

Docket Item #11-A and 11-B
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2003-0004 (11-A)
REZONING #2002-0005 (11-B)
QUAKER RIDGE

Planning Commission Meeting
November 6, 2003

ISSUE:

MPA#2003-0004 Consideration of a request for an amendment to the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill small area plan chapter of the Master Plan to change the land use designation of the subject property from Residential Low to Residential Medium and the recommended height limit from 35' to 45'.

REZ#2002-0005 Consideration of a request to rezone the subject property from R-8/Residential to RB/Townhouse with proffers.

APPLICANT: Carrhomes, LLC
by J. Howard Middleton, Jr., attorney

LOCATION: 3517-3551 Duke Street

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, OCTOBER 7, 2003 (MPA2003-0004): On a motion by Mr. Leibach, seconded by Mr. Dunn, the Planning Commission voted to **defer** this item. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Commission requested staff and the applicant to provide additional analysis on the implications regarding the proposed rezoning and Master Plan amendment.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, OCTOBER 7, 2003 (REZ2002-0005): On a motion by Mr. Leibach, seconded by Mr. Dunn, the Planning Commission voted to **defer** this item. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Commission requested staff and the applicant to provide additional analysis on the implications regarding the proposed rezoning and Master Plan amendment.

SUMMARY

The applicant requests a change in the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill small area plan from a general residential low land use category to a residential medium category. The request also requires a change in the recommended heights in the small area plan from 35 feet to 45 feet, and rezoning from single-family (R-8) to townhouse residential zoning (RB). The land use and zoning changes that resulted in the development of Colonial Heights, Quaker Village, ARHA public housing townhomes and adjoining developments have altered the land use and development pattern in this section of Duke Street to the extent that the subject property is almost entirely surrounded either by townhouse uses or by commercial and multi-family zones that permit townhouse uses. Townhouse zoning is appropriate given the surrounding townhouse and multi-family zoning.

The applicant's proposed rezoning includes a proffer that limits development of the site to what is approved in the development special use permit case. Staff has worked with the applicant extensively on the density, design, landscape buffer, and open space in the townhouse proposal, and believes the development, with the conditions outlined in DSUP #2002-00048, including the removal of units, which will essentially be the zoning of the site, is supportable.

The community has expressed concerns about a number of issues, including the proposed use, the density, and the traffic and parking impacts that result, and the concern that the rezoning/land use change will set a precedent for rezoning other single-family zones in the neighborhood. Staff addresses each of these important concerns in this report. However, staff recommends approval of the rezoning and master plan change, because allowing a townhouse development between two other townhouse developments is a rational infill development and is an appropriate land use.

It is important to protect our existing single-family neighborhoods from encroaching commercial, multi-family or townhouse uses. In this case, however, the rezonings and land use changes that began in the 1980s and continued in the 1990s have already changed the character of this portion of Duke Street, and allowing the zoning change at this location will not create precedent for the large single-family areas to the west and the north.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** of the master plan amendment, pursuant to the attached resolution.

Staff recommends **approval** of the rezoning request, pursuant to the attached proffer:

That the property subject to this rezoning application shall be developed in accordance with the Development Special Use Permit with Site Plan approved concurrently with this application for rezoning.

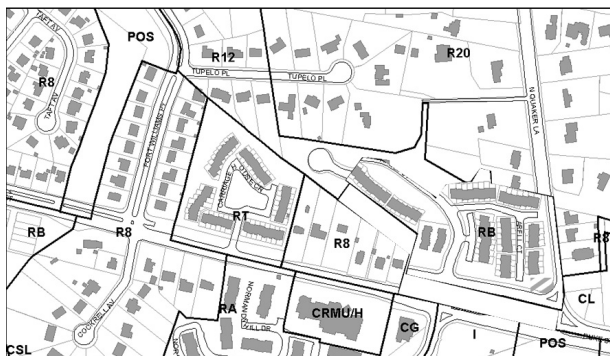
A. Background

The applicant, Carr Homes, is requesting approval to change the zoning for the 2.49 -acre site at 3517-3551 Duke Street from R-8/Residential and R-B/Townhouse, with a zoning proffer limiting the rezoning to the current development site plan. The applicant is also requesting approval of amendments to the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill small area plan chapter of the Master Plan regarding the height limit and the land use designation of the property. The applicant requests the height limitation be increased from 35 feet to 45 feet, and seeks to change the existing land use designation from residential low to residential medium.

