

Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC)
Staff Report for
Shirlington House (4201 31st St. S.)
SPLN24-00001

There are multiple ways to provide feedback and input on the proposal, County Staff welcomes comments in any form. Please use any method listed below.

Mail-in Comments:

Arlington County Planning Division
c/o Peter Schulz
2100 Clarendon Blvd. Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201

Contact Staff:

Contact the Arlington County Planning Staff reviewing this project either by phone or email

Peter Schulz
Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development
703-228-0067
pschulz@arlingtonva.us

Contact the SPRC Chair:

The SPRC Chair is a member of the Planning Commission and conduct all SPRC meetings

Nia Bagley
nbagley@commissions.arlingtonva.us

Shirlington House (SPLN24-00001)
4201 31st St. S.
(RPC #29-003-010, -019)

Public Review and Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) Process:

- Online Engagement Opportunity: February 10 – February 20, 2025
 - Topics:
 - Land Use & Density
 - Site Design & Layout
 - Building Height, Form & Architecture
 - Parking & Loading/Transportation
 - Open Space & Landscaping
 - Green Building & Sustainability
- Site Plan Review Committee Meeting #1 (Hybrid) – March 31, 2025, 7 p.m.
- Walking tour : 5 p.m., at site.
 - Introductions
 - Staff Presentation
 - Applicant Presentation
 - SPRC Discussion Topics:
 - Land Use & Density
 - Site Design & Layout
 - Building Height, Form & Architecture
 - Parking & loading
 - Public Comment
- Site Plan Review Committee Meeting #2 (Hybrid) – April 21, 2025
 - Introductions
 - SPRC Discussion Topics:
 - Transportation
 - Open Space & Landscaping
 - Green Building & Sustainability
 - Construction Timeline
 - Public Comment
 - Wrap-up

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE

DATE: March 31, 2025
PLACE: 2100 Clarendon Blvd, Room 216 (Cherry)
TIME: 7 p.m.-9 p.m.

SPRC STAFF COORDINATOR: Matthew Pfeiffer

Item 1. Shirlington House (SPLN24-00001)

RPC#29-003-010, -019

Planning Commission and County Board meetings TBD 2025.

Peter Schulz (CPHD Staff)

The Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) is comprised of Planning Commission members, representatives from other relevant commissions and several appointed citizens. The SPRC reviews all site plans and major site plan amendments requests, which are submitted to the County Board and the Planning Commission for consideration. The major responsibilities of the SPRC are the following:

1. Review site plan or major site plan amendment requests in detail.
2. Advise the Planning Commission by recommending the appropriate action in regard to a specific plan and any conditions, which it might determine to be necessary or appropriate.
3. Provide a forum by which interested citizens, civic associations and neighborhood conservation committees can review and comment on a particular plan, or the effects that the proposed project might have on the neighborhood.

In order to save copying costs, staff has selectively chosen the reduced drawings to be included in this package. The complete full size drawings are available for review in the on the County's Webpage at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Projects/Project-Types/Site-Plan/4201-31st-Street-S>

For more information on the Arlington County Planning Commission, go to their website <http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/planning-commission/>

For more information on the Site Plan public review process, go to the Arlington County Planning Division's website on Development Proposals/Site Plans http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/Planning/applications/site_plans/CPHDPlanningApplicationsSite_plansMain.aspx

To view the current Site Plan Review Committee schedule, go to the website <http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/planning-commission/sprc/>

Glossary of Terms:

Area Median Income (AMI): The income at which half of the families of a particular household size have incomes higher and half have incomes lower.

Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO): County adopted document that regulates the use and development standards of all land located within the County. There are various zoning districts within the zoning code and each district sets the standards for development. Examples of such requirements include maximum heights, required parking, required setbacks, density, etc.

Average Site Elevation (ASE): The calculated average elevation of the existing or officially approved grade of the site at the perimeter of the site.

By-right Development: May be approved administratively in the respective zoning district subject to all other applicable requirements of this zoning ordinance. Is not required to seek approval by the County Board.

Density: The ratio of a particular use given the area of land. Density measures the intensity of a given land use.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR): The gross floor area of all buildings on a lot divided by the lot area.

General Land Use Plan (GLUP): The General Land Use Plan (GLUP) is the primary policy guide for future development in the County. The GLUP establishes the overall character, extent and location of various land uses.

Gross Floor Area (GFA): Gross floor area (GFA) is the sum of the area of the horizontal surface of the several floors of a building measured from the exterior faces of exterior walls, to include all floor area not defined as gross parking area.

