems with the lack of public engagement for this matter is well-known. As Supervisors, you acknowledged the inadequacy of public outreach in January 2024 and directed that further engagement occur. To the extent public outreach has been conducted, it was done so in a manner to give a platform for the preordained use of the property as a rent-subsidized housing project and to seemingly preclude the consideration of any alternatives. At the public meeting on 6 May 2024, it was clear to all concerned that the opinion of most of the attendees was against this transfer, but there was no meaningful effort made to give these different voices any platform. Participants did not have a chance to read everyone's input, there was extremely limited trackability to how the input was being addressed, and participants had no insight if input was being prioritized for local residents. Even worse, during the last session (the report back to the community) the community was given insufficient time to receive answers to a lot of questions which facilitators filtered; officials would not directly answer many of those questions. The audience was informed that answers to all the questions asked would be posted to the County website, but that has not happened to the best of our knowledge.

2. **Lack of opportunity to review all development options** – County officials did not present any alternative (non-residential) uses for this property at any of the public meetings, much less debate these options. A presentation from County officials to the Franconia Land Use Committee on 13 May 2024 (enclosure 3) highlighted that the area around the proposed development site already has a deficit of 23 sports courts and there is a need for more recreational amenities in the district like fields, playgrounds, and dog parks. Yet, input from

residents requesting recreational amenities for this site was quickly dismissed by officials who said there was no budget to add additional amenities and referenced nearby facilities like the Franconia Receptions Center. Also, multiple community-serving organizations critical to the Franconia District are very interested in this property, such as the Franconia Volunteer Fire Department and Koinonia (Franconia’s non-profit food pantry/relief group). For taxpayer owned property, the citizens should be able to discuss and debate all possible uses and options for the property and hear from interested organizations sharing their vision for the property. As a courtesy, the Franconia Land Use Committee could have been given notice of the plan to transfer and an opportunity to review it.

3. **Lack of a data driven process** – One of the equity tools under One Fairfax is “data to develop strategies and drive results.” We have heard from multiple public meeting participants that they do not believe a data driven process was used to support community engagement with respect to options for this site. Data was not used to justify the County’s proposed use for the property or to dismiss the numerous requests for non-housing options to include a community amenity or other public serving functions. In addition, on 6 May 2024, the County did not provide any statistical analysis of input received to support the conveyance of this property.

4. **Community perspective and informed input** –Per our most recent community survey conducted April 2024 (enclosure 1) with 1,287 responses and our active engagement with other neighboring associations, we can confidently assert our belief that most of the residents of our district believe this site is better suited for other uses; this is further supported by an earlier survey conducted January 2024 (enclosure 2). Kingstowne residents overwhelmingly believe that the County should prioritize efforts to build dense rental developments within walking distance of major transit, whereas this property is a 43 minute walk to the nearest metro station. Other County data supports the lack of amenities and activities for our community. That we are seemingly disregarding valuable existing facilities and property which would be value added and support existing community needs is unfathomable. That we are doing so with a discussion and public debate orchestrated for a preordained use is reprehensible.

To summarize our position on substance:

There are numerous ongoing housing projects and developments that are in various stages of development, approval, and implementation. These projects will just add to the already existing shortfall of support facilities and amenities for our community (enclosure 3). We stress community because a community is more than just a conglomeration of residences. It is noteworthy to add that all this development will just drive an even greater demand for facilities, amenities, and road infrastructure improvements that will need to be constructed later at a much higher cost, unless there is no plan to do so. There should have been a more data driven approach to justify the optimal use of this site.

To the extent it is used for housing, we submit that the County’s emphasis on creating subsidized rental units on County land for a select few is not a sound policy. These taxpayer-subsidized rental projects will not solve the problem of affordable housing. They are not only very expensive for the taxpayers on a per-unit basis, but they may even be making the problem of housing availability worse because they disincentivize market-based alternatives to create ownership-based housing at those price levels. This drains precious public resources, adds to a growing tax burden, and produces very few government-subsidized rental units at very high expense. Such developments tend to alienate the tenants of these units, rather than integrate them into the community. We submit that ownership programs will result in lower costs to the taxpayers and more benefits for the larger community while helping homeowners generate

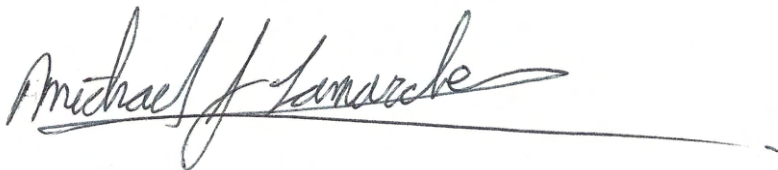
wealth. It is puzzling why the County's affordable housing policy slights its own very limited homeownership program to favor rent-subsidy programs.

