



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

County Board Agenda Item Meeting of April 16, 2005

DATE: March 28, 2005

SUBJECTS: A. Adoption of the Fort Myer Heights North Plan.

B. GP-300-04-1 Adoption of the following General Land Use Plan amendments (see Attachment 1):

1. Add Note 22 designating the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District” to include the area generally bordered by Clarendon Boulevard to the north, North Scott Street and North Courthouse Road to the west, North Pierce Street to the east, and Fairfax Drive to the south; and a paragraph under Special Planning Areas on the General Land Use Plan describing the vision and goals for the proposed district.
2. Add an Open Space symbol (triangle) to the following locations in order to encourage public open space:
 - Northeast corner of the block bordered by 16th Street North, North Queen Street, 14th Street North, and North Quinn Street.
 - Southeast corner of the block bordered by Clarendon Boulevard, North Quinn Street, North Rhodes Street, and 16th Street North (south of the existing public park).
 - Northeast corner of the block bordered by 14th Street North, North Rhodes Street, Fairfax Drive, and North Rolfe Street.

C. Adoption of an Ordinance to Amend Sections 13 and 15 of the Zoning Ordinance which amends, reenacts and recodifies regulations for uses permitted and development permitted under Special Exception Site Plan to include new provisions specific to properties located in the Fort Myer Heights North Special District (see Ordinance).

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Molly Harbin, CPHD, Planning Division
Leon Vignes, CPHD, Planning Division

PLA-3981

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Defer adoption of the Fort Myer Heights North Plan until the July 9, 2005, County Board meeting.
- B. Adopt General Land Use Plan amendment # 1 (above) and defer approval of amendment # 2 until the July 9, 2005, County Board meeting. (See the attached resolution).
- C. Adopt the attached ordinance to amend reenact and recodify Section 13 of the Zoning Ordinance as it relates to uses permitted and defer until the July 9, 2005, County Board meeting, consideration of Zoning Ordinance amendments to Sections 13 and 15 related to development permitted under Special Exception Site Plan.

ISSUES: The Fort Myer Heights North Plan includes a vision for the neighborhood. This and the other items recommended for deferral would be used to help implement the vision, including incentives for pursuing the site plan process. These incentives are still being refined. The County Board has directed staff to initiate a separate collaborative public process to refine the way increases in density are allocated in all site plan districts countywide. This process and the resulting recommendations may necessitate additional changes to the Fort Myer Heights North Plan and the necessary tools and incentives to implement the Plan.

SUMMARY: The Fort Myer Heights North area contains: a large supply of low-rise, brick garden apartment buildings, many of which have important historic merit; a significant amount of rental units considered market-rate affordable; and, a major mature tree canopy that is unique along the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. As the core areas of Rosslyn and Courthouse build out, additional development pressure in this area is increasing.

As a result, during 2003 and 2004 staff, in conjunction with the Long Rang Planning Committee of the Planning Commission and community stakeholders, conducted a planning process to develop goals and objectives for this neighborhood. The results of the planning process will be presented to the County Board for approval in two phases. The first phase, the subject of this report, includes adding a note and language to the General Land Use Plan that designates the boundaries of a Special District and generally describes the vision for the neighborhood and proposes a Zoning Ordinance Amendment to remove the townhouse as a by-right use, but to continue permitting it through the site plan process. The second phase to be considered later this year includes adoption of the Fort Myer Heights North Plan, General Land Use Plan amendments to depict the desired location for public parks in the neighborhood, and Zoning Ordinance amendments to allow for an increase in density in the Fort Myer Heights North District when a development proposal conforms to the recommendations of the Fort Myer Heights North Plan and provides community benefits to offset the increase in density. Therefore, it is recommended that the County Board adopt the General Land Use Plan and Zoning

Ordinance amendments necessary to establish the general vision for the Fort Myer Heights North neighborhood and the first change to the Zoning Ordinance necessary to implement that vision.

BACKGROUND: The Fort Myer Heights North planning process focuses on reevaluating the land use goals and objectives for the area bordered by Clarendon Boulevard, Arlington Boulevard, North Pierce Street, and North Courthouse Road.

County staff, the Long Range Planning Committee of the County's Planning Commission, and community stakeholders, including the Radnor-Fort Myer Heights Civic Association, the Rosslyn Renaissance, residents of adjacent communities, land owners, and developers, began a study of the Fort Myer Heights North neighborhood in the summer of 2003. The study began with a walking tour of the neighborhood to observe existing conditions. Since then, a thorough inventory has been conducted including land use, historic buildings, affordable housing, open space and tree canopy, infrastructure, and demographics. A series of public workshops were held in 2003 and 2004 to help identify issues, develop a vision statement, and provide feedback on potential concepts and implementation strategies.