SUMMARY: The applicant, Snell Properties, proposes to construct 73 new, additional apartments on the property, for a total of 509 dwelling units. The existing apartment building and parking structure will remain. The proposed new development will comprise:

- One (1) new 7-story apartment building with 59 units; and
- Seven (7) townhouse-style units with two (2) units each

The new units will be constructed on the 31st Street frontage, lining the existing parking garage. The existing 565 parking spaces will remain, for a proposed ratio of 1.1 spaces per unit.

The developer requests modifications from the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance which include:

- Additional density for provision of Affordable Housing and other site features and amenities;

Figure 1. Overall Perspective View



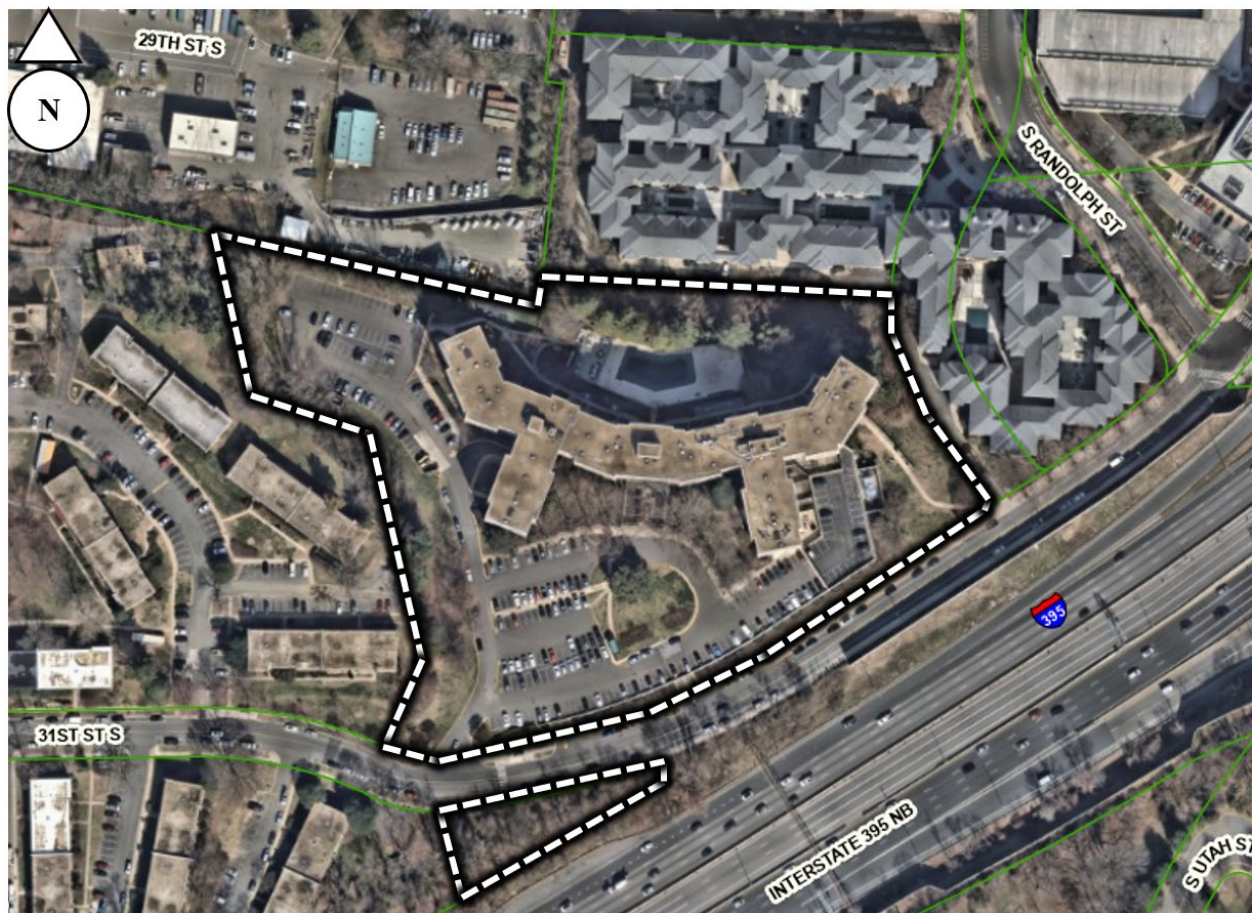
BACKGROUND: The following provides additional information about the site and location.

Existing site:

The 8.4 acre site is located in Shirlington at 4201 31st St. S. It is located adjacent to I-395 (Shirley Highway) to the south, the Park Shirlington Apartments to the west, the Citizen Apartments to the east (which are a part of the Shirlington Phased Development Site Plan) and north, and the Arlington County Property Yard (commonly known as the "Trades Center") to the northwest.