It is also disturbing to many of our residents that the County does not give priority for the government subsidized units first to Fairfax County residents or to all those employed by Fairfax County, such as police officers, firefighters, or teachers. The reality is that very few of our public servants qualify for these units because their starting salaries are too high. If County residents are going to subsidize housing in any form, then Fairfax County residents and all County public servants should be given a preference as has been done in other counties within Virginia.

Finally, for several years now, Fairfax County has been [losing population](#). The County's policies appear to directly contribute to the relocation of people (and tax revenue) outside this area instead of serving as an attractant. Giving away the County's remaining vacant land, on top of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on government-subsidized units, provides far too few units to solve the problem of a lack of housing while its costs make Fairfax County less affordable for most of its residents. There are better ways to address the affordability of housing, including reducing the permitting and zoning costs that drive up the cost of units and drive down the number of units, bolstering our County's homeownership programs to create a revolving fund and address generational wealth, promoting creative market-based housing solutions without subsidies and creating communities that people want to live in.

In conclusion, as elected representatives of the local government, we urge you to consider the informed voices of the community. We are opposed to transferring this property to the Housing Authority, and we are dismayed that the Board is currently scheduled to vote without allowing our residents to speak publicly to the Board. Public comment should be permitted after a robust public engagement process, not limited to occurring before the community is educated on the proposal. We request that you make a motion to re-open the public comment portion of the public hearing and defer the hearing until a later date so that we can advise our members of the opportunity to publicly speak to the Board before the vote. When a vote occurs, we respectfully ask that you vote against this proposed transfer to the Housing Authority.

Very Respectfully,



President
Board of Trustees
Kingstowne Residential Owners Corporation

Enclosures: 3

- Enclosure 1: April 2024 KROC Land Use Survey (Page 4)
- Enclosure 2 January 2024 KROC Governmental Center North Village Survey (Page 14)
- Enclosure 3: Excerpts from 13 May 2024 Presentation to Franconia District Land Use Committee (Page 17)

Enclosure 1: **April 2024 KROC Land Use Survey – 1,287 Responses**

Background

There is a lot of debate about a housing shortage in the greater Washington metro area. Fairfax County has created a strategic plan [to update the zoning process and approve new construction to make up a shortfall of 62,184 housing units](#) throughout the county. As of April 2024, it's estimated that 3,942 units (many apartments) have already been approved to be built in the Franconia area; this is in addition to 2,140 proposed units as well as a potential additional 800 units under deferred studies for the County Work Program Tier 3 projects. Franconia District is already seeing the effects of this plan with meetings about new construction such as:

- The newly approved South Van Dorn development.
- Several large apartment buildings that have been approved for the Kingstowne Towne Center's M and N lots as well as on the current site of Ashley Furniture. These will inevitably be built in the not-too-distant future.
- Additional units in the 2023 Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program Tier 3 projects. This includes conversations around Rose Hill and Springfield center redevelopment.
- Recent conversations around what to do with the Franconia Governmental Center ([see separate report about that issue](#)).

KROC has an obligation to represent KROC owner interests during these conversations, so the Corporation resolved to poll residents broadly about land use issues to guide how the Corporation represents owners during current and future land use discussions.

The Survey

Kingstowne prepared a survey that asked 10 questions about various land use issues. This survey was packaged with a brief background on the Fairfax County Strategic Plan and used the Franconia Governmental Center discussion as an example of ongoing land use issues. (Text inserted as an appendix below.)

The survey was emailed to every resident in Kingstowne twice and posted on www.kingstowne.org. The website post generated an email reminder for active users with notifications turned on. Residents were given two business weeks to fill out the survey. KROC received 1,287 responses out of 6,909 attempted email deliveries, an 18.6% response rate. The survey closed on Friday, April 26.

Conclusion

Kingstowne residents picked Kingstowne because of the existing character of the area (community safety, aesthetics, etc.) and conveniences such as proximity to certain amenities or work. Overwhelmingly, respondents want to live in a suburban area, or at least one with a suburban feel, with a priority given to townhomes and single-family homes. Community safety and infrastructure are people's priorities for the area, and people are concerned that more development will make those worse.

KROC recognizes that development is inevitable. However, this survey suggests that the Corporation should advocate for development that keeps with Kingstowne's existing character: A suburban-esque community of single-family homes and townhomes with easy access to nearby

amenities. Further, the Corporation should advocate for improvements to the county’s infrastructure that will keep up with new homes putting more cars on the road.

Detailed Results

Due to the way Google Forms displays checkbox results, check box questions are typed out without formatting and the actual chart is pasted as a photo separately.

