



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
#1 COURTHOUSE PLAZA, SUITE 700
2100 Clarendon boulevard
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201
(703) 228-3525 • fax (703) 228-3543



Michael foster,
CHAIR
Terry savela,
VICE CHAIR

THOMAS MILLER
COORDINATOR

September 15, 2005

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

SUBJECTS: 7.A. GP-301-05-1 GENERAL LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT from “General Commercial” to “Medium” Office-Apartment-Hotel; 2000 Wilson Blvd. (SP #389)

7.B. Z-2520-05-1 REZONING: Elm Street Development, Inc., from ”C-2” Service Commercial – Community Business Districts to “C-O-2.5” Commercial Office Building, Hotel and Apartment Districts; 2000 Wilson Blvd. (RPC #17-011-009, -013, -015, -016)

7.C. SP #389 SITE PLAN: Elm Street Development, Inc., approx. 165 dwelling units, approx. 32,468 sq ft commercial/retail space, comprehensive sign plan with modifications of use regulations for increased density, coverage, tandem parking, exclusion of retail storage and loading corridor GFA; 2000 Wilson Blvd. (RPC #17-011-009, -013, -015, -016)

RECOMMENDATIONS: Defer consideration of the General Land Use Plan Amendment, rezoning, and site plan to allow the resolution of issues.

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard these items at their recessed September 8, 2005 meeting. Nan Terpak, attorney for the applicant, introduced the development team and provided an overview of the proposed General Land Use Plan amendment, rezoning, and site plan. George Dove, the project’s architect, reviewed the project’s architecture and site plan. Jill Hunger provided a staff report. Tara Lake was also present to answer any questions.

Commissioner Foster recognized Melissa Bondi, a member of the Housing Commission (HC), in the audience and asked for an update on the HC’s action on the proposed plan. The HC had met earlier in the evening. Ms. Bondi reported that the HC voted unanimously to recommend to the County Board not to support the housing component of the project. In view of the change in the General Land Use Plan and the requested rezoning, which involved both a large increase in density and a change from commercial to largely residential use, it seemed insufficient that only five units of the proposed 165 unit project were to be provided as affordable dwelling units. Also, the proposed site plan conditions for housing included many contingencies which made it difficult to

PC - #58.

assess how the program would be achieved. The Planning Commission expressed appreciation for the opportune briefing by Ms. Bondi.

Public Speakers

Chris Cahill, a resident and Board Member of Colonial Village, noted the developer was very helpful. Parking is greater than what would typically be required. He supports building Troy Street between Wilson and Clarendon Boulevards as a critical element. The freestanding signs proposed by the applicant are needed to point the way to parking. He does regret seeing Dr. Dremos be displaced.

Stan Karson, president of the Radnor Fort Myer Heights Citizens' Association (RAFOM) questioned the appropriateness of another high-density, high-priced condominium in the area. He believes that the RAFOM area is the densest area in Arlington. The applicant did not meet with RAFOM but RAFOM did participate in Site Plan Review Committee meetings. He noted the lack of consistency with the In-Between Urban Design Study is a concern. Building heights should be taller closer to the Wendy's site. The tapering is difficult to visualize.

Dennis Gerrity, speaking on behalf of Colonial Village III Homeowners Association, noted they had numerous meetings with the developer. He expressed support for the project. Parking is an important issue for the neighborhood and each new development creates more pressure. There have been improvements to the project since it was submitted.

Linda Slagle, the Colonial Village II Homeowners Association President, noted that there were 78 members of the HOA at the first meeting with the developer. Given the large turnout, it was decided to have a series of focus meetings. Parking is a major concern. Because condominium owners bring cars, she would like to see a one parking space per bedroom requirement. She would also like to see more quality retail. The community spent considerable time working with the developer on the accessibility of the project. She expressed support for the new Troy Street and the proposed building, despite concerns about its height. The open space included along Wilson Blvd. is good.

