



DOCKET ITEM # 4
Text Amendment #2012-0001

Issue: Consideration of the initiation of a text amendment and a text amendment to amend the CR/Commercial regional zone (Landmark Mall) to add a public school use.	Planning Commission Hearing:	March 8, 2012
	City Council Hearing:	March 17, 2012
Staff: Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning		

This text amendment will allow a public school use in Landmark Mall which is zoned CR/Commercial regional zone

I. Background

In 1992, the master plan and zoning for the entire city was updated and included, for the first time, a zone uniquely designed to apply only to regional commercial shopping centers. Applied to Landmark Mall, the City's then only regional mall, it contained a specialized list of uses typical of what was anticipated at Landmark Mall. The zone does not include a public school use, although it was amended at one time to include a private commercial school.

Under the new Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Small Area Plan, a completely new mixed use development is anticipated on the land now occupied by Landmark Mall. The zoning will change, and is anticipated to be CDD when the site is redeveloped. Applications by the new Landmark Mall owners have yet to be filed. Groundbreaking is at least two years away. In the interim, the mall contains significant underutilized building space.

II. Proposed Text Change

The proposed change to the Zoning Ordinance adds a new use to the list of permitted uses in the CR/Commercial regional zone. Specifically, a new section 4-702 (E.3) will be added, as follows:

(E.3) public school;

The change will allow public school use within Landmark Mall. See attached text.

III. Alexandria City Public Schools: Flexible and Extended Learning Opportunities Program

ACPS' current plan for Landmark is to house its Flexible and Extended Learning Opportunities Program, which is an addition to its T.C.Williams curriculum. Modeled on successful similar programs in many other jurisdictions, it is designed to provide flexible, nontraditional classrooms to better meet the needs of students who otherwise are experiencing difficulty in the traditional high school setting. With a goal of decreasing high school dropout rates, reducing discipline, and providing alternatives to students, the program will allow flexibility in program and curriculum to those for whom the 3,000 student population, large building, and traditional learning environment has proven to be difficult.

ACPS hopes to occupy a small, approximately 3,500 square foot, space within the mall near a rear entrance and the parking structure. The Landmark classroom will serve up to 100 students a day with modified classroom schedules staggered throughout the day from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Students will travel to and from the Landmark satellite by their

own vehicles or by subsidized public transportation (DASH and Metro bus). The facility will be operated and managed by ACPS and the students will be T.C. Williams students. Three or four teachers plus support staff, including special education teachers and student counselors, will be present and coursework will be primarily on line curriculum materials certified and approved by the Virginia Department of Education. Instead of being within the T.C. Williams building, the satellite facilities will be located outside of it and scattered in locations elsewhere in the City. Although ACPS hopes to locate such classrooms in Old Town and Arlandria, as well as in the West End, it plans to begin the program with a facility within the Landmark Mall building.

IV. Analysis and Recommendation

Staff supports the proposed text amendment. The academic program is part of ACPS's mission and designed to serve a student population in need. As a zoning matter, the impacts from a public school use within Landmark Mall for the next few years will be minimal, if there are any at all. There is a large amount of unused building space within the mall building, as well as ample parking for students and teachers. The location is a distance from any external adjacent uses.

Public schools in Alexandria are typically associated with residential zones, reflecting a historical neighborhood development pattern. The public school use is now permitted in all of the residential zones (except RD, RT and RS) and in the traditional commercial zones, but not in the office zones, and not in the CR, KR, MVO, I, UT or NR zones. Planning staff is working with ACPS to find additional locations suitable to its mission elsewhere in the City.

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission initiate a text amendment and recommend approval of a text amendment to add public school as a permitted zoning use in the CR/Commercial regional zone.

Attachment: 1. Proposed Zoning Text Changes
2. ACPS description of its Flexible and Extended Learning Opportunities.

Staff: Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

ATTACHMENT 1

PROPOSED ZONING TEXT CHANGES

CR/Commercial Regional Zone

4-702 - Permitted uses.

