



Submission Form for Proposed Changes to the Comprehensive Plan or Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program

To use this form, type responses or print in ink. Attachments may be used as necessary. This form is also available on the Web at: <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/fairfaxforward/submissionformproposedchangescompplan2.pdf>

1. Subject Property Information (Not required for countywide proposal.) For help visit the Planning & Zoning Viewer

Identify general location, street address, or Tax Map parcels, if available. Countywide

a) General Location: Mason District

b) Street Address: 5250 and 5252 Cherokee Ave, Alexandria, VA 22312

c) Tax Map Parcel Numbers: 72-3 ((27)) 1 and 72-3 ((27)) 2

For help visit the Department of Tax Administration website or the Digital Map Viewer

d) Identify total aggregate size of all subject parcels in acres or square feet: _____

3.2 acres

For help visit the Department of Tax Administration website

2. Proposed Amendment to Comprehensive Plan recommendations

a) Describe the character and type of proposed development, if a land use change is proposed. The potential development could be described in terms of land use floor area ratio (FAR) or dwelling units per acre. Building height or size may also be used to convey scale.

Option to redevelop the property by adding two stories and converting to residential condos from the current office use. Additionally, an option for a ground floor neighborhood retail should also be considered.

b) If a policy change is proposed, describe why the proposal should be addressed at a countywide level.

c) Provide justification for the proposed amendment. Describe how the proposal meets any of the following criteria and why the proposal should be included in the work program. Check all that apply.

- Address emerging community concerns or changes in circumstance;
- Respond to actions by others, such as Federal, State, or adjacent jurisdictions;
- Advance major policy objectives, such as promoting environmental protection, fostering revitalization of designated areas, supporting economic development, preserving open space, providing affordable housing, or balancing transportation infrastructure and public facilities services with growth and development;
- Better implement the Concept for Future Development;
- Reflect implementation of Comprehensive Plan guidance through zoning approvals; and,
- Respond to or incorporate research derived from technical planning or transportation studies.

continued on reverse side

Explanation for (c). (Additional sheets may be attached.) This will be provided in a separate email or fax submission to the Dept. of Planning and Zoning, Attn. Marianne Gardner - Director.

3. Contact Information (Name and daytime phone required.* Provide street address and/or email address.)

a) Name: Nazir Bhagat

b) Daytime Phone: * 703-642-5030

c) Street Address: 5252 Cherokee Ave, Unit 202

d) Email Address: bhagat.info@gmail.com

4. Would you like to speak with staff about this submission?

Select: Yes or No

Yes No

4a. If yes, how should we contact you? e-mail phone

****Staff review of all submissions is anticipated to begin February 2016****

Submit the completed form or direct questions to:

Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning

The Herrity Building

12055 Government Center Parkway

Suite 730

Fairfax, Virginia 22035-5500

703-324-1380, TTY 711 (Virginia Relay)

DPZmail@fairfaxcounty.gov



Redeveloping Halifax Office Park with Neighborhood & RPA Improvements

SYNOPSIS:

Due to its peculiar history, Halifax Office Park (HOP), located at 5250-5252 Cherokee Ave, Alexandria VA 22312, (Tax Map: 72-3-27-01 & 02) was developed in 1980s as a twin multistory office park, separated from the rest of the commercial properties higher up on Cherokee Avenue (towards I-395). Further, the buildings, obsolete with respect to current codes and environmental standards, do not sufficiently protect the adjacent RPA and flood plain.

The height of the office buildings is well mitigated by large setbacks and their low elevation location in the Indian Run Stream Valley. The buildings are buffered by park land on two sides, screened from the townhouses at the rear by tall trees, and have a small profile on Cherokee Ave. HOP's zoning, and usage, however, are completely incongruous with its surroundings. HOP, and its adjacent park land, are completely surrounded by a suburban residential neighborhood. And yet, HOP is a multistory office park with C-3 zoning, which permits not only offices, but also houses of worship, cultural centers, restaurants, health clubs, and other high traffic uses incongruous with a quiet residential neighborhood. Further, the HOP buildings are increasingly obsolete, but grandfathered as to existing standards for the environment and storm water management, fire-safety, ADA, and Universal Design.