Stuart Stein, a resident of Nash Street, expressed concern about the size of the building and the concept of constantly maxing out density. He noted that the by-right development is commercial. He believes the proposal has a lot of density and impact and is not in keeping with the In-Between Study. He is also concerned about the implications of approving a rezoning to "C-O-2.5" because that zone allows up to 16 stories.

Nina Weissberg, representing the property owner to the east of the subject site, spoke in favor of the project. She participated in the In-Between study. The location of Troy Street was shown on that plan and discussed in many meetings with property owners and county staff. She noted that former staff member Lu Ho was very helpful. She believes that a height limit of five stories will produce boxier buildings. Building setbacks and tapering are useful tools to meet the FAR. She was told many times during the In-Between Study's development that the drawings in the study were merely conceptual and not requirements. The history is important; there are many guidelines for redevelopment.

June O’Connell, a unit owner in Colonial Village for 11 years, urged the Planning Commission to recommend denial of the proposal. She likened the proposed building to the FDIC project in Virginia Square. The proposed community benefits are insufficient. This project does not meet the bar for up-zoning. There is no good reason for this building and the changes they are asking for. If this much density can be placed on “C-2” sites, it raises concerns. The proposed building is also too tall. A setback does not make a story disappear and should not be treated as one. She noted the adopted plan and the project’s failure to meet the plan.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Fallon provided a report from the Transportation Commission (TC), which voted to recommend denial of the proposed plan. The TC noted that the final alignment of North Troy Street, between Wilson and Clarendon Boulevards, does not align with adjacent streets to the north and south. The parking plan was not complete. The TC felt that the major public benefit of the final alignment of Troy Street did not justify the GLUP and zoning changes.

Commissioner Foster provided a report of the Site Plan Review Committee. He noted that the design of the project has substantially evolved. The applicant, through the SPRC process, showed progress in addressing issues. The last meeting was focused solely on the parking issue. Other issues addressed included the relationship to the Rosslyn to Courthouse Urban Design Study, the LEED score, setbacks and transitions, and the scale of the proposed site plan.

Commissioner Savela asked Commissioner Johnson to summarize key elements of the In-Between Study (Rosslyn to Courthouse Urban Design Study). Commissioner Johnson stated that the intent of the study was to develop parameters for an area that would not be like either the Rosslyn or the Courthouse Metro station area but something smaller in scale, more fine-grained and more responsive to the two adjacent neighborhoods of generally lower-scale development, Colonial Village and Fort Myer Heights North. Because of the long expanse of the blocks between Clarendon and Wilson Boulevards, the study identified a need to open up more through-block connections for both pedestrians and vehicles. Regarding building heights, the general intent was to taper up in both directions generally from Rhodes Street, the mid-point between the two station areas. The movement away from 55 foot buildings would be gradual and focused toward the ends of the area, Courthouse Road to the west and Pierce Street to the east.

Commissioner Chávez asked staff about County policies on measuring stories and at what point building setbacks are measured such that a setback could be great enough that it no longer counted as a story. Jill Hunger responded that in the “C-O-2.5” zoning category, building height is measured by stories – up to twelve (12) stories for office and sixteen (16) for residential and hotel buildings. Typically the depth of setback is measured to determine building taper.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the treatment of the density related to the proposed new Troy Street. Jill Hunger responded that density is calculated from the total site area before dedication for the right-of-way. When the site area is reduced by the dedication, the FAR will increase. Commissioner Johnson suggested that this should not be called a “bonus” because the applicant,

like others, is simply using the density from the road area being dedicated. Ms. Hunger agreed and stated that a pre- and post-dedicated site area and FAR would be provided in the final staff report.

Commissioner Dobson questioned whether staff opposed the monument style signs because they are contrary to policy. Ms. Hunger responded that the County typically does not support this type of signs in the Metro corridor, particularly for residential projects. Commissioner Hunt asked whether the international parking symbol, the blue “P”, would suffice. Ms. Hunger stated that it would and could be placed in the right-of-way.

