

Docket Item #19-A & 19-B
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2003-0008 (#19-A)
REZONING #2003-0004(#19-B)
West Glebe Road Townhomes

Planning Commission Meeting
October 7, 2003

ISSUE:

MPA#2003-0008 Consideration of a request for an amendment to the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan chapter of the City's Master Plan to change the land use designation of the subject property from Utility/Transportation to Residential Medium.

REZ#2003-0004 Consideration of a request to rezone the property from the UT/Utility and transportation zone to the RB/Residential townhouse zone, with proffers.

APPLICANT: WPCE, LLC
represented by M. Catherine Puskar

LOCATION: 905 West Glebe Road (a parcel of land bounded by West Glebe Road on the north, Martha Custis Drive on the west and multi-family and single-family residential on the south and east)

MPA #2003-0008
REZ #2003-0004
905 West Glebe Road

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed master plan amendment from Utility/Transportation to Residential Medium, subject to the attached resolution..

Staff recommends **approval** of the proposed rezoning from UT/Utilities and transportation to RB/Residential townhouse, subject to the following proffer:

The applicant proffers to the approved development plan, the architectural elevations and the special use permit conditions attached thereto.

A. Background

The applicant, WPCE, LLC, is requesting approval to change the land use designation and zoning of a portion of the long, narrow strip of land on the south side of West Glebe Road, long used by Dominion Virginia Power as its parking lot, in order to build townhouses. Specifically, the applicant seeks to replace the UT/Utility/Transportation land use designation in the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan with an RM/Residential Medium designation, and to rezone the site from UT/Utilities and transportation to RB/Residential townhouse zoning. The proposed development involves a subdivision of the site into two parcels. The portion of the site proposed to be developed with townhouses contains 1.7 acres on the eastern section of the parking lot site; the remaining .88 acre portion of the site will remain in Dominion Virginia Power ownership and continue to be used for parking.

In conjunction with the rezoning and Master Plan amendment requests, the applicant has also submitted a development special use permit, with site plan and subdivision, to construct a 24 unit townhouse cluster development that is discussed in more detail in the accompanying development special use permit staff report (DSUP#2003-0013).



Aerial photograph showing the site and surrounding uses

The site is surrounded by the following townhouse, multifamily, commercial and utility zoning:

- Directly to the north of a portion of the site is the large Dominion Virginia Power office building and storage site, which is zoned UT/Utility and transportation.
- Immediately to north of the remainder of the site are the Glebe Park and Kingsport Apartment complexes, in the RA zoning.
- North and east of the site is the large area of Upper Potomac West north of West Glebe Road and developed with townhouse and apartment buildings. Most of that area is zoned RA/Residential multifamily, with some land designated as RB/Residential townhouse.

Prior to 1992, the parking lot, along with the large VEPCO parcel on the north of Glebe Road, was shown as residential in the City's 1974 Master Plan, but was zoned I-1, allowing a variety of industrial uses, but also allowing large office buildings. The 1992 Master Plan designated the property as Utility/Transportation, recognizing the existing use of the site, and recommended that the zoning be changed to a zone consistent with the use by the utility. In addition, the 1992 plan lowered the height limits at this property from 77 feet to 50 feet. The 1992 plan changes were consistent with the stated policy to change industrial sites adjacent to residential development to bring about more appropriate zoning.

The applicant proposes to change the land use designation for part of the parking lot site to residential medium, which is the same land use designation shown in the plan for the land areas nearby which are developed with townhouse and apartment buildings.

C. Zoning

The UT/Utilities and transportation zone was developed to apply to a series of utility and transportation sites and existing facilities within the city, including Metro stations, railroad sites, and pumping stations. In addition, it permits utility offices and permits accessory uses to the main utility function. At the Glebe Road location, the Dominion Virginia Power offices fall within the scope of the UT zoning, and were appropriately zoned. The UT zoning, which was also applied to the Dominion Virginia Power parking lots on the south side of West Glebe Road, allowed them to remain. Under the UT zone, relatively large buildings can be built. There are no yard requirements; the floor area ratio permitted is .25, but can be increased with a special use permit up to .5. Building heights are limited to 35 feet, except that a UT building may be as much as 50 feet with a special use permit.

Under the existing UT zoning, the subject property could be used for other utility or transportation facilities, such as an electrical substation or switching station, or for railroad uses or a bus station. With a special use permit, the site could conceivably be approved for a helistop, utility service yard, and for equipment outdoor storage yards. If the entire 2.4 acre site were developed for a utility office building, then, with a special use permit, the UT zone allows a 50,000 square foot building to theoretically be built. A building half that size could be built without a special use permit. Like other nonresidential zones in the City, the UT zone requires no open space.

The applicant proposes to change the zoning to RB/Residential townhouse, which is the same zone applied to the multifamily buildings directly behind the site on Tennessee Avenue. The RB zone is also applied to the townhouse developments further east on West Glebe Road. Under the RB zone, townhouses at 22 units per acre are permitted. The applicant's proffer limits the density to the 13.8 units per acre achieved in the proposed development plan. The RB zone permits a height of up to 45 feet; with the proffered development plan, the proposed height for this site is 39 feet.