There are currently 436 apartments in a 10-story apartment building constructed in the early 1960s, with a total of 565 parking spaces in both surface and structured parking. In addition to the main parcel of land on which the building and improvements sit, there is an approximately 19,000 square foot piece of land that was detached from the main parcel when 31st Street South was created in the 1950s. This parcel has remained in the same ownership to this day and is encumbered for density purposes (see explanation below).

Figure 2. Site Location



Neighborhood:	The subject site is located within the boundary of the Fairlington Civic Association and adjacent to the Shirlington Civic Association.
GLUP Designation:	"Low-Medium" Residential (16-36 units/acre).
Zoning:	RA6-15 and RA14-26, Multiple-family Dwelling Districts.

Figure 3. Existing Conditions (looking west from 31st St. S., white is structured parking)



Development Potential: The following provides a statistical summary of the development potential for the site area. It should be noted that due to Zoning Ordinance changes in how density is calculated in “RA” districts and the taking of some land by the Commonwealth of Virginia for I-395 expansion after construction of the current building, the current building is over density. In 1981, the Arlington County Board of Zoning Appeals approved a variance (V-

5208-81-6) to permit the existing density on the site and encumbered 10,200 square feet of the detached parcel across 31st Street South (Zoned “RA14-26”). This is recorded as a covenant in the County land records.

	Site Area	Density Allowed for Proposed Uses	Maximum Development
Existing Zoning: “RA6-15” and “RA14-26” Districts			
By-right	RA6-15: 347,358 s.f. RA14-26: 17,208 s.f.	Multifamily residential RA6-15: 1 unit/900 s.f. of site area RA14-26: 1 unit/1800 s.f.	385 units 9 units
Special Exception	same	Multifamily residential or townhouses.	Same base density, but eligible for additional density based on provision of affordable housing and other amenities specified in the Zoning Ordinance Sections 12.3.7 and Section 15.5.9

Proposed Development:

- Adding infill development to the site consisting of a 7-story multifamily building consisting of 59 units, and seven (7) two-family buildings, and reusing the existing 565-space structured and surface parking.

The following provides a statistical summary for the proposed development:

SPLA24-00001 – 4201 31 st St. S. Shirlington House		
	Base Zoning/Requirement	Proposed
Site Area		
Total Site Area		364,566 s.f. (8.3 acres)
RA6-15 site area		347,358 s.f.
RA14-16 site area		17,208 s.f.
Density		
Existing (units)	394	436
Existing units/acre	RA6-15: 48 RA14-26: 24	52.2

Total Existing GFA ¹		436,000 s.f.
Proposed new units		73
Proposed new GFA (s.f.)		89,727 s.f.
Total Proposed Density		
Units		509 units
Units/acre		61 units/acre
GFA (s.f.)		525,727 s.f.
Base Density ²	52.2	437 units
Additional Density Requested above Base		72 units
Average new unit size (s.f.)		1,229 s.f.
Building Height		
New Multifamily Building		
Main Roof Height (from ASE)	70 ft ³	57.6 ft
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23 ft	17.0 ft
Stories	6 stories	7 stories
Liner Building 1		
Main Roof Height	60	56.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4
Liner Building 2		
Main Roof Height	60	51.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4
Liner Building 3		
Main Roof Height	60	48.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4
Liner Building 4		
Main Roof Height	60	42.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4
Liner Building 5		
Main Roof Height	60	39.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4

¹ Gross Floor Area is for reference only. Density in “RA” districts is regulated in units per acre.

² The base density for the site was set by the Arlington Board of Zoning Appeals at 52.2 units per acre and 437 dwelling units, see discussion under “Development Potential”.

³ Permitted by ACZO Section 12.3.7.A.1, the ordinance section the applicant is applying under to achieve the proposed development plan.

Liner Building 6		
Main Roof Height	60	33.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4
Liner Building 7		
Main Roof Height	60	29.1
Mechanical Penthouse Height	23	N/A
Stories	6	4
Parking		
Total Parking Spaces	534	565
Residential Parking Ratio	1.125 space/unit for the first 200 units, 1 space per unit thereafter	1.1 spaces/unit
Compact Parking Ratio	Maximum 15%	75%
New Loading Spaces	1 space	1 space

DISCUSSION:

Adopted Plans and Policies: The following regulations, plans, and guiding documents are applicable to development on this site:

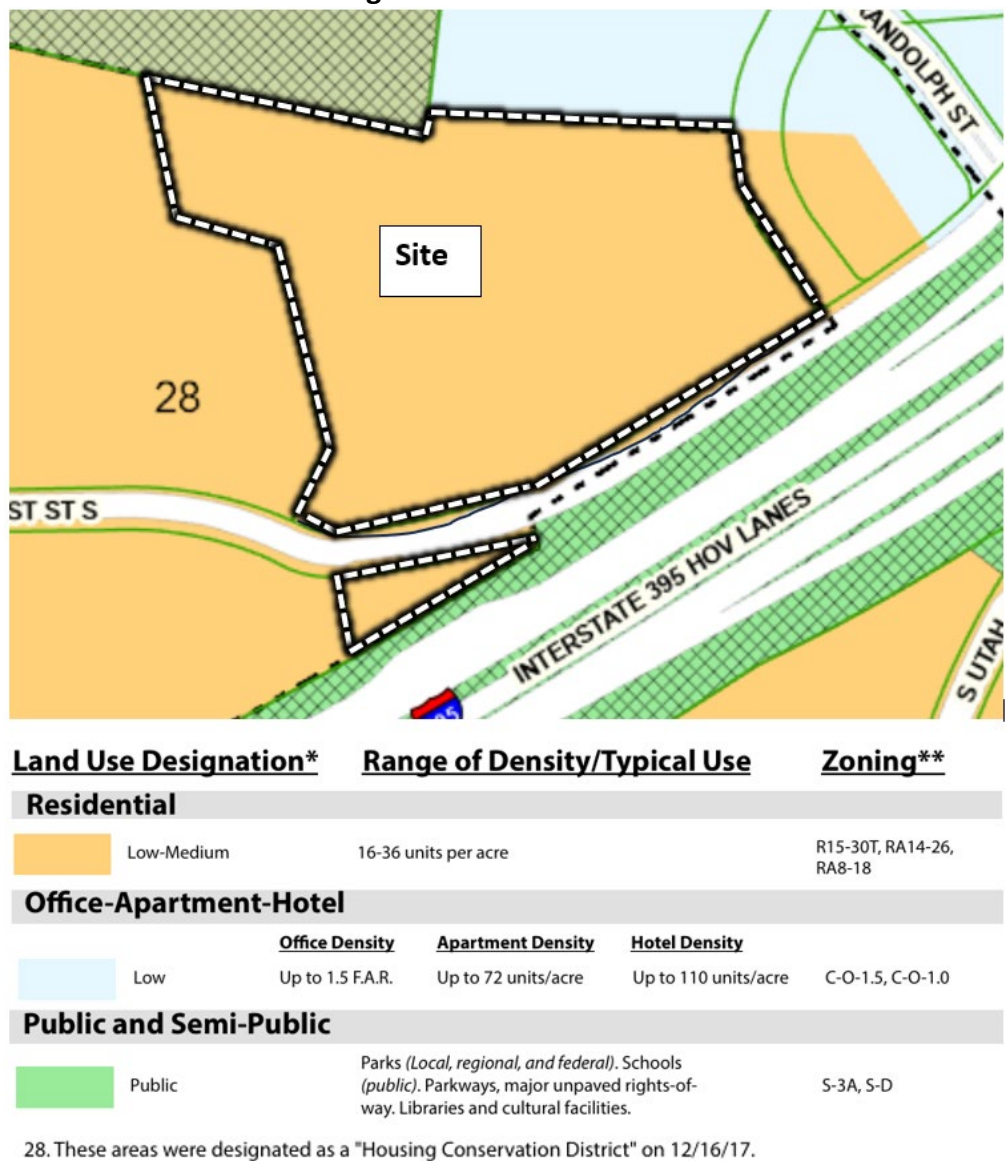
- General Land Use Plan (GLUP)
- Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO)
- Master Transportation Plan
- Housing Conservation District (HCD) Policy Framework

GLUP: The current GLUP designation of the site is “Low-Medium Residential, 16-36 units/acre)”. The site was designated “undetermined” in the first GLUP Map in 1961. After the building was constructed, the County Board designated the site in 1964 as “High Medium Residential”, which at that time was defined as “14-39 units per acre”. In the 1970s the County Board redefined the GLUP categories, and the site was designated the current “Low-Medium Residential (16-36 units/acre)” definition.

In 2017, the County Board amended the GLUP to designate the site on the GLUP map as a “Housing Conservation District”.

The current site is zoned “RA6-15”, which permits more density of up to 48 units per acre, which corresponds more accurately with a General Land Use Plan designation of “Medium Residential (37-72 units/acre)”. Staff cannot find a record that explains the discrepancy between the General Land Use Plan and the existing zoning.

