

The following is a summary of the presentation made by the Alexander Company and county staff and the questions and comments discussed at the following outreach meetings:

- **June 9, 2008 meeting of the Laurel Hill Project Advisory Committee**
- **June 10, 2008 meeting of the South County Federation**
- **June 12, 2008 meeting of the Architectural Review Board**
- **June 16, 2008 meeting of the Lorton Heritage Society**

INTRODUCTION

Natalie Bock and Brad Elmer of the Alexander Company presented an overview of the company, which focuses on historic preservation and adaptive reuse. Locally, they are working on the redevelopment of the National Park Seminary in Silver Spring, MD. More detail on the company and their expertise can be found online at <http://www.alexandercompany.com/>

The Alexander Company was hired by Fairfax County in May 2008 to develop a master plan for the Adaptive Reuse site. Their work to date has included market research and identifying potential uses for the site.

Ms. Bock discussed some of the requirements and desired characteristics that retailers consider when they review a potential location. Visibility, signage, the storefront space including windows, efficient space and parking were identified as significant factors in location decisions. Educational users have similar requirements in terms of parking, visibility and a need for advanced technology, and often prefer new construction.

A concept plan developed for discussion purposes was presented. This draft conceptual plan can be viewed online at the address below, and divides the Reformatory and Penitentiary site into conceptual zones:

http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/master_plan/alexanderpresentation.pdf

- Zone 1 includes the Reformatory buildings. These buildings are envisioned for residential uses.
- Zone 2 includes the Penitentiary buildings. These buildings are envisioned for residential uses.
- Zone 3 includes the Ballfield area (Zone 3A), Guards Quarters area (Zone 3B), and open space inside the Penitentiary closest to Silverbrook Road (Zone 3C).
 - Zone 3A is envisioned as a Village Center that includes a mix of uses including retail and commercial space in part of the former prison Ballfield area. This zone also includes community space (possibly an amphitheater or a recreation space for residents) adjacent to the Ballfield bleachers. The Village Center is envisioned to include restaurants and community-serving retail, and would be developed to be a pedestrian-friendly area with retail uses on the first floor and office uses on the second floor of the new development. This would

be an area of new construction and may meet the needs of retailers and educational users more effectively than the existing historic buildings.

- Zone 3B is envisioned as a retail/commercial area and may include a new entrance point off of Silverbrook Road into the Village Center.
- Zone 3C is envisioned as a retail space, and may include development that would incorporate the Penitentiary Wall.
- Zone 4 is located between the Reformatory and Penitentiary buildings and is envisioned as a transition zone. This area could be developed with retail and commercial uses, but may also be developed with residential uses. The Task Force recommended a “Main Street” concept in this area; however this area is constrained in terms of access from Silverbrook and Lorton Roads, and may not be as viable for retail uses.
- Zone 5 is located to the south of the Reformatory buildings (includes the Chapel) is envisioned for new residential construction, developed in a manner that is compatible with the existing historic buildings.

Potential access points into the site would include: 1) the existing cul-de-sac on White Spruce Way, 2) a potential new access point from Silverbrook Road near the Guards Quarters, 3) from the existing park road that extends to Lorton Road to the south, and 4) a possible entrance point near the existing historic road adjacent to the Laurel Hill House.

The Penitentiary Wall is a significant barrier to access and visibility for the site and will need to be addressed creatively. Ideas mentioned included taking the height to knee level in some places to buffer parking uses, and removing parts of the wall internal to the site to provide more access from the penitentiary buildings and the Village Center area. It is important to retain the feel of the wall and the character of the wall in the redevelopment. All four Penitentiary guard towers should remain.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Process

1. Kettler owns a portion of the Spring Hill development and 5 former prison buildings formerly associated with the prison. Will The Alexander Company and the County talk to Kettler about proposed activities?
Response: The Alexander Company is reaching out to Kettler and will discuss with them the respective development plans in the area.
2. The project should contain incentives that help pay for the Middle School and should also consider the PPEA opportunities that might be available.
Response: Comment noted.
3. Will the development plan have proffers?

Response: It is expected that the approved rezoning plan will have proffers but it is too early in the planning stage to make specific determinations. The selected developer will work with the county regarding proffer commitments as part of the rezoning stage of the process.

