

Fairfax Center Area Study – Phase I
Braddock District Working Group
Monday July 28, 2014, 7:00pm
Conference Room 9, Fairfax County Government Center

Attendance:

Working Group: Vincent Picciano, Terry Wanbaugh, Tom McDonald, Roni Robins, Debbie Brown, Leigh Kennedy, Susan Martin and Joe Martin

Staff: Rosemary Ryan (Supervisor Cook's Office), Marianne Gardner (DPZ), Kim Rybold (DPZ), and Tom Burke (FCDOT)

Additional attendees: Ed Reiner (Leewood, accompanied by other community representatives) and Andrew Teeters (Shelter Development/Brightview Senior Living)

Minutes

The meeting was called to order by Vince Picciano at 7:08 pm.

The Minutes for the June 30 meeting were approved with the following Amendments: for Sub-Unit V2, it was noted that a viable option for Sub-Unit V2 should include the current Comprehensive Plan (Plan) language with no change. The discussion regarding placement of a future transit center should be changed from "Fairfax Center" to "Fairfax Corner;" and it should be noted that only part of the land area in land bay T transferred to Woodson High School beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. Some students on both sides of the Fairfax County Parkway attend Fairfax High School. With those changes, the minutes were approved.

Kim Rybold began the meeting with a discussion of the current schedule for the review of all the transition areas that surround the Fairfax Center Suburban Center. She stated that a staff report would be available on September 4th, and that staff was currently working on editorial changes to the current Plan text. Public hearings at the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors are scheduled for September 18th and October 28th. Kim then reviewed the current staff analysis by land unit:

Land Unit T. Kim spoke to the reasons why there were no specific alternatives for change proposed at this time. She also noted that most of this land bay is not in a sewer service area and that the recommendation for future development in the current Plan was to carry forward residential development at 1-2 homes per acre. This would include the existing Merrifield Gardens site which is considered a compatible commercial use in a residential area but would not be allowed to expand its operations. Kim noted that these properties are zoned R-1 and R-

C (Residential Conservation) and are in a Water Supply Overlay District. Tom McDonald asked a question about the eight acre parcel in this land bay that sits at the intersection of the Fairfax County Parkway and received verification that its development potential was the same as Merrifield.

A discussion of the small commercially (C-8) parcel at Holly Avenue was discussed. Staff noted that the operative phrase for this parcel was that it not be expanded or enhanced. The probability of a Special Exception for this parcel being filed in the near future was discussed. Staff noted that buffering and screening would be required. There was a motion made and agreed to by the working group to retain the current Plan guidance for two dwelling units per acre at the overlay level for this area.

Sub-Unit U-1. The focus was on the proposal to allow an alternative use to the C-2 zoned office building at McKenzie Avenue and Village Drive. The Plan recommendation is currently for a 0.25 FAR at the overlay level. The working group was unanimous that it did not feel that a child care center would be a compatible use at this location due to traffic considerations and an existing center already in the area. A discussion of the appropriateness of an assisted living facility at this location ensued. Staff noted that the current proposal was for a 0.6 FAR which was equivalent to housing at an R-12 density. It was agreed that additional retail at this location was too intensive.

Representatives of Shelter Development/Brightview Senior Living (Shelter Development) were present to further discuss their proposal as were several residents of the Leewood subdivision. Shelter representatives made the point that trip generation for assisted living as opposed to office use was approximately 1/3 the peak travel trips. When questioned, Andrew Teeters of Shelter Development stated that there would be 25 employees on the morning and afternoon shifts and about 10 overnight. Their facility required about 45 parking spaces as opposed to 108 spaces for office. Their project had 50% open space and would be 37 feet as opposed to 47 feet for office. The building facing the community would be 2 ½ stories.

