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Department of Planning & Zoning**

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STAFF REPORT 2009-2010 SOUTH COUNTY AREA PLANS REVIEW

SUPERVISOR DISTRICTS: LEE, MOUNT VERNON

APR ITEM: 09-IV-11MV

NOMINATOR: Patrick Rea, Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations

ACREAGE: N/A

TAX MAP I.D. NUMBERS: N/A

GENERAL LOCATION: Area generally surrounding Richmond Highway from the City of Alexandria boundary to the Woodlawn Plantation.

PLANNING AREA: IV
District: Mount Vernon
Sectors: Huntington (MV1), Hybla Valley (MV2), Greater Belle Haven (MV3), Groveton (MV5), Fort Hunt (MV6), Mount Vernon (MV7), and Woodlawn (MV8)
Special Areas: North Gateway, Penn Daw, Beacon Groveton, Hybla Valley/Gum Springs, South County Center, and Woodlawn Community Business Centers (CBCs)

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: N/A

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT: The Richmond Highway Corridor Area plan seeks to promote revitalization and redevelopment while maintaining an acceptable land use and transportation balance.

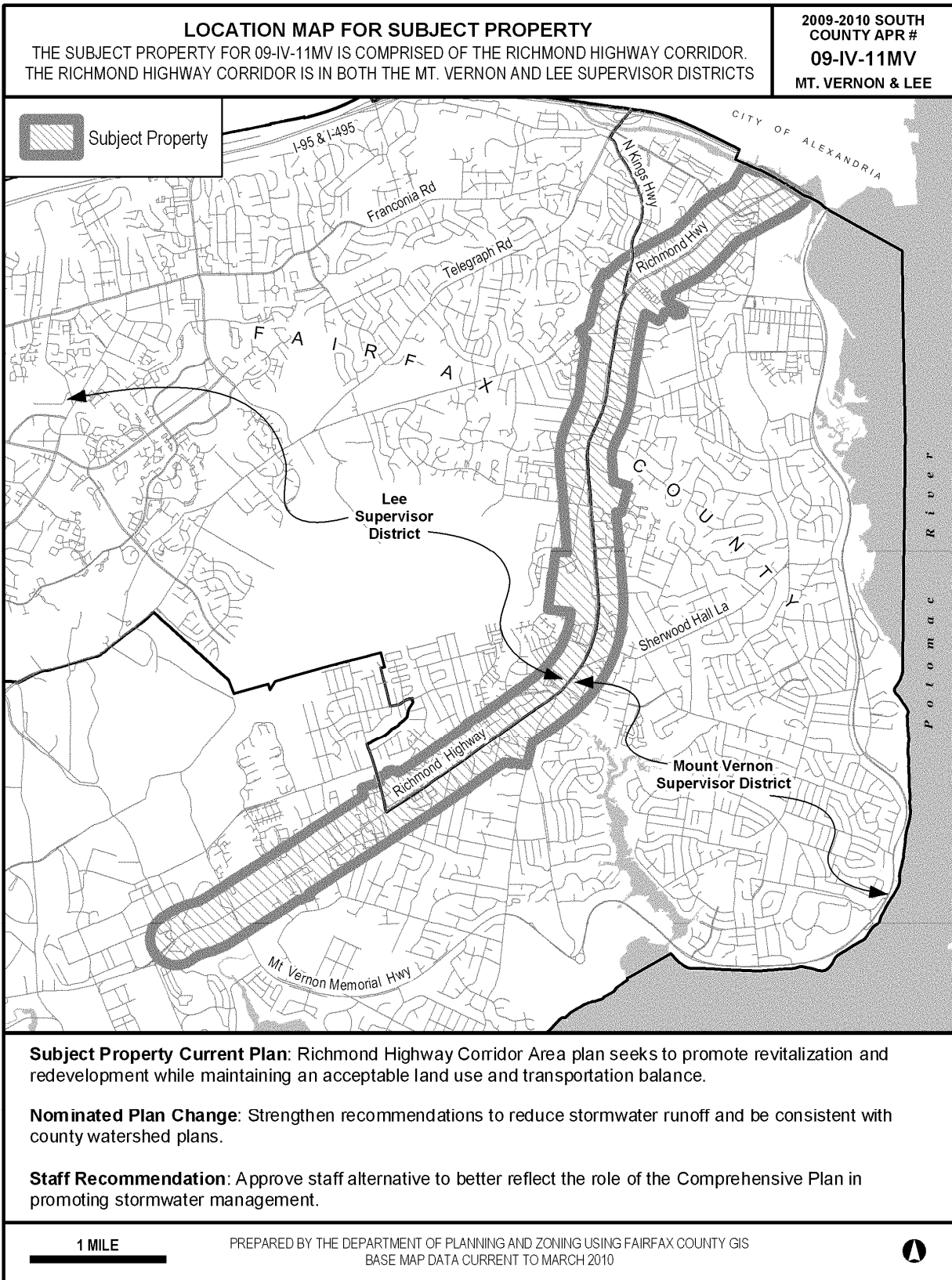
For complete plan text see <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/area4/mtvernon1.pdf>

PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT: Strengthen recommendations to reduce stormwater runoff and be consistent with county watershed plans. Add specific text encouraging development incentives and reducing roadway width to achieve these goals.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- Approve Nomination as submitted
 Approve Staff Alternative
 Retain Adopted Plan

Staff agrees with the general intent of the proposed nomination but the manner in which the proposed Plan text is written may result in creating new policies that cannot be practically implemented. Therefore, staff is proposing alternative language that addresses the nominator's intent while adding clarity. Staff does not support the nominated recommendations regarding service drives and road widening projects.



CONTEXT

General Location

The nomination consists of the area generally surrounding Richmond Highway from the City of Alexandria boundary to the Woodlawn Plantation.

Existing and Planned Land Use and Zoning

The subject area includes the general area surrounding a seven and one-half mile stretch of the Richmond Highway Corridor, extending from the City of Alexandria boundary to the Woodlawn Plantation. The area primarily contains commercial uses, such as local-serving retail uses, which are located in a number of community and neighborhood shopping centers, and free-standing and strip commercial uses. The majority of these commercial uses are uncoordinated and characterized by large setbacks from the roadway that contain surface parking. The Corridor also contains townhouse-style and some mid-rise offices and hotels. A wide variety of residential uses are located along the corridor as well from mobile home parks to high-rise residential uses near the Alexandria border. A variety of zoning classifications exist throughout the corridor, including C-2, C-3, C-5, C-6, C-8, PDH-5, PDH-8, PDH-12, PDH-16, PDH-30, PDH-40, PRM, R-1, R-2, R-3, R-4, R-5, R-8, R-12, R-16, R-20, R-30, and R-MHP. Additionally, many parcels lie within the Richmond Highway Commercial Revitalization District and the Highway Corridor Overlay District.

ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEXT

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Policy Plan, as amended through 9-22-08; Land Use, Redevelopment Section, page 6:

“Objective 9: Non-residential redevelopment should be in accord with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy d. Optimize stormwater management and water quality controls and practices for non-residential redevelopment consistent with revitalization goals.”

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Policy Plan, as amended through 2-25-08; Environment, Water Quality Section, pages 7-9:

“Objective 2: Prevent and reduce pollution of surface and groundwater resources. Protect and restore the ecological integrity of streams in Fairfax County.

Policy k. For new development and redevelopment, apply better site design and low impact development (LID) techniques such as those described below, and pursue commitments to reduce stormwater runoff volumes and peak flows, to increase groundwater recharge, and to increase preservation of undisturbed areas. In order to minimize the impacts that new development and redevelopment projects may have on the

County's streams, some or all of the following practices should be considered where not in conflict with land use compatibility objectives:

- Minimize the amount of impervious surface created.
- Site buildings to minimize impervious cover associated with driveways and parking areas and to encourage tree preservation.
- Where feasible, convey drainage from impervious areas into pervious areas.
- Encourage cluster development when designed to maximize protection of ecologically valuable land.
- Encourage the preservation of wooded areas and steep slopes adjacent to stream valley EQC areas.
- Encourage fulfillment of tree cover requirements through tree preservation instead of replanting where existing tree cover permits. Commit to tree preservation thresholds that exceed the minimum Zoning Ordinance requirements.
- Where appropriate, use protective easements in areas outside of private residential lots as a mechanism to protect wooded areas and steep slopes.
- Encourage the use of open ditch road sections and minimize subdivision street lengths, widths, use of curb and gutter sections, and overall impervious cover within cul-de-sacs, consistent with County and State requirements.
- Encourage the use of innovative BMPs and infiltration techniques of stormwater management where site conditions are appropriate, if consistent with County requirements.
- Apply nonstructural best management practices and bioengineering practices where site conditions are appropriate, if consistent with County requirements.
- Encourage shared parking between adjacent land uses where permitted.
- Where feasible and appropriate, encourage the use of pervious parking surfaces in low-use parking areas.
- Maximize the use of infiltration landscaping within streetscapes consistent with County and State requirements.

Policy 1. In order to augment the EQC system, encourage protection of stream channels and associated vegetated riparian buffer areas along stream channels upstream of Resource Protection Areas (as designated pursuant to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation

Ordinance) and Environmental Quality Corridors. To the extent feasible in consideration of overall site design, stormwater management needs and opportunities, and other Comprehensive Plan guidance, establish boundaries of these buffer areas consistent with the guidelines for designation of the stream valley component of the EQC system as set forth in Objective 9 of this section of the *Policy Plan*. Where applicable, pursue commitments to restoration of degraded stream channels and riparian buffer areas.

Policy m. Support watershed management planning and consider any watershed management plans that are adopted or endorsed by the Board of Supervisors as a factor in making land use decisions.

Policy n. Optimize stormwater management and water quality controls and practices for redevelopment consistent with revitalization goals.”

NOMINATED PLAN AMENDMENT

This nomination proposes to add language to the Land Use and Transportation sections of the Richmond Highway Corridor plan to reduce stormwater runoff, consistent with County watershed plans. To the Character section of the Plan, the nomination would add language stating that development in the corridor has degraded the area’s watersheds. A land use recommendation to provide incentives to reduce stormwater runoff and imperviousness would be added with this nomination. Additionally, transportation recommendations are proposed that involve removing some service drives and recommending that road widening projects better control runoff from existing paved areas. The complete nomination is shown as Attachment I.

ANALYSIS

Fairfax County is currently in the process of creating watershed plans for each watershed in its boundaries. The Little Hunting Creek Watershed Management Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 5, 2005 and the Cameron Run Watershed Management Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors on August 6, 2007. These plans, which cover part of the Richmond Highway Corridor, outline a number of actions to be taken that would improve the quality of the Little Hunting Creek and Cameron Run watersheds. The county has not yet moved to the implementation phase of the Watershed Plans, pending the completion of plans for other watersheds. Additional watersheds in the Richmond Highway Corridor include the Dogue Creek and Belle Haven Watersheds.

The nomination proposes to add text stating that incentives for development and redevelopment to better control stormwater runoff and reduce imperviousness should be offered. Staff believes that this language may be too prescriptive and is outside of the Plan’s role as a guiding document. The nomination also proposes text in the Transportation section related to controlling runoff along service drives and at road widening projects. Existing Plan language does not preclude the removal and conversion of unneeded service drives to pervious surface. Service drives are intended to improve traffic flow and access to private property. The proposed text seems to suggest that the service drives should be removed without consideration of this purpose.