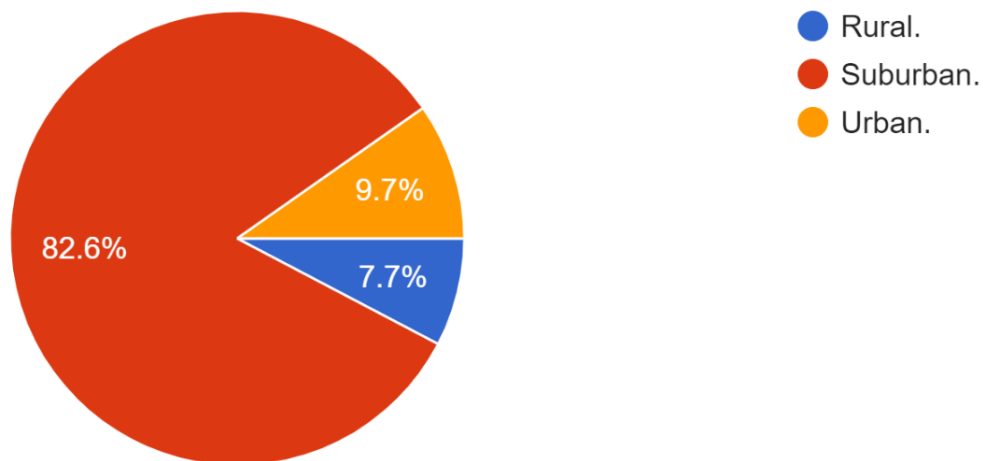
Question 1: What are your top three reasons for choosing Kingstowne over other areas in and around the Washington metro area? Pick up to three choices.

[Poll Note: Choices were not ranked. Respondents just clicked a simple check box to mark that the issue was important to them. Choices were randomized for each user to eliminate order bias. Respondents had the option to select “other” and type a personalized response. Those answers are not included here. Many of them reference nearby green areas, aesthetic appeal, or neighborhood planning.]

Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Community safety	620	48.4%
Kingstowne amenities	554	43.2%
Proximity to place of work	467	36.5%
Close to the Metro	388	30.8%
Close to retail shopping	308	24%
Ease of driving	268	20.9%
Specific home design desires	246	19.2%
Proximity to family or friends	207	16.2%
Specific schools	130	10.1%
Management of Kingstowne	122	9.5%
Dining options	66	5.2%
It’s the only place a home was available	64	5%
No preference	27	2.1%



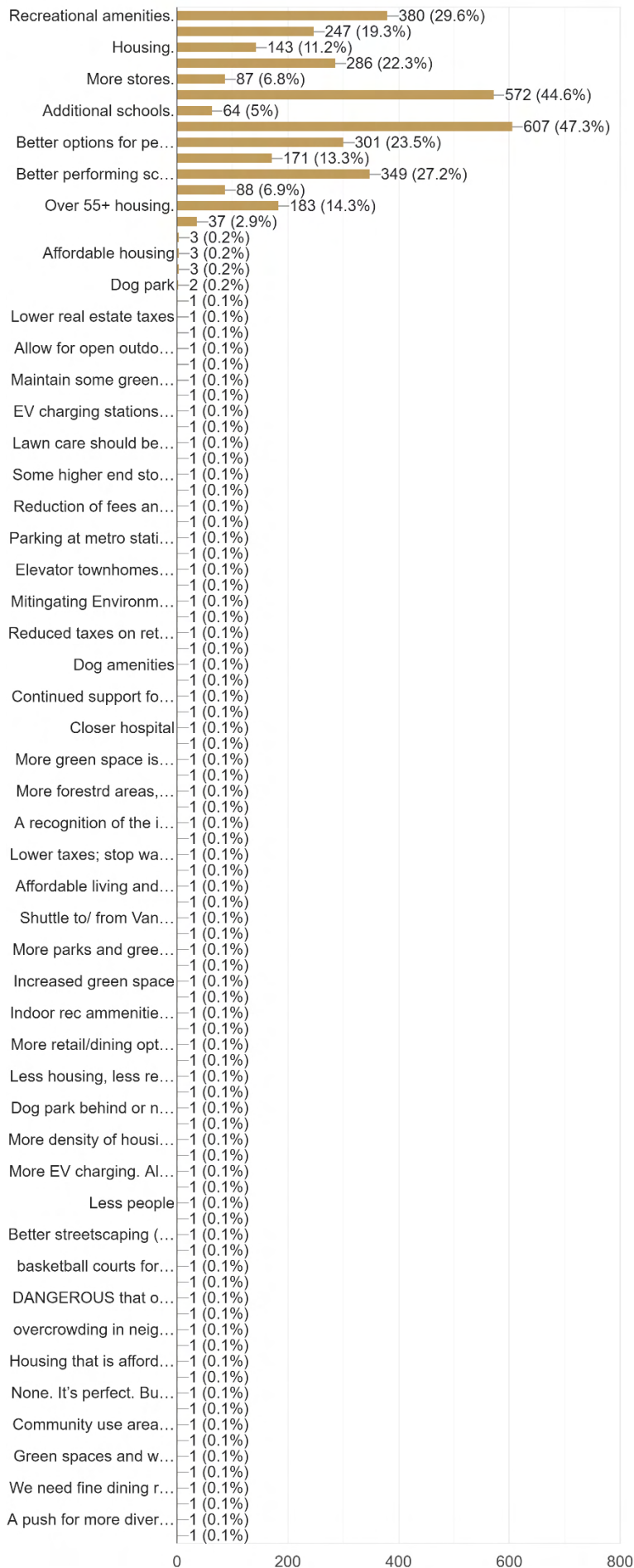
Question 2: What type of area do you prefer to live in? [One choice only.]



