

The Project Advisory Committee meeting was held at the Laurel Hill Community Association Clubhouse at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting agenda and presentations can be viewed online at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/master_plan.htm

- Supervisor Gerry Hyland welcomed the group to the meeting and thanked the attendees for their participation.
- Tim Sargeant, Chair, gave a presentation covering the history and previous planning activities for the site. Topics reviewed also included the Memorandum of Agreement for the site, the National Register District nomination, adaptive reuse and site preparation costs, and expenditures at Laurel Hill to date. The full presentation can be viewed at the website listed above.
- Natalie Bock and Brad Elmer of the Alexander Company presented their Summary of Findings report. Community input from previous public meetings, market research, and site and building information was reviewed. The full presentation can be viewed at the website listed above.

Questions and Comments

Master Planning Process

- Is The Alexander Company going to be the developer? Will there be an open bidding process for the selection of the developer?

The Board of Supervisors will determine the Master Developer for the site. The Alexander Company was hired to develop a Master Plan for the site. Upon completion of the Master Plan, the county has the option to negotiate a development agreement with the Alexander Company. The county also has the option to select another developer if an agreement with the Alexander Company is not desired or reached.
- How many residential dwelling units are planned for the project?

At this point the number of units has not been developed. This information will be presented at the September 29th meeting.

Transportation and Trails

- Does the development take into account improvements to surrounding roadways?

Alexander Company's transportation consultant will evaluate the planned improvements to existing roadways in the context of this site, and will perform a traffic analysis on any proposed development program as part of the development review process.

It was noted that Lorton Road is planned to be redesigned to a 4-lane divided road, with a context-sensitive parkway design.

- Comment: The East Coast Greenway includes the Cross-County Trail, which is included on this site.

The Master Plan will show the connections to the Cross-County trail.

Summary of Findings and Market Studies

- The occupancy rates look reasonable; a recent article in Wall Street Journal describes a nationwide trend in retail and that a mall-type development might not succeed.
Retail development on this site would be neighborhood retail, not the scale of a regional mall.
- Are more detailed demographics and studies available? Does it make more sense to do a trade area analysis?
I-95 does create a barrier that may not adequately capture retail trends shown in the 1, 3 and 5-mile radii used in the study. The Alexander Company will look into this.
- What is the viability of condos?
Condominiums are viable but this site may be more successful with rental residential uses given the market in this area. Lorton Station has converted some condos to rental units.

Proposed Uses and Development on-site

- Has consideration been given to an Educational Facility or a Library?
Educational uses are included in this evaluation, and a library is a good potential use to consider.
- Have you considered housing for the elderly and housing needs for an aging population?
Comment noted; the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan also includes guidance for this site related to elderly housing.
- Have you looked at developing buildings below-grade?
Constructing buildings below-grade or into hillsides has not been evaluated. Below-grade construction tends to be expensive although there are possible opportunities to work with the topography on the site.
- Concern noted over high density residential development and impacts on roads and schools.
- The continued use of the ball field by the South County Hawks not only promotes local youth athletics but the setting can also serve as an object lesson for young people.
Comment noted.
- Has the analysis taken into account construction escalation costs?
Yes.

Penitentiary Wall

- Impact of prison wall will need to be assessed and the following considered:
 - Costs to maintain the wall.
 - Engineering of the wall and removing sections to allow access.
 - National Park Service requirements to retain the wall (and implications for historic tax credits).
 - View/access issues associated with the wall and the viability of retail uses without adequate visibility and access.
 - Flexibility and creativity associated with construction near the wall.
 - A comment noted the irony of the prison origins as a “prison without walls” and how the conversation now focuses on saving the wall.

Historic Tax Credits

- Clarification of the Historic Tax Credit review process: if tax credits are requested for one building or one part of the site, the entire site is reviewed according to the Secretary of the Interior’s guidelines.
- Is there a market for historic tax credits?
Yes, there is an active market for these credits.

Additional Comments

- Do you know of – or worked on – other prison redevelopments?
The Boston Jail (Charles Street Jail) is one example of a redevelopment (into a hotel); Alexander has worked on train stations and the conversion of a cold storage warehouse into residential uses as some examples.
- Comment: Community evaluation of the proposal should not be based on what’s there now but on the proposed final product (example given that the Lorton Arts Foundation site at the Workhouse is about to open and is a successful rehabilitation).

South County Athletic Fields Discussion

The discussion was prompted by recognition that the ball field area at the reformatory-penitentiary site may be recommended for additional development to support (financially) the preservation of contributing structures. In addition, meeting attendees discussed the current shortage of athletic fields in the South County area, which is not limited to baseball diamonds.

As a result, the PAC adopted the following recommendation:

The Project Advisory Committee recommends that the Board of Supervisors work directly with the Fairfax County Park Authority to identify funding and other resources to address the shortage of athletic fields in the South County area. This could be a phased approach to increase the number of fields over several years,

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including 60-foot and 90-foot baseball diamonds, as well as rectangular fields. Current demands for athletic fields and growth projects for the South County area indicate that funding for new fields must be identified and prioritized as soon as possible.

The next PAC meeting will be held on September 29, 2008 at 7:30 p.m. at the Lorton Station Elementary School, 9298 Lewis Chapel Road, Lorton, VA 22079, where the Alexander Company will present the draft master plan to the PAC and the public.