

**PRELIMINARY  
STAFF REPORT  
2009-2010 SOUTH COUNTY AREA PLANS REVIEW**

**SUPERVISOR DISTRICT:** MOUNT VERNON

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

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**NOMINATOR:** Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

**ACREAGE:** 1.31 acres

**TAX MAP I.D.:** 93-1 ((18)) (D) 117, 126, 130 and 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  
**Special Areas:** Beacon/Groveton Community Business Center, Land Unit E

**ADOPTED PLAN MAP:** Alternative uses and residential uses at 3-4 dwelling units per acre

**POLICY PLAN TEXT:** Protect and enhance existing neighborhoods by ensuring infill development is compatible;  
Achieve compatible transitions between adjoining land uses through the control of height and the use of appropriate buffering and screening;  
Preserve or establish areas of the County which provide necessary commercial and professional services to the community

For complete Plan text see [Attachment 1](#)

**AREA PLAN TEXT:** On parcels 117 and 126, the base Plan calls for 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;

On parcels 130 and 138, residential uses at 3-4 du/ac for both options.

For complete Plan text see Attachment I

**PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT:** Retail uses at an intensity up to .35 FAR, with potential for low density residential use on parcels abutting residential properties. The purpose of the amendment is to allow parking (rather than buildings to be located along the Richmond highway frontage). For complete proposed Plan text see Attachment II.

**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 replanning a part of the site for residential use, as this 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 .15FAR, 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 on pages 3 and 4.

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**CRITICAL ISSUES****Land Use**

The subject area occupies a narrow property along Richmond Highway and abuts the Memorial Heights Community Improvement Area, a neighborhood of single family houses. The periphery of the subject property is planned for residential use. However developed as planned, the ability to provide a satisfactory on-site buffer and achieve an appropriate transition to the residential area would be weakened. To facilitate an adequate transition to the existing neighborhood, staff believes the entire 1.31 acre subject area should be planned for non-residential uses.

Since the early 1990's, the Comprehensive Plan guidance for the subject area has recommended that buildings be placed close to Richmond Highway. A principal reason is to provide the greatest distance between commercial and residential buildings. The urban design guidance for the Richmond Highway Corridor Area also encourages orienting buildings to Richmond Highway to create a walkable environment.

A concept plan showing 6,000 square feet of retail use at an intensity of .10 FAR was provided by the nominator for information. The significant residual amount of open space could be used as a transition to the neighborhood. The Comprehensive Plan discourages placing large expanses of parking adjacent to and visible from the streets, If all parking is 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, 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 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 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 not provided 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.

### **Cultural Resources Impacts**

The subject parcels are adjacent to a number of other sites noted to have served as large Civil War Union camp sites. It is possible that remnants of these camps remain in undeveloped portions of the property. Prior to any ground disturbance, it is recommended that the area undergo a Phase I archaeological survey. If sites are found, Phase II archaeological testing is recommended. If any of the sites are determined eligible for inclusion into the National Register of Historic Places, a Phase III data recovery should occur.

### **Conclusion**

Staff recommends retaining guidance in support of retail and office use on the subject area, but reducing 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 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:

#### **“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.~~
- The lots are fully consolidated;
- 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.

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."~~

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.

**ATTACHMENT I**  
**AREA PLAN TEXT**

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, AREA IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, amended through 8-3-2009, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, Page 43:

**“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.”

**ATTACHMENT II**  
**PROPOSED PLAN TEXT**

Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, 2007 Edition, AREA IV, Mount Vernon Planning District, amended through 8-3-2009, Richmond Highway Corridor Area, Page 43:

**“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 .50 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 to include eating establishment, and/ coffee house style fast food restaurant 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.~~
- The lots are fully consolidated;
- 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 the intent of all other applicable Richmond Highway Streetscape elements are met.