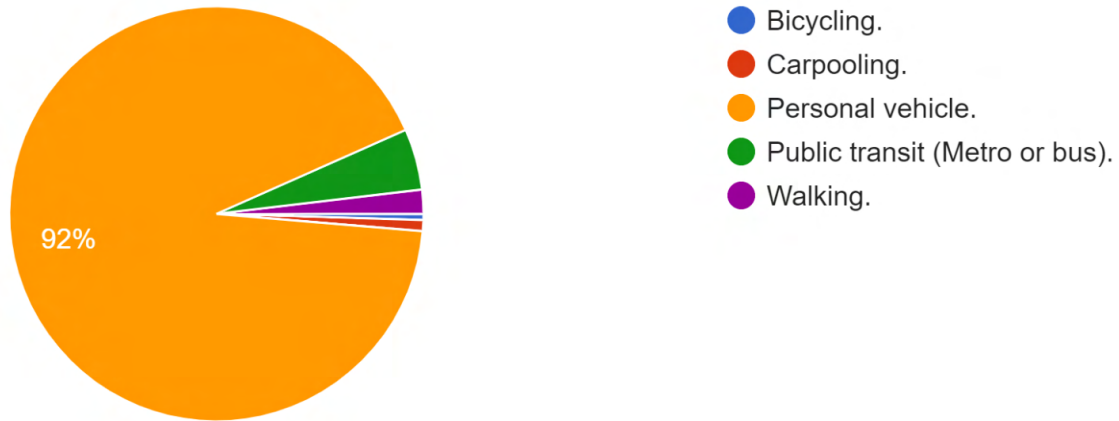
Question 3: What do you believe are the top three greatest needs for future County development? Pick up to three choices.

[Poll Note: Choices were not ranked. Respondents just clicked a simple check box to mark that the issue was important to them. Choices were randomized for each user to eliminate order bias. Respondents had the option to select “other” and type a personalized response. Those answers are not included here.]

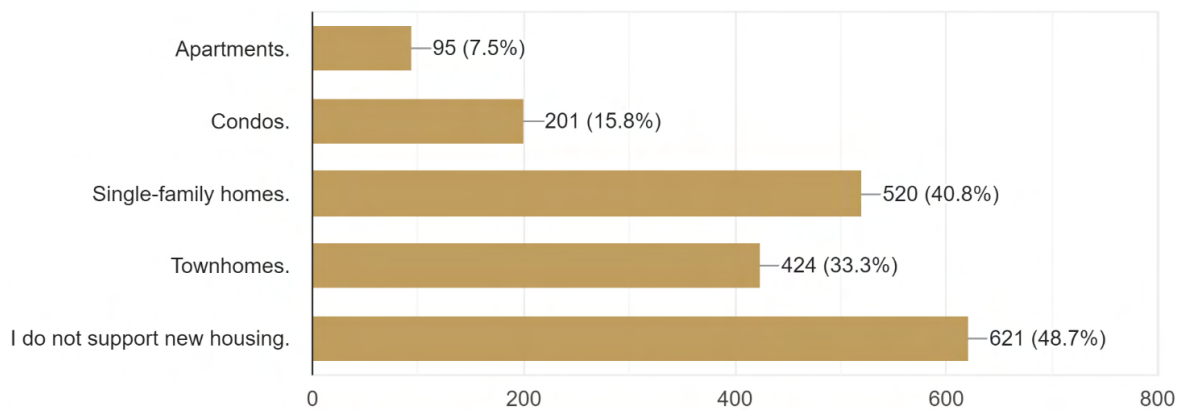
Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Recreational amenities	380	29.6%
Employment opportunities for good paying jobs	247	19.3%
Housing	143	11.2%
More restaurants	286	22.3%
More stores	87	6.8%
Improvements to safety/security	572	44.6%
Additional schools	64	5%
Improved infrastructure for ease of navigation on roadways	607	47.3%
Better options for pedestrian and bicycle transit	301	23.5%
More transit options (Metro or bus)	171	13.3%
Better performing schools	349	27.2%
Long-term care facilities	88	6.9%
Over 55+ housing	183	14.3%
No preference	37	2.9%



Question 4: What is your primary mode of transportation? [One choice only.]

