

The Project Advisory Committee meeting was held at the Lorton Station Elementary School at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting agenda and presentations can be viewed online under the September 29, 2008 meeting date at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/laurelhill/master_plan.htm. The next PAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 17, 2008, time and location to be determined.

- Supervisor Gerry Hyland welcomed the group to the meeting and thanked the attendees for their participation.
- Tim Sargeant, Chair of the Laurel Hill Project Advisory Committee, reviewed the meeting agenda and format of the meeting, and introduced the Alexander Company.
- Natalie Bock, Brad Elmer, and Ed Freer of the Alexander Company presented the Draft Master Plan for the Laurel Hill Adaptive Reuse Area. 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.
- Generally, the Draft Master Plan divides the Adaptive Reuse Area into 4 Zones:
 - Zones 1 and 2: Residential Uses in the Reformatory buildings, the area near the chapel, in the buildings between the Reformatory and Penitentiary, and on the existing Ball Field
 - Approximately 200 units of multifamily housing in the historic reformatory buildings
 - Approximately 155 newly constructed town homes
 - Zone 1A – Development pad – possibly commercial development – in the southwest corner of the site near the proposed connector road
 - Zone 3: Office and Service Retail Uses in the Penitentiary buildings and the area between the Penitentiary and the Ball Field
 - 51,500 s.f. of new construction
 - 62,500 s.f. of adaptive reuse space in historic structures
 - Traditional small office users and service retail such as, dentist, architecture/engineering firm, hi tech start up, investment advisor, accountant, yoga studio, personal trainer, consultant, etc.
 - Zone 4: Neighborhood Retail Uses in the Northern section of the Penitentiary
 - 45,000 s.f. of new construction
 - 15,000 s.f. of adaptive reuse space in historic structures
 - Small grocery, pharmacy, bank, restaurant, wine shop, etc
 - Open Space in multiple locations with varying sizes and intended levels of activity
 - Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation throughout all four Zones

Questions and Comments

Master Planning Process

- Is The Alexander Company the presumptive developer? Will an open (RFP) bidding process select 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.
- Comment that the transparency of the process has been appreciated.

Plan Assumptions

- Does the development need an anchor use, such as a hotel, to create the retail hub of activity described in the plan?
 - Alexander examined various anchor uses, including a movie theater and hotel. Theaters are not viable based on construction costs and parking requirements while a new hotel may not be compatible with the existing scale of development on the site (which potentially impacts the use of historic tax credits). The site location is likely too far from interstate I-95 for an ideal hotel location. Developers tend to prefer the close proximity of office space to a hotel use.
- What are the economic assumptions for the site? Was the site viewed in terms of profitability versus the good of the community?
 - Alexander examined different uses, including an educational facility at the site. An education use is difficult for the existing buildings because of space and technology requirements of educational users. A private educational user (example of ITT) will not typically commit to a site 2-3 years prior to construction (the time frame for this development). Education uses also require large parking facilities.
- Regarding the retail assumptions, Old Town Alexandria and National Harbor are unique places that draw consumers. A unique Laurel Hill location should be able to draw people to restaurants. Also, townhomes do not appear viable in the current economic situation. Why should we preserve so many of these buildings?
 - Removing all the buildings is not an option. Historic preservation can create a unique and different place, with community appeal. Townhome financing in today's economic climate is difficult. However, the development of this site is at least 2 years away. The retail analysis recommends a retail use close to Silverbrook Road in order to take advantage of access and visibility, and also recommended not dividing retail uses on the site that then might compete with one another. This site does not have the surrounding density to support as much retail as exists in parts of Old Town and places like Shirlington.

Ballfield

- The South County Hawks expressed a concern about the loss of the Ballfield [currently used by the Hawks through an interim agreement with the Fairfax County Park Authority] as shown in the Draft Master Plan, and the need for ballfields in this part of the county.
 - The County is requesting a Master Plan that preserves the historic elements of the site, is economically viable and sustainable, and places a minimum burden on the taxpayer. The new construction in the area of the Ballfield, in part, reflects the need to reduce the burden of infrastructure costs to the county. Also, the preserved green space is intended to provide recreational open space for all the members of the community, as described in the Comprehensive Plan. New construction at the ball field area is ultimately the decision of the community and elected leaders.