4. What is the planning horizon and schedule?

Response: The Master Plan process will take through the end of 2008. Upon completion of the Master Plan the county will work with a development partner to execute a development agreement. A Rezoning application, amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, and permit applications will take place in 2009. Site work or construction could begin as early as 2010.

Site Land Use

1. How many residential units will be built and what will be the impact on schools?

Response: The number of units has not been determined so any impact to the schools is also unknown. Residential units in adaptive reuse space tend to be one- to two-bedroom units for empty-nesters, singles, and young couples.

2. Could the site provide an opportunity for Fort Belvoir contractor offices or at least a place for them to come and eat lunch and spend money? How will these opportunities be identified? Could the transition area be used to support Fort Belvoir contractors?

Response: Contractors that provide government or military support typically need and want space to meet security and telecommunication requirements that can best be met in new construction office space. The historic buildings may not be best suited for these types of uses. We will work with the County Economic Development Authority to identify needs and opportunities that might be filled by the adaptive reuse site.

3. Residential, retail, and commercial opportunities for the adaptive reuse site could possibly be tied to the new hospital at Ft. Belvoir and the proposed Inova HealthPlex at Silverbrook and Lorton Roads.

Response: Comment and possible partners noted. The Alexander Company will investigate these possibilities.

4. The ballfield area shows a possible ballfield at a smaller scale than the current ballfield.

Response: The ballfield area is designated in the Comprehensive Plan as a recreation resource for the community. This resource could be one – or a combination of – a variety of uses including an open green space, passive or active recreation use, or an amphitheatre function that utilizes the grandstand and bleacher seats. It is also important to tie this area into the adjacent Greenway Trail.

5. Concern about the amount of residential units in the adaptive reuse area and residential units attracting a criminal element to the area. Not convinced that retail cannot be compatible in historic buildings. Would prefer more retail and less residential use on the site.

Response: The mix of residential and retail has not been determined at this time. Retailers are looking for high visibility, easy parking, and large storefront windows. While some historic buildings in the adaptive reuse site may be suitable for retail, the area designated as the “Main Street” is far from any major road, has limited parking, and no storefront windows.

6. Shirlington is a good example of human-scale urban development.

Response: Comment noted. We will try to find similar good examples of architecture, scale, and development in the area.

7. Are there plans to put a police substation on the site?

Response: There are no plans at this point for a police substation and nothing in the Comprehensive Plan for the Adaptive Reuse Area that identifies this as a need. There is a public safety use identified for the larger Laurel Hill area and the county intends to reserve an area for either a fire or police substation, or both, as needed. This use is currently identified in the Comprehensive Plan for a county-owned parcel south of Furnace Road opposite the Cold War Museum site.

8. There are lots of houses for sale in our neighborhoods – we don’t need new housing.

Response: The adaptive reuse residential units would be unique and tend to attract those who do not want single-family detached homes.

9. To eat at a restaurant or go anywhere to shop I have to get in my car. We need retail that is close and easy to access.

Response: Comment noted. The adaptive reuse area will be pedestrian-friendly but will also have to provide adequate parking.

10. How will the education element of the Comprehensive Plan be addressed?

Response: Education users such as colleges, trade or technical schools, prefer new space that reflects a commitment to state of the art learning with amenities such as amphitheatre seating and the ability to adapt to technological learning tools. The education use will be difficult to put into the historic buildings. However, there may be opportunities for newly built educational space in areas designated for new construction and infill development.

11. What will be the relationship between the adaptive reuse site and the Lorton Arts Foundation? Will they be in competition?

Response: The two sites will not compete against each other with each providing unique opportunities and features. The two sites should actually complement each other helping to make the entire Laurel Hill area a vibrant and dynamic destination.

Historic Elements & Architecture

1. What challenges do you face with the historic elements at the site, such as the towers and the wall?

Response: To help make the project economically feasible the developer will want to use Historic Tax Credits from both the State and Federal Government. The

Alexander Company has already begun to talk to the State Historic Preservation Officer of Virginia and the National Park Service about the historic elements of the site. The developer must follow specific design criteria for the project in order to be eligible for the tax credits. This includes identifying the significant spaces within the site and the period of significance.

2. The preliminary concepts show a good sense of site dynamics and good balances between housing, adaptive reuse, retail. We will have to accept some level of residential use to help support the retail components. Also, the ideas about the wall make sense.