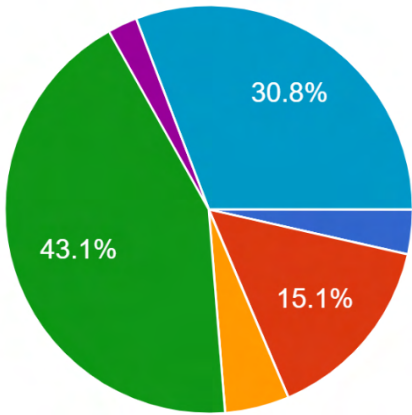


Question 5: What are your top two priorities for new types of housing in our area? You can pick up to two choices.



Question 6: What type of subsidized housing would you prefer to see prioritized? [One choice only.]

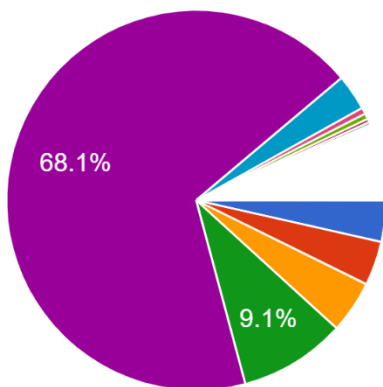
Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8)	45	3.5%
Housing for the elderly (Section 202)	192	15.1%
Housing for persons with disabilities (Section 811)	65	5.1%
Workforce development housing (for teachers, firefighters, police, or County officials).	549	43.1%
Public housing	30	2.4%
None of these	392	30.8%



- Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8).
- Housing for the elderly (Section 202).
- Housing for persons with disabilities (Section 811).
- Workforce development housing (for teachers, firefighters, police, or County officials).
- Public housing.
- None of these.

Question 7: What development impacts concern you the most? [One choice only. Respondents could also pick “other” and type a personalized response. Those options are not shown here.]

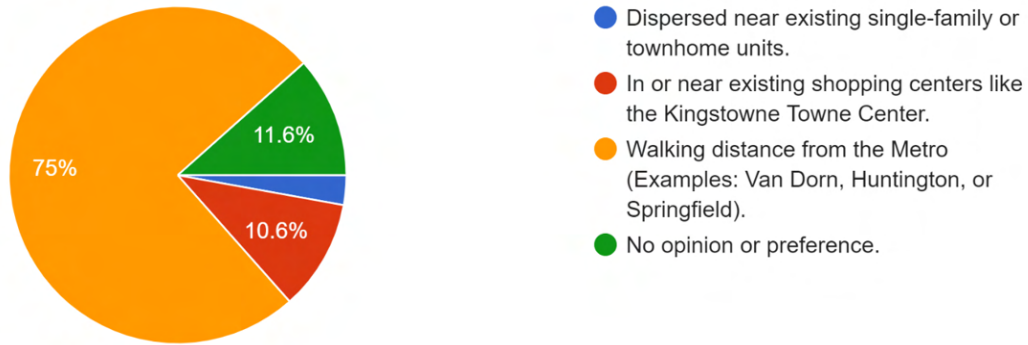
Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Access to public transit	45	3.5%
Availability of first responders	48	3.8%
Availability of parking	57	4.5%
School capacity	116	9.1%
Traffic	869	68.1%
I have no concerns about development impacts	39	3.1%



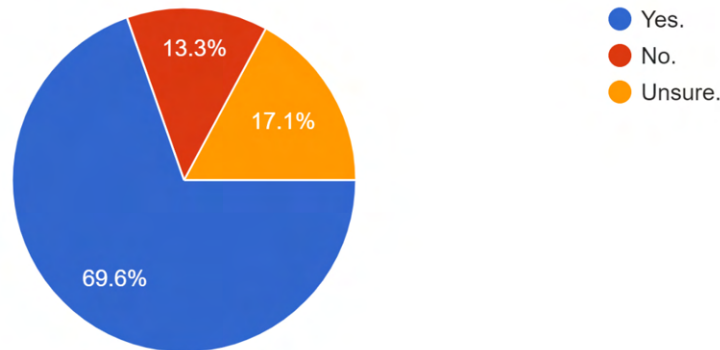
- Access to public transit.
 - Availability of first responders.
 - Availability of parking.
 - School capacity.
 - Traffic.
 - I have no concerns about development...
 - Crime
 - Safety
- ▲ 1/12 ▼

[Poll Note: The uncolored area represents all the “Other” responses. Crime (seven responses) and Safety (six responses) are shown on this chart, but they are “Other” responses typed in by respondents. Crime and Safety were not options on the question.]