Residential Use

- The nature of the proposed retail, and the planned Lorton HealthPlex nearby, warrants the consideration of rental housing for the elderly and aging-in-place options.
 - Comment noted. The Alexander Company will investigate other possible residential uses. There is an approved (not yet constructed) four-story independent living building planned for the corner of Silverbrook Road and White Spruce Way in Spring Hill, and also five historic buildings approved for redevelopment into age-restricted condominiums in Spring Hill. Condominiums are also approved (not yet constructed) on the west side of Spring Hill, adjacent to the golf course.
- Does elimination of the new residential construction in Zone 2 (the existing Ballfield) lower the infrastructure costs of the development?
 - Somewhat, but the overall infrastructure costs for the site (stormwater management, roads, utilities, the wall and towers) are not reduced proportionately by removing those townhomes. Under the current Draft Plan, the proposed townhomes contribute approximately \$6 million towards the infrastructure costs, estimated at approximately \$18-20 million.
- Previous studies indicate a rise in costs as new residential construction is removed. It is important to consider that less residential construction means less money to the county to defray infrastructure costs. It is important to achieve a balance and remain flexible when evaluating these uses and potential costs to the county. The amount of money contributed should be considered against the money made by the developer.
 - Comment noted.
- Consider the rental structure for the apartments in the historic Reformatory buildings. The county needs workforce housing for teachers, police officers, firefighters, nurses, etc. and this is an opportunity for a partnership. Consider removing some rows of townhomes in the Ballfield to provide athletic field space in this part of the county. Certain lower-scale hotel or motels might work on this site. Perhaps show a plan without part of the wall and without some of the towers.

- Opportunities for workforce and magnet housing are included in the Comprehensive Plan and will be evaluated. One idea for the towers is to take advantage of grant opportunities to allow public access into a tower to read plaques describing the history of the site.
- Can the townhomes in the Ballfield area move further east?
 - Physical and environmental constraints limit the area available for new construction, most notably topographic constraints (steep slopes), and a Resource Protection Area to be avoided.
- Are the proposed residential units in the chapel the best use for this space?
 - The plan shows 10 residential units in the chapel. We will consider alternative uses such as community space or a daycare.
- The parking and access for the townhomes is hard to visualize.
 - [Alexander reviewed the circulation plan for the site.] Townhome parking is proposed for garages located at the rear of the homes, accessed by an alley. The intent is to retain an appealing street frontage of the townhomes.

Retail and Office Use

- The amount of office space seems low; was a higher density option reviewed?
 - A variety of densities and uses were considered. An increase in office space requires additional parking and may also have a greater traffic impact.
- The amount of density in Zones 3 and 4 is almost identical. Any thoughts about swapping the uses and having the office towards Silverbrook and the retail in the historic buildings? What about having the existing buildings that flank the old cafeteria as retail space as well?
 - Retail requires high visibility – both of the storefront and parking. Also, retail uses are not a viable use in the existing historic (Penitentiary) buildings; retailers’ prefer direct vehicular access, window visibility, and specific space configurations.
- Is the retail shown inside or outside the wall?
 - The two eastern buildings are outside the wall while the proposed western building is inside the wall. The easternmost buildings mimic the feel of the wall by placing building frontage in areas of removed wall panels. The wall is a challenge to creating viable retail and office uses on the site.

Penitentiary Wall

- Maintaining the wall will be a considerable expense. Does this plan address the wall?
 - The draft plan proposes to remove select panels of the wall between the pilasters. This includes sections of the wall closest to Silverbrook Road allowing access into the site. Further discussions with the Fairfax County Architectural Review Board, the Virginia

Department of Historic Resources, and the National Park Service are needed to assess the viability of this proposal. Future decisions must reflect a balance between preservation and the need to access the site.

Historic Tax Credits

- What percentage of preserved historic buildings qualifies the developer for historic tax credits?
 - Removing or modifying the character of any of the historic buildings or features can put the use of historic tax credits in jeopardy; the review is not based on the percentage of building preserved.

Public Facilities

- Is it possible to reduce the number of historic structures for preservation in order to lessen the number of residential units and thereby lessen the potential impacts to schools?
 - If historic buildings are removed and not redeveloped, it reduces the development costs that can be offset by using historic tax credits. In addition, removing historic buildings in one part of the site may affect the entire site's ability to receive tax credits, as the site is examined in its entirety.
- Can the Alexander Company commit to proffers that will offset the impacts to schools?
 - At this stage in the process, the county is not reviewing a rezoning application. Proffers are discussed during the county development review process which will not occur until after the Master Plan is finalized and a developer is hired.

Additional Comments

- There is a need for flexibility and compromise with regard to historic preservation in order to create a viable and sustainable development.
 - Comment noted. The Lorton Arts Foundation development at the Workhouse received permission to remove historic buildings as part of their development plan, though the Foundation obtained only state (no Federal) historic tax credits.
- Has consideration been given to removing all the buildings and making this site open space?
 - The site is governed by both the Quitclaim Deed and the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) requiring the county to maintain the historic buildings. The site is also part of a larger National Register of Historic Places District. The removal of buildings (some or all) requires the concurrence of the signatories to the MOA and the state and federal review authorities. The Deed states that the removal of all of the buildings converts the property to open space.