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Mr. Richard Lambert
Planning Division
Fairfax County Department of Planning and Zoning
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 730
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**RE: Phase II of the Reston Master Plan Special Study
Recommendations for the St. John's Wood Property**

Dear Richard,

I'm writing on behalf of St. Johns Wood Realty Holding Company, Inc. (the "Owner"), the owner of the St. John's Wood property located at 11500 Olde Tiverton Circle in Reston, Virginia, and identified on the Fairfax County Tax Map as 11-4 ((1)) 12 (the "Property"). The Property is located in the northeast corner of the intersection of Reston Parkway and Center Harbor Road, diagonally across from the North Point Village Center.

The purpose of this letter is to request that Fairfax County retain the current Reston Master Plan land use designation for the Property, which would allow the Owner to proceed with its presently pending development proposal for the Property in conformance with that designation. As an alternative, the Owner requests the County's consideration of a new land use designation that would provide an opportunity for the Owner to proceed with a redevelopment proposal under site-specific Comprehensive Plan guidance appropriate for the Property.

I. Development Proposal in Conformance with the Reston Master Plan

As you know, the Owner has submitted Development Plan Amendment, Proffered Condition Amendment, and PRC Plan application DPA/PCA/PRC 86-C-023 (collectively, the "Application") proposing to redevelop the existing multi-family garden apartment complex on the Property with a mix of single family attached and mid-rise multi-family residential units. The Owner's proposed development complies with the current designation of the Property for High Density Residential uses up to 50 dwelling units per acre under the existing Reston Master Plan.

II. Fairfax County Proposes to Change the Reston Master Plan

As part of the Phase II study, Fairfax County offered property owners and other stakeholders the opportunity to submit proposals for changes to the Reston Master Plan. As we have discussed, the Owner did not submit a proposal for any changes to the Reston Master Plan because the Owner is not seeking, and does not want, to change the long-standing Comprehensive Plan guidance applicable to the Property.



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Nevertheless, the County has put forth a draft of proposed changes to the Reston Master Plan recommending that the Property be "down-planned" from its current High Density Residential designation to a newly created designation of "Low-Density Multi-Family" uses, which would permit a density of 13 – 20 dwelling units per acre. Further, the draft recommendations state that any redevelopment of multi-family residential properties should require a separate, future amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

Fairfax County's proposal to change the Property's existing land use designation would hinder or eliminate the Owner's ability to redevelop the Property as currently recommended under the Reston Master Plan. The Property is developed at approximately 17.5 dwelling units per acre. As a result, the County's proposal to change the Property's land use designation would effectively eliminate the opportunity to redevelop the Property as currently recommended and at nearly any density beyond that already existing on the Property.

III. Retain the Current Reston Master Plan Designation for the Property

The Owner requests that the County retain the current Reston Master Plan recommendation applicable to the Property because the recommendation for High Density Residential uses has been in place since the inception of the Reston PRC district. The Reston Master Plan, first adopted in 1962 and subsequently revised through 1989, has always designated the Property for development with High Density Residential uses. The County's proposed new designation would change the land use recommendation that has been in place for the Property for over 50 years.

Given this long-standing planning guidance, the Owner has intended to redevelop the Property at an appropriate time based on market conditions and the condition of the existing garden apartment buildings. The proposed development is not only consistent with the Reston Master Plan's current recommendation, but also is closer to the original vision for the Property than the existing garden apartment buildings. In addition, the pending Application will be the subject of a substantial review by both Fairfax County and the Reston community, which will provide many opportunities for community input as part of the County's review of the Application. The Owner respectfully requests that the County retain the Reston Master Plan designation and allow the pending Application to proceed through the County and community review process.

IV. Alternative Option for Consideration of Future Redevelopment

Given the pending Application and ongoing Phase II study, there is a timely opportunity to align the Comprehensive Plan recommendations and the pending development proposal for the Property in a review process involving the Owner, Fairfax County, and the Reston community. If the County intends to change the land use designation for the Property, the Owner requests that the County reclassify the Property to the new "Mid-Density Multi-Family" designation and incorporate additional site-specific recommendations into the Comprehensive Plan. Doing so would provide an opportunity for a thorough review of the Application for conformance with planning guidance and land use objectives specific to the Property's circumstances. Such a



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process could begin during the Phase II special study and continue as long as necessary to provide a full review with participation from all stakeholders.

The Mid-Density Multi-Family designation of 21 – 50 dwelling units per acre is appropriate for the Property because it encompasses a range of potential densities and forms of development that the Owner, the County, and the Reston community may determine are suitable for the Property. This designation would allow a number of different types of redevelopment in terms of the project's design, dwelling unit types, and relationship with surrounding uses, all of which would be subject to further review. Moreover, such a designation would allow all stakeholders to engage in the review process and determine an appropriate form of development for the Property within the context of a specific proposal, without creating an expectation that any particular density is appropriate (or not appropriate) for the Property.