Question 8: Where do you feel the County should prioritize building dense multi-story apartment or condo units?



Question 9: Would you be concerned about sound levels and environmental impacts if a data center is built within 3 miles of your residence?

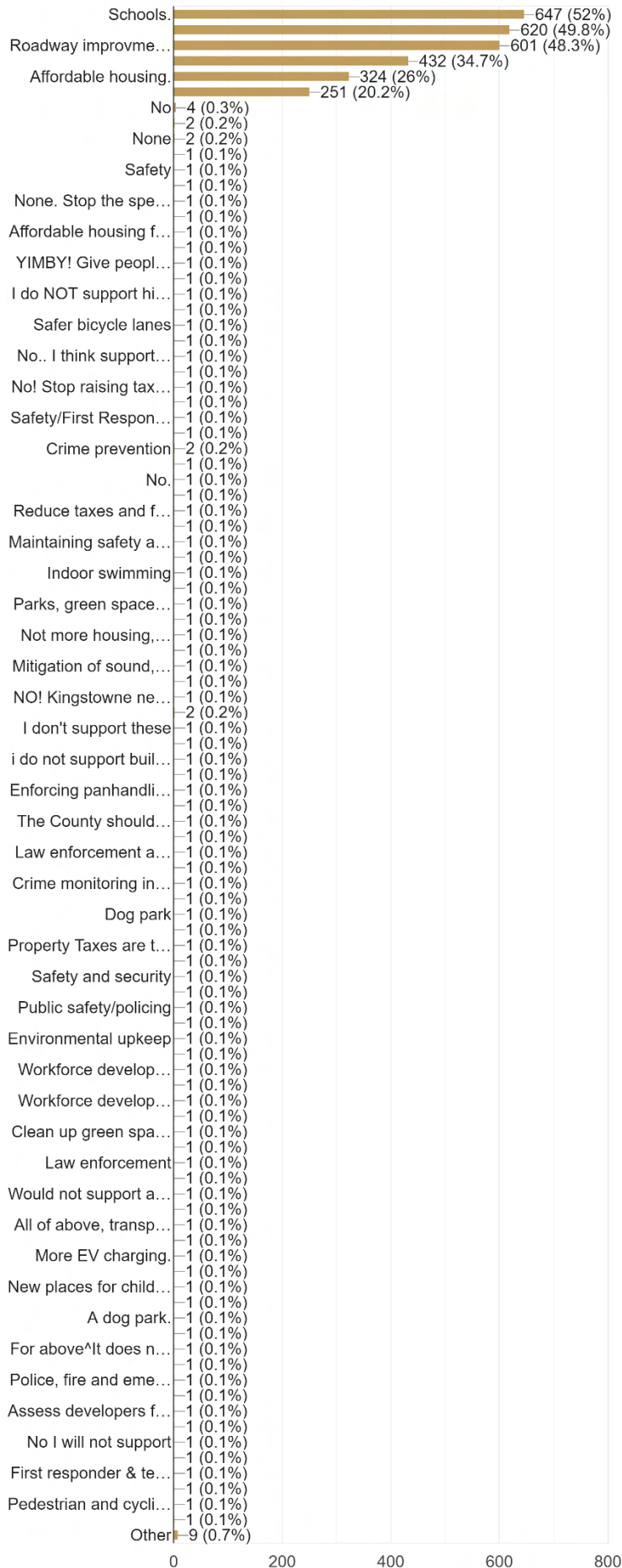


Question 10: Would you support additional County funding for any of these budget items? Check all that apply.

[Poll Note: Choices were not ranked. Respondents just clicked a simple check box to mark that the issue was important to them. Respondents had the option to select “other” and type a personalized response. Those answers are not included here.]

Answer	Number of Responses	Percentage of Total Responses
Schools	647	52%
Recreational amenities	620	49.8%
Roadway improvements, such as new roads or expanding lanes*	852	68.5%
Funding public transit	432	34.7%
Affordable housing	324	26%

*This answer is shown as two separate answers on the chart below. There was a typo that was not corrected until halfway through the survey period. When the typo was corrected, Google made them into two separate answer lines.



Enclosure 1: Appendix A: Poll Advertisement

This message was sent to every KROC resident that registered their email with the office. It was sent on April 17 and a reminder was sent on April 23.

Dear Kingstowne Residents,

The Kingstowne Board of Trustees (BOT) requests your response to the below survey in order to provide us the opportunity to give the Kingstowne Community a vital voice on land use issues that are before the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for imminent decision. This is an urgent matter and we request your responses as soon as possible, but no later than **Friday, April 26**.

The survey below will ask you questions about why you live in the Kingstowne area and your opinion about future development in Franconia. It will take about five to 10 minutes to complete.