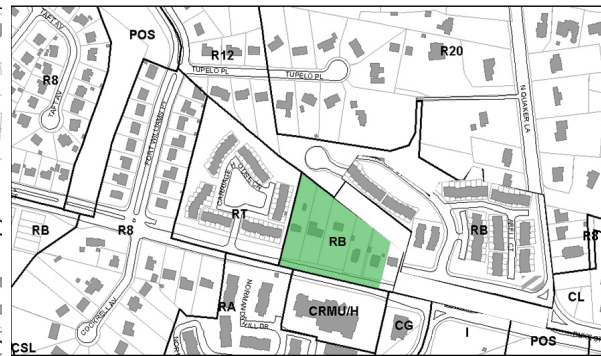
There are seven lots zoned R-8/Single-family located between the Colonial Heights townhouse development and the ARHA public townhouse development at the corner of Duke Street and Arell Court, on the north side of Duke Street west of Quaker Lane.



The applicant has assembled a total of six parcels. One existing parcel, located immediately adjacent to the subject property to the east, and also zoned R-8 and developed with a single-family residence, is not part of the applicant's assemblage.



Existing Zoning



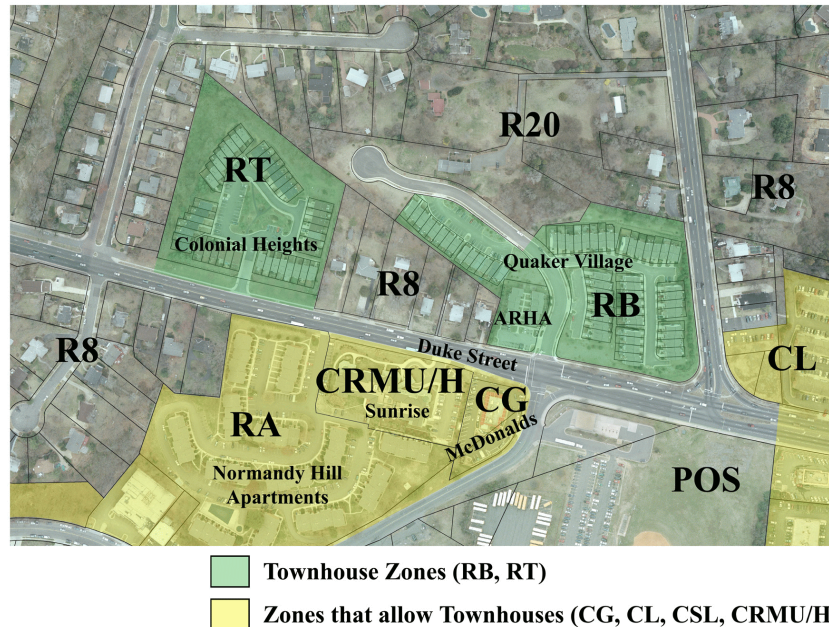
Proposed Zoning

In conjunction with the rezoning and Master Plan amendment requests, the applicant has also submitted a development special use permit, with site plan, to construct a 28-unit townhouse cluster development that is discussed in more detail in the accompanying development special use permit staff report (DSUP# 2002-0048).

The site is surrounded by the following townhouse, multi-family and commercial zoning:

- The 55-unit Quaker Village townhouse community, north and east of the site, zoned RB/Townhouse.
- A 10-unit ARHA public housing townhouse development, to the east of the subject property at the corner of Duke Street and Arell Court, zoned RB/Townhouse.
- The Sunrise Assisted Living facility, south of the site, zoned CRMU/H-Commercial Residential Mixed Use-High. On the east side of the Sunrise facility is a McDonald's restaurant, zoned CG/Commercial General, and on the west of the Sunrise facility is the Normandy Hill Apartments, zoned RA/Multifamily.
- Immediately adjacent to the site to the west is the Colonial Heights townhouse community, zoned RT/Townhouse.