Speaking for the Leewood community, Ed Reiner, who had been part of the office rezoning, stated that he preferred office use which would be quiet at night, while the assisted living facility was, in effect, a 24 hour operation. He felt that the "envelope was being pushed" with this proposal. He said the office use would be upscale and that security would be a big issue with assisted living and reported three burglaries in their neighborhood recently. He recounted his problems with the Fairfax Nursing Center and its lack of parking when he cared for his mother.

After substantial discussion Roni Robins asked if there was any alternative to office and was told that housing at the R-2 density would be compatible with homes in the area. It was noted that 13,000 square feet has been taken for the Lee Highway widening which reduced the parcel to 2.09 acres.

Vote: 3 members voted to keep the current Plan: Terry Wanbaugh, Tom McDonald and Leigh Kennedy; a vote to express "no objection" to assisted living if impacts could be mitigated was supported by a majority of five members. Finally, a third vote of support to allow two homes per acre at the baseline level was supported by all but one member (7 ayes).

Sub-Unit V-1. This parcel which is on the southwest corner of Lee Highway and Shirley Gate Road is currently zoned C-6 with a 0.25 FAR. After discussion about the current nearby rezoning and active site plans, the working group voted unanimously to allow an option for residential use compatible with adjacent residential uses.

Sub-Unit V-2. Kim began the discussion by stating that staff believes that the current Plan remains viable and intensification would require the expansion of the Suburban Center which is designed to be more dense. She stated that while Sub-Unit V-2 could support a mix of uses, residential density at a level of 12-20 homes per acre was reserved for the Suburban Center. This proposed change would be an alteration in the vision of Fairfax Center and would need a compelling reason to expand here. She considered it a significant policy issue. Because staff has no detailed information on what is proposed, they are unable to say that there is such a compelling reason at this time and is inclined to say that it is premature to consider such a change.

Kim mentioned the "Mobile Home Retention Guidelines" found in Appendix 10 of the Land Use section of the Policy Plan. She stated that this area was rezoned in the 1990s to be a Mobile Home Park.

Susan Martin raised the issue of the community's desire for walkability and Leigh Kennedy stated that it is time to move beyond a policy from the 1990s because mixed use is what Millennials want.

Marianne Gardner took time to discuss the Occoquan Basin Study as another vision established in the 1980s to reduce non-point source pollution on over 60,000 acres. 40,000 acres were downzoned and 20,000 were subject to Best Management Practice (BMP) guidelines. Most of this area is zoned R-C where lots are at least 2 acres. The highest density abutting the typical zoning for the Occoquan is R-12. Leigh noted that the Dwooskin assemblage actually abuts a park and the Cloisters, not the headwaters of the Occoquan. Marianne stated that replanning this area may overlook bigger issues.

Roni Robins stated that since the 1980s technology has changed and that what staff is looking for cannot be provided by her firm in such a short timeframe. She pointed out that Dwoskin has no plans for at least 10 years but was attempting to respond to the holistic plan for Fairfax Center. Joe Martin reiterated the technology issue and stated that staff should not tie the hands of the community for the next 25 years. He also stressed the importance of economic development.

Kim stated that the door can be left open for future discussion and that this might become the subject of a special study area in the future but that staff did not want to do anything to weaken the guidance of the current Plan.

Commissioner Hurley asked for a watershed map to see where various parts of Fairfax Center drain because this is very close to Difficult Run. During a discussion about affordable housing, and the ability of current owners to build equity, Roni noted that the rent control proffer had expired last January and that the owner can now raise rents to market levels. However they have proposed 155 replacement affordable housing units.

In response to questions from working group members, Marianne Gardner expressed willingness to consider this 1.8 m square foot area for a special study at such time as the owner was ready to come forward with more definitive plans. This could be done out of cycle on the motion of the supervisor. She also stated that staff would take a preliminary look at what criteria should be part of expansion so that the owner had some idea of what staff would be looking for as "compelling" reasons for change.

While it did not hold a formal vote, the group expressed its sense that mixed use should be considered for this area in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Ryan
Acting Secretary