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.~~

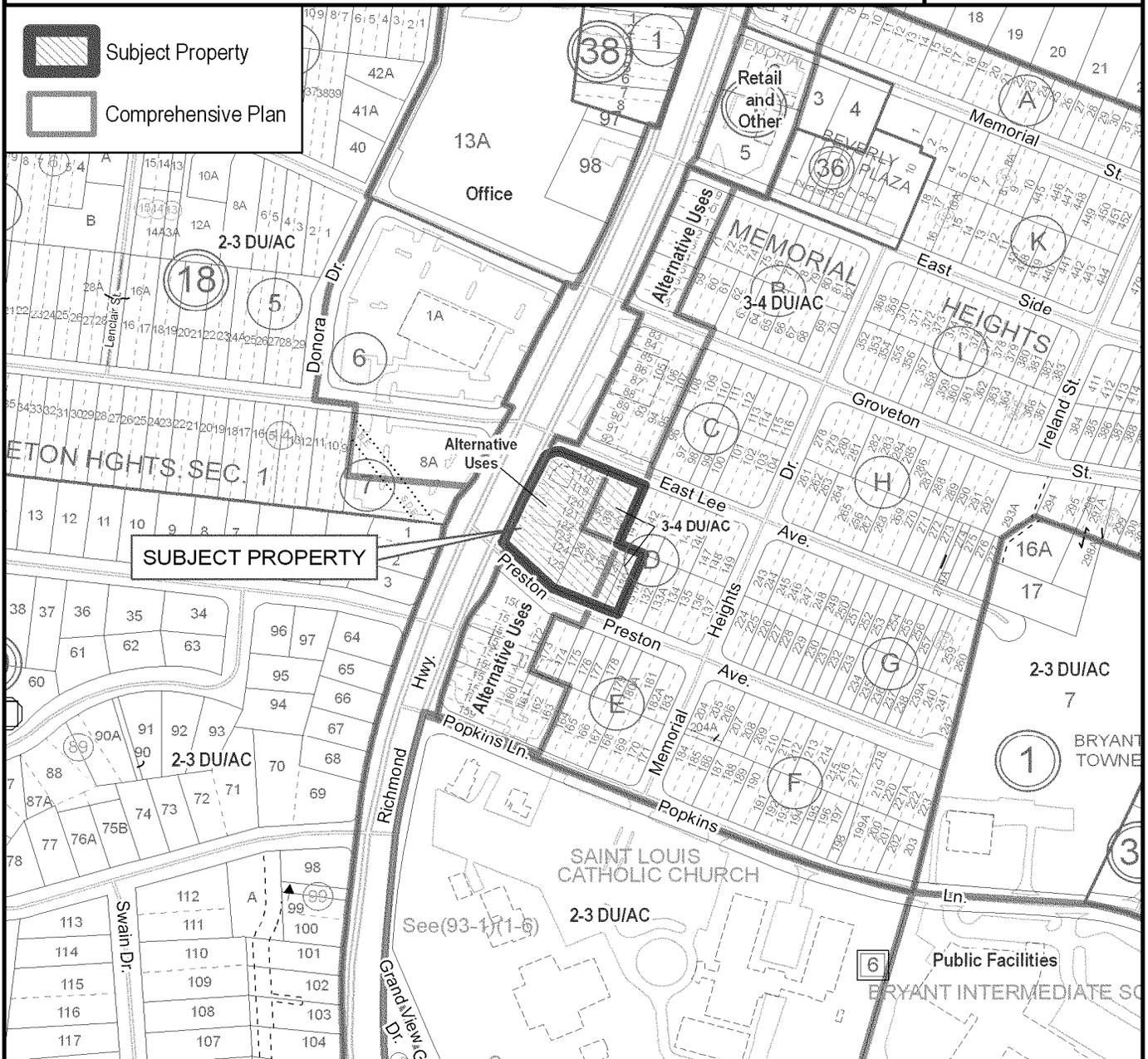
~~Modification to minimum building set back from Richmond Highway may be appropriate in order to further revitalization goals provided that appropriate noise mitigation can be achieved as recommended above.”~~

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.

**CURRENT PLAN AND NOMINATED PLAN CHANGE**  
 PARCEL LOCATION MAP SHOWING CURRENT PLAN AND NOMINATED CHANGE FOR  
 SUBJECT PROPERTIES AND CURRENT PLAN MAP FOR ADJACENT AREAS

2009-2010 SOUTH  
 COUNTY APR #  
**S09-IV-MV2**  
 MT. VERNON



**Subject Property Current Plan:** Townhouse style office and/ or retail use up to .30 FAR; up to .50 FAR with full consolidation; mixed-use development up to .80 FAR w/multi-family residential & ground floor retail w/conditions related to noise mitigation and establishment of viable residential environment.

**Nominated Plan Change:** Retail use up to .35 FAR and low-density residential at periphery of site as transition to surrounding residential area.

**Staff Recommendation:** To be determined.

300 FEET

PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING USING FAIRFAX COUNTY GIS  
 PARCEL INFORMATION CURRENT TO DECEMBER 2009

