

**PRELIMINARY
STAFF REPORT
2008 AREA PLANS REVIEW**

SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S): LEE

APR ITEM(S): BRAC# 08-IV-7FS

NOMINATOR(S): David R. Gill on behalf of MR Keene Mill 1 LLC

ACREAGE: 16.05 Acres

TAX MAP I.D. NUMBERS: 80-3((1))6,8;80-4((1))11,11A1;90-1((2))246-253,A;90-2((1))5A,5B;90-2((2))243-245

GENERAL LOCATION: South of Old Keene Mill Road, West of Amherst Ave., East of Spring Rd.

PLANNING AREA(S): IV

District(s): Springfield

Sector: Springvale (S4) (pt.)

Special Area(s): Springfield (West) Community Business Center (Land Unit D-2) (pt.)

ADOPTED PLAN MAP: Retail & Other uses, Office use, Residential use at a density of 2-3 dwelling units per acre (du/ac)

ADOPTED PLAN TEXT Retail and office uses up to 0.50 FAR with conditions (part).
Residential use at 2-3 DU/AC (part).

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

PROPOSED PLAN AMENDMENT: Office mixed-use at base of 1.85 FAR with option to increase up to 2.25 FAR (95% office, 4% institutional, 1% retail uses OR 75% office, 20% residential, 4% institutional, 1% retail uses, in either scenario).

BACKGROUND

The 16.0-acre subject area is located in part in the Springfield CBC, Sub-unit D-2, and in part in an adjacent residential neighborhood. The nomination proposes the redevelopment and expansion of the southwestern portion of the Springfield CBC into the neighboring Springvale Community, which is planned and developed at a density of 2-3 du/ac and west to include the Springfield Methodist Church. The portion of the subject area located within a portion of Sub-unit D2, is planned for low intensity retail and office uses up to an intensity of 0.50 FAR. However, it is developed with less intense uses, several of which are vacant buildings, and the American Legion Post.

The nomination proposes redevelopment of the subject acre as a high intensity mixed-use activity center with a predominantly office character. In an email clarification, the nominator specified two land use mixes for each of the intensities, resulting in an analysis of four different land use scenarios. In each of the scenarios, the existing Springfield Methodist Church would remain.

The proposed land use mixes are as follows: Option 1 would include 95% office, 4% institutional, and 1% retail uses. Option 2 would substitute a portion of the office component for residential use. This land use mix would include 75% office, 20% residential, 4% institutional, and 1% retail uses. The residential uses would include townhouses and other low-rise units and would be located on the south portion of the subject area to create a buffer to the neighboring residential.

CRITICAL ISSUES

Land Use

Relationship to Old Keene Mill Road: The redevelopment of this subject area with office and supporting retail use, located close to Old Keene Mill Road, would be consistent with the current Plan recommendations for commercial revitalization and private sector investment in this area, especially with redevelopment of the vacant properties.

Compatibility: The proposed location of the residential use, primarily on the southern portion of the subject property in Option 2, would be compatible with the neighboring residential uses. The addition of residential use in this area would support the county's goal for mixed-use redevelopment and help to promote employees living near their workplace. Low-rise residential use generally would provide an effective transition to the adjacent residential uses.

Option 1 does not include the residential use. The lack of residential use would be a cause for concern for several reasons. First, without residential use, the proposal would not support county policy in activity centers that strives for mixed-use redevelopment. Furthermore, the replacement of office use in this same location on the southern portion of the subject area would not be compatible with the adjacent residences. Office use located next to residential uses may be appropriate in some scenarios; however, in this nomination, the adjacent homes front towards the subject area and would receive a direct, adverse, visual impact from the proposed development. The nomination proposes a buffer to minimize this concern; however, the buffer

would result in additional concern because it would need to be substantial in width, would transfer intensity to the remainder of the site, and would result in an unknown, higher, effective intensity on the site.

Consolidation: The nomination proposes the expansion of the CBC into a residential area and on area developed with a church to form the approximately 16-acre consolidated area. The proposed expansion would be within the scope of the BRAC APR process. The land area consolidated would be substantial and appears to be logical based on the roadway network. It would provide the opportunity to establish a grid network of streets with more accessibility and smaller blocks, which encourage pedestrian usage. Furthermore, the consolidation of this area in its location along the western side of the CBC also would serve as a highly visible “gateway” location in the CBC.

