

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

SUPERVISOR DISTRICT: PROVIDENCE

APR ITEM: 08-I-2MS

NOMINATOR(S): Francis A. McDermott

ACREAGE: 9.57 Acres

TAX MAP I.D. NUMBERS: 49-2 ((1)) 26C, 27, 28, 28A, 34B; 49-4 ((1)) 55

GENERAL LOCATION: North of Lee Highway; east of Gallows Road.

PLANNING AREA(S): I

District(s): Jefferson

Sector: Merrifield (J6)

Special Area(s): Merrifield Suburban Center (B5)

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: Mixed-Use

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT: Retail use with option for retail or office/ retail mixed-use up to an intensity of 0.65 floor-are ratio (FAR) with conditions and second option for residential mixed-use and/or hotel use up to an intensity of 1.05 FAR with conditions.

For complete Plan text see <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/planareas.htm>

PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT: Office, residential, hotel, retail mixed-use up to an intensity of 1.5 FAR

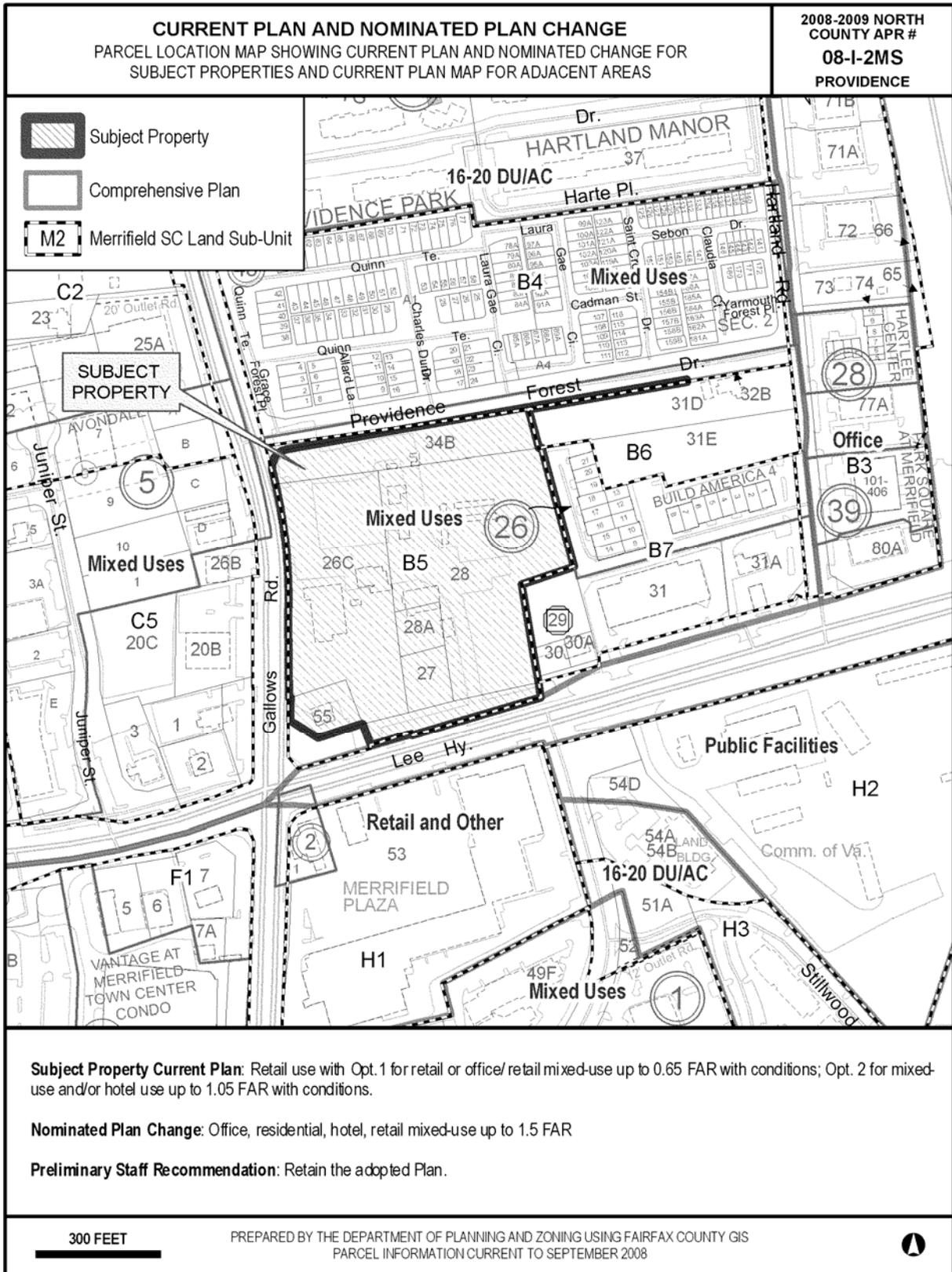
SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve Nomination as submitted