Commissioner Fallon questioned the value assigned by the applicant for a proposed community benefit of providing additional parking. If that parking is primarily used by residents of Colonial Village, how does the community or public at large benefit in quantifiable terms, relative to other types of community benefits? Ms. Hunger noted that the parking is a value that the applicant has proposed. Nan Terpak cited the costs of constructing an underground parking space at \$35,000 per space and said that these additional parking spaces would not have typically been built by the applicant. Commissioner Fallon stated that he does not see the additional parking as a county-wide benefit since the applicant will lease spaces and recover construction costs. He asked about the new Troy Street and service alley and whether they would be required to be implemented with a by-right development. Ms. Hunger responded that they would not be required of a by-right development. Commissioner Fallon also asked about the anticipated time-frame between the interim and final versions of the street. Ms. Hunger noted that the full street construction is contingent upon redevelopment of the adjacent site. Commissioner Fallon again noted that the final alignment of the street was the primary point of opposition among Transportation Commissioners.

Commissioner Saks asked whether the requested General Land Use Plan amendment and “C-O-2.5” zoning requested by the applicant were within the scope of the In-Between Study. Commissioner Johnson responded that the study was primarily an urban design study and did not suggest General Land Use Plan changes or new zoning. The requested zoning allows density that fits within the building envelope recommended in the study, although the guidelines are more restrictive than some elements of the zoning category, specifically height. Ms. Hunger noted that the General Land Use Plan designation and zoning are consistent with those approved for other projects in the In-Between area. Commissioner Saks asked if there were other zoning categories suitable for the site. Ms. Hunger responded that the proposed zoning provides the opportunity for a variety of uses. The zoning district corresponds to the “Medium” General Land Use Plan designation.

Commissioner Weihe noted the history of the site, its current General Commercial designation, and the earlier use of the building as the Olmstead Oldsmobile building.

Commissioner Dobson stated that he liked the proposed building because it is redeveloping two automotive oriented sites (Taco Bell and the former Olmstead Oldsmobile garage) and provides a great deal of retail to fill in the gaps where retail is missing today. The only thing that the project does not do is provide office/condominium uses which he believes would be a good use.

Commissioner Dobson made a motion to recommend that the County Board approve the proposed General Land Use Plan amendment, rezoning and site plan, subject to the conditions in the staff report as presented to the Planning Commission and to include two new items: removal of the

monument style signs, and further review of the affordable housing package. Commissioner Hunt seconded the motion.

Commissioner Malis referred to the community benefits memo provided by the applicant and questioned how the applicant determined the value for the dedication of land for the service alley and the new street. Nan Terpak stated that they used the value of the density on those areas because the owner is losing the right to build on the land.

Commissioner Johnson noted that that density is being used elsewhere on the site. If the applicant did not have to build the street and alley, the site would generate the same amount of density but it could be distributed differently across the site.

Commissioner Malis asked whether higher density uses were expected to the west of the site (the Wendy's property). Ms. Hunger replied that as outlined in the In-Between study, a nine to ten story building could be constructed on the site to the west, with a specific office use, and with a sculpted design and open space provided.

Commissioner Malis asked about the alignment of Troy Street and whether the offset was desirable. Ms. Hunger noted that the Odyssey project on the south side of Clarendon Boulevard closed the traffic island at Scott Street because there were concerns about cut-through traffic. Tara Lake responded that Troy Street north of Wilson Blvd. does not provide access to Lee Highway, so encouraging traffic to use Troy Street would not be productive. Moreover, the key purpose of the new street was to provide circulation between Wilson and Clarendon Boulevards and locations for loading and garage entrances that should not be located on either Wilson or Clarendon Boulevard. Commissioner Malis expressed concern about pedestrian movements with the offset. Tara Lake responded that marked cross walks will help pedestrians crossing the street.

