

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 under the November 24, 2008 meeting date at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/master_plan.htm.

- Tim Sargeant, Chair of the Laurel Hill Project Advisory Committee, reviewed the meeting agenda and format of the meeting, and introduced Department of Planning and Zoning staff.
 - Chris Caperton, Laurel Hill Project Coordinator, Department of Planning and Zoning, welcomed the group and reviewed the outreach meetings held beginning on September 29, 2008 to present the Draft Master Plan. A comment roll-up is available online at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/master_plan.htm.
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- Natalie Bock and Brad Elmer of The Alexander Company presented a summary of the issues raised at the ten community meetings held over the past two months. The full presentation is posted on the website listed above, and outlined generally below:
 - Key Issues: 1) Chapel, 2) Retail use, 3) Ballfield/Recreation use, 4) Historic Preservation, 5) Housing and Commercial use, and 6) Financial Feasibility.
 - Several ideas suggested by citizens and groups during the outreach process have merit for consideration, including the use of towers for a “tower tour”, enhancing pedestrian connections, creating a “hub” of activity for Laurel Hill, including a pavilion or ice rink as part of the recreation use, playgrounds, and the orientation of retail. Some of these ideas are captured in plans submitted by citizens. These are included in the comment roll-up document.
 - Chapel: Suggestion to consider an alternative use for the chapel (other than the residential proposed in the draft plan). The Alexander Company will consider alternate uses, such as a community use/daycare/church for the chapel.
 - Retail use: Citizens expressed a strong interest in community retail and restaurants at the site. The orientation of the retail proposed at the north end of the penitentiary was a point of discussion. Comments and suggestions included designs to limit the amount of parking in the penitentiary area, the amount of retail space proposed, and the removal of too much of the wall. Good examples of retail and restaurant centers cited by citizens included Shirlington and Reston. Alexander visited these locations and while the amount of development on the adaptive reuse site is not comparable, creating the feeling of those spaces is possible at Laurel Hill. Alexander will re-evaluate the design of the retail in this location.

- Ballfield/Recreation use: There is both opposition to removing the baseball use as well as support for placing new development on the field to support the economics of the larger site. Aerial photographs from 1937 and 1953 do not show a baseball field at the current location. Alternative plans and comments submitted during the outreach process included suggestions for office, retail, and age-restricted residential uses at this location. Layouts for retaining a baseball use have also been submitted. The Alexander Company, as a consultant to the county, recommends planning this space for residential use to support the infrastructure costs of the larger site, and also recommends inclusion of a green, open space to serve the entire community with the potential for including a structure such as a community pavilion or ice rink. The green space could be used for farmers markets, concerts and other community events.
- Housing: Comments included concern about the amount of housing proposed (200 apartments in existing structures and 155 new townhomes) and the impacts to schools; a preference for owner-occupied housing; inclusion of workforce housing; and the inclusion of age-restricted and assisted living housing. The proposed townhomes would be owner-occupied, and could be designed as low-rise, zero-lot-line homes (with a bedroom on the first floor) rather than 4-story townhomes, in order to attract young professionals and empty-nesters. The new construction residential provides the greatest offset to infrastructure costs for the site (estimated at \$20 million) when compared to other uses.

The use of historic tax credits in the existing (Reformatory) buildings negates owner-occupied adaptive reuse housing; the units must be rental units. Alexander suggests the Reformatory units target lower income ranges as part of a magnet housing program with the County or with Inova as part of the Lorton Healthplex.

The Alexander Company does not recommend age-restricted housing at the adaptive reuse site; the adjacent Spring Hill development, with 442 approved units, could potentially be in competition with the adaptive reuse site. The Alexander Company noted the benefits of age diversity in a community. Also, individuals who chose to live in an age-restricted community may not utilize the play areas and other public spaces planned for the site. The new construction townhomes can be designed to attract empty-nesters by including bedrooms on the first floor. The apartments proposed in the Reformatory dorms will be 1- and 2-bedroom units, which typically do not have residents with many children, and are more desirable for young professionals or empty-nesters.