DISCUSSION:

Existing Conditions: The Fort Myer Heights North area contains a large supply of low-rise, brick garden apartment buildings that have important historic merit, a significant amount of rental units considered market-rate affordable, and a major mature tree canopy that is unique along the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. As the core areas of Rosslyn and Courthouse build out, additional development pressure in this area is increasing. Several sites are being developed with new town houses under the by-right provisions of the Zoning Ordinance. Although the underlying zoning districts for this neighborhood offer a site plan option, the difference in height and density between the by-right and site plan provisions is not enough of an incentive to encourage a developer to go through the site plan process. An increase of by-right townhouse development will continue to reduce the number of market rate affordable units in the neighborhood. Furthermore, demolition to accommodate new by-right development could continue to threaten the historical context of the neighborhood and impact the significant tree canopy and open spaces that currently exist.

Vision and Goals: The future vision of the Fort Myer Heights North area includes a culturally and economically diverse, medium-density residential neighborhood with a variety of housing types and styles. The neighborhood includes a significant amount of affordable housing, with site design and architectural elements reminiscent of multi-family housing in Arlington built in the 1930s to 1950s. Through the creative use of site design, with all stakeholders in mind, redevelopment shall consider the following goals and objectives:

- Preservation of existing affordable housing units and the construction of new affordable units.
- Preservation of neighborhood character and historic buildings.
- Preservation of tree cover, specimen trees, other significant trees.

- Provision of public and private open space.
- Enhanced pedestrian corridors along North Rhodes Street and 16th Street North.
- An improved neighborhood edge and pedestrian oriented streetscape along Fairfax Drive and Clarendon Boulevard.
- The provision of adequate parking using creative strategies.

Implementation Tools: In order to realize the vision for the Fort Myer Heights North neighborhood, the Fort Myer Heights North Plan includes incentives to redevelop using the County’s Special Exception Site Plan option for development. The Plan proposes to allow additional density, up to the maximum allowed by the General Land Use Plan, when a development proposal conforms to the recommendations of the plan and provides community benefits to offset the impacts resulting from the additional density. Additional density, above 72 units per acre, may be approved when a development proposal includes preservation of a building on the preferred buildings list and units inside that building are designated affordable.

In light of the County Board resolution on affordable housing priorities adopted on February 15, 2005, staff will be working with community stakeholders in clarifying how to allocate additional density as it relates to affordable housing contributions through the site plan process County-wide. The results of this process may necessitate changes to the Fort Myer Heights North Plan and the necessary tools and incentives to implement the Plan. It is expected that progress on the affordable housing process will be achieved by mid-year. At that time, staff will be able to determine any necessary changes to the Fort Myer Heights North Plan. Therefore, it is recommended that the adoption of the Plan, additional GLUP amendments and Zoning Ordinance amendments related to implementation tools be deferred until the July 9, 2005 County Board meeting.

Items for Adoption:

General Land Use Plan Amendment: In order to establish this new vision, staff proposes the following GLUP amendment (See GLUP Amendment Resolution and Attachment 1, Proposed GLUP Amendments.):

- Add Note 22 designating the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District” to include the area shown on the attached map and generally bordered by Clarendon Boulevard to the north, North Scott Street and North Courthouse Road to the west, Fairfax Drive to the south, and North Pierce Street to the east; and
- Add a paragraph under Special Planning Areas on the GLUP generally describing the vision for the proposed district.

Zoning Ordinance: In order to promote this new vision, staff proposes a change to the Zoning Ordinance that will support redevelopment consistent with the vision established by the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District.” The following Zoning Ordinance amendment is proposed for adoption at this time (see Ordinance):

- Remove the townhouse option from the list of permitted uses and allow townhouses only by Special Exception through the site plan process. The remaining by-right options in the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District” would include apartment houses, which are consistent with the GLUP recommendations for the neighborhood, and single-family homes. Town houses take up more land and provide less density than apartment houses, and therefore result in a higher price per unit and greater potential loss of the existing tree canopy. Also, the by-right townhouse form has typically included excessive curb cuts, front loaded garages and parking in the front, all of which are inconsistent with the future vision of this area. Encouraging redevelopment by site plan provides an opportunity for the County to achieve desired community goals such as affordable housing, historic preservation, tree preservation and public open space.