The following uses are permitted in the CR zone:

- (A) Amusement enterprise;
- (A.1) Day care center;
- (B) Health and athletic club;
- (C) Light auto repair or drive through facility located in a freestanding building not part of an integrated and connected complex of structures;
- (D) Motor vehicle parking or storage;
- (E) Personal service establishment;
- (E.1) Pets supplies, grooming and training business with no overnight accommodation;
- (E.2) Private school, commercial;
- (E.3) Public school;**
- (F) Restaurant;
- (G) Retail shopping establishment;
- (H) Utilities, as permitted by section 7-1200
- (I) Accessory uses, as permitted by section 7-100

FLEXIBLE AND EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITES

Overview

Alexandria City is one of the most diverse learning communities in the country with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) supporting students from 128 countries speaking more than 80 different languages. The student population is ethnically diverse with 34% African American/Black; 30% Hispanic/Latino; 28% White; 5% Asian; and 3% Other. And, 56% of its students are economically disadvantaged, as measured by eligibility for free and reduced meals. Academically, ACPS has seen a number of gains including a significant rise in students taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses from 26% to 35% over the last three years, while qualifying scores on those test increase by 60% to 860.

ACPS works to meet the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of its students. With some of the finest schools in the state, ACPS, like other school divisions, continues to implement research-proven strategies in an effort to meet the needs of every student, to decrease dropout rates, and to increase students graduating with a high school diploma prepared for college, career and civic responsibilities. Based on a recent survey of ACPS counselors, students who have dropped out or have contemplated dropping out are often challenged by the traditional school environment including: (1) students who are distracted by the size of the school campus and/or large student body; (2) students who find daily school schedules inflexible or too challenging to meet life constraints (i.e., need to work, sibling care, etc.); (3) students who lag academically or are older than their peers; (4) teen parents who would continue their education if learning opportunities (instructional times) were more flexible to allow for child care; and (5) students who are bored with the routine of school and need ways to accelerate and differentiate learning.

Learning Update

The proposal for Flexible and Extended Learning Opportunities would expand the suite of educational opportunities for ACPS high school students. The purpose of the proposal is to create flexible, non-traditional 21st Century learning environments in ACPS that support, extend and develop a more complete *continuum of services* to better meet the needs of students from recovery to acceleration and that:

- inspire and reengage students not motivated, challenged, or find it difficult to achieve in a large traditional high school,
- eliminate gaps in achievement between White/Asian and Black/Hispanic subgroups in ACPS to support a focus on academic excellence for all learners,
- decrease the high school dropout rates for Hispanic, Black, and English Language Learner students in ACPS,
- reduce discipline and improve the systems designed to modify behavior, and
- transition and integrate students in the Adult Learning Program ages 15-22 who are interested in achieving a high school diploma to continue their education through TCW.

Satellite Campuses will provide an academic program that leads to a Standard or Advanced Studies diploma in preparation for post-secondary education or career development. The satellite campuses will provide flexible hours of operation and locations to accommodate non-traditional student schedules. The hours of operation will vary by site and could range Monday-Friday from 8am – 8pm. Locations are currently being investigated in three areas: West Side, Old Town and Arlandria.

Satellite campus students will access a curriculum which provides a course selection approved by the Virginia Department of Education and supported by ACPS' Office of Curriculum & Instruction. Courses will be blended in nature, combining 21st century online learning that is student paced with facilitated

instruction as well as direct instruction opportunities. Students taking courses at ACPS Satellite Campuses will remain T.C. Williams High School students and will as be able to participate in CTE learning options, after-school sports and extracurricular activities on T.C. Williams' campus. Mentors, support staff, project based and experiential learning opportunities will also be integrated to allow the students to gain academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

Satellite teacher/facilitators providing direct and facilitated instruction will be endorsed in specific content areas, Special Education, and/or English Language Learner Education. K12 endorsed teachers skilled in supporting a blended learning environment will be at each location. A support services team including a social worker, counselors, and a psychologist will be available to provide needed wrap-around services.

Measures of Success

Satellite Campuses will quantify success through the following measures: (1) students who successfully complete credit recovery courses; (2) increase in the percentage of students who are at-risk for dropping out of school that obtain a Standard or Advanced Studies diploma; (3) decrease in the dropout rate for Black, Hispanic, and English Language Learners; (4) increase in the number of Standard and Advanced diploma issued to students aged 19-22 years in the city of Alexandria; and (5) increase in graduation rates and reduction in dropout rates for ACPS.