

Fairfax Center Phase II Working Group

Meeting Notes

July 29, 2015

Attendance

Working Group: Jeff Saxe, Vincent Picciano, Chris Grisafe, Sandria Lherisse, Jackie Bradley, Roni Robins, Jeff Parnes, Mark McConn, Jim Katcham, Robbie Stark, Sherry Fisher

Staff: Kim Rybold (DPZ), Ken Sorenson (DPZ), Rosemary Ryan (Supervisor Cook's office – Braddock District)

Planning Commissioner Peter Murphy, Springfield District

Introduction

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Staff provided an overview of the agenda for the evening and the working group voted 8-0 to approve the minutes from the July 7, 2015 Phase II Working Group meeting, as amended. Staff and the Working Group discussed voting procedures to select a chair for the working group and the working group agreed to select a vice-chair and proceeded to vote. Jim Katcham was elected as the chair, and Vince Picciano as the vice chair.

Kim Rybold, DPZ, explained the original criteria that guided the overall vision for the plan. She distributed a handout listing the criteria, which cover the areas of transportation, land use, environmental quality, market potential, and implementation.

Recent Planning Themes – Past and Current Plan Amendments

Next, Kim Rybold continued the presentation by highlighting Plan amendments that have been adopted within the Suburban Center during the past ten years, as well as three Board-authorized Plan amendments in the study area that are under review.

Fair Oaks Mall

The presentation began with a focus on the Suburban Center core. A 2009 Area Plans Review (APR) nomination increased the overlay level FAR to 0.65 and included additional options that can be exercised when transit development is completed. Roni Robins asked what the existing FAR is for the mall. Jeff Saxe responded that it is probably around 0.4 FAR. Roni Robins asked why the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) option was only 0.8 FAR, and Kim Rybold responded that the Metrorail option is envisioned as the ultimate build out. BRT does not have as strong of a trip reduction compared to Metrorail, resulting in less density. Vince Picciano asked about street connections to Fair Oaks Mall, and Kim Rybold responded that additional pedestrian road connections are recommended for the transit-oriented options. She also explained that there is guidance within the Plan for these options related to building orientation and block sizes that in effect, create more of a grid system. Jeff Parnes asked if there will be 24/7 access across the future Metrorail causeway, and if not, he would like to see language asking for continuous access. Jeff Saxe noted that the Fairfax Corner rezoning case

reserved a spot for the Metrorail pedestrian connection. Kim Rybold indicated that staff can look into zoning cases within the Fairfax Center Area that may provide insight into improving street connectivity.

Fairfax Corner

Fairfax Corner is not within the core; however, there was a Plan amendment in the 2005 APR cycle that added more intensity to a mixed use option which was tied to provision of transit. Existing surface parking lots have approvals would be converted to additional mixed use development.

Vincent Picciano asked if the additional parking lot was required by VDOT. Jeff Saxe responded that the 3-acre parking lot was sold to the county, and leased back to Fairfax Corner. Parking will be relocated back into Fairfax Corner when transit comes.

Chris Grisafe asked for further clarification on FAR and if the land use mix affects density. Kim Rybold explained that mixed use development uses FAR as a measure of intensity, which is based on building square footage. Residential use is generally measured in dwelling units per acre, but you can use the building size to measure an equivalent FAR.

Fair Lakes

Plan options for an additional 1.5 million SF of development were added during the 2005 APR cycle. These options consist of mainly infill development, which would occur on existing surface parking.

Ridge Top Road

This site was originally planned for office use but the first Plan amendment added a residential component with ground floor retail. A later amendment converted a large portion of the planned office use to residential use. The area with townhouses under construction was originally reserved for office use, and a small professional office building is recommended for the remaining undeveloped parcel.

Vince Picciano asked if any ground floor retail for this site was required. Kim Rybold responded that the Plan recommends it and ground floor retail space was included in the building that was constructed.

Commissioner Murphy noted that a lot of development rights from the downzoning in the Occoquan watershed shifted to the Fairfax Center Area. He cautioned that the area shouldn't be overly reliant on residential uses. The Working Group discussed the tax revenue and burden associated with certain types of uses and noted that it would be difficult to build out an office component with the changing office market.

Land Unit A

During the 2004 APR cycle, the Plan recommendation for Sub-unit A3 was updated to include retail use, in addition to low intensity office use and institutional use, at an intensity of .25 FAR. Subsequent amendments in Land Unit A added options for independent living, which have not yet been implemented.

Fair Lakes Hyatt

The proposed plan amendment considers the addition of senior housing to the hotel site and is scheduled to go to the Planning Commission in October. This Plan amendment continues the theme of looking at independent/assisted living facilities within the area.

Fairfax Towne Center

The proposed Plan amendment for this site considers a mix of uses up to a 1.2 FAR. Ken Sorenson, DPZ indicated that the land use mix is unknown at this point, but should be forthcoming.

Fair Lakes

This amendment considers flexibility in using the development intensity associated with site-specific Plan options in the Fair Lakes area. Kim Rybold explained that the staff is working with the property owner to understand how this flexibility is envisioned in Fair Lakes.

Rosemary Ryan asked why this amendment was able to be authorized outside of the study process. Kim Rybold responded that the amendment was authorized separately by the Supervisor's office and that staff is examining how this amendment will relate to the study.

Submissions

Kim Rybold presented the submissions in order of when they would be discussed in the study. The first two, Areawide (AW) 6 and Site-specific (SS) 5, relate to the overall Concept for Future Development in the Fairfax Center Area. AW6 is related to which areas should be designated as the core, while SS5 deals with adding transit-oriented Plan options in the park and ride area outside of the existing core and Suburban Center. Jeff Parnes noted that the group should plan for transit-oriented development around planned transit stops.

The Working Group discussed the need for planned interchanges along US 29. Kim Rybold explained the process for removing interchanges from the Transportation Plan Map, and the need for funding to undertake this study. The study itself will likely occur beyond the timeline of the Fairfax Center Area Study. It was noted that it would be helpful to know what elements will be included with the existing Route 29 widening project. Commissioner Murphy noted that the area hasn't been planned well to provide active transportation. He also mentioned that the Working Group should consider some creative recreation ideas for the area since that is also an element that is lacking.

After reviewing items related to the overall vision, the Working Group will consider what land use changes should be made in future exercises. It was noted that the updated Plan would reflect existing and stable development. This will include submissions AW10, SS1, SS2, SS3, and SS4, which will inform scenarios developed by the Working Group. Staff and the Working Group Chair will determine how individuals who submitted ideas will be invited to present their ideas. Jeff Saxe noted that he thought some of the timelines for some site-specific recommendations were too long, and that it may be desirable to move these items forward once the Working Group has made a recommendation. Kim Rybold also stated that SS3 may not need a Plan amendment, and staff is researching this in more detail.

Kim Rybold reviewed the areawide guidance submissions. Most of these are related to updating Plan guidance for each topic area to ensure that it is up to date. This includes guidance in areas of heritage resources, parks, environment, land use, and bicycle and pedestrian connectivity.

Jeff Parnes suggested that pedestrian and bicycle circulation be improved through the TRW site if possible.

Lastly, Kim Rybold reviewed the submissions related to Plan implementation and how the Working Group will review these to see how Plan guidance should be adjusted to support the updated vision. For instance, the Use-Specific Performance Criteria do not currently address mixed use development despite the fact that several of the recent Plan amendments in the area involve mixed use.

NEXT STEPS

The Working Group discussed meeting at the beginning of September and to set a monthly, fixed date thereafter for consistency.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.