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Department of Planning & Zoning**

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STAFF REPORT 2009-2010 SOUTH COUNTY AREA PLANS REVIEW

SUPERVISOR DISTRICT: MOUNT VERNON

APR ITEM: 09-IV-1S

NOMINATOR(S): Cynthia Ann Smith

ACREAGE: 7.46 acres

TAX MAP I.D.: 99-4 ((1)) 32 and 33

GENERAL LOCATION: South of the Landsdowne development on the west side of Telegraph Road.

PLANNING AREA: IV
District: Springfield
Sector: S6 Newington Community Planning Sector
Special Areas: N/A

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: Residential use at 1-2 dwelling units per acre (du/ac).

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT: Clustered, single-family detached residential use at 1-2 dwelling units per acre.

PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT: Residential use at a density of 0.5-1 du/ac with several conditions. Complete nominated Plan text is shown in the Nominated Plan Amendment section.

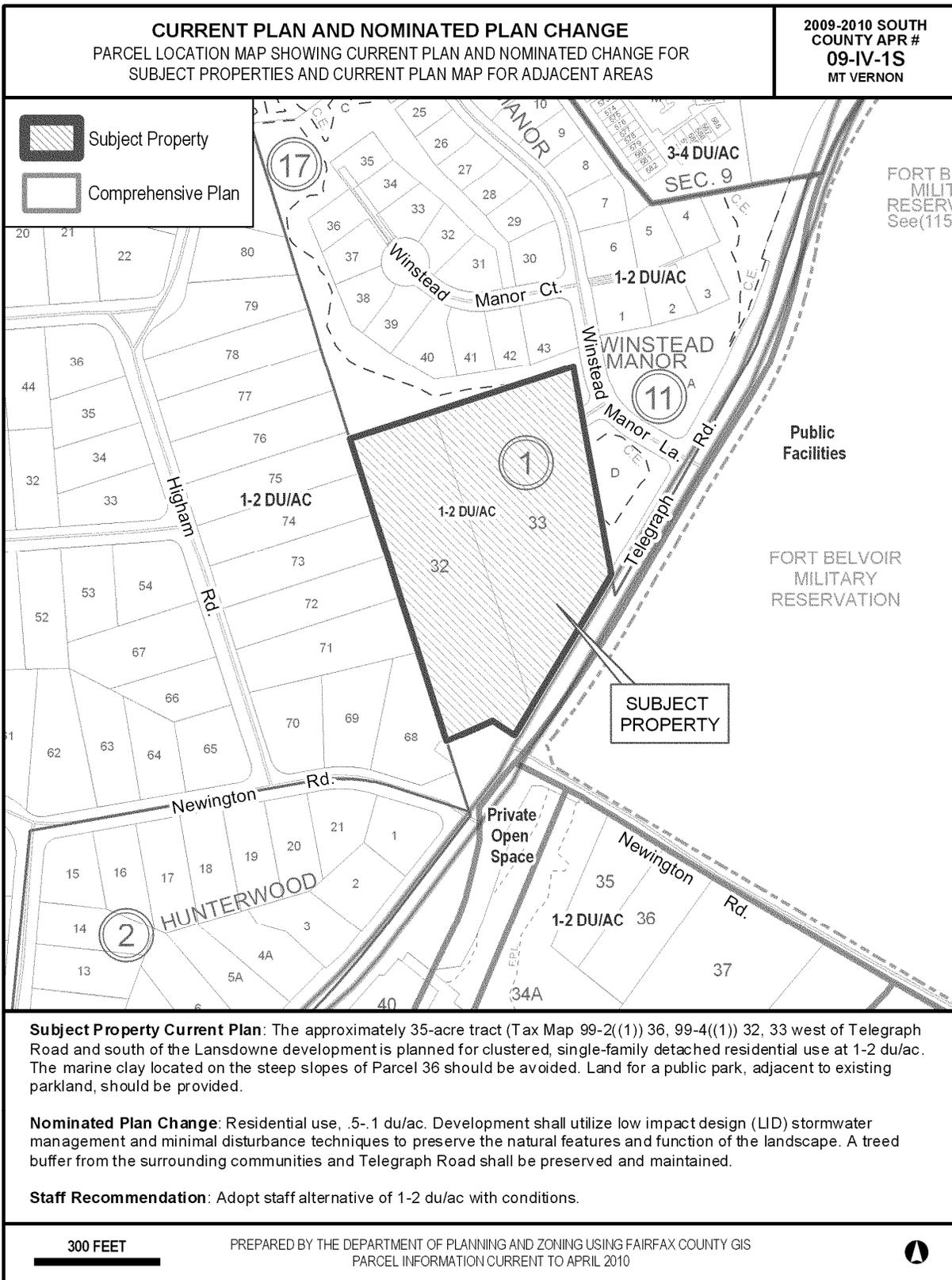
SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Nomination As Submitted

