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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 **PLAN AMENDMENT:** S09-IV-MV2

NOMINATOR(S): Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

ACREAGE: 1.2 acres

TAX MAP I.D.: 93-1 ((18)) (D) 117, 126, 130, 138

GENERAL LOCATION: East side of Richmond Highway, south of East Lee Avenue, north of Preston Avenue and west of Memorial Heights Drive.

PLANNING AREA: IV

District: Mount Vernon

Sector: MV5 Groveton Community Planning Sector

Special Areas: Beacon/Groveton Community Business Center, Land Unit E

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: Alternative uses and residential use at 3-4 dwelling units per acre (du/ac)

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT: Parcels 117 and 126: townhouse style office and/or retail at an intensity up to .30 FAR with conditions; Option 1: Same uses and conditions at an intensity up to .50 FAR with limited retail use; Option 2: Mixed-use development including residential use at an intensity up to .80 FAR with conditions;

Parcels 130 and 138, residential uses at 3-4 du/ac, and options 1 and 2 above.

Complete Plan text is shown in the Adopted Comprehensive Plan Text section.

PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT: Retail uses at an intensity up to .35 FAR, with potential for low density residential use on parcels abutting residential neighborhood. The purpose of the amendment is to allow parking rather than buildings to be located along the Richmond highway frontage. Complete Nominated Plan text is shown in the Nominated Plan Amendment section.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