[Click here for the KROC Land Use Survey.](#) [Link removed]

Background

[Fairfax County has a strategic plan to add 62,184 homes](#) across its districts in the next 15 years. This will impact all of us in one form or another. The County has been informed that it has a deficit of more than 31,000 rental homes affordable to low-income individuals and families. The County plan provides a breakdown for the 62,184 homes as follows:

- 4,591 extremely low-income households (income <30% Average Median Income [AMI]).
- 8,443 very low-income households (30–50% AMI).
- 5,588 low-income households (50–80% AMI).
- 9,048 moderate-income households (80–100% AMI).
- 11,929 households with incomes between 100 and 120% of AMI.
- 22,585 households with incomes above 120% of AMI.

As an example of the plan and its potential impact on our local community, 4,500+ units (mostly apartments) have already been approved to be built in the Franconia area in addition to the 2,900+ proposed units that are currently in the Franconia District land use approval process.

We have most recently seen the housing shortage come up during the discussions around what to do with the old Franconia Governmental Center. The County has been trying to get the land approved for up to 120 new units without considering other options to repurpose the existing building or providing enough opportunities for local residents to give feedback. The results of this survey will help KROC navigate the Governmental Center issue and future land use issues in the coming months.

Thank you for your prompt response,
Kingstowne Residential Owners Corp.

Enclosure 2: January 2024 KROC Governmental Center North Village Survey – 469 Responses

Background

Franconia District is building a new government building at the corner of Beulah Street and Manchester Boulevard. Sometime in 2025, the old Franconia Governmental Center building at 6121 Franconia Road will be vacated and the site repurposed for something else. Fairfax County is currently considering building 120 affordable housing units at the site. In 2021, they made a decision to convey the land to the Fairfax County housing authority, but the matter was reopened in November 2023 when the County scheduled another hearing about the issue. KROC and other community associations objected to the lack of communication about the new housing and asked for more time for public engagement before a binding decision was made. The County agreed to delay the final decision and hold more public meetings.

The Survey

Kingstowne prepared this survey in January 2024 to better understand the views of the North Village. The North Village was selected because those neighborhoods are close to Franconia Road and are the closest neighborhoods to the old Franconia Governmental Center. All the residents in the North Village were emailed the survey and a brief introduction to the issue. We received 469 survey responses out of 2708 registered email addresses, or a 17.3% response rate. The survey asked the respondent to mark whether they support, do not support, or do not have an opinion about the new units. They were then shown a list of factors commonly cited during conversations about new developments and asked to check any that they thought about while deciding about the new units. They also had the option to write an additional factor if they did not see something listed.

Results

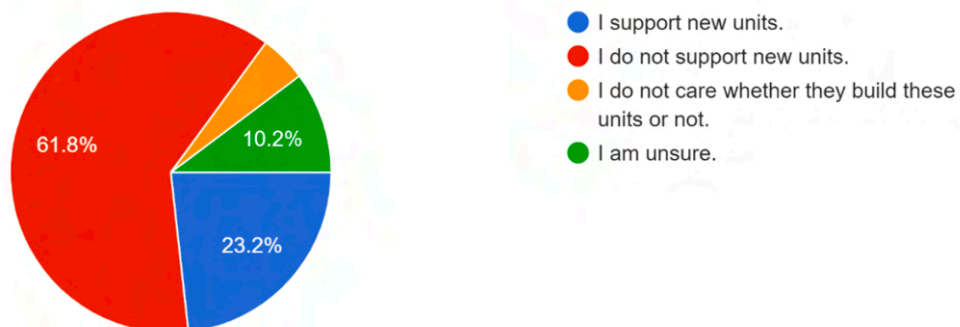
A majority of respondents did not want the new units to be built. Almost all of those respondents listed traffic as a concern with school capacity following close behind. A possible reading is that Fairfax County will have a tough time getting support from these KROC residents without Fairfax investing more into improving or expanding existing infrastructure and community services. Only roughly a quarter of respondents supported building the new units. These respondents generally cited the limited housing inventory or a need for more affordable housing in the area.

Charts

The summary charts are below. Due to the way Google Forms displays checkbox results, the top choices are copied separately as well. There were many individual comments that were not included in this report, but were given to the Board for their review.

Do you support building up to 120 units at the old Franconia Governmental Center site at 6121 Franconia Road?

469 responses



What are some of the factors behind your decision? Check all that apply. (Offered options only. Individual responses are not included.)

Factor	Total Number of Times Selected	Percentage of Total Responses
Traffic	333	73%
Capacity at local schools	223	48.9%
Impact on housing prices	223	48.9%
Impact on local green spaces	162	35.5%
Impact on housing inventory	137	30%
Impact on local businesses	105	23%
Capacity of public transit	99	21.7%

What are some of the factors behind your decision? Check all that apply.