Commissioner Savela stated that she did not think a sufficient community benefit was being offered. She proposed an amendment to the motion to recommend that in addition to the elements in the site plan, the applicant provide an affordable housing package with a minimum of 10 affordable units and 16 bedrooms. Commissioner Hubbard seconded the motion.

Commissioner Chávez asked how Commissioner Savela arrived at the number of units and bedrooms. Commissioner Savela explained that she started with a general goal of five percent of the units, and then modified the numbers to permit fewer units with more bedrooms that could accommodate families. She noted the applicant's proposal for affordable units were almost all single bedroom units.

Commissioner Fallon asked whether the Housing Commission discussed or recommended what they would like to see in the proposed plan. Melissa Bondi stated that while it was impossible for her to represent what all members of the Housing Commission would like to see, the existing affordable housing guidelines and targets should be the standard, and that is more than what was proposed.

Commissioner Malis stated that while she supports additional affordable housing in this project, this amendment would not be sufficient for her to support the project at this time.

Commissioner Saks said that 15 units might be a more appropriate number than 10.

Commissioner Foster expressed concern that if the Housing Commission and staff can't successfully quantify the appropriate affordable housing package, then it is unlikely that the Planning Commission could do so.

Commissioner Savela withdrew her proposed amendment to the motion. Commissioner Hubbard agreed.

Commissioner Hunt proposed a substitute motion to recommend deferral of the General Land Use Plan amendment, rezoning, and site plan to allow issues such as the community benefit, specifically, affordable housing, to be resolved. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Saks.

Commissioner Chávez also requested clarification of the definition of a story and what a story is on the proposed site plan. Additionally, she noted that given the previous recommendation on NSTA, the Planning Commission could be signaling that we are generally supportive of rezoning and re-GLUPing on this block.

Commissioner Johnson stated that regardless of how you measure stories, the issue for her is that there are too many stories and too much density on the site. The applicant has proposed to build the full 115 units per acre allowed under "C-O-2.5". If those units were 950 to 970 sq. feet each, the resulting density would be around 2.5 FAR. However, these are much larger units, so the resulting density is closer to 3.4 FAR. That pushes the boundaries in the In-Between Study too much. There are tradeoffs here, involving unit size, number of units, height and density, that have yet to be made. She would also prefer realigning the community benefits to put more into an affordable housing package rather than, for instance, \$225,000 for public art.

Commissioner Savela also noted the significant number of issues that need further review. She also requested that the site plan come back before the Site Plan Review Committee before returning to the Planning Commission. Commissioner Savela offered an amendment to the substitute motion to specify that the item be deferred until the January 2006 Planning Commission and County Board meetings. The proposed amendment was not accepted unanimously.

Commissioner Foster said that many of the issues had been addressed at SPRC. Commissioner Dobson stated that a four-month deferral would not be justified.

Commissioner Weihe encouraged more consideration of commercial use and LEED certification.

The Commission voted 1-10 not to adopt the amendment to the substitute motion. Commissioner Chávez supported the motion. Commissioners Dobson, Fallon, Foster, Hubbard, Hunt, Johnson, Malis, Saks, Savela, and Weihe opposed the motion.

Chairman Foster stated that the project could be brought back as soon as it was ready.

The Planning Commission voted 9-2 to approve the substitute motion to recommend deferring the General Land Use Plan amendment, Rezoning and Site Plan. Commissioners Chávez, Fallon, Hubbard, Hunt, Johnson, Malis, Saks, Savela and Weihe supported the motion. Commissioners Dobson and Foster opposed the motion.

The substitute motion became the main motion. The Planning Commission voted 8-2-1 to support the motion. Commissioners Chávez, Hubbard, Hunt, Johnson, Malis, Saks, Savela and Weihe supported the motion. Commissioners Dobson and Foster opposed the motion. Commissioner Fallon abstained from voting.

Respectfully Submitted
Arlington County Planning Commission,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas H. Miller" followed by a horizontal line.

Thomas H. Miller
Planning Commission Coordinator