Approve Staff Alternative

Retain Adopted Plan

The proposed nomination conflicts with the overall goals of the Merrifield Suburban Center regarding land use pattern and intensity. In addition, the elimination of some of the conditions for redevelopment, as proposed in the nomination, would undermine established guidelines that encourage the development of a high-quality, walkable, affordable, urban environment. The current Plan already provides an option for redevelopment of the subject property that substantially increases the intensity above the existing use. This option conforms to the goals of area and provides a similar mix of land uses as proposed. Staff recommends the retention of the current Plan.



CRITICAL ISSUESLand Use:

- The 9.6-acre subject property is located in the northwest quadrant of intersection of Lee Highway (Route 29) and Gallows Road. The subject property is part of the Sub-unit B-5 of the Merrifield Suburban Center and is zoned C-8, I-5, and R-3. The Merrifield Garden Center, a garden center, nursery, and landscaping company, has operated on this site since 1971. The Garden Center has a built square footage of approximately 5,600 square feet; however, most of the property is used for surface parking, plant display, and storage.
- The property was included in a special study of the Merrifield area, 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 development and redevelopment in the Merrifield area, which balanced existing and planned infrastructure, such as transportation, schools, parks, water, and sewer systems. The result of this Plan Amendment was the current Merrifield Suburban Center Plan recommendations, which directed growth around two core areas, the Dunn Loring-Merrifield Transit Station Area and the Merrifield Town Center Area. The nominated area does not lie within either of these areas, but proposes an intensity in excess of that planned for the nearest core area, the Merrifield Town Center.
- In the current Plan, recommended intensities are highest in the core areas, for example, up to 1.2 FAR in the Merrifield Town Center. In order to support these higher intensities, specific conditions must be achieved that address mixture of land uses, urban design, building heights, setbacks, consolidation, streetscape and road improvements, pedestrian and open space systems, and affordable housing. The Plan also identifies the areas, adjacent to the core areas, that could become more urban, pedestrian-oriented development, but these areas are planned for lesser intensities than the core area to provide a transition in between and around the core areas to the non-core areas.
- The subject property is considered within the area “adjacent to the core area,” in a critical location between the two core areas. The Plan currently recognizes the importance of the subject property, due to its accessibility and visibility to Route 29 and Gallows Road. As a result, options exist for more intense redevelopment, with the achievement of similar conditions to the core area. The adopted Plan recommends two options for redevelopment above the base Plan: Option 1 recommends a retail center or an office-retail mixed-use up to 0.65 FAR; Option 2 recommends a residential, institutional, retail, and service mixed-use and/or hotel use up to 1.05 FAR. The second option would allow a similar mixture of land uses to the nomination and would achieve the Plan goals.
- The nomination proposes to increase the intensity of this option from a 1.05 FAR to a 1.5 FAR. This intensity would disrupt the development pattern of the Merrifield Suburban Center by recommending a high intensity, outside the core area. Adjacent to the subject property are less intense Plan recommendations for 0.65 FAR, south and west of the subject property and residential use at a density of 5-8 du/ac, north of the subject

property.

