



**A Publication of the County of Fairfax, Virginia
Department of Planning & Zoning**

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**STAFF REPORT
2008-2009 NORTH COUNTY AREA PLANS REVIEW**

SUPERVISOR DISTRICT: DRANESVILLE

APR ITEM(S): 08-III-15UP

NOMINATOR(S): Douglas Cobb

ACREAGE: N/A

TAX MAP I.D.: N/A

GENERAL LOCATION: The Upper Potomac Planning District is the area generally bounded by the Potomac River; Difficult Run; Georgetown Pike; Old Dominion Drive; Towlston Road; Georgetown Pike; Leesburg Pike and Loudoun County.

PLANNING AREA: III
District: Upper Potomac
Sector: Riverfront (UP1), Springvale (UP2), the portion of Hickory (UP3) north and east of Leesburg Pike

Special Areas: N/A

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: Low Density Residential, Retail & Other, Public Parks, Private Recreation, Private Open Space, Public Facilities

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT: Generally planned for low density residential with some private recreation, private open space, public park and retail.

For complete Plan text see: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/area3/upperpotomac/>
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PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT: Add text intended to encourage locating utilities underground and protection of Heritage Trees.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

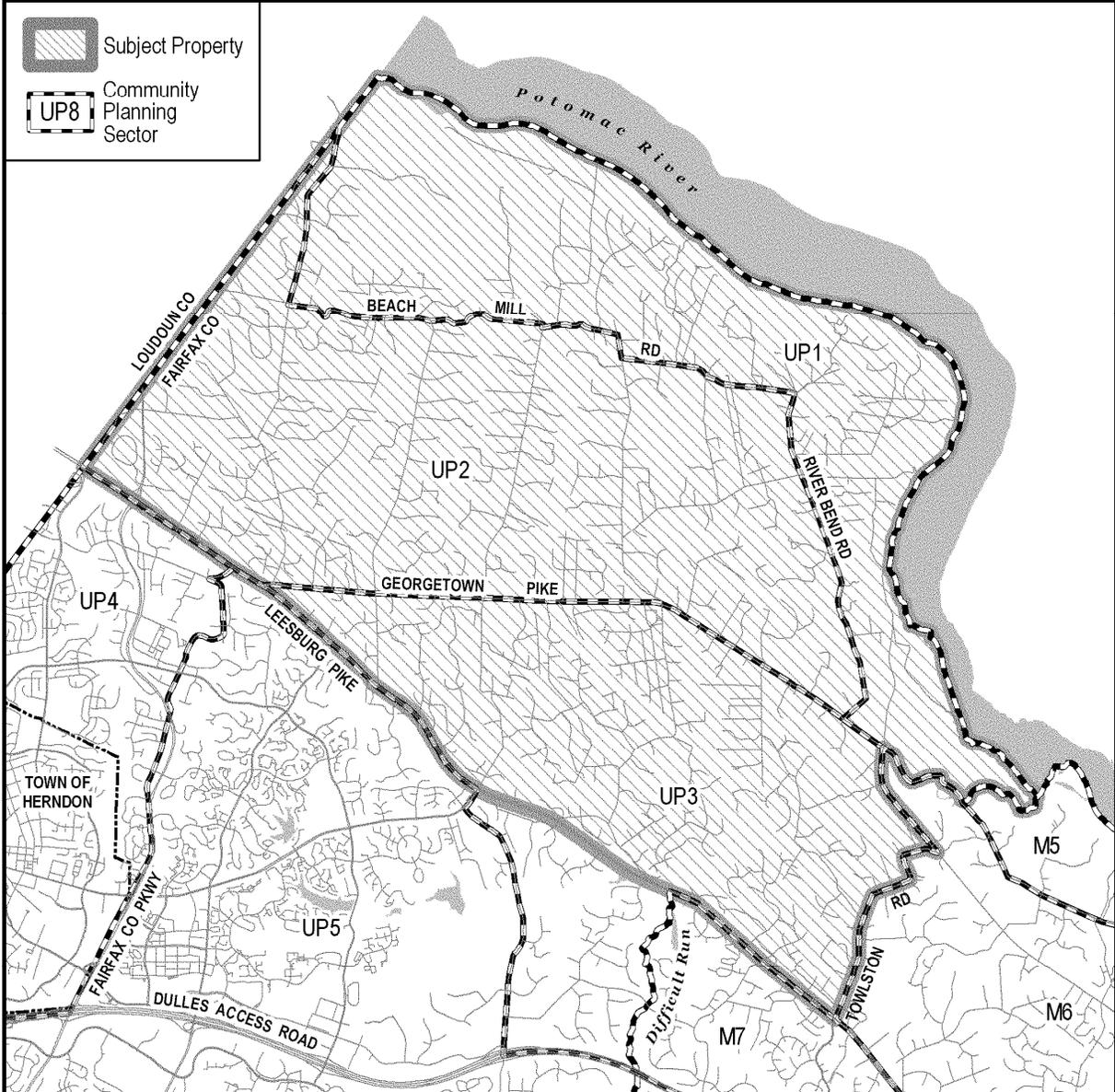
Approve Nomination As Submitted

Approve Staff Alternative

Retain Adopted Plan

Staff recommends that all new development and redeveloped properties in the subject area be strongly encouraged to bury all overhead utilities while protecting the valuable Heritage Trees and significant treescapes of the county. This alternative differs from the nomination in that it does not prescribe an implementation method such as easements but does state the importance of preserving Heritage Trees.