- Commercial Use: A proposed office use in the Ballfield area creates an increased financial gap that potentially leads to more taxpayer subsidy.
- Historic Preservation: Comments and questions included removing specific buildings, such as the Penitentiary Dining Hall; removing the proposed parking in the courtyards; removing the new construction surrounding the historic buildings that potentially blocks views into the site; and a concern about infill construction between the Reformatory dorms. To obtain historic tax credits, the development is reviewed against the Secretary of Interior's standards. Removal of buildings has to be necessary to save other buildings, and cannot affect the historic fabric of the space. The Penitentiary Dining Hall is a primary façade and removal of that building would not be supported by the preservation community. In The Alexander Company's opinion, removal of the building would jeopardize the use of historic tax credits for the entire site, leading to an increase in the financial gap for the project. Removal of parking in courtyards and locating new buildings in locations that do not limit views into the site can be re-examined.
- Financial Considerations: The Alexander Company estimates that basic infrastructure costs are \$20 million. \$16 million in historic tax credits (state and Federal) are possible on the site. Economic drivers for the site, in order of significance, are single-family residential, retail, multi-family residential, and office use. Suggestions for structured parking have been made: Estimates for below-ground structured parking are \$20,000 - \$30,000 per space, and \$15,000 - \$20,000 per space for an above-ground structure.
- Next Steps: The Alexander Company will continue to refine the Master Plan based on the input received over the past few months. The Alexander Company will prepare a financial feasibility analysis which will be submitted to the county for internal review. It is anticipated that the next presentation of both a master plan and financial analysis will be in the February 2009 timeframe.

Questions from Project Advisory Committee Members:

- Previous studies indicated that the development might experience a \$30 million financial gap. Does Alexander agree with this? Does this include \$20 million for infrastructure?
Response: Although The Alexander Company's financial feasibility analysis is still underway; the Company does not think that the gap will be as high as \$30 million. The gap does include infrastructure estimates. The analysis will include the financial impacts of potential proffer commitments.

- What is the incentive for developers or occupants to want to locate at the site if they might have to share in the costs of maintaining the wall, towers and common infrastructure? Is this a disincentive? Will the pro forma include these costs?

Response: The wall and towers need immediate repairs and once completed the maintenance should not carry significant operating costs. The financial pro forma will include these costs.

- It has been suggested that the Penitentiary Dining Hall be removed; which buildings are likely to subject the “entire site” to the loss of historic tax credits?

Response: The draft plan proposes the removal of a handful of buildings not considered (in Alexander’s opinion) as significant as the other buildings. There is potentially more flexibility with state historic tax credits than with federal historic tax credits.

- Given all the comments from preservationists (Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Architectural Review Board, Lorton Heritage Society, and History Commission) can the future developer qualify for historic tax credits?

Response: Yes. It is Alexander’s opinion that obtaining tax credits for the project will be feasible. Many of the comments received can be addressed, such as the parking in the courtyards, a different use in the chapel, and removal of sections of the wall. Further discussions with VDHR are needed to clarify specific issues regarding the wall and infill development.

- Should the viability of the project focus so much on tax credits given the tenuous nature of some of the comments received by preservation agencies? Does the cost to preserve many of the buildings and structures needed to qualify for historic tax credits outweigh the benefits of the tax credits?

Response: Alexander stated that the best avenue for making the project successful is to use the historic tax credits. Their goal is to provide a plan that minimizes the burden on the taxpayers, and the use of historic tax credits helps to achieve that goal. A developer not using tax credits must still meet rigid preservation requirements as outlined in the MOA. The belief of The Alexander Company is that long and protracted battles with preservationists are costly, time consuming, and in the end, not always successful.

- Can the Board of Supervisors overrule the MOA signatories? Is the Master Plan subject to approval by the signatories of the MOA?