Townhouse uses are permitted uses in both the CRMU-H and CG zones, and the RA/Multifamily zone.



B. Zoning History

In this section of Duke Street, over the past 20 years, there has been a series of zoning changes and redevelopment of formerly single-family residentially zoned and developed property with townhouse uses. In addition, recent zoning changes after the adoption of the Master Plan in 1992 have further altered the former zoning and land use pattern from single-family to townhouses and commercial uses.

Quaker Village, the 55-unit cluster townhouse development to the north and east of the subject property, was constructed pursuant to special use permit approved in 1993 (SUP#2181-B). Prior to that, in 1988, part of the site was rezoned from R-8 and R-20 to RB/Townhouse, and a portion of the site zoned R-20 was rezoned to R-12. Proffers were attached to the rezoning approval, which restricted the new development to single-family and townhouse development, set the maximum density at 14.5 du/ac, and designated Duke Street as the access point.

Quaker Village



Colonial Heights, another cluster townhouse development, abuts the subject property to the west. In 1980, the property was rezoned from R-8 to RT, with a proffer limiting the number of units to 44 townhouses. In 1984, the special use permit was approved to allow the construction of 39 townhouses in a cluster development (SUP #1699).



Colonial Heights

Located on the eastern portion of the subject site is the 10-unit ARHA public housing townhouse development, located on property which was rezoned from R-8 to RB/Townhouse in 1988. Concurrently, a special use permit approved the construction of the 10 unit cluster development (SUP #2102).

Since the adoption of the Master Plan in 1992, several rezonings have occurred on adjoining sites on Duke Street. In 1995, the Sunrise Assisted Living Facility site was rezoned from CL/Commercial Low to CRMU-H/Commercial Residential, with proffers restricting the allowable density to 40 units per acre, a height limitation of 35 feet without a special use permit, and a prohibition on any modification of the 40 % required open space. In addition, in 1994 the property at 3750 Duke Street, west of the subject property, was rezoned from R-8 to RB, with proffers including a limitation on the development consistent with the townhouse development plan provided by the applicant, the provision of a tot lot or a contribution to provide it off-site, and a limitation on the types of allowable modifications.

Adjoining Commercial Uses On Duke Street



The land use and zoning changes that resulted in the development of Colonial Heights, Quaker Village, ARHA public housing townhomes, and adjoining developments have significantly altered the land use and development pattern in this section of Duke Street, to the extent that the subject property is almost entirely surrounded either by townhouse uses or by commercial and multi-family zones that permit townhouse uses.

C. Master Plan

In 1992, the City adopted a new Master Plan, the primary guide for the future development of the City. Since its adoption, the plan has been updated and periodically amended to more clearly reflect the intended use for a particular area. The plan may be amended either as part of a long-term planning process for a designated area or as an individual request for a specific change.

In 1992, as part of the Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill small area plan, the land use designation for the subject property was changed from residential medium to residential low, in order to reflect both the existing low density, single-family homes and the existing zoning of the subject property. The stated goal of the Plan is to “*preserve the primarily residential...area, to protect the residential neighborhoods from incompatible intensive development of adjacent commercial and industrial parcels...and to keep Duke Street as a major east/west connector through the City while protecting residential sections from non-local traffic.*”

The small area plan describes a 1983 planning study of the Duke Street corridor which recognized that the area “between Wheeler Avenue and Jordan Street was primarily residential and recommended that residential development and rehabilitation be encouraged in this area.” Notably, the study recommended support for the continuation of residential uses and encouraged the redevelopment and rehabilitation of them.

The small area plan also recognized that a number of rezonings occurred in the 1980s, which resulted in the redevelopment of lower-density, single-family zoned properties to medium-density, townhouse communities. It was noted in the small area plan, however, that the rezonings included conditions designed to improve the design and limit the density of the particular developments.