Intensity

The nomination proposes a base plan of office mixed-use up to an intensity of 1.85 FAR, with an option to increase the intensity up to 2.25 FAR. With either of the land use mixes, as described above, the proposed nomination at a 1.85 FAR would result in 1.35 million square feet (m.s.f.) of development, while the 2.25 FAR would result in 1.64 m.s.f. of development. The effective intensity also should be calculated once more information is received about the size of the commuter parking facility and the inclusion of the church property in the proposal to determine that the proposal would continue to afford effective transitions and compatibility with the neighboring uses.

The proposed intensity exceeds that which was evaluated and recommended as part of the Springfield Connectivity Study, which is contrary to what is stated within the justification for the nomination. The Study evaluated and recommended the current Plan language for office use at an intensity up to 0.50 FAR for the subject property, recognizing that more intense redevelopment in this area should be focused closer to the Interstate and that appropriate transitions to the neighboring area should be maintained.

With this transitioning intensity in mind, the Connectivity Study recommended the highest intensity, up to a 2.0 FAR, north of Old Keene Mill Road in Land Units A, B, and C. Areas, south of Old Keene Mill Road, east of Amherst Avenue in Land Unit D-1 transition from a 1.5 FAR to a 1.0 FAR, moving away from the interchange of Interstate-95 and Old Keene Mill Road, which is identical to the current Plan. Continuing the tapering of intensity would be consistent with both the existing Plan and the Connectivity Study goals.

The lower intensity of 1.0 FAR also would be more realistic due to the limitations of mitigation techniques. The Connectivity Study constrained land uses to that which could be supported by reasonably achievable transportation improvements. To that end, the recommended transportation improvements, such as an additional bridge to connect Backlick Road over Old Keene Mill Road, were significant, but attainable. Higher intensities on the subject area would effectively limit the amount of development potential being considered for the CBC area to the north because additional mitigation, above the Connectivity Study’s recommendation, may be difficult to achieve.

Transportation

Chapter 527: Site generated traffic that is generated by the proposed nomination would be substantial and exceed the threshold of the Chapter 527 regulations. The nomination must be submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for Traffic Impact Analysis review and comment.

Trip generation: The nomination would generate between 10,945 and 15,733 additional daily trips over the current Comprehensive Plan. On a peak hour basis, the nomination would generate between 1,535 and 1,965 more trips in the AM peak hour inbound direction, and between 1,135 and 1,779 more trips in the PM peak hour outbound direction.

Access: The proposed nomination offers a consolidation of a 16.0-acre site. The proposal would have frontage on Old Keene Mill Road, Spring Road, Utica Street, Springfield Boulevard, and Amherst Avenue. Currently, access points exist to each of these roadways. The nomination proposes that it would maintain these access points and enhance connectivity through the creation of a grid of streets through the subject property. This grid of streets should maintain this level of accessibility, especially important onto Spring Road. The access point onto Spring Road would be a main ingress and egress for the site. The retention of this access point would underscore the need to consolidate with the church.

Road Improvements: The nomination would need to mitigate these additional trips through such improvements as road widening. However, it is not clear whether these improvements would be possible. The subject area fronts on Old Keene Mill Road, which is a minor arterial roadway carrying high volumes of traffic. This roadway has been recently upgraded in this area to provide improved access to and from Interstate-95. The proposed nomination would necessitate further improvements to Old Keene Mill Road and other surrounding roadways. For example, any of the proposed scenarios would require Old Keene Mill Road to be widened by at least one additional lane in each direction in the Springfield CBC. Furthermore, Old Keene Mill Road may need to be widened to two additional lanes in each direction should either of the 2.25 FAR-scenarios be adopted. Additional improvements also would be required for Springfield Boulevard and Spring Road. Right-of-way dedication would be required as well. The specifics of these improvements would need to be determined at the time of rezoning, if the nomination is approved.

Commuter Parking Facility: The current Plan for the subject area also includes the location of a commuter parking facility, up to 1,000 spaces. The recommendation for this improvement should remain as a condition of redevelopment. The nomination proposes a garage of up to 650-spaces, below that which is planned.