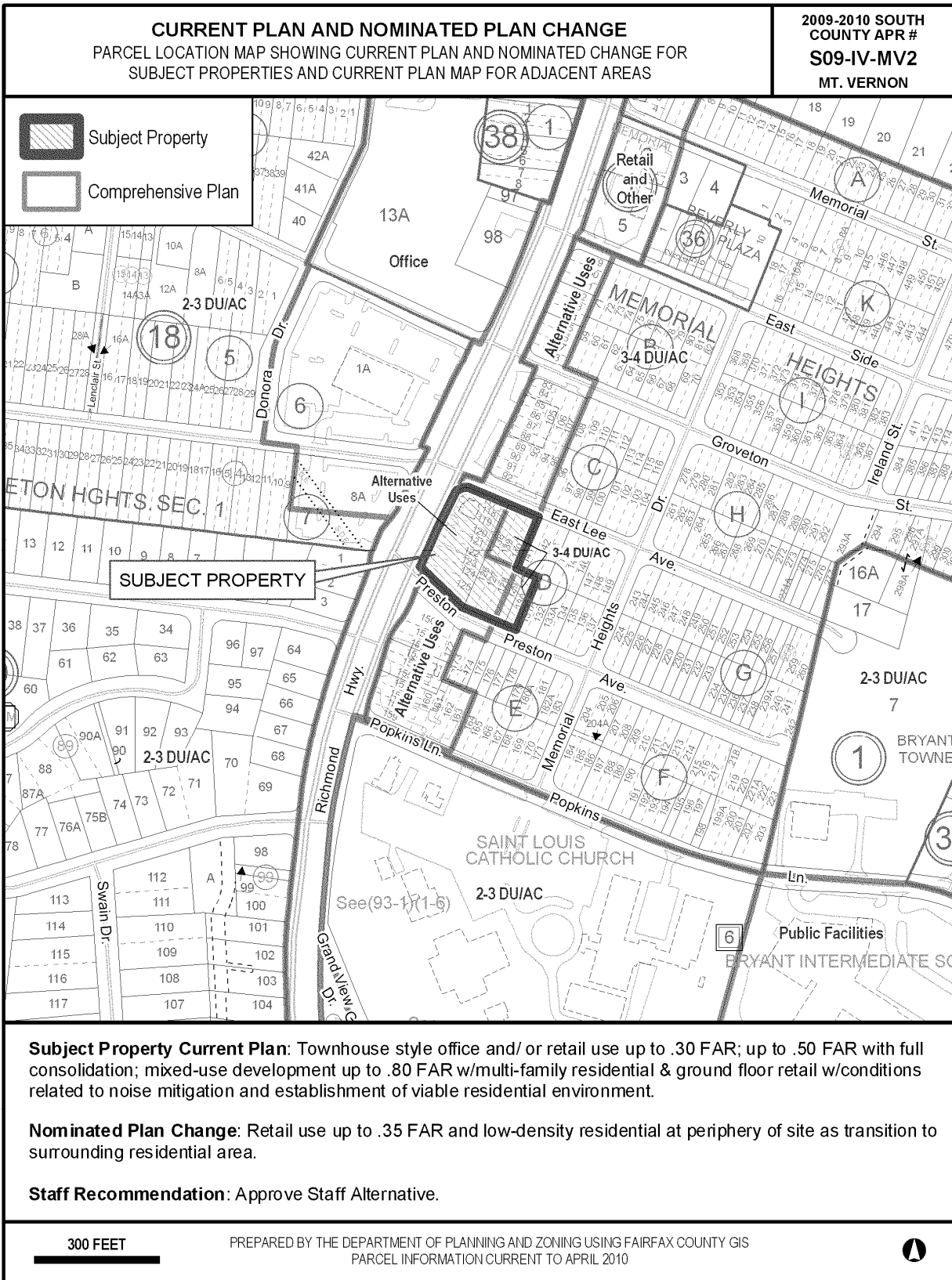
Approve Nomination As Submitted

Approve Staff Alternative

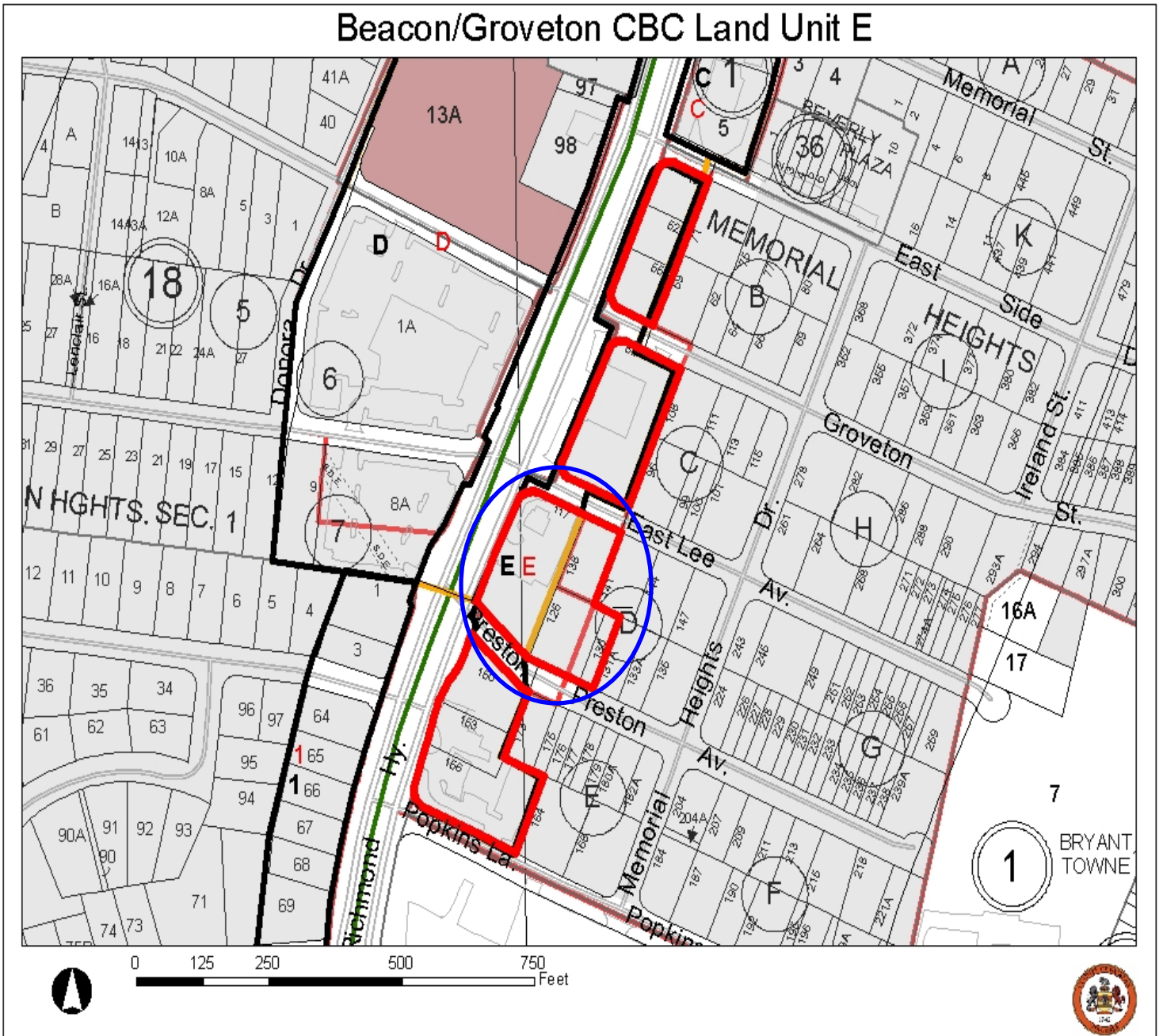
Retain Adopted Plan

The subject area is constrained by small size and shallow width. The shared edge with a residential neighborhood requires that a transition and buffer area be located on the commercial property to protect the neighborhood. Staff does not support replanning the property for retail use at an intensity of .35 FAR with parking located along Richmond Highway because the resulting building location would hinder achieving this objective. For this reason, neither does staff recommend planning a part of the site for residential use when combined with this option, as doing so would also constrain the ability to provide acceptable transition and buffering within the commercial area.

As an alternative, staff recommends reducing the intensity of the subject area to .15 FAR to better assure an appropriate transition to the existing residential neighborhood. Compared to the adopted Comprehensive Plan, the lower intensity would result in better landscaping, buffering and site design. Staff also recommends revising conditions to recognize that at the intensity of .15 FAR, some parking may be suitable at the front edge of the building, contingent on achieving a design that includes pedestrian orientation and a full transition and buffering treatment to the adjacent neighborhood. The staff recommended text is shown in the Recommendation section.



Beacon/Groveton CBC Land Unit E



CONTEXT

General Location:

The nomination concerns properties in Land Unit E of the Beacon/Groveton CBC and the MV5 Groveton Community Planning Sector of the Mount Vernon Planning District. The subject property is generally located on the east side of Richmond Highway, south of East Lee Avenue, north of Preston Avenue and west of Memorial Heights Drive.

Existing and Planned Land Use and Zoning:

Subject Property: The subject area contains a single-family detached home, a parking lot and vacant land. Parcels 117 and 126 are planned for office or retail use up to .30 FAR with conditions, with an option for an intensity up to .50 FAR with the same conditions provided any retail use is limited to 10,000 square feet in size. An additional option recommends mixed-use development including residential and retail uses up to an intensity of .80 FAR with additional conditions. Parcels 130 and 138 are planned for residential use at 3-4 du/ac, and also include the same two options. The subject property is zoned PRM.

Adjacent Area:

North: To the north of the subject property is an office building and single-family detached homes planned for office/retail use and residential use at 3-4 du/ac, and zoned C-3 and R-3;

East: Single-family detached homes planned for residential use at 3-4 du/ac, zoned R-3;

South: Vacant land and an apartment building planned for office/retail use and residential use at 3-4 du/ac and zoned C-8 and R-3;

West: Across Richmond Highway from the subject property are a parking lot that serves the office building located at the corner of Richmond Highway and Collard Street, and single-family detached homes planned for office use and residential use at 2-3 du/ac, and zoned C-8 and R-3.

ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TEXT

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, MV5 Groveton Community Planning Sector, amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, Land Use, page 145:

“1. Residential infill in Memorial Heights is planned for 3-4 dwelling units per acre. Additional guidance for Tax Map 93-1 ((18)) (D) 130pt. and 138 is included in Land Unit E of the Beacon/Groveton Community Business Center within the Richmond Highway Corridor.”

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, Land Use, pages 43-44:

“Land Unit E

Lots on the east side of Richmond Highway from East Side Street to Popkins Lane are planned for townhouse-style office and/or retail use up to .30 FAR with maximum building heights of 35 feet. The following conditions should be met with any development proposal:

- Commercially-zoned lots along Richmond Highway between Groveton Street and East Lee Avenue or East Lee Avenue and Preston Avenue or Preston Avenue and Popkins Lane are consolidated;
- Buildings are oriented to Richmond Highway with parking located at the rear of the property; and
- Effective screening and buffering are provided and maintained between the proposed development and the adjacent residential neighborhood.

With the full consolidation of Tax Map Parcels 93-1((18))(D)117, 126, 130 (pt.) and 138 located between East Lee Avenue and Preston Lane, development of townhouse-style office and/or retail use up to .50 FAR with maximum building height of 45 feet may be developed provided that:

- Buildings are oriented to Richmond Highway with parking located at the rear of the property;
- Effective screening and buffering are provided and maintained between the proposed development and the adjacent residential neighborhood;
- Retail use is limited to no more than 10,000 gsf; and
- Development should provide for compatible architecture to mitigate impacts on adjacent residential development.

Modification to minimum building set back from Richmond Highway may be appropriate in order to further revitalization goals.

An option for increased intensity up to .80 FAR could be appropriate for mixed use development consisting of multifamily residential and ground floor retail provided that:

- All conditions for the office/retail option noted above are addressed, including maximum building height;
- Appropriate noise mitigation from Richmond Highway can be demonstrated through a noise study to be reviewed at the time of rezoning; and
- Redevelopment for residential use can achieve a viable living environment that is compatible with adjacent uses.

Modification to minimum building set back from Richmond Highway may be appropriate in order to further revitalization goals provided that appropriate noise mitigation can be achieved as recommended above.”

NOMINATED PLAN AMENDMENT

The nomination proposes to modify the Plan text found in the Richmond Highway Corridor Area text for the Beacon/Groveton Community Business Center to add an option for retail use at an intensity up to .35 FAR for parcels 93-1((18)) (D) 117, 126, 130, and 138, and consider low density residential use at the periphery of the subject area as a possible transition from parcels fronting Richmond Highway to the existing residential neighborhoods.

ANALYSIS

Land Use

After the proposed Plan Amendment was authorized, the property owner’s agent provided new survey information that indicated the dedication of land for the future right-of-way for Preston Avenue and reduced the size of the site from 1.31 acres to 1.2 acres in size. This new site acreage is noted on page 1 of this report and is referred to below.

The underlying reason for the Plan amendment is to facilitate the placement of surface parking along Richmond Highway. The Comprehensive Plan (Streetscape Elements for Richmond Highway) states: “Where feasible orient commercial buildings toward the road with parking lots to the side and rear to create an urban atmosphere. Where buildings are oriented to the road, no minimum front yard is required except as needed for streetscape treatments...”. A concept plan showing 6,000 square feet of retail use at an intensity of approximately .12 FAR was provided by the nominator for information. If all of the parking spaces are located along Richmond Highway rather than to the side or rear of the site as called for by the Comprehensive Plan, buildings would be located closer to the residential neighborhood. However, the conceptual design shows significant residual amount of open space that could be used as a transition to the neighborhood. In this case, it is possible that at least a limited amount of parking could be accommodated in front of the buildings without substantially diminishing pedestrian orientation or visually impacting the adjacent neighborhood. Given the potential to limit development to a very low intensity, a large expanse of parking could be avoided. This specific concern could be addressed at the time of rezoning, but there is reason to consider flexibility in the placement of parking in this circumstance.