Residents have raised the point that existing single-family homes were zoned R-8, even though the lots were surrounded by the townhouse development, at the time of the preparation of the Master Plan in 1992. While it is true that the property was designated R-8, that designation was a reflection of the existing use and zone, rather than a clear intent for these properties to remain as single-family homes. In preparing the land use designations for the 1992 Master Plan, the site was left in the single-family zoning category because, as a general planning principle applied City-wide, residential land use categories were typically not changed. Zoning changes of residentially zoned parcels would be considered on a case by case basis, as they arose, after a full assessment of the appropriateness and consistency of any potential zoning change with the Master Plan and existing land use and development pattern.

D. Staff Analysis

Townhouse Use

The proposed townhouse development is an appropriate use, given the adjoining townhouse developments located on the western portion of the site (Colonial Heights), and northern and eastern portion of the site (ARHA and Quaker Village). In addition, multi-family uses (Normandy Hill Apartments) and commercial uses (McDonald’s and Sunrise Assisted Living) are on the southern portion of the site. The site is located in a block with a mix of commercial and residential uses at medium densities. The predominant use surrounding the site is townhomes, while the existing single-family homes represent the least prevalent land use adjoining the site.

Density

In addition to the concern regarding the proposed townhouse use and rezoning, nearby residents have also expressed concern regarding the proposed density that would be permitted within the RB zone. The proposed density, F.A.R, lot size, and number of units of the adjoining developments are depicted in the table below.

	Colonial Heights	Quaker Village	Quaker Ridge (proposed)
Zone	RT Cluster	RB Cluster	RB Cluster
Site Acreage	4.44 Acres	4.93 Acres	2.49 Acres
Max. Number of Allowable Units	44 units	79 Units	NA
Number of Units	44	55	28
Project Density	10.0 Units/Acre	11.2 Units/Acre	11.2 Units/Acre
Average FAR Per Lot	1.24	1.40	1.18
Site FAR	0.42	0.59	0.69
Average Lot Size	1,467 sf	1,655 sf	3,002 sf
Unit Size	20' x 32'	22' x 36'	24' x 40' and 24' x 42'
Approval Date	1984	1988	NA

The proposed density (11.2 du/ac) is similar to the adjoining townhouse developments, which range in density from 10.0 du/ac to 11.2 du/ac. As discussed in the accompanying development special use permit report, staff is recommending that the applicant eliminate three units to retain a mature tree and provide an additional buffer on the northern perimeter of the property. The elimination of the units would reduce the density of the development to 10.04 du/ac, making it less dense than the adjoining Quaker Village development, and similar to the density of Colonial Heights. The reduced density as recommended by staff will create an appropriate transition in density between the Colonial Heights and Quaker Village townhomes.

While the RB zone would permit up to 54 units, a proffer of the rezoning is contingent upon the approved development plan. A proffer of less density than the RB zone permits would effectively create a zone with less density than the adjoining RB zone, and slightly more density than the adjoining RT zone, which will serve as an appropriate transition in density between the two townhouse developments.

Height

The Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill Small Area Plan recommends that the height limit at the location of the subject property be 35 feet, which is the height limit in the plan for single-family development. However, the same plan allows a 45-foot height at the adjacent Quaker Village development immediately to the east, and a 45-foot height limit has long been permitted on the south side of Duke Street, where the Normandy Apartments are located. When the site immediately to the south was rezoned in 1995, the master plan was changed to allow heights of up to 45 feet with a special use permit. Therefore, the proposed height change to the small area plan is consistent with the other townhouse and multi-family properties in the immediate area.

Impacts on Adjoining Single-Family Zones

Several of the adjoining residents and civic groups have raised the concern that a rezoning of this property would create a precedent to change the zoning for other single-family residential properties located in the area.