Pedestrian connectivity: The nomination proposes to overlay a grid of streets onto the proposal, but does not specifically address how pedestrian or bicycle connectivity would be improved. A pedestrian system linking the elements within the proposed development, as well as to the other activities within the CBC should be included in any development, for example, a pedestrian linkage to Springvale Park with improvements to Spring Road. The nomination does not address these needs.

Parks and Recreation

Park Deficiencies: The Springfield Planning District has 18 neighborhood and community parks and one countywide park. The Park Authority owns and maintains a total of 963 acres of parkland in Springfield. The recreation facilities in these parks do not meet standards established by the Park Authority through the Needs Assessment study. By 2015, the projected deficiency in the Springfield Planning District will include: 715 acres of district and countywide parks; 7 rectangular fields; 1 adult softball field; 21 basketball courts; and 3 playgrounds.

The proposed nomination would contribute to this deficiency. Residents and employees in the proposed development would need leisure and recreational opportunities. The integration of urban parks in the overall development design would enhance the desirability of the project. The impact on parks and recreation should be mitigated per County policies contained in the Objective 6 of the Parks and Recreation Section of the Policy Plan. The provision of all-year recreational facilities, both on-site and off-site, for employees and residents should be addressed.

On-site recreation: Urban park amenities should be integrated into the development design. These would include a variety of open spaces and urban plazas, children's play areas, exercise trails, and sports courts. For example, on-site recreation associated with the proposed residential development should be located near the Spring Road and Utica Street intersection. This would allow for the recreational area and open space to be linked with Springvale Park. These needs are not specifically addressed in the nomination.

Off-site improvements: Due to the lack of available space in much of the CBC, additional active recreation facilities would be needed to be located at parks within the larger service area of the proposed development. These amenities could include new athletic fields, upgrades to existing facilities, children's play areas, sport courts, picnic areas, walking/exercise paths, dog parks, skate parks, restrooms, or gateway features. Local park amenity improvements should be made to Springvale Park, which is adjacent to the application area. These needs are not addressed in the nomination.

Public Schools

The subject area is within the Garfield Elementary School, Key Middle School, and Lee High School boundaries. Currently, the enrolled capacity is under-capacity and is projected to decrease by the 2012-2013 school year. The nomination proposes to replace the existing 11, single-family dwelling with two residential options of 216 or 263 dwelling units, depending on the amount of office use developed. These scenarios would result in 42 or 51 students, respectively. The receiving schools would have sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed nominations.

Environment

RPA: No Resource Protection Area, Environmental Quality Corridor, or floodplain exists on the site.

Noise: Transportation generated noise may impact residential development on the subject area. The area may be impacted by noise levels exceeding 65 dBA DNL from Old Keene Mill Road and other roadways in the area. A noise study would need to be completed to determine the full extent of impacts.

Water quality: New development should be designed in a manner which incorporates runoff detention and water quality improvement measures, such as LID techniques.

LEED certification: LEED or an equivalent third party certification would also be required as part of the Environmental Section of the Policy Plan.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- Approve Nomination as submitted
 - Approve Staff Alternative
 - Retain Adopted Plan
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Staff recognizes the need for redevelopment in this area, especially that which provides a complete, mixed-use environment where residents can live and shop near their workplace. Furthermore, this location would present the opportunity for a highly visible “gateway” for Springfield. However, the proposed intensity causes significant concern related to transportation. The proposed intensity may create impacts, which would severely constrain the recently improved roadways and may not be possible. Furthermore, the unknowns related to the size of the commuter parking facility and the ability to provide buffering and tapering to the adjacent residential community also create questions about the intensity of the nomination.

As an alternative to the nomination, staff recommends that Land Unit D-2 be expanded to include the subject area, and as an option, the subject area would be planned for office, residential, and supporting retail mixed-use up to a 1.0 FAR with full consolidation of the subject area and conditions related to improved multi-modal connectivity, and to buffering and tapering development away from the neighboring residential areas, outside of the CBC. The plan for the commuter facility would not change, nor would the recommendation for areas outside the subject area.