In addition, a designation for Mid-Density Multi-Family could include parcel-specific planning guidance to ensure that any redevelopment of the Property, at any density, meets the expectations of the County and the community for high-quality design elements and contextual design that distinguish development in Reston. Based on meetings with the Reston Association, the Design Review Board, members of the Reston Planning & Zoning Committee, and Fairfax County Staff, a number of specific objectives appear to be prerequisites for any redevelopment of the Property. The Owner proposes the following conditions as a way to embody these objectives in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Development should embody an organic, natural design to achieve a built environment that is compatible with the property's wooded setting. The site layout should allow for green areas and meaningful open space within the property.
- The architecture and massing of development should feature context-sensitive design that fits into the natural and architectural character of the surrounding area.
- Existing buffers should be maintained and the streetscape of Reston Parkway should be preserved as a wooded path rather than redesigned as an urban sidewalk.
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing trails should be provided to enhance safety and connectivity among the property, immediately surrounding uses, the North Point Village Center, and the Reston trail network.
- Above-grade structured parking should be wrapped with active uses where possible, and where exposed should be treated with architectural detailing or landscaping to reduce the visible impacts from adjoining properties.
- The development should include a community gathering space using both hardscape and landscape areas, with a preference for a greater proportion of landscaped open space than hardscape plaza area.



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The Owner believes this approach will lead to a development that is consistent with Fairfax County's planning goals and responsive to the Reston community's comments on the initial design proposed for the Property.

V. A Redevelopment Option Remains Appropriate for the Property

Whether the Property retains its current High Density Residential land use designation or is reclassified to the new Mid-Density Multi-Family designation, a redevelopment option remains appropriate for the Property for the following reasons.

A. Fulfills the Reston Master Plan Vision for the Property

As noted above, the master developer of Reston planned for the Property to be developed at a higher density by designating it for High-Density Residential uses. Although the Property was not initially developed at the recommended density, a land use designation allowing a higher density redevelopment option remains appropriate because it will further the planning principles for Reston and fulfill the original vision for the area. Reston is a tremendously successful and desirable community, and it is important to recognize that it developed so well since its inception in accordance with the Reston Master Plan. The evolution of the Comprehensive Plan should not take away from the original vision for Reston as embodied in the Reston Master Plan.

B. Opportunity to Provide More Housing Options

Maintaining a redevelopment option in the Comprehensive Plan will allow future development that adds to the diversity of housing options for Reston residents. The Property is located well outside of the transit station areas that were the subject of Phase I of the special study. Those areas are planned for residential uses to be developed primarily in high-rise buildings. This type of construction involves substantially greater land costs, construction costs, and more extensive building features that collectively contribute to making these development projects significantly more costly to develop. Such projects correspondingly result in higher housing prices.

In contrast, the Owner seeks to provide new housing under an alternative, and less costly, development structure that affords the opportunity to serve a broader segment of the housing needs in the Reston community. Put more simply, there should be opportunities for new housing options for Reston residents beyond only those in high-rise, high-cost buildings in the transit station areas. The pending Application offers an opportunity for these types of options with a mix of apartments and townhouses. This type of development is consistent with one of Reston's founding principles; specifically, to provide a variety of housing types for families of all ages, sizes, and levels of income. The proposed development furthers this critically important objective by providing meaningful alternative housing options within the community.

C. Supports the North Point Village Center

The location of higher density residential uses in proximity to the North Point Village Center is consistent with the vision for Reston as a community that offers its residents walkable access to



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amenities and public gathering spaces. Outside of the transit station areas, the next highest densities should be, and have been, planned and located near Village Centers to maximize convenience for the greatest number of residents. The current Reston Master Plan shows areas of High Density Residential uses adjacent to each of the Village Centers. Maintaining the recommended density for the Property or allowing an option for higher density development will contribute to the success of the North Point Village Center and support the higher-intensity node intended with the original Reston Master Plan.

D. Limited Areas for High Density Residential

The Property is one of relatively few areas outside of Reston Town Center originally planned for High Density Residential uses under the Reston Master Plan. This designation is logical given the Property's location adjacent to the North Point Village Center, making it part of a higher-density node that is characteristic of Reston's planning at each Village Center. It is unlikely that maintaining the Property's designation for High Density Residential or designating the Property as Mid-Density Multi-Family as suggested above would have any impact on other similar properties because there are few comparably situated properties outside of the Town Center and Village Center areas.

VI. Conclusion

There is an opportunity for redevelopment of the Property to contribute to Reston's high-quality natural and built environment by substantially improving the site design, architectural character, and pedestrian connectivity of the Property. Maintaining a redevelopment option would allow all stakeholders to engage in a County and community review process to determine the most appropriate use for the Property, which could involve specific recommendations to ensure compatibility with the vision for Reston and the context of neighboring properties. Therefore, the Owner respectfully requests that Fairfax County maintain the Property's current land use designation or reclassify the Property to the new Mid-Rise Multi-Family designation.

Best regards,

Brian J. Winterhalter

- cc: The Honorable Catherine M. Hudgins, Hunter Mill District Supervisor
- Frank de la Fe, Hunter Mill District Planning Commissioner
- Heidi Merkel, Department of Planning & Zoning
- Nick Rogers, Department of Planning & Zoning
- Cate Fulkerson, Reston Association
- Joe Enrico, Reston Association Design Review Board
- Jared Wilcox, Reston Planning & Zoning Committee
- Eric Fenton, Bozzuto Development Company
- Mark C. Looney, Cooley LLP

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