Advisory Commission Review Process:

Subsequent to the authorization to advertise public hearings for the adoption of the Plan and associated GLUP and Zoning Ordinance amendments by the County Board on October 2, 2004, there was substantial review of the Plan by several advisory commissions and by a joint work session of the County Board and the Planning Commission. The advisory commissions expressed support for the intent of the Fort Myer Heights North Plan and issues raised have been addressed.

CONCLUSION: The proposed General Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments provide guidance to the County Board, property owners, residents, visitors and developers as to the desired vision, form and land use for the Fort Myer Heights North neighborhood. The proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment would amend, reenact and recodify zoning provisions concerning uses permitted in order to preserve the character of the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District,” as designated on the General Land Use Plan, which includes multi-family residential development reminiscent of the first multi-family housing in Arlington County and which provides a significant supply of affordable housing; to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice. It is therefore recommended that the County Board adopt the proposed General Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments. In addition, it is recommended that the County Board defer consideration of the Plan, General Land Use Plan amendment #2 (above) and Zoning Ordinance amendments to Sections 13 and 15 of the Zoning Ordinance related to development permitted under Special Exception Site Plan to the County Board meeting of July 9, 2005.

GENERAL LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENTS RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the County Board of Arlington County has been presented with proposed amendments of the General Land Use Plan (“GLUP”), a part of the County’s Comprehensive Plan, to:

- Add Note 22 designating the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District” to include the area shown on the attached map (Attachment B) and generally bordered by Clarendon Boulevard to the north, North Scott Street and North Courthouse Road to the west, Fairfax Drive to the south, and North Pierce Street to the east; and add a paragraph under Special Planning Areas on the GLUP describing the vision and goals for the proposed district. The note should read as follows:

“22. This area was designated the Fort Myer Heights North Special District on April 16, 2005.”

- Add the following language describing the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District” under Special Planning Areas on the GLUP as follows:

“The purpose of this District is to guide redevelopment in the Fort Myer Heights North neighborhood. The vision for the neighborhood includes promoting redevelopment that is in keeping with the historic character of this neighborhood, including site design and garden apartment buildings from the first multi-family buildings in Arlington County. The vision also includes preservation of affordable housing units, significant historic buildings, mature trees, and open space.”

WHEREAS, the County Manager has recommended that the proposed amendments be approved; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has recommended that the proposed amendments be approved; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Arlington has considered the foregoing recommendation and the purposes of the GLUP and the Comprehensive Plan as set forth in these documents, the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance and the Code of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the County Board of Arlington County held a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendments to the GLUP on April 16, 2005.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that, based on the aforementioned considerations, deliberations and all public comments, the County Board of Arlington County finds that the following proposed amendments to the GLUP should be, and hereby are, approved.

- Add Note 22 designating the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District” to include the area shown on the attached map (Attachment B) and generally bordered by Clarendon Boulevard to the north, North Scott Street and North Courthouse Road to the west, Fairfax Drive to the south, and North Pierce Street to the east; and add a paragraph under Special Planning Areas on the GLUP describing the vision and goals for the proposed district. The note should read as follows:

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ZONING ORDINANCE

ORDINANCE TO AMEND, REENACT, AND RECODIFY ZONING ORDINANCE SECTION 13. “RA8-18” APARTMENT DWELLING DISTRICTS OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE USES PERMITTED IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE CHARACTER OF THE “FORT MYER HEIGHTS NORTH SPECIAL DISTRICT,” WHICH INCLUDES MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT REMINISCENT OF THE FIRST MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING IN ARLINGTON COUNTY AND WHICH PROVIDES A SIGNIFICANT SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND TO FACILITATE THE CREATION OF A CONVENIENT, ATTRACTIVE AND HARMONIOUS COMMUNITY WITHIN THE “FORT MYER HEIGHTS NORTH SPECIAL DISTRICT.”

BE IT ORDAINED THAT, Section 13 of the Zoning Ordinance is amended, reenacted, and recodified as follows in order to preserve the character of the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District,” which includes multi-family residential development reminiscent of the first multi-family housing in Arlington County and which provides a significant supply of affordable housing; to facilitate the creation of convenient, attractive and harmonious community within the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District;” and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice.

* * *

Section 13. “RA8-18” Apartment Dwelling Districts

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A. Uses Permitted

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2. *Apartment houses or town houses. Provided, however, that in the “Fort Myer Heights North Special District,” as designated on the General Land Use Plan, town houses shall not be permitted except by Special Exception Site Plan. However, town house projects for which building permit applications have been submitted to the Inspection Services Division on or before April 15, 2005 shall be allowed under the provisions of this ordinance as it existed on or prior to April 15, 2005.*

* * *

Attachment 1

Proposed GLUP Amendments

Attachment 2

Community Correspondence