456 responses



Enclosure 3:
Excerpts from 13 May 2024 Presentation to
Franconia District Land Use Committee
(Parks and Receptions)

SSPA Infrastructure Impacts and Rezoning Proffer Summary

Presented by Katrina Newton, Planner
Katrina.Newton@fairfaxcounty.gov

Franconia District Land Use Committee
May 13, 2023

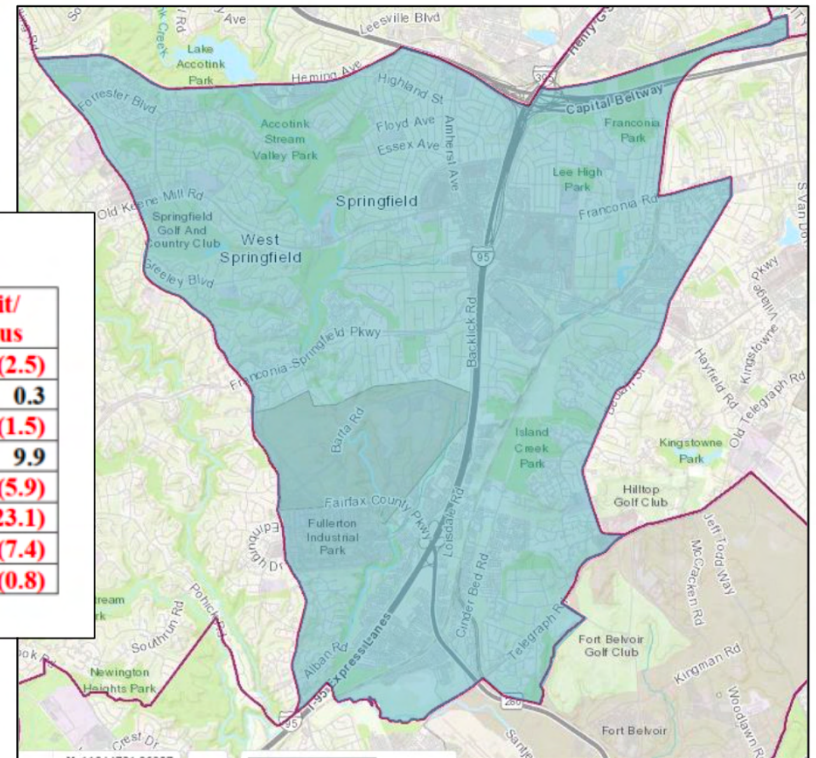


Parks and Recreation-Springfield Planning District Recreational Facility Needs

Table 1. Springfield Planning District Recreational Facility Needs.

Facility Type	Existing	Needs Assessment Standard	Need in 2020	Deficit/Surplus
Rectangle Fields	21.7	1 field / 2,700 people	24.2	(2.5)
Adult Baseball Fields	3.0	1 field / 24,000 people	2.7	0.3
Adult Softball Fields	1.5	1 field / 22,000 people	3	(1.5)
Youth Baseball Fields	19.0	1 field / 7,200 people	9.1	9.9
Youth Softball Fields	1.5	1 field / 8,800 people	7.4	(5.9)
Sport Courts	8	1 court / 2,100 people	31.1	(23.1)
Playgrounds	16	1 playground / 2,800 people	23.4	(7.4)
Dog Parks	0	1 dog park / 2,700 people	0.8	(0.8)

Table 1 compares existing recreational facilities in the Springfield Planning District to the district's facility needs based on needs assessment standards as of 2020.



Springfield Planning District

Parks and Recreation

	Service Level Standards	Springfield Blvd.	Amherst Ave (Net difference only)	Frontier Drive	Inova-Springfield Ctr. Drive	Franconia Triangle	TOTAL
UNITS		604	122	634	350	150 MF 66 Attached	1,926
POPULATION		1,057	214	1,110	613	503	3,497
SERVICE LEVEL NEEDS							
URBAN PARK ACRES		1.59	0.32	1.66	0.92	N/A	4.49
RECTANGLE FIELDS	1 Field/2,700 people	0.39	0.08	0.41	0.23	0.19	1.3
ADULT BASEBALL FIELDS	1 field/24,000 people	0.04	0.01	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.15
ADULT SOFTBALL FIELDS	1 field/22,000 people	0.05	0.01	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.16
YOUTH BASEBALL FIELDS	1 field/7,200 people	0.15	0.03	0.15	0.09	0.07	0.49
SPORT COURTS	1 court/2,100 people	0.50	0.10	0.53	0.29	0.24	1.66
PLAYGROUNDS	1 playground/2,800 people	0.38	0.08	0.4	0.22	0.18	1.26
DOG PARKS	1 dog park/86,000 people	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.04