The incongruity posed by HOP, however, can now be reduced by undertaking a win-win process, such as Fairfax Forward, with all the stakeholders, in order to incentivize reinvestment in HOP and convert it to less intensive residential use. HOP would then be not only better integrated with the surrounding residential community, it would help:

- 1) Meet a growing need for infill housing in Mason District for residents needing easy access to I-395 & I-495.
- 2) Achieve greater compliance with current codes, including ADA, universal design, and fire safety codes,
- 3) Make HOP greener, more sustainable and Leeds Certified,
- 4) Improve water quality, decrease runoff from the HOP, and comply with current SWM codes,
- 5) Improve adjacent parkland by adding to it, and increase protection for the RPA/flood plain
- 6) Proffer amenities e.g. exercise stations, dog park or tot lot and provide an access easement to the community, through HOP, to Indian Run Park.

However conversion from office use to less intensive residential use would require vacating and gutting the current buildings, and making a substantial reinvestment. This reinvestment could be only justified, if the building's proffered condition limits on FAR were lifted, and permission were granted to add two additional stories to the existing buildings. Given the location of the buildings and the existing tree line at the rear, the visual impact of the added 20 foot height to the current 45 feet, is expected to be minimal—and certainly far less than the benefits to the community of:

- 1) Banning all C-3 uses currently permitted by right, e.g. restaurants, temples, etc. at HOP, and

- 2) A reinvestment in HOP that, along with conversion to residential use, brings along the right mix of onsite amenities, environmental improvements, school and neighborhood improvements, including those to the Indian Run Park, and providing the community an access easement to the Park.

Indeed, reinvestment in and redeveloping of an infill commercial building to less intense residential use, while maintaining its existing footprint, can be shown to be as, if not more, ecofriendly, and provide a smaller carbon footprint than greenfield, transient oriented development at distant metro stops. In the case of HOP, *a reinvestment would also have the following obvious benefits to the surrounding community:*

- 1) *Have a significant **decrease** in vehicular traffic, including cars, limousines, and delivery trucks*
- 2) *Parking significantly exceeding County codes, part of which could be made available to the neighborhood for special events (as has been done in the past).*
- 3) *Less noise due to less traffic and large truck deliveries*
- 4) *Reduced crime due to presence of 24/7 residents that participate in Neighborhood Watch*
- 5) *Replacing office workers with residents, who participate in neighborhood and civic activities*
- 6) *Creation of sufficient scale to create car pools or van service during rush hours to the Metro*
- 7) *Reduced flooding due to elimination of the storm water runoffs from the roof, and adherence to best current SWM practices.*

The reinvestment in HOP would fulfill the following Lincolnia Comprehensive Plan objectives:

1. **“Limit commercial encroachment into residential neighborhoods and establish a clearly defined “edge” between commercial and residential areas;”** *The conversion of HOP to residential does just that.*
2. **“Encourage the creation of additional parks, open space and recreation areas and acquire additional acreage in environmentally sensitive areas as part of the Environmental Quality Corridor program;”** *The reinvestment in HOP would include investment in improving the Park and in greater protection of the RPA/flood plain on site, leaving the stream valley better off.*

Further, pg 39 of the Plan recommends:

3. **“Ensure protections of EQCs and public access to stream valley parks through acquisition and/or donation of conservation/trail easements on privately owned land in accordance with Fairfax County Park Authority stream valley policy.”** *Currently the neighbors access the park by trespassing on private property. As part of the reinvestment in HOP, the public could be provided an access easement through HOP to the Indian Run Park.*

The benefits to the neighborhood for incentivizing the residential conversion of HOP (RCHOP) are significant. Also, RCHOP follows the example of other such conversions in metro area.

PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT:

What is proposed is the repurposing and redevelopment of Halifax Office Park to residential multifamily use, with a removal of the existing Proffered Condition Amendment limitation on FAR in order to permit two additional stories on the office buildings. In addition permission is also sought for a professional services and retail use on the ground floor in order to service the local neighborhood.

BACKGROUND:

Halifax Office Park:

Halifax Office Park (HOP) consists of two 4 story office buildings situated on 3.6 acres on Cherokee Avenue, across from its intersection with Navajo Avenue. A brief description of C-3 zoning and HOP building conformity is attached as Exhibit A. Due to a proffered condition, the buildings heights and the FAR have been limited to 50% of that permitted by HOP's C-3 zoning.

HOP has two loading docks for large truck deliveries, and parking for 257 vehicles, considerably in excess of the existing code. Due to grade difference between the front and the back of the property, the front of each building has a lower level lobby that serves as the main entrance, and a covered parking area. The buildings are well constructed, have atriums, balconies and terraces, and have won awards for their masonry construction. Built in the 1980s, they are still well preserved and maintained. Though they are not in full compliance with existing ADA standards and current building codes, they have been grandfathered due to their age.

The buildings sit adjacent to park land in the Indian Run Stream Valley, well below the Windy Hill development on the other side of Indian Run. It has easy access to I-395 intersection and its retail establishments. Although part of the parking lot is in the 100 year flood plain, the buildings are not.

Zoning History and Current Use:

HOP was originally zoned as Industrial. When its owner sought to develop an industrial park around 1980, the County objected. Eventually, a compromise was reached, which divided the property into three lots. The lot north of the other two, and at a higher elevation, was developed as townhouses, and the other two lots, which are now HOP, were rezoned as C-3 and developed as two office buildings with a Proffered Condition Amendment restricting them to half the permitted FAR . Not only is this resulting office use incongruous with the residential character of the neighborhood, the current C-3 zoning continues to permit by right, a number of other uses that are even more incongruous (See Exhibit A).

Thus, since the 1980s, HOP has operated as an office park, starting initially as headquarters for the Halifax Corporation, a publicly traded, facilities management company. HOP is currently multi-tenanted, attracting firms that need a head office with plenty of parking and easy access to I-395 and I-495. Thus, the current mix of tenants includes firms that provide architectural, engineering, property management, health staffing, tutoring and limousine service. For many of these firms, HOP serves as their head office

location, from which employees are dispatched from, or arrive from, client locations or job sites around the Beltway. These tenants therefore require plenty of parking, and they generate a lot of traffic. Traffic at HOP may increase even further because:

1. The economy recovery is continuing to reduce vacancy;
2. There is a continuing trend to office hoteling and smaller offices—office occupancy has grown from an average of 4 occupants per 1000 SF average to 5 occupants in the last several years
3. If a successor owner converts HOP by right uses such as restaurants, health clubs, temples, etc.

Furthermore, HOP’s commercial use brings in transient visitors making it more difficult to integrate these visitors into a close knit part of the neighborhood, in which neighbors socialize with and befriend neighbors, work together to control crime, care for the elderly, and participate actively in civic duties .

The current Comprehensive Plan for Lincolnia locates HOP at the bottom vertex of the L-2 section, and closest to the I-395 intersection. While the Plan generally calls for residential use along Cherokee Avenue from Little River Turnpike to its intersection with Navajo Ave, there is no discussion of HOP and its incongruent zoning. The Comprehensive Plan, however, does list the following as a major objective: “Limit commercial encroachment into residential neighborhoods and establish a clearly defined “edge” between commercial and residential areas;”

Fortunately, the current Fairfax Forward Initiative permits the community an opportunity to further this objective and eliminate the HOP’s incongruous zoning and use.