Response: The Board of Supervisors ultimately controls the property subject to the Memorandum of Agreement and Deed for the property. The Master Plan is not subject to “approval” by the MOA signatories. The MOA states that all parties shall be invited to participate in planning activities related to adaptive reuse. The MOA specifies procedures for approvals related to site planning activities and specifies procedures if there are conflicting positions held by MOA signatories.

- Does review of the Adaptive Reuse site for Historic Tax credits include the review of the Lorton Arts Foundation (Workhouse) site since they are part of the same National Register District?
Response: This issue will be explored further by staff and the County Attorney's office.
- Where does Alexander's income range of \$34,000 - \$64,000 fall? Workforce housing? Affordable dwelling units?
Response: The lower end of the income range should be targeted towards a magnet housing program, which could provide housing for teachers, police officers, nurses, etc. There is no upper income limit for the proposed residential use.
- Does the planned open space necessarily exclude a baseball field use?
Response: The programmable open space could be used for baseball and other sports depending on the size of the playing field and the other programmed activities. Youth soccer and T-ball baseball, for example, could probably be easy "fits."
- How does the programming of open space work? Is there enough of a new neighborhood synergy to program the space?
Response: An owner's association could program some recurring activities, such as a farmer's market while interested outside groups – Lorton Arts, for example – could be responsible for programming some activities.
- VDHR noted a problem with connecting the Reformatory dorms. Does this jeopardize the viability of the reuse?
Response: An earlier site walk-through with NPS and VDHR did not identify proposed Reformatory infill development as a problem. Also, VDHR comments on the Draft Architectural Standards and Guidelines indicated a willingness to consider development of the space between the Reformatory dorms. This issue will need to be addressed in further conversations with VDHR.
- Are the rental apartments calculated on a "square foot" basis?
Response: It is anticipated that average rents in the magnet housing would be approximately \$1.08/sf while the average rents in the market rate units would be approximately \$1.54/sf.
- The draft plan proposes 200 apartments. Is there a tipping point for the number of apartments that makes management of the site – rental office, maintenance, etc. – a burden?

Response: Typically, a development of less than 100 apartments becomes less efficient to manage.

- What is the revised amount of retail space?

Response: The Alexander Company is considering approximately 35,000 square feet of retail space but this does not include other pad sites for potential retail, mixed use, or restaurants.

- What is the timeline for the project?

Response: County staff will monitor the progress of the plan development and provide a project status to the PAC in early January. A revised plan and financial feasibility analysis presentation to the community is targeted for the February 2009 timeframe. Upon approval of a master plan, the next steps include a potential Comprehensive Plan Amendment and then a Rezoning and Site Plan review. These processes could take two years before there is construction on-site.

- Has the Architectural Review Board (ARB) weighed-in on the idea of new development at the adaptive reuse site and the location of any new development?

Response: The ARB's Draft Standards and Guidelines identify a number of areas suitable for new development; open space within the penitentiary walls, areas around the chapel, and the Ballfield area.

- Is there a phasing option for the plan?

Response: Given the high infrastructure costs and the interconnectedness of the infrastructure needs for the proposed uses on the site, phasing the project will be difficult. A civil engineer is examining possibilities for phasing but it is anticipated that construction of the various proposed uses will proceed concurrently.

- Reference was made by the PAC to a recent Fairfax Chronicle article about the planning for the site and the need for compromise. This article can be viewed at <http://www.chroniclnewspapers.com/articles/2008/10/29/news/viewpoints/view01.prt>

- The PAC voted to recommend that the Board of Supervisors obtain outside counsel to review questions raised about federal and state historic tax credits for the larger historic district. These questions include:

1. Will the status of the entire National Register District, including the Lorton Arts Foundation's (LAF) Workhouse site, be reviewed as part of an application for federal historic or state historic tax credits in the Reformatory-Penitentiary Adaptive Reuse Area?

2. Will the National Register and historic tax credit status of the LAF Workhouse be reviewed as part of an Adaptive Reuse Area review?