The subject area occupies a narrow property along Richmond Highway and includes two parcels planned for residential use at the baseline that are in the Memorial Heights Community Improvement Area, a neighborhood of single family houses. The properties are part of the PRM district area. If the residentially planned properties were developed as single family houses there would be less area within the commercial development to create buffering and a transition area. To facilitate an adequate transition to the existing neighborhood, staff believes the entire 1.2 acre subject area should be planned for non-residential uses.

The subject property currently has options to develop at intensities up to .50 FAR and .80 FAR. These options are the result of previous attempts to redevelop the property and are not provided in the Comprehensive Plan to other blocks in the Land Unit. The two options should be deleted based on the recognition of the importance of providing an appropriate transition to the abutting residential neighborhood.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends an alternative to retain guidance in support of retail and office use on the subject area, but to reduce the baseline intensity to .15 FAR in view of the subject area's small size, shallow depth and adjacency of the subject area to a residential community. Given the limited amount of intensity recommended, some flexibility in parking placement may be appropriate. Staff also recommends deleting the options for office/retail and mixed use at intensities of .50 FAR and .80 FAR. A low intensity development would create a more compatible relationship and better protect and enhance the residential neighborhood in accord with the Richmond Highway objective that states:

“Reduce adverse impacts, such as noise, glare and incompatible building forms, on adjacent residential communities by establishing effective transitions buffering and screening, and by designing buildings of appropriate height and screening.”

Staff recommends the following alternative. Text to be added is shown as underlined, text to be deleted is shown as ~~strikethrough~~:

MODIFY: Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, Area IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, amended through 3-9-2010, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, Land Use, pages 43-44:

Land Unit E

Lots on the east side of Richmond Highway from East Side Street to Popkins Lane are planned for townhouse-style office and/or retail use up to .30 FAR with maximum building heights of 35 feet. The following conditions should be met with any development proposal:

- Commercially-zoned lots along Richmond Highway between Groveton Street and East Lee Avenue or East Lee Avenue and Preston Avenue or Preston Avenue and Popkins Lane are consolidated;
- Buildings are oriented to Richmond Highway with parking located at the rear of the property; and
- Effective screening and buffering are provided and maintained between the proposed development and the adjacent residential neighborhood.

With the full consolidation of Tax Map Parcels 93-1((18))(D)117, 126, 130 and 138 located between East Lee Avenue and Preston Lane, development of townhouse-style office and/or retail use up to .15 .50 FAR with maximum building height of 45 25 feet may be developed provided that:

- ~~• Buildings are oriented to Richmond Highway with parking located at the rear of the property;~~
- ~~• Effective screening and buffering are provided and maintained between the proposed development and the adjacent residential neighborhood;~~
- ~~• Retail use is limited to no more than 10,000 gsf; and~~
- ~~• Development should provide for compatible architecture to mitigate impacts on adjacent residential development.~~
- Buildings and parking are oriented to encourage pedestrian traffic;
- Development is screened and buffered from the adjacent residential neighborhood in accordance with zoning regulations.
- Development provides compatible architecture treatments to avoid creating an adverse visual impact on adjacent residential development.

Limited parking may be considered along the property frontage provided the preceding conditions are addressed and all other applicable Richmond Highway Streetscape elements are met.

~~An option for increased intensity up to .80 FAR could be appropriate for mixed use development consisting of multifamily residential and ground floor retail provided that:~~

- ~~• All conditions for the office/retail option noted above are addressed, including maximum building height;~~
- ~~• Appropriate noise mitigation from Richmond Highway can be demonstrated through a noise study to be reviewed at the time of rezoning; and~~
- ~~• Redevelopment for residential use can achieve a viable living environment that is compatible with adjacent uses.~~

~~Modification to minimum building set back from Richmond Highway may be appropriate in order to further revitalization goals provided that appropriate noise mitigation can be achieved as recommended above.~~

NOTE:

The Plan Map will change to show the entire subject area (parcels 117, 126, 130 and 138) as planned for alternative uses. The boundary of Land Unit E will be expanded to include the entire subject area.