- The nomination also proposes that the conditions set forth in the Plan to achieve this higher intensity would restrict the ability of the subject property to redevelop. The conditions set forth in the Plan were explicitly written to maintain the balance of land use and infrastructure, as described above, and create a viable environment for redevelop that would emphasize high-quality urban design, concentrated growth, land use synergy, affordability, accessibility, and transit usage. The nomination does not specify which conditions would not be met, but rather adds a blanket statement that the conditions would preclude redevelopment. Without the conditions in the Plan guidance, the nomination may defeat the overall goals of the Merrifield Suburban Center, since the subject property is located at a critical location between the two core areas.

Transportation:

- The nomination would generate slightly fewer daily trips (3%), as compared to the office-retail mixed-use option but significantly greater trips (170%), compared to the residential-retail mixed-use option. In both scenarios, significantly higher AM peak hour trips would result from the proposed nomination and would increase trips in and out of the site during peak hour. These trips could adversely impact the surrounding road network.
- The nomination states that the “alternative uses density increase limitations above Option 1 result in unnecessary constraints... [on the site’s] ability to meet more recently adopted Transit Oriented Development (“TOD”) goals and criteria...” However, 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 northwest corner of the subject area is approximately ½ mile walking distance from the transit station platform, along Gallows Road. The redevelopment of the subject area would not be considered transit-oriented, as the majority of the subject area is outside the 5-10 minute walking range. The location of high-density, mixed-use on the subject area would not be able to maximize pedestrian-oriented, transit-ridership, due its location. (See Attachment 1) Because of this distance, transit reductions for the proposed development also would be limited, primarily to the residential use.
- The proposed land uses could further limit the opportunity to reduce trips on the site as the additional office and significantly lower amount of community-serving retail could reduce the synergy among land uses.
- The intersection at Gallows Road and Route 29, which is located at the southwest corner of the site, is currently under construction with an anticipated completion date in mid-

year of 2013. Once the intersection is improved there will be three through lanes, two left turn lanes, and one right turn lane in each direction on Route 29 and Gallows Road. The Comprehensive Plan states that ultimately the intersection will be a grade-separated diamond interchange. The current construction of the intersection improvement affects the frontage of the nomination area, which is not addressed in the nomination.

- The proposed nomination would need to mitigate the impact on the surrounding roadways, above the current Plan recommendations and HOT improvements. These would include limiting access on Route 29 and Gallows Road, due to current and anticipated vehicle trips on these two arterial roadways. Full access would be desired on Providence Forest Drive, and road improvements would need to be completed on Providence Forest Drive and Hartland Road.
- 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”. The proposed nomination would not warrant a VDOT 527 review. The nomination would not generate 5,000 additional vehicle trips per day, as compared to the highest density recommended under the current Comprehensive Plan

Parks and Recreation:

- Existing public park and recreation facilities are very limited in the Merrifield Suburban Center, as identified in the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The nomination would potentially increase the population within the Merrifield Suburban Center by 422 new residents, in addition to hotel guest and employees. The nomination would need to provide on-site public park facilities for the new residents and hotel guests and off-site park facilities for the new residents and employees.

Sanitary Sewer:

- The proposed density of 1.5 FAR would impact the sanitary sewer system. The density would result in several surcharged pipes that would require resizing.

Public Schools:

- The proposed nomination is located within the Shreveview Elementary School, Kilmer Middle School, and Marshall High School boundaries. Shreveview Elementary and Kilmer Middle Schools are projected to be over-capacity in the 2009-2010 School Year, while Marshall High School will be under-capacity. Shreveview, Kilmer, and Marshall Schools are projected to be over-capacity in School Year 2013-2014 by 170, 180, and 13

students, respectively. Planning funds have been approved for renovation at Marshall High School, but construction remains unfunded. Redevelopment of the Devonshire administrative center, as part of the relocation of Graham Road Elementary School, could provide some relief to Shreveview ES.

- If the nomination is compared against the current residential-retail mixed-use option of the Comprehensive Plan, assuming a development of 200 high-rise, multi-family dwelling units, the nomination would reduce the number of students resulting from redevelopment by 14 students. However, Shreveview, Kilmer, and Marshall Schools would still remain over-capacity, and it uncertain whether the current Comprehensive Plan option would development with the assumed mixture of uses.

Attachment 1

Distance for Transit Platform Map