Additionally, road widening projects are undertaken by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in accordance with their own policies and regulations. The Comprehensive Plan does not hold influence over VDOT's policies; therefore, the nominated language regarding road widening projects may be in conflict with these policies.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposed nomination contains language that seeks to achieve better control over stormwater runoff in the Richmond Highway Corridor. Staff recommends approval of a staff alternative to better reflect the role of the Comprehensive Plan in promoting stormwater management. The language proposed in the staff alternative removes that which is not enforceable through the Comprehensive Plan, replacing it with more general guidance that promotes better control of stormwater runoff in the Richmond Highway Corridor. Language stating that incentives to reduce imperviousness should be provided to developers is replaced with less prescriptive language, reflecting the Comprehensive Plan's role as a guiding document. Proposed transportation recommendations regarding service drives have been removed, since language addressing low impact development practices for the entire corridor is proposed. Likewise, proposed recommendations regarding road widening projects have been removed, since VDOT undertakes these projects in accordance with their own policies and regulations.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Staff recommends the Comprehensive Plan be modified as shown below. Text proposed to be added is shown as underlined and text proposed to be deleted is shown with a ~~strikethrough~~.

MODIFY: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, as amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, page 25:

“CHARACTER

...The northern part of Richmond Highway is located in the Belle Haven and Little Hunting Creek watersheds, while the southern segment is in the Dogue Creek watershed and is affected by the floodplains and stream valleys of Dogue Creek. The entire corridor is located in the Coastal Plain geologic province and thus lies in a zone of extensive slippage-prone swelling clays and sensitive aquifer recharge. Development in the Richmond Highway Corridor has degraded all three of these watersheds by increasing stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces and decreasing groundwater recharge.”

ADD: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, as amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, page 27:

- “Encourage development approaches that serve to reduce imperviousness and achieve better control over stormwater runoff in the Richmond Highway Corridor. Encourage the application of low impact development practices of stormwater management (e.g., bioretention facilities; vegetated swales) toward this end. Consideration should be given to reducing the impervious footprints of redevelopment sites and to integrating LID practices within landscaping strategies.”

MODIFY: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, as amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, page 27:

- “Minimize the impact of highway widenings, new roadway alignments, and new development projects on adjacent residential communities and the ~~ecology of~~ water quality and ecological conditions of streams within the district.”

NOTE: The Comprehensive Plan Map would not change.

ATTACHMENT I

NOMINATED PLAN TEXT – 09-IV-11MV

MODIFY: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, as amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, page 25:

Additions are shown underlined and deletions are shown with a ~~strikethrough~~.

“CHARACTER

...The northern part of Richmond Highway is located in the Belle Haven and Little Hunting Creek watersheds, while the southern segment is in the Dogue Creek watershed and is affected by the floodplains and stream valleys of Dogue Creek. The entire corridor is located in the Coastal Plain geologic province and thus lies in a zone of extensive slippage-prone swelling clays and sensitive aquifer recharge. Development in the Richmond Highway Corridor has degraded all three of these watersheds by increasing stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces and decreasing aquifer recharge.”

ADD: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, as amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, page 27:

- “Offer incentives for development and redevelopment projects to reduce imperviousness and achieve better control over stormwater runoff in the Richmond Highway Corridor.”

MODIFY: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, as amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, page 27:

“Transportation

The following objectives are intended to guide general transportation decisions in the Richmond Highway Corridor.

- Provide improved traffic circulation and traffic safety during both peak and non-peak hours;
- Maximize the efficiency of existing highway facilities to move people and goods;
- Promote the increased use of ridesharing and public transportation to reduce reliance on automobiles; and
- Minimize the impact of highway widenings, new roadway alignments, and new development projects on adjacent residential communities and the ~~ecology~~ water quality of the district.

Service drive construction should not generally be required where interparcel access can be provided between adjacent development areas. ~~Existing service drives should be replaced wherever possible.~~ In order to achieve improved stormwater controls, existing

service drives or portions that are no longer needed should be removed to reduce the impervious footprint. Consideration should be given to converting them to bioretention or vegetated and treed swales that could serve as landscaping features, and that would control and treat stormwater. Highway right-of-way dedication or the “reservation” of right-of-way will be required where necessary.

Road widening projects should better control the runoff from existing paved areas that lack stormwater management controls. Such projects should reduce the existing peak runoff rate, as permitted by Virginia regulations upon request of the DCR in areas that have adopted a watershed management plan. Improvements in the control of stormwater runoff from the Richmond Highway should be achieved using LID techniques and installing structural BMPs along the proposed corridor.”