Figure 4. General Land Use Plan Designation

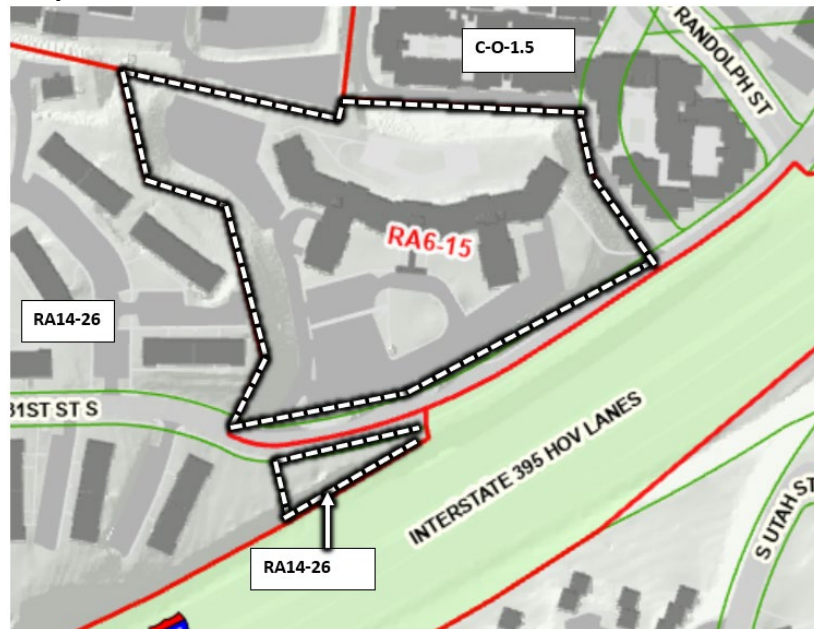


Zoning Ordinance: The vast majority of the site, and the site upon which the applicant is requesting infill development, is zoned “RA6-15” Multiple-Family Dwelling District, which permits multi-family dwelling units by right at a density of 48 units per acre. With approval of a special exception, townhouses may also be permitted at the same density. A small portion of the site across 31st Street South is zoned “RA14-26”, Multiple-Family Dwelling District which permits multifamily dwellings at a density of 24 units per acre. This parcel is vacant and is proposed to remain so.

The existing “RA6-15” zoning on the site permits higher density development than is recommended in the General Land Use Plan. Staff cannot find a record that explains the

discrepancy between the General Land Use Plan and the existing zoning.

Figure 5. Zoning Map



[Housing Conservation District \(HCD\) Policy Framework:](#) In December 2017 the County Board designated the site (and the neighboring Park Shirlington Apartments, along with older multifamily properties around the County) as a Housing Conservation District and adopted a policy framework for those areas designated as an HCD. The intent of the HCD is to “preserve affordability in those multiple-family residential neighborhoods that have managed to retain a supply of market-rate affordable rental units, even as those resources have become scarce countywide.” Development proposals in HCDs should strive to, among other goals:

- Provide committed affordable (CAF) rental housing up to 60% AMI and up to 80% AMI;
- Preserve buildings listed on the Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places;
- Incorporate sustainable building practices;
- Encourage renovation and infill development while accommodating redevelopment;
- Ensure projects are compatible to their surroundings;
- Ensure any new density can be supported by existing transportation infrastructure and the transit network; and
- Encourage creation of underrepresented housing forms.

Land Use & Density: The proposed development consists of entirely new multiple family dwelling units. As stated above in “Development Potential”, the approved density for the site is 437 dwelling units. The number of approved units exceeds the number of units that would be permitted under the current “RA6-15” zoning regulations. Therefore, any dwelling units above

that number must be considered bonus density. The proposed density, at 61 units per acre, exceeds the General Land Use Plan recommendation of 16-36 units per acre.

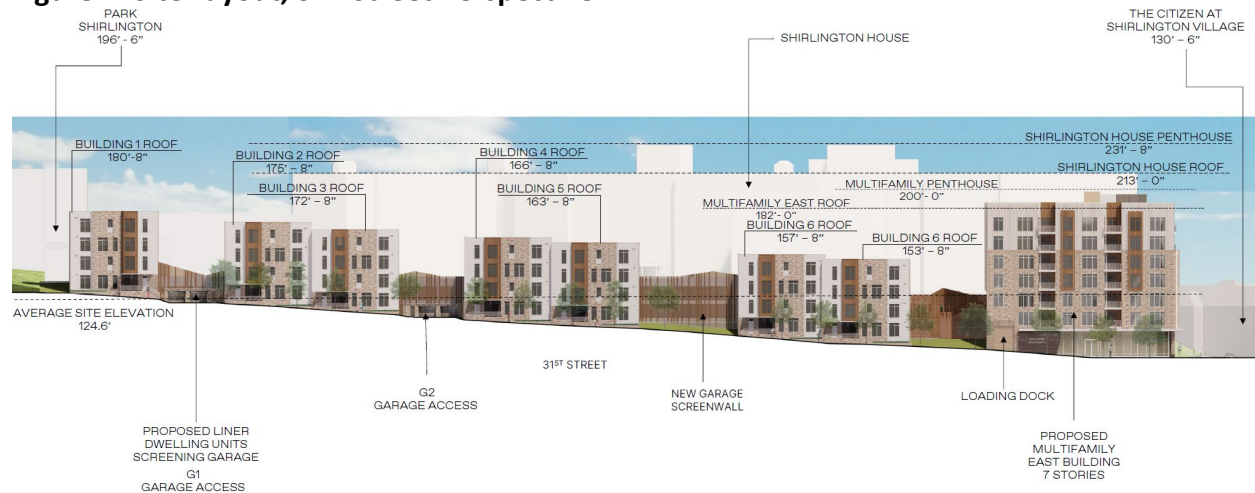
The development consists of 73 new dwelling units. The proposed new multifamily building will contain 59 units that range from “Junior” one-bedroom units to three-bedroom units. All 14 of the “liner” units will have three bedrooms.