Ownership Disclosure: The owners of HOP are Alisha Bhagat Egerman and Zohar Bhagat, both of whom were born and raised in Mason District. Alisha currently works for Forum for the Future, a nonprofit dedicated to international economic development. Zohar is a graduate student in applied mathematics. Their father, who acquired the property fifteen years ago and manages HOP, is a retired U.S. civil servant, and until recently, the Mason District representative on the Fairfax Commission on Aging.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED:

The residential conversion of Halifax Office Park (RCHOP) depends on three interrelated questions relating to its benefits to the community, the increase in FAR and height needed to make the project economically viable, and the assessment and mitigation of any adverse impacts due to RCHOP. Thus, we need a public private process through Fairfax Forward to assess the following:

- 1) Are the benefits of RCHOP to the surrounding community, and to Fairfax at large, well understood and desired by the community and the County?***

RCHOP benefits the community directly by reducing a zoning and usage incongruity, and by replacing the occupants in the HOP from office workers, who may be transient and not vested in the community, to permanent residents, who integrate closely with other residents in the neighborhood. Development proffers would be another direct benefit. Further, RCHOP could further County’s 50+ Plan objectives by providing more universal design housing options for active adults who prefer to down size and age in the community. It would also provide indirect

benefits such as onsite amenities, greater public use of Indian Run Park, improved compliance to current building codes, including those related to ADA, environmental, and fire safety. Furthermore, RCHOP would decrease storm water runoff, and lower HOP's carbon footprint.

2) ***What is the minimum height and FAR increase needed to make RCHOP economically feasible?***

RCHOP cannot be undertaken without a considerable expense. The major costs include the cost of vacating the building of tenants and the consequent loss of rents, gutting the entire interior and rebuilding it, strengthening the structure further, adding additional floors, adding an ADA compliant elevator, creating on site amenities such as a meeting room and gym, and upgrading the building systems to meet current building codes. Without the benefit of detailed analysis, it seems that RCHOP cannot be undertaken with less than a two story addition and a yield of 45 to 50 apartments per building. While these options need to be assessed further for engineering feasibility, they provide a framework for assessing the impacts of the RCHOP on the community.

3) ***What are the impacts of the above height and FAR changes to the neighborhood, and can potential community concerns be allayed or mitigated?***

Community concerns that need to be addressed include impact of RCHOP on:

- a) Traffic. In spite of the narrow bridge over Indian Run Creek, traffic has usually not been a significant problem, even when the buildings are fully occupied with high trip generating office tenants. Moreover, conversion to residential use from office use will lead to a significant decrease in the occupancy ratio of persons per 1000 SF: from 4 to 5 adults per 1000 SF for office use, to less than 2 adults per 1000 SF unit for residential apartments. Office use also usually generates more trips per adult, as explained earlier. Residential trip generation will be also reduced by providing on site amenities such as a multipurpose meeting and media room, a gym, and a business center. Eliminating C-3 uses for HOP, as noted earlier, would prevent any successor owners of HOP from converting to other by right commercial uses, without any regard to neighborhood concerns about traffic. Nevertheless, if concerns about traffic as a result of RCHOP persist, a traffic study will be conducted.
- b) Parking. Halifax Office Park currently has two loading bays and 257 parking spaces, including handicapped parking. For multifamily residential use, Fairfax requires only 1.6 parking spaces per unit or about 160 spaces for 100 units. This would mean that RCHOP would have parking that ***is more than 60% in excess*** of the parking required by County code. Indeed, some of the excess parking could be converted to an appropriate on-site amenity. Any concerns about parking are further mitigated by the trend towards a sharing economy and multimodal transport such as new versions of Segways: Puma by GM or mini golf carts, and ride sharing apps, including Uber. Van service to the Metro, feasible due to increased density, will reduce the average number of cars per condo and reduce traffic as well.

- c) Neighborhood Stability. A major objective of the Comprehensive Plan is to preserve stable residential areas. By converting HOP from commercial to residential zoning and use, the mix of HOP occupants changes from transient office workers to local residents, adding to the stability of the residential neighborhood.