Approve Staff Alternative

Retain Adopted Plan

Staff recommends an alternative that maintains the current residential density guidance of 1-2 du/ac of the site, but adds conditions suggested by the proposed nomination. As an infill property, staff believes that additional conditions regarding the envisioned character of development are reasonable. Staff does not support replanning the subject area for a density of 0.5 - 1 du/ac because the property is zoned R-1. Replanning the subject area for this density would eliminate the incentive needed to help achieve the site conditions called for in the Plan recommendation. On a broader level, reducing the planned residential density to 0.5 - 1 du/ac would introduce a designation lower than any other Telegraph Road property, or property within at least a two-mile radius of the subject property. Staff does not believe there is sufficient justification to support a change that would distinguish the subject property from other similar properties in the area to this degree



CONTEXT

General Location:

The nomination concerns property in the S6 Newington Community Planning Sector of the Springfield Planning District. The subject property is located on Telegraph Road south of the Landsdowne development

Existing and Planned Land Use and Zoning:

Subject Property: The subject area contains vacant land on two parcels. The subject area is planned for residential use at a density of 1-2 du/ac and zoned R-1.

Adjacent Area:

North: Single-family detached homes in the Winstead Manor subdivision planned at a density of 1-2 du/ac and zoned PDH-2;

East: Dedicated common open space within the Winstead Manor subdivision. Across Telegraph Road to the east and south is Fort Belvoir, which is planned for public facilities, institutional and governmental use and zoned R-C;

South: Across Telegraph Road is vacant land planned for private open space (zoned R-1) and single-family detached homes planned for residential use at a density of 1-2 du/ac and zoned R-1.

West: Single-family detached homes in the Hunter Estates subdivision planned at a density of 1 du/ac and zoned R-1.

ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEXT

The Land Use section of the S6-Newington Community Planning Sector contains the following recommendations for the nominated area:

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Springfield Planning District, amended through 8-3-2009, S6-Newington Community Planning Sector, Land Use, page 68:

- “6. The approximately 35-acre tract (Tax Map 99-2((1))36, 99-4((1))32, 33) west of Telegraph Road and south of the Landsdowne development is planned for clustered, single-family detached residential use at 1-2 dwelling units per acre. The marine clay located on the steep slopes of Parcel 36 should be avoided. Land for a public park, adjacent to existing parkland, should be provided.”

NOMINATED PLAN AMENDMENT

The nomination proposes to modify the Plan to reduce the planned residential density for the undeveloped portion of the subject area, and add new conditions for development. Text to be

added is shown as underlined, text to be deleted is shown as ~~strikethrough~~.

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Springfield Planning District, amended through 8-3-2009, S6-Newington Community Planning Sector, Land Use, page 68:

- MODIFY:**
6. The Winstead Manor subdivision (Tax Map 99-2((1))36), ~~The approximately 35-acre tract(Tax Map 99-2((1))36, 99-4((1))32, 33)~~ located west of Telegraph Road and south of the Landsdowne development is planned for clustered, single-family detached residential use at 1-2 dwelling units per acre. The marine clay located on the steep slopes of Parcel 36 should be avoided. Land for a public park, adjacent to existing parkland, should be provided. In-fill development of the approximately 7-acre tract [Tax Map 99-4((1))32, 33] located west of Telegraph Road, south of the Winstead Manor subdivision, and north and east of the Hunter Estates subdivision, is planned for clustered, single-family detached residential use at 0.5 to 1 dwelling units per acre. Development shall utilize low impact design (LID) stormwater management and minimal disturbance techniques (site fingerprinting) to preserve the natural features and function of the landscape. A treed buffer from the surrounding communities and Telegraph Road shall be preserved and maintained.