Table 1. Unit Mix

UNIT MIX AND AREA SUMMARY- EXISTING AND PROPOSED										
UNIT MIX	EXISTING		PROPOSED						TOTAL	
	SHIRLINGTON HOUSE		MULTIFAMILY EAST		LINER DWELLING UNITS		SUBTOTAL (PROPOSED)			
UNIT TYPE	NO. OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE	NO. OF UNITS	PERCENTAGE
STUDIO	168	39%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	168	33%
1 BED JR	3	1%	10	17%	0	0%	10	14%	13	3%
1 BED	197	45%	28	47%	0	0%	28	38%	228	44%
1 BED + DEN	0	0%	4	7%	0	0%	4	5%	1	1%
2 BED	68	16%	13	22%	0	0%	13	18%	81	16%
3 BED	0	0%	4	7%	14	100%	18	25%	18	4%
TOTAL NO. OF UNITS	436	100%	59	100%	14	100%	73	100%	509	100%
TOTAL AREA (SF)	436,000 SF		64,730 SF		24,997 SF		89,727 SF		525,727 SF	

Site Design & Layout: The proposed new units will be located on the “RA6-15” parcel of land north of 31st Street South. The proposed new 7-story multi-family building will be placed at the easternmost corner of the site, adjacent to a private alley and the four-story Citizen Apartments. A proposed loading dock will be accessed by a new curb cut from 31st Street South.

The liner units will front on 31st Street South in 7 (7) buildings that that contain two (2) units each. Six (6) of these liner buildings are attached to each other in clusters of two (2). These liner units will be placed in front of the existing above grade parking structure. The liner units are placed on the site to accommodate the existing structured parking entrances.

Figure 6. Site Layout**Figure 7. Site Layout, 31st Street Perspective**

Building Height, Form and Architecture: The proposed architecture is intended to blend in with the materials and vocabulary of the existing building, with tan brick and bronze-colored vertical metal panels.

In between the liber units, the applicant proposes to screen the existing structured parking with bronze metal panels.

The proposed new dwelling units are under the maximum permitted height of 60 feet.⁴

⁴ The existing Shirlington House building is 10 stories. In the late 1970s the County Board amended the Zoning Ordinance to reduce the maximum permitted height in the RA6-15 zoning district to 60 feet.

Figure 8—Left: existing building; Right: Multifamily building**EAST MULTI-FAMILY APARTMENT****Figure 9—Liner Unit 3 showing treatment of garage entrance (typ.)**

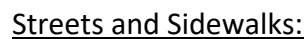
Public Space and Landscaping: There is no proposed public space at this site. The applicant proposes a planting strip and street trees along 31st Street. The developer proposes planting beds between the new multifamily building and the liner units, and additional planting between the clusters of liner units (at least where there are no existing garage entrances that must be accommodated). Behind the liner units, the developer proposes to screen the view of the parking structure from the units with planters with shrubs or grasses.

Sustainable Design: The building is designed to achieve an LEED Gold certification and the applicant is requesting additional density under the [Green Building Incentive Policy](#) (GBIP). The applicant is proposing to participate in the GBIP's incentive program at the 0.25 FAR level and will incorporate the GBIP baseline prerequisites with Arlington-specific points.

Parking and Loading: The applicant is proposing to keep the existing structured and surface parking but restripe the surface lot to reduce the number of compact parking spaces, for a proposed total of 565 spaces, or 1.1 spaces per dwelling unit. The existing building has surface loading spaces. The proposed new multifamily building will have one new loading space. The zoning ordinance does not require loading spaces for the liner units. The proposed number of parking spaces meets the Zoning Ordinance requirements in Section 14.3.7.A.

Transportation: The site is located along 31st Street South, just south of the Shirlington House apartments and west of a private alley that primarily serves the adjacent residential property. The following sections provide a detailed overview of the existing and proposed transportation facilities. Staff continues to evaluate the proposal for consistency with County policies and guidelines.