LOCATION MAP FOR SUBJECT PROPERTY THE SUBJECT PROPERTY FOR 08-III-15UP IS COMPRISED OF THE UP1 AND UP2 COMMUNITY PLANNING SECTORS, AND A PORTION OF THE UP3 COMMUNITY PLANNING SECTOR	2008-2009 NORTH COUNTY APR # 08-III-15UP DRANESVILLE
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Subject Property Current Plan: Generally planned for low density residential with some private recreation, private open space, public park and retail.

Nominated Plan Change: Add plan text intended to encourage locating utilities underground and protection of Heritage Trees.

Staff Recommendation: Approve Staff Alternative. All new development and redeveloped properties are strongly encouraged to bury over head utilities while protecting the valuable Heritage Trees and significant treescapes, and improving the safety and quality of life in the community.



PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING USING FAIRFAX COUNTY GIS
BASE MAP DATA CURRENT TO MARCH 2009



CONTEXT

General Location:

The nomination concerns the Riverfront Planning Sector (UP1), Springvale Planning Sector (UP2), the portion of Hickory Planning Sector (UP3) north and east of Leesburg Pike, all within the Upper Potomac Planning District. This includes land generally located north of Leesburg Pike, east of the Loudoun County – Fairfax County line, south of the Potomac River and west of Towlston Road, Old Dominion Drive and the Difficult Run.

ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEXT

There is no site specific Plan text. However the Comprehensive Plan, pages 33 and 35 of the Public Facilities section of the Policy Plan, 2007 Edition, Amended through 1-10-2005, states:

“Objective 40: Locate electrical and land-line service facilities to provide maximum service levels as unobtrusively as possible.

Policy f. Construct underground transmission and distribution lines, whenever possible...”

The Comprehensive Plan, page 16 of the Environment section of the Policy Plan, 2007 Edition, Amended through 2-25-2008, states:

“Objective 10: Conserve and restore tree cover on developed and developing sites. Provide tree cover on sites where it is absent prior to development.

Policy a: Protect or restore the maximum amount of tree cover on developed and developing sites consistent with planned land use and good silvicultural practices.”

NOMINATED PLAN AMENDMENT

Insert the following text, Environment section of the Upper Potomac Planning District Overview:

“Riverfront (UP1), Springvale (UP2) and Hickory (UP3) north of Route 7 constitute the community of Great Falls, a highly committed, environmentally-aware community which has been recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as the 23rd Community Wildlife Habitat in the United States, and which has been recognized by the State of Virginia and Fairfax County as the home of some of the largest and oldest Heritage Trees in the State.

The community of Great Falls is distressed by the hacking of trees along road sides by the public utilities, telecommunications companies and others and requests that all overhead wiring and other infrastructural apparatus be buried underground to enhance safety along roadways, reduce

loss of power during storms, and to protect residents during power outages caused by falling trees.

The County shall encourage citizens to grant underground utility easements free of charge. The compensation for granting the easements will be the notable enhancement of the environment and appearance of the grantor's property.

The residents of Great Falls (UP1, UP2, and UP3 north of Route 7) treasure the many Heritage Trees (trees of 100 years of age or older) throughout the community, which must be carefully preserved and protected-the trees and their root systems-during the process of burying utilities.

All new development is to encourage utilities buried underground, as is customary today in other communities such as Reston.”

ANALYSIS

New Development or Redevelopment

The benefits of placing utilities underground can include improving the appearance of an area and reducing disruption to the tree canopy when maintaining the utilities. The Public Facilities section of the Policy Plan states as an objective to “Locate electrical and land-line service facilities to provide maximum service levels as unobtrusively as possible.” In addition, there are policies that explicitly state that transmission and distribution lines should be underground, whenever possible. In the case of new development or redevelopment, policies in the Comprehensive Plan may be consulted.

Tree Preservation

The Environment section of the Policy Plan includes policies to protect or restore the maximum amount of tree cover. In addition, there are requirements for preserving and replacing tree cover in existing regulations including the county's tree conservation ordinance; zoning ordinance; subdivision ordinance; erosion and sedimentation control ordinance; the heritage, specimen, memorial and street tree ordinance; and the public facilities manual.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recognizes the desire of the residents of Great Falls to protect the appearance of their community by mitigating the impact of overhead utility lines, and the community's desire to protect valuable Heritage Trees. Initially, staff recommended retaining the current Plan text due to existing Policy Plan guidance for these issues, however, the Dranesville APR Task Force developed an alternative recommendation that staff believes would be appropriate to add to the Area Plan text. Staff has added the geographic area to which the recommendation would apply to be consistent with the nomination.

Staff recommends that the Comprehensive Plan be modified as shown below. Text proposed to be added is shown as underlined.

ADD: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area III, Upper Potomac Planning District, Amended Through June, 30 2008, Overview, Environment, pages 10-11:

In the Riverfront (UP1), Springvale (UP2), and the portion of the Hickory (UP3) north and east of Leesburg Pike community planning sectors:

- Maintain very low density development in the portions of the district that are environmentally constrained and drain into the Difficult Run and the Occoquan....;
- All new development and redeveloped properties are strongly encouraged to bury all overhead utilities while protecting the valuable Heritage Trees and significant treescapes, and improving the safety and quality of life in the community.

NOTE: The Comprehensive Plan Map would not change.