Response: Thanks! The wall will be a challenge because it should not an “all or nothing” proposition. We need to find a way to make the wall work with the development, preserve a sense of the historic nature of the wall, and allow access and visibility through the wall to allow the revitalization of the site.

3. We should be open to tearing down buildings because of the high cost of renovating older structures.

Response: The plan for the area includes some flexibility to adaptively reuse, demolish, and build new buildings. This has to be weighed against the Tax Credit program and the proposed uses at the site.

4. Is architectural compatibility a concern?

Response: The National Park Service doesn’t want new construction to mimic the old but it also wants good taste and architecture that is compatible. The goal at the adaptive reuse site will be to work with the historic organizations and review boards to create compatible spaces and buildings.

5. Is the entire site historic?

Response: Yes. The 80-acre adaptive reuse site is part of the larger 500-acre National Register Historic District.

6. Will the guard towers be used in the adaptive reuse?

Response: We will look for ways to incorporate the towers into the proposed development – perhaps utilizing an interior staircase to take people to different levels of a store or building. The towers are unique features that help to brand to the site as unique. They should be preserved and incorporated into any adaptive reuse.

Environment

1. What are the environmental issues on the site?

Response: Some environmental issues identified at this early state are potential impacts to steep slopes, storm water management (runoff quantity and quality), maintaining green space, and possible impacts to Resource Protection Areas.

2. Is noise pollution a consideration?

Response: Yes, noise impacts would be considered specifically in terms of traffic noise. Another consideration may be mitigation of light pollution from the site into adjacent areas.

Traffic and Transportation

1. What will the traffic patterns from the site look like?

Response: Traffic volumes and patterns are unknown at this time. A civil engineer and transportation planner will be brought on board to assess traffic and transportation impacts when the land use and proposed densities are known to a better degree.

2. Is Silverbrook the main entrance road or will Lorton Road be used?

Response: At this early stage it appears that two access points from Silverbrook Road – at the cul-de-sac in front of the wall (White Spruce Way) and a new drive along the east side of the property – and the existing entrance from Lorton Road will adequately serve the site. Further analysis will be needed once the land uses are proposed.

3. Will traffic from I-95 exit and “pass-through” this area? The area should be unique and not just a highway exit.

Response: The restaurants and retail would not likely be the type to service Interstate travelers. However, by making the area unique it could generate people from a wider area than just the immediate neighborhoods.

The Alexander Company presented information to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) and asked for feedback on items such as the wall, proposed uses, the ability to add to, and connect, the dormitory buildings, the standards and guidelines, and any other general feedback. Following are key topics discussed.

- The ARB asked if site topography will constrain access and circulation. Will the site accommodate cars and delivery trucks and parking?
 - Some topographic constraints are evident on the eastern side of the site from Silverbrook Road, but it appears that access is obtainable. The Alexander Company is in discussions with the Fairfax County Department of Transportation and VDOT.
- Two ARB members expressed a desire to see treatments of the wall that left the integrity of the wall intact as opposed to placing architectural elements in or through the wall.
- Is the (early) plan to have structured parking?
 - At this preliminary stage, we are planning for surface parking only, but will consider the need for structure parking, perhaps utilizing some of the topographic features of the site.
- Perspectives from within the wall are important as well. The architect should not fill all the negative space within the wall with development and should be sensitive to the rhythm of the buildings.
- The ARB expressed a desire that architecture not mimic the styles and materials that exist on the site. One member asked if the architect was open to being assertive – in a positive sense – with new architecture on the site. The Alexander Company responded in the affirmative.
- An ARB member noted that there are some circulation constraints where the driveway behind the northern Reformatory dorms and the Greenway Trail share a common easement. Alexander agreed that this is an issue to be addressed.
- The ARB asked about the process and the Master Plan deliverable. It is expected that the Master Plan will require informal adoption or acceptance before a development agreement can be initiated.
- The ARB asked about the use of Historic Tax Credits and Alexander informed the group of their experience in working with the Tax Credit program, the desire to apply tax credits to this site, and their early coordination with the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Officer.
- Alexander was asked if the area could support a town center type of development. Alexander stated that they saw the retail component as a pedestrian-friendly village center space with retail geared toward the immediate community with some additional area-wide attraction.