Figure 10. Master Transportation Plan Map

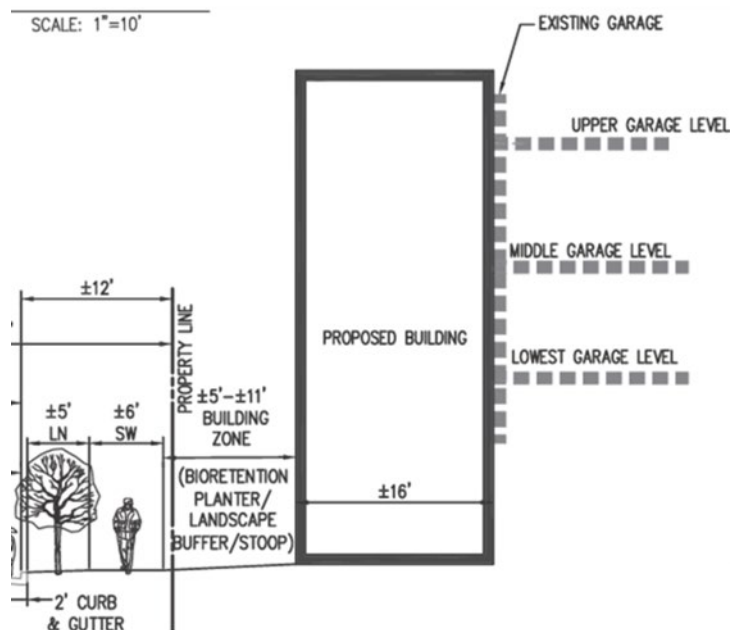


31st Street South: The Master Transportation Plan (MTP) identifies the adjacent segment of 31st Street South as a neighborhood street. The MTP plans for a neighborhood street to contain 1 ½-to-2 travel lanes, low-to-no median priority, no restriction on driveway access, and high on-street parking priority. The MTP identifies neighborhood streets to contain a streetscape with 4-to-6 foot wide sidewalks and 2-to-4 foot wide green strips. The adjacent segment of 31st Street South consists of a varying street section width measuring from 36-feet to 46-feet wide which includes two travel lanes (one in each direction) and two 7-foot-wide parking lanes. The existing Shirlington House apartments contains three curb cuts from 31st Street South, which provide access to an existing two-level parking garage and surface lot over the garage. Along the site's frontage, there is currently a 4.5-foot-wide sidewalk with no landscape strip. Along the site's frontage on 31st Street South there are various traffic calming elements such as curb extensions and speed humps. On the western end of the site's frontage, where there is a curb cut to access the surface lot there is a curb extension with a marked crosswalk serving a transit stop.

The applicant proposes to modify the northern half of the site's 31st Street South streetscape. For the modified segment of the streetscape, the applicant proposes a 11-foot-wide

streetscape consisting of a 5-foot-wide landscape strip and a 6-foot-wide sidewalk. The multifamily building and liner dwelling units will be setback from the back of sidewalk by approximately 5-to-11-feet. With the modified streetscape, the applicant is proposing a consistent 36-foot-wide street-section with on-street parking being maintained only on the south side, where it is maximized due to no curb cuts being present. Where on-street parking exists on the north side of 31st Street South today, the applicant is proposing to allocate that space for an on-street bike lane adjacent to the face-of-curb.

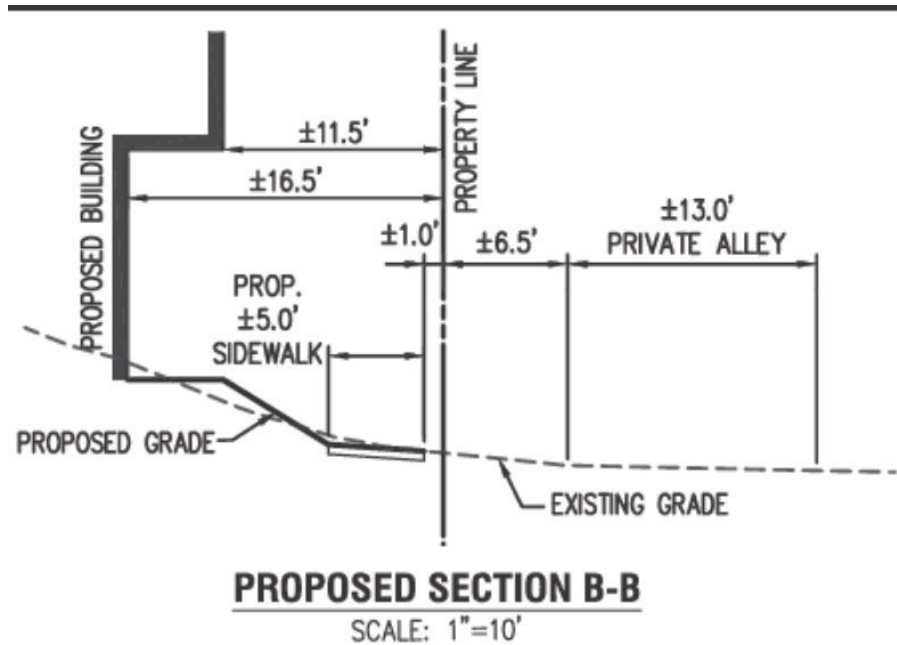
Figure 11. Proposed 31st Street South Cross Section (Facing West)



