

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

SUPERVISOR DISTRICT: PROVIDENCE

APR ITEM: 08-I-1MS

NOMINATOR(S): Keith C. Martin on behalf of Brenizer Properties, LLC

ACREAGE: 4.56

TAX MAP I.D. NUMBERS: 49-1((13))31,32

GENERAL LOCATION: Northeast corner of Hilltop Road and Dorr Avenue.

PLANNING AREA: I

District: Jefferson

Sector: Merrifield (J6)

Special Areas: Merrifield Suburban Center, Sub-Unit C7

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: Mixed Uses

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT:

This sub-unit is developed and planned for warehouse and industrial uses at current intensities. Any modification, expansion, and/or reuse of the existing buildings should be consistent with guidelines for Existing Uses and Buildings under the Area-Wide Land Use section.

For complete Plan text see Attachment 1.

PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT:

Mixed use up to 2.0 FAR (45% office, 45% residential, 10% retail).

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Nomination as submitted

Approve Staff Alternative

Retain Adopted Plan

The proposed nomination would significantly increase the development intensity on the subject property. Prior planning efforts in the Merrifield Suburban Center have explicitly stated that redevelopment should be focused around two core areas: the Transit Station Area and the Town Center Area. The subject property and the rest of Sub-Unit C7 are recommended to remain at the current use and intensity. Increased density and residential use on the subject site would exacerbate existing deficiencies in schools and park resources. With respect to transportation, the nomination would add nearly ten times the number of average daily automobile trips to that planned and existing. The mitigation of the adverse impacts to the surrounding roadway network would likely need to occur through road improvements, as the distance to the Metro station limits the ability to reduce trips through transit use. Staff recommends retention of the adopted Plan.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Land Use

- These parcels were included in a special study of the Merrifield Suburban Center, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors as Out-of-Turn Plan Amendment S98-CW-2CP in June 2001. A major objective of this three-year study was to create a new vision for Merrifield Suburban Center, while striving to create a balance between existing and proposed infrastructure such as transportation, schools, parks, water, sewer, and land use. The result of this Plan Amendment directed growth around the Dunn Loring Transit Station Area and the Merrifield Core, leaving other areas such as Sub-Unit C7 planned for current uses and intensities.
- Surrounding properties are planned for light industrial office/warehouse or retail uses at current intensities, with maximum heights of 50 feet. Approximately 87,000 square feet of light industrial office and warehouse development currently exists on the site, resulting in an overall intensity of approximately .44 FAR.
- The proposed 2.0 FAR would result in 200 residential units and approximately 218,000 square feet of office and retail space on the site, more than quadrupling the amount of development currently planned and existing. This would be a substantial increase in density and would create a significant change in the light industrial character of Sub-Unit C7 and adjacent Sub-Units. Any change in use or intensity on these parcels may create expectation for increased intensity or different uses in Sub-Unit C7, thereby increasing pressure for redevelopment. Intensity of this magnitude is reserved for the two core areas of Merrifield; allowing this intensity in this and potentially other Sub-Units in the future would undermine the goals of the Merrifield study approved in 2001.

Transportation

- Guideline 1 “Transit Proximity and Station Area Boundaries”, under the *Guidelines for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)* in the Policy Plan section of the Comprehensive Plan, as amended through September 22, 2008, states that the TOD boundary, the area where the highest density should be focused near the rail transit station, is generally considered as a ¼ mile radius from the station platform, with density tapering within a ½ mile radius from the station platform. This distance generally defines a 5-10 minute walk, which is assumed to be the distance and time associated with optimized transit usage. The nominated property is located approximately 3,150 feet (measured from the middle of the site) from the Dunn Loring-Merrifield Metro station, and is beyond the area considered appropriate for transit-oriented development. (See Attachment 2)
- The Comprehensive Plan currently states that Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies are needed in this area. The Plan requires a minimum 15% non-SOV (single occupancy vehicle) mode split for parcels located more than ½ mile from the Metro station in the Merrifield area. Given this distance of greater than ½ mile, transit reductions for this site are very limited, especially for the office use proposed for the site.
- The intensity and type of land uses proposed by the nomination would adversely impact the surrounding roadway network. The proposal would increase trips in and out of the site during peak hours and on an average daily basis, resulting in a net gain of 4,584 daily trips when assessed against the current plan, an increase of nearly ten times.

- The Transportation Plan shows a planned extension of Dorr Avenue from its current terminus at Hilltop Road south to Lee Highway (US Route 29). This road is shown in the plan to be an improved two-lane collector. Hilltop Road is shown on the Plan to be an improved four-lane collector road extending west from Dorr Avenue. Lee Highway is shown on the Plan to be an improved six-lane arterial. Site access from Dorr Avenue is desired on the northern edge of the site to mitigate potential impacts with the planned intersection at the Dorr Avenue extension and Lee Highway. However, because the improvements are scaled to support the current Comprehensive Plan recommendations, additional roadway improvements may be needed to accommodate the additional trips.
- The Code of Virginia (Chapter 527 §15.2-2222.1) requires localities to submit Comprehensive Plans and amendments to Comprehensive Plans that will substantially affect transportation on state-controlled roads to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Any amendment to the Comprehensive Plan that would generate 5,000 additional vehicle trips per day, assuming the highest density permissible, would trigger a review by VDOT. This review is also commonly referred to as “VDOT 527” or “Chapter 527”. Although the nomination does not trigger VDOT Chapter 527 review since less than 5,000 additional daily trips are generated, a traffic impact analysis study may be required due to the size of the net increase in average daily trips as a result of the proposed amendment.

Parks and Recreation

- Existing public park and recreation facilities are very limited in the Merrifield Suburban Center. This proposal would allow for a potential increase in residents within Merrifield by 422 individuals, requiring an on-site provision of public park facilities. Integration of publicly accessible urban parks is critical to providing on-site recreation resources.

Schools

- The subject property is served by Shreveewood Elementary School, Kilmer Middle School, and Marshall High School.
- The addition of 200 mid-rise multifamily units would result in approximately 16 students over the existing development and Plan recommendation: 9 elementary, 2 middle school, and 5 high school students.
- In school year 2009-2010, Marshall High School will be the only school affected by the nomination not experiencing a deficiency in capacity. However, there is projected to be a capacity deficit at all of the receiving schools for the 2013-2014 school year. The APR nomination is anticipated to increase the capacity deficit at the receiving schools.

Environment

- Due to the proximity of the existing light industrial uses and the surrounding road system there may be some potential for noise impacts to the proposed residential units and other noise sensitive uses at this location. Any redevelopment at this location may require noise mitigation measures for exterior activity areas and interior noise mitigation for residential units.

ATTACHMENT 1
CURRENT PLAN TEXT

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area I, The Merrifield Suburban Center, as amended through July 21, 2003, Land Unit Recommendations, p. 68-69:

Sub-Unit C7:

“Sub-Unit C7 is located adjacent to Route 29 and is bounded by Land Unit D on the west, Sub-Unit C4 on the north and Sub-unit C6 on the east. This sub-unit is planned and developed primarily with warehouse and industrial uses. These sub-unit uses should remain at current intensities. Any modification, expansion, and/or reuse of the existing buildings should be consistent with guidelines for Existing Uses and Buildings under the Area-Wide Land Use section.

Height Limit: The maximum height for existing development is 50 feet. See the Building Heights Map, Figure 16, and the Building Height Guidelines under the Area-Wide Urban Design section.”

ATTACHMENT 2
DISTANCE FROM TRANSIT PLATFORM MAP