However, the characteristics of the subject site are very different from those of other adjoining sites zoned single-family, in that the site is surrounded by townhouse uses and zoning that permits townhouse uses on the western, northern, and eastern portion of the site. In addition, commercial and multi-family uses are located immediately across the street to the south. The few other lots that adjoin the site to the north that are zoned R-12 and are developed with single-family homes that do not share the characteristics of the subject property.

Therefore, staff believes that amending the Master Plan and rezoning the site would not set a precedent for similar actions for any properties north of the site, nor require a rezoning of other single-family-zoned properties. The properties on the eastern and western portions of the site are already zoned for and developed with townhomes, with commercial and multi-family zoning and uses on the southern portion of the site.

Although it is the City's policy to discourage the consolidation of properties in established single-family neighborhoods in order to construct townhouse developments that would require spot zoning and be out of character with the neighborhood, the proposed rezoning is not such a case. The proposed townhouse use is comparable in density and use to the surrounding developments, and is consistent with goal of the Master Plan to "preserve and protect the character, scale and density of existing residential uses."

Traffic, Parking, and Landscape Buffers

Several of the adjoining residents have also expressed concerns related to the rezoning of the property, including increased traffic, parking problems and the loss of landscaped buffers. While these are legitimate issues that need to be addressed, it is appropriate to discuss them as part of the review the proposed site plan. For a discussion of the site plan and related issues, see DSUP #2002-0048.

E. Conclusion

The first test for a proposed rezoning is the assessment of whether the proposed land use is appropriate. In this context, the proposed zoning change from single-family homes to townhouses is appropriate, given the adjoining townhouse zoning, land use, and development pattern.

Staff recommends approval of the applicant's request to rezone the subject properties from R-8 to RB and the change in land use designation from residential low to residential medium. Staff also recommends approval of the increase in the height restriction in the Master Plan from 35 feet to 45 feet. The proposed increase is consistent with the 45 ft. height restriction at the Quaker Village and the ARHA properties. The density and scale of the proposed development are generally compatible with the existing density, character and scale of Colonial Heights and Quaker Village, the neighboring townhouse developments, a stated goal of the small area plan with regard to residential uses.

Staff recommends approval of the rezoning and Master Plan amendment for the following reasons.

- The townhouse use is compatible with the existing mix of townhouse, multi-family and commercial uses that surround the site.
- The proposed RB zoning is compatible with the zoning of the adjacent properties.
- The density, scale and height of the development permitted in RB-Townhouse zone is consistent with the intent of the Master Plan to "preserve and protect the character, scale and density of existing residential uses."
- The density and scale of the proposed development and RB zone, with a proffer of reduced density, are generally consistent with the adjoining townhouse developments.
- The density and scale of the development will be compatible with the adjoining townhomes and will provide an appropriate transition from Duke Street to the single-family homes that are located on the northern portion of the site (north and west of Quaker Lane).
- The use is appropriate given the adjacent roadway pattern, as the site is located adjacent to Duke Street, one of the arterial roadways within the City.

There are remaining site plan-related issues, such as open space, tree preservation, and landscape buffers, which are discussed in the accompanying development special use permit staff report.

MPA #2003-0004
REZ #2002-0005
QUAKER RIDGE

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the applicant's request to rezone the property from R-8/Single-family to RB/Townhouse, and a Master Plan amendment to change the land use designation from residential low to residential medium and to increase the height limit from 35 feet to 45 feet.

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Jeffery Farner, Development, Division Chief;
Kathleen Beeton, Urban Planner;
Lorrie Pearson, Urban Planner.

RESOLUTION NO. MPA 2003-0004

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 Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill Small Area Plan chapter of the 1992 Master Plan was filed with the Department of Planning and Zoning on November 15, 2002 for changes in the land use designations to the parcels at 3517-3551 Duke Street; and

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 Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill 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 Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill 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 Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill 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 Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill 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 Seminary Hill/Strawberry Hill 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 3517,3517 A, 3525, 3535, 3541, and 3551 Duke Street from Residential Low to Residential Medium and change the height from 35 feet to 45 feet.

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 6th day of November, 2003.

Eric Wagner, Chairman
Alexandria Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Eileen P. Fogarty, Secretary