Private Alley: The Master Transportation Plan (MTP) does not identify the adjacent segment of the Private Alley. This segment consists of a 1.5-lane yield street with no on-street parking or streetscape on either side. Currently, the alley does not provide access to the Shirlington House apartments and is separated from the site by a retaining wall of varying heights as it extends north.

Along the site's eastern frontage, the applicant proposes modifications to the western side of the Private Alley streetscape. This includes a 5-foot-wide sidewalk extending approximately 170 feet from 31st Street South to a stairway behind the proposed multifamily building, providing access to an amenity area. The existing retaining wall between the alley and the sidewalk will remain in place and the Applicant does not propose any changes to the alley width.

Figure 12. Proposed Private Alley Cross Section (Facing North)



Transit Service: The MTP identifies the adjacent segment of 31st Street South to serve the primary transit network. Metrobus routes 7A and 22A directly service the site with a bus stop located on the site's frontage on 31st Street South, and a matching bus stop on the opposite (south) side of the street. Additional transit routes such as ART, DASH, and Metrobus are located 600-feet east of the site on 31st Street South at the Shirlington Transit Station. The applicant is proposing minor modifications to the location of the existing bus shelter at the site's frontage on 31st Street South.

Bicycle Facilities: The MTP does not identify the adjacent segment of 31st Street South as a primary bicycle corridor. However, the County has identified 31st Street South as a recommended on-street bike route given the low traffic speeds and connectivity to the Shirlington Transit Station. A Capital BikeShare station is located within a ¼ of a mile west of the site on 31st Street South. The applicant proposes 31 new Class I (long-term, secured) bicycle parking spaces for the site, located in two bicycle storage rooms: one in the existing garage and the other on the 1st level of the multifamily building. The applicant proposes 6 Class III (short-term, unsecured) bicycle parking for visitors, located outside the multifamily building and between two of the liner dwelling units.

Multimodal Transportation Analysis and Trip Generation: The applicant submitted a Multimodal Transportation Assessment (MMTA) which was prepared by Wells & Associates, dated May 10, 2024. The analysis assumes that approximately 47 percent of the residential-related trips will not use a personal vehicle. During the AM peak period, the analysis anticipates 16 vehicle trips. During the PM peak period, the analysis anticipates 21 vehicle trips. The analysis assessed six intersections within the vicinity of the site, which include the site's existing curb cuts. The analysis concluded that the signalized intersections will continue to operate at an acceptable level of service with the proposed redevelopment meanwhile the unsignalized intersections will continue to operate similar to existing conditions.

Site Features and Amenities: Site plan projects deliver a number of standard benefits that are required by conditions of approval, including a Public Art contribution, Utility Fund contribution and streetscape improvements, including affordable housing contributions. The developer also proposes to achieve additional density by providing on-site committed affordable dwelling units and achieving LEED Gold certification at the .25 FAR level.

Modification of Use Regulations: The applicant requests the County Board modify the following Zoning regulations, including, but not limited to:

Additional Density: The project includes commitments for achieving LEED Gold certification to earn additional density. The features and amenities that benefit the community associated with additional density, including committed affordable housing on-site, are under review by staff.

Parking ratio: ~~The applicant is requesting a parking ratio of 1.1 spaces per dwelling unit.~~ Applicant meets the Zoning Ordinance regulations for number of parking spaces per dwelling unit for multifamily buildings in Section 14.3.7.A.

Compact Parking ratio of 75%: The developer proposes to keep the existing parking garage in its current configuration (no construction in the garage is proposed, or necessary to accomplish the development plan), but proposes to restripe the surface lot to reduce the number of compact spaces (currently 85% of all parking). This request is currently under review by staff.

Preliminary staff issues:

- Can the applicant do some green improvements to the existing building?
- Can the applicant improve pedestrian circulation from the existing building to the bus stops on 31st Street and to Shirlington?

SPRC Chairs:

Nia Bagley

Planning Commission

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CPHD - Planning

pschulz@arlingtonva.us

Sergio Viricochea

DES – Development Services
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