

**County of Fairfax, Virginia  
Planning Commission Meeting  
July 14, 2021  
Verbatim Excerpt**

*PA 2021-00006 -2806 POPKINS LANE – Amendment to consider proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Plan for Fairfax County, VA, in accordance with the Code of Virginia, Title 15.2, Chapter 22. This amendment concerns approximately 5.5 acres located at 2806 Popkins Lane (Tax Map Parcel 93-1 ((1)) 7) in the Mount Vernon District. The area is planned for residential use at a density of 2-3 du/ac on the Plan Map and 3-4 du/ac if part of adjacent Memorial Heights neighborhood. The amendment will consider a up to 5-8 du/ac, with specific considerations for workforce housing, a review of the watershed management plan for the area, an evaluation of the optimal points of site access, and analysis of potential impacts to the local transportation network. Recommendations relating to tree preservation and stormwater management are also proposed. (Mount Vernon District)*

During Commission Matters

(Decision Only) (Public Hearing on this application was held on June 23, 2021)

Commissioner Clarke: Good evening, thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good evening, everybody. I want to begin by thanking the hard work of the Mount Vernon SSPA taskforce for the numerous hours of reviewing this nomination and certainly appreciate Ms. Catharine Ward for recording out the taskforce's recommendation during the public hearing. And, we want to thank her for her forward thinking, of having a discussion—or having the applicant to have a discussion with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. Also, I thank Commissioner Tim Sargeant, my co-chair, for the SSPA taskforce, for all of his efforts and guidance along this process. So, Mr. Chairman, this Plan Amendment 2021-00006 concerns the property located at 2806 Popkins Lane in the Mount Vernon District. The site is currently planned for residential use 3 to 4 dwelling units per acre as part of a recommendation for the Memorial Heights neighborhood, which abuts the site to the west. The site contains a Verizon switching station along Popkins Lane frontage—frontage and vacant wooded land—site's interior and rear. The amendment originated from an SSPA nomination submitted and reviewed during the screening phase by the Mount Vernon SSPA Task Force. That the study of the amendment considered an option for increased density on the site from 3—from 5 to 8 dwelling units, excuse me, to—to the acre. The Board also requested that staff consider the optimal points of site access to serve potential residential development with a higher density, affordable housing opportunities, and adopted watershed management plan's recommendations for the area. The primary consideration during the review of the plan amendment was the existing tree canopy and, specifically, opportunities to preserve as much of the tree cover as possible. This objective was recognized as crucial by the task force and staff, and different approaches for achieving this objective were discussed at length. In the end, the task force voted to retain the current plan recommendation for the site and also defer the consideration of the amendment into the Standard Track of SSPA to allow for potential conversations between the nominator—in this case, Verizon's representatives and Northern Virginia Conservation Trust—to explore the possibilities of preserving the site and conservation easement. As an alternative to increase of density options on the site, the nominator has had discussions with Northern Virginia Conservation Trust regarding the conservation easement process, but indicated they are not interested in pursuing such an arrangement for the entire site. I have great respect for the work of the task force and their emphasis on preservation objectives during the task force's meetings. With that said, the role of the task force for plan—and the Planning Commission is to provide guidance to the Board on the authorized plan amendment.

And without the property owner's consent, it has not been our practice to consider down-planning sites that are already planned for residential use. Staff's recommendation provides an avenue for considering a middle ground, which is density within the Board's authorization of up to 6 dwelling units per acre, provide 35 percent of the site's tree canopy—can be preserved with the redevelopment. This tree preservation target would be far greater than a canopy preservation that would be required under the existing R-3 zoning or higher density zoning districts. Considering higher densities beyond the current Plan's recommendations can also enable attached unit types of housing, which are more economical with the use of the land and can allow clustering that enables more contiguous stands of trees to be preserved with development compared to the development under the existing zoning. I would note that we did hear from one of the adjacent property owners at the hearing on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, who noted the issues he has encountered on his property related to reoccurring flooding due to the existing drainage pattern in the neighborhood, and his concern with development on the site—on the subject site and what that would mean to his property. I certainly hear that concern and would note that the stormwater management will need to be carefully considered during any future entitlement applications to ensure that there are no negative impacts from the development to surrounding properties. The language in the staff recommendation also makes it clear that the stormwater should be managed on the site in the manner that it does not conflict with the tree preservation goals. Finally, I would note that tree preservation target recommended in the text could be pursued through a conservation easement for a portion or portions of the property, which could be discussed further during a future entitlement application. Lastly, the staff recommendation includes a reference providing primary access onto the site from Popkins Lane, with potential secondary access from either East Lee or Preston Avenue, which will help provide the connectivity for the residents. So, my motion, Mr. Chairman, THEREFORE, THIS EVENING I WOULD MOVE THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS THE ADOPTION OF THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR PLAN AMENDMENT 2021-00006, AS CONTAINED IN THE STAFF REPORT DATED JUNE 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2021. THE AMENDMENT WOULD ALLOW FOR THE OPTION FOR UP TO 6 DWELLING UNITS TO THE ACRE ON THE SITE, WITH THE PRESERVATION OF 35 PERCENT OF THE SITE'S EXISTING TREE CANOPY, PRIMARY ACCESS ON POPKINS LANE, AND WITH A POTENTIAL SECONDARY ACCESS ON EITHER EAST LEE AVENUE OR PRESTON AVENUE.

Commissioner Sargeant: Second.

Vice Chairman Ulfelder: Okay, is there any discussion? It's been moved and seconded that the Planning Commission recommend approval for—adoption of the proposed plan amendment, as outlined by Commissioner Clarke, with the one minor revision to the staff's recommendation. Is there any discussion? All in favor, say aye.

Commissioners: Aye.

Vice Chairman Ulfelder: Any opposed? That motion carries unanimously.

The motion carried by a vote of 10-0. Commissioner Murphy and Commissioner Bennett were absent from the meeting.

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