3. In what way, if any, do the tax credits obtained by LAF impact or influence the ability to obtain tax credits for the Adaptive Reuse site?
4. In what way, if any, would demolition or alteration of contributing structures at the Reformatory-Penitentiary site impact the National Register status and tax credit eligibility of the LAF Workhouse site?
5. Generally, what are the historic tax credit implications for the Adaptive Reuse Area?

DPZ staff will follow up with the County Attorney's office on this request.

Questions from the Public:

- Will the state tax credits be available? Maryland's tax credit program has been under fire recently.
Response: Federal tax credits are strong and there is nothing to indicate a reduction in Virginia state credits. It was also stated by a History Commissioner in the audience that at the APVA (Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities) conference, the Governor of Virginia indicated his commitment to the state historic tax program.
- What is "time zero" for the project? Is should be at the end of the Master Planning process.
Response: Time zero is assumed to be at the end of the rezoning, recognizing there is time sensitivity to the project, funding, and tax credits.
- Are the townhomes on the Ballfield a *fait accompli*? Would any developer move forward with the site without developing on the Ballfield?
Response: The previous Request for Proposal efforts resulted in proposals showing large amounts of new residential construction on the Ballfield – often at the cost of removing historic structures. The Alexander Company considered a variety of uses on the Ballfield including retail, commercial and mixed use. The economics of the project require an income generator in this location.
- How will townhomes be "for sale" units when the county wants to retain ownership of the property?
Response: Long term land leases are common in commercial real estate and will not pose a problem for the development of multi-family rental residential, retail or office. Land leases can be problematic for for-sale residential but have not been ruled out as a possibility on this site.
- Would the rental units receive Section 8 funding?

Response: No. Other funding mechanisms will be explored and these will all be detailed in the pro forma submitted to the county.

- What is the potential impact of the proposed development of the adaptive reuse site on the National Register District designation at the Workhouse (Lorton Arts Foundation)?

Response: Further analysis is needed to ensure that activities at either site do not jeopardize the historic tax credits of the other and, specifically, to ensure that the proposed adaptive reuse plans do not call into question the entire District. County staff was instructed to lead this analysis.

- Given the current economic conditions, what is a realistic timeline for this project?

Response: The potential Comprehensive Plan amendment and required rezoning and site plan review could take as long as two years. The Alexander Company believes that this is a good time to be planning.

- How many buildings were demolished at the National Park Seminary? Did this affect the ability to receive tax credits?

Response: The 32-acre site that The Alexander Company has redeveloped in Silver Spring, MD has 11 significant buildings and 12 significant homes. Two concrete block structures (not historic) were removed, and one house was moved. The project received historic tax credits (both state and federal).

- Concern noted about new access point from Silverbrook Road and impacts to tree cover.

Response: The Fairfax County Department of Transportation and the Virginia Department of Transportation were consulted about the proposed new access point and although further review is needed, both have indicated that an access point appears possible based on sight distance requirements. Impacts to tree cover and vegetation are not known at this time. Impacts will be reviewed in more detail during the next phases of the process.

- The five 90' fields listed in the comment-response document are not all viable. South County Secondary School has been closed and has limited spots available for the South County Hawks. The Lower Potomac Field is only used by Lorton Little League. Occoquan is scheduled by a separate entity (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority). McNaughton Fields is permanently used by Woodlawn Little League.

Response: The Fairfax County Park Authority and the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services provided information about existing 90' fields in South County.

A question was asked about improving the Occoquan field – it would need a fence, there is currently a volleyball court in right field, and it is poorly

maintained. Audience members stated that the field is underutilized and there are often signs on the fields indicating that they should not be used.

A question was asked about how many 13-18 year olds on the Hawks play on the 90' field. Response was that 5-6 teams play on the field in the fall and spring.

- Concern that meetings have been dominated by a single issue—the Ballfield—when there are other opinions in the community about uses for the Ballfield; need to focus on providing input for the buildings that need to be preserved and the overall site.
- Need for a sustainable and economically viable plan, which means there will need to be compromise.