- d) Environment. The property is separated from Indian Run Creek by park land. Although part of the parking lot closest to Indian Run Creek is in the 100 year flood zone, the buildings are not in the flood zone and no construction is envisaged other than adding additional stories on the existing footprint of the buildings. As noted, RCHOP would result in more ecofriendly buildings and decreased storm water runoff. Further, the construction will adhere to green building principles and high energy efficiency standards. More important, RCHOP will permit reinvestment in greater protection of the RPA/floodplain, through better grading of HOP and advanced engineering. Nevertheless, environmental impacts of the addition of stories will be investigated thoroughly.

- e) Visual and Architectural Impact: The buildings are already taller than the surroundings, but the visual impact on the neighborhood has been mitigated by:
 - i) their low elevation location in the Indian Run Stream Valley--about 200 feet below the Windy Hill Condominiums, and 20 to 30 feet below the townhouse development at the rear on Cherokee Court;
 - ii) large existing setbacks, and the existence of park land on two sides,
 - iii) visual screening by tall trees on three sides, and,
 - iv) a low profile of the building edge at its entrance across from Navaho Street.
 - v) rising slopes, away from the entrance of HOP on Cherokee, of both Navajo and Chowan Streets.

Thus, although the addition of two stories makes each building 65 feet tall, they would still be well below the 90 foot or (eight story) height limit for C-3 zoning. As seen from the attached exhibits, the addition is unlikely to create a significant visual impairment. Of the two properties, 5250 Cherokee Avenue, sitting at the rear of the property, which is also at a lower elevation, will have a lower visual impact. Visual impacts will be further minimized through careful architectural design.

Tentative Timetable for Next Steps:

- February 2016: Concept vetted with County Staff, and Park Service for park improvements and Concept vetted with the Supervisor's office.

- Spring 2016: Refine proposal with input from County and Supervisor, and then initiate discussions with key community leaders in the neighborhood and Weyanoke School Principal on school impact and needs, conduct traffic study.

Actual implementation of the redevelopment proposal is unlikely to take place another 3 yrs.

Depending upon the feedback, a decision will then be made to prepare and submit a more detailed plan that will include proffers to improve Indian Run Park and perhaps local school.

To conclude: There is a unique opportunity to assess the merits of incentivizing reinvestment in Halifax Office park, in order to eliminate its commercial zoning and use, and bring it in better harmony with the surrounding residential community. The proposed redevelopment option will provide additional benefits such as reduced traffic, more involved neighbors, greater compliance with universal design, fire-safety and environmental codes and Leeds Certification. The professional service and/or neighborhood retail on the ground floor will provide a useful amenity to the immediate neighborhood, including a convenient delivery point for the last mile, for orders placed on the internet. We intend to work cooperatively with all the stakeholders to address their concerns and consider their suggestions for improving the concept.

Exhibit A : ZONING

HOP lies within C-3 district, whose stated purpose is to “provide area where predominantly non-retail commercial uses may be located, such as offices and financial institutions.” Uses permitted by right include, but are not limited to: houses of worship, cultural centers, restaurants, financial institutions, health clubs, offices, institutions, and public uses.

Basic Development Standards are as follows:

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Minimum Lot Area: | 20,000 SF |
| Minimum Lot Width: | 100 feet |
| Front Yard: | Controlled by 25 degree angle, but not less than 40 feet |
| Side Yard: | No Requirement |
| Rear Yard: | Controlled by 20 degree angle, but not less than 25 feet |
| Maximum Floor Area Ratio: | 1.0x |
| Open Space: | 15% |
| Maximum Height: | 90 feet |
| Parking Requirements: | (Greater than 50,000 gf area) 3 spaces per 1000 SF of office |

Exhibit B: Existing Site Plan/Landscaping Plan/Flood Plain Map

To Be Provided

Exhibit C: VISUAL RENDERING OF HEIGHT INCREASE: Pictures Before & Pictures after





RedevelopingHalifaxOfficePark/10.29.2014