ANALYSIS

Land Use

The nomination proposes to reduce the planned residential density of the subject property from 1-2 du/ac to 0.5 – 1 du/ac. The area is zoned R-1 and is surrounded by residential properties developed at a density of 1 du/ac and 1.83 du/ac. The nomination stems from a 2008 rezoning application to rezone the 7.46 acre subject area from the R-1 residential district to the PDH-2 planned development housing district, at a density of 1.47 du/ac, for a total of 11 single-family detached homes. The R-1 district would yield 7 single-family detached homes.

The application was supported by the Planning Commission but denied by the Board of Supervisors. Community objections to the rezoning application dealt with issues of design and layout. Specifically, concern was expressed that large homes on small lots would decrease the amount of open space on the site, that the proposed access road to the site would cross a wetland, and that clearing and grading would reduce the existing tree cover.

The proposed text provides guidance intended to address these concerns by emphasizing the importance of open space, low impact design, stormwater management and minimizing

disturbance and buffering from the surrounding communities and Telegraph Road. In addition, the nomination would retain adopted text supporting clustered development. Clustering houses on small lots is a technique that could minimize clearing and grading of the sloped terrain.

Staff believes that a version of the proposed development conditions would be useful in the zoning application review process because as a vacant area adjacent to two neighborhoods, the infill nature of development could affect the adjacent neighborhoods. In addition, the conditions would encourage a design that would be more sensitive to preservation of the natural terrain. Staff differs with the nominated condition that suggests tree preservation be based on the creation of a perimeter buffer. This condition may have an unintended consequence of causing removal of valuable and healthy trees to preserve a buffer at the edge of the property. Staff suggests this issue be looked at within the context of a development plan, and that the Plan text support tree preservation in general.

As proposed by the nomination, the planned density would be reduced to a level that, at the maximum, is equal to current zoning. This reduction would conflict with achieving the stated objectives to create open space, and preserve trees and the landscape. The ability to implement the conditions rests on the ability to seek voluntary proffers in the rezoning process.

Another major issue is that planning this area for residential density in the range of 0.5 - 1 du/ac would create a pocket of very-low density in an area with minimum densities that are not less than 1 du/ac for the entire length of Telegraph Road and beyond. Singling out this property for reduced density is not justified given that there are other similarly situated properties in the area planned and developed at a densities higher than 0.5 du/ac, such as the Hunterwood community, planned for 1-2 du/ac and developed at 2 du/ac; Hunter Estates, planned for 1-2 du/ac with a maximum of 1 du/ac and developed R-1; and Winstead Manor planned for a density of 1-2 du/ac and developed at a density of 1.8 du/ac.

RECOMMENDATION

The nomination seeks to achieve goals such as saving trees and preserving the function of the landscape by adding specific plan text. Staff supports this notion, especially because the subject is an infill property that contains valuable natural features. However, if residential density is reduced as proposed, there will be little to no incentive to implement these recommendations. Reducing the long standing recommendation of residential use at 1-2 du/ac to residential use at a density of 0.5 - 1 du/ac would produce a designation that is inconsistent with the surrounding area, without clear justification. Additionally the view that this lower density recommendation will produce better design is not shared by staff, who believes that the proposed conditions would most likely be implemented through a zoning action. Therefore, staff recommends the following alternative:

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Springfield Planning District, amended through 8-3-2009, S6-Newington Community Planning Sector, Land Use, page 68:

Text to be added is shown as underlined, text to be deleted is shown as ~~strikethrough~~.

- MODIFY:** 6. The Winstead Manor subdivision (Tax Map 99-2((1))36), ~~The approximately 35-acre tract (Tax Map 99-2((1))36, 99-4((1))32, 33)~~ located west of Telegraph Road and south of the Landsdowne development is planned for clustered, single-family detached residential use at 1-2 dwelling units per acre. The marine clay located on the steep slopes of Parcel 36 should be avoided. Land for a public park, adjacent to existing parkland, should be provided. In-fill development of the approximately 7-acre tract [Tax Map 99-4((1))32, 33] located west of Telegraph Road, south of the Winstead Manor subdivision, and north and east of the Hunter Estates subdivision, is planned for clustered, single-family detached residential use at 1-2 dwelling units per acre. Development at the lower end of the density range is desirable. Development should utilize low impact design (LID) stormwater management and minimize disturbance to preserve the natural features and function of the landscape. The maximum amount of existing tree cover should be preserved.

Note: The Comprehensive Plan map will not change