D. Staff Analysis:

Land use

Residential uses at the proposed location represent an excellent buffer and transitional use for the large single family neighborhood to the south. The City's Master Plan designates the use of the subject property as U/T Utilities and Transportation, reflecting its ownership and long use by the electric utility. The site, however, is surrounded by a variety of diverse land uses. In addition to the single family uses of North Ridge to the south, there are commercial and utility uses to the north and west, apartments to the northeast and southwest, and townhouses to the immediate east. The proposed change, from utility to residential, is not only compatible with the surrounding uses, it is an improvement overall because it protects the homes to the south from the potential intrusion of an incompatible use on this site.

The introduction of townhouse uses at the subject property is entirely reasonable and appropriate given the townhouse development immediately to the east (Beverly Crest townhouses) and the other residential uses surrounding the property on three sides. In addition, the townhouse form is a moderately dense residential structure, providing transition between the bulk and density of the multifamily building structures to the north and east, and the single family homes to the immediate south. The townhouses also help form a buffer between the commercial and multifamily uses to the west and east on Glebe Road and the low density residential neighborhood to the south.

Zoning/Proffer

Like the land uses, the zoning in the immediate neighborhood also reflects a variety of different uses. The subject property and the Dominion Virginia Power offices across the street are zoned U/T Utilities and transportation. As with the land use, there is commercial zoning to the west, RA zoning for the apartment buildings to the east, RB for the apartment buildings immediately behind the site on Tennessee Avenue, and R-8 for the single family areas in Beverly Hills to the south. Rezoning the subject property to RB/Residential Townhouse is a logical extension of the RB zoning immediately behind the site, and consistent with the townhouse use directly to the west.

The applicant has proffered that the rezoning will be limited by the actual development approved in the DSUP case being heard with the rezoning and has agreed to a series of design features in the siting and the architecture of the development which work to ameliorate the impact the development would have on adjacent uses. For example, the applicant has agreed to redesign the site to maximize open space by consolidating it. There will be a public sidewalk with street trees at the front perimeter of the development. A fence and landscaped buffer running along the rear of the site will separate the townhouses and the rear drive aisle from the residences to the south. In terms of traffic impacts, the density of the project is low, a total of 24 units, and access to the site is from only two points on West Glebe Road. Vehicular access to the townhouses is from rear garages within each structure. The

townhomes will be primarily brick, and the rear of the units will be similar to the front facades. Finally, the proposed development includes the elimination of the very substantial overhead power lines along this section of West Glebe Road, reducing the utilitarian appearance of the area.

Rezoning this parcel does establish the possibility that the balance of the Dominion Virginia Power land on the south side of W. Glebe Road will be the subject of a similar request in the future. The balance of the parcel, designated Parcel A in this application, consists of 0.88 acres and is expected to be used by Dominion Virginia Power for parking for the foreseeable future. However, if RB zoning were eventually to be approved for Parcel A approximately 10 to 12 additional townhouses could be developed.

E. Conclusion:

This land use case provides an opportunity for the City to add residential uses at a location where it supports the surrounding neighborhood, and supports the policies of the master plan. The use, density and height of the proposed development scheme are significantly more desirable than the current land use and zoning, thereby protecting adjacent uses from possible incompatible development. The changes provides in general for an appropriate transition between the more intense development to the north and the single family neighborhood to the south. And the design of the site and the townhouses reflects a consensus among the neighborhood, the applicant and staff, bringing significant public benefit to the immediate neighborhood and the larger community. In such a case, it is reasonable and appropriate that the requested changes be made.

Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the rezoning and master plan amendment.

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Jeffery Farner, Chief, Development;
Robert McLeod, Urban Planner.

RESOLUTION NO. MPA 2003-0008

WHEREAS, under the Provisions of Section 9.05 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission may adopt amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Alexandria and submit to the City Council such revisions in said plans as changing conditions may make necessary; and

WHEREAS, an application for amendment to the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan chapter of the 1992 Master Plan was filed with the Department of Planning and Zoning on August 8, 2003, for changes in the land use designations to the parcels at 905 West Glebe Road (A parcel of land bounded by West Glebe Road on the north, Martha Custis Drive on the west and multi-family and single-family residential on the south and east..)

WHEREAS, the Department of Planning and Zoning has analyzed the proposed revision and presented its recommendations to the Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on October 7, 2003 with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendment is necessary and desirable to guide and accomplish the coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan section of the City; and
2. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the 1992 Master Plan and with the specific goals and objectives set forth in the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan chapter of the 1992 Master Plan; and
3. The proposed amendment shows the Planning Commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan; and
4. Based on the foregoing findings and all other facts and circumstances of which the Planning Commission may properly take notice in making and adopting a master plan for the City of Alexandria, adoption of the amendment to the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan chapter of the 1992 Master Plan will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents of the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Alexandria that:

1. The following amendment is hereby adopted in its entirety as an amendment to the North Ridge/Rosemont Small Area Plan chapter of the 1992 Master Plan of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in accordance with Section 9.05 of the Charter of the City of Alexandria, Virginia:

Change the designation of parcels at 905 West Glebe Road
(a parcel of land bounded by West Glebe Road on the north, Martha
Custis Drive on the west and multi-family and single-family residential
on the south and east) from Utility/Transportation to Residential
Medium.

2. This resolution shall be signed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission and attested by its secretary, and a true copy of this resolution forwarded and certified to the City Council.

ADOPTED the **7th day of October, 2003.**

Eric Wagner, Chairman
Alexandria Planning
Commission

ATTEST:

Eileen P. Fogarty, Secretary