

Docket Item #13 A-C
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2005-0003(A)
REZONING #2005-0004 (B)
TEXT AMENDMENT #2005-0004 (C)
HUNTING CREEK AREA PLAN

Planning Commission Meeting
September 8, 2005

- ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for (1) an amendment to the City of Alexandria Master Plan to replace the Supplement to the Old Town Small Area Plan with the Hunting Creek Area Plan; (2) amendments to the City of Alexandria zoning map to change the zoning of certain properties in the area of the Capital Beltway from Route 1 to Royal Street to UT, Utilities and Transportation, recognizing the widening of the Beltway, and rezoning of a small remnant area of OCM(50) south of the Capital Beltway to RC, High Density Apartment, (3) amendments to Section 3-906 related to bulk and open space regulations and the addition of Section 3-908 of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance to add design guidelines and standards for development for properties adjacent to South Washington Street (George Washington Memorial Parkway) south of the Capital Beltway.
- APPLICANT:** City of Alexandria, Department of Planning and Zoning.
- LOCATION:** Those properties south of the northern boundary of the Capital Beltway and east of U.S. Route 1 in the City of Alexandria.
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission, on its own motion, initiate and recommend approval of the following amendments:

1. Amendment to the Master Plan to replace the previously adopted Supplement to the Old Town Small Area Plan with the Hunting Creek Area Plan.
2. Amendment to the zoning maps to rezone those portions of parcels 83.01-01-06, 83.02-01-05 and 83.02-01-06 that are within the Capital Beltway right-of-way from RC, High Density Apartment to UT, Utilities and Transportation; to rezone all of parcel 83.02-01-02 and that portion of Parcel 83.02-01-03 that is within the Capital Beltway right-of-way from OCM (50), Office Commercial to UT, Utilities and Transportation; and to rezone that portion of Parcel 83.02-01-03 that is not within the Capital Beltway right-of-way from OCM (50), Office Commercial to RC, High Density Apartment.
3. Amendment to Section 3-906 of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance dealing with bulk and open space regulations in the RC, High Density Apartment, zone to refer to added section 3-908, and add Section 3-908 establishing design guidelines and standards for development of properties along South Washington Street south of the Capital Beltway in the RC zone.

BACKGROUND:

The Hunting Creek Area Plan considers the City's long-term policy for that area of the City south of the Capital Beltway and east of U. S. Route 1, as outlined on the aerial photo at left. This area includes the southern portion of Jones Point Park and the Hunting Towers, Hunting Terrace and Porto Vecchio residential developments along Washington Street (George Washington Memorial Parkway).



The construction of the new Woodrow Wilson Bridge and related Capital Beltway and Route 1 interchange modifications have added substantially to the Capital Beltway right-of-way and have resulted in changes to the terrain and the environmental characteristics of the area immediately south of the beltway.

In addition, the temporary ownership of the Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace properties by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has created a unique challenge and opportunity. VDOT's ownership has resulted in a much higher likelihood that the properties will be redeveloped or rehabilitated than if the properties had not been purchased for the bridge project. VDOT intends to sell the properties for their current appraised value in the near future. In order to profit from purchasing the properties, a new owner is likely to choose to redevelop or substantially rehabilitate one or both of the properties.

In order to provide community participation in development of a plan for the area, the City Manager appointed an advisory group representing both citywide and local area interests to advise the Planning Department on the principles that should direct the future development of the area. This committee included a representative from the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, a representative from the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review, residents of the planning area, representatives of civic associations in the Old Town and Southwest Quadrant areas of the City, and a representative of the Virginia Department of Transportation. This advisory group met in July through December of 2004 to advise the Planning Department on issues and challenges in the planning area, development of planning principles, and preparation of the draft plan.

Following the advisory group process, two community meetings were held to present the plan's concepts and receive community comments on the draft recommendations. These meetings were held May 5, 2005 at Lloyd House, and May 26, 2005 at Porto Vecchio. The preliminary draft Hunting Creek Area Plan was placed on the City's web site for public review in May, 2005.

In response to comments from the public, the Virginia Department of Transportation and review by other departments, further revisions were made to the draft.

HUNTING CREEK AREA PLAN

The key issues that arose during the Hunting Creek Area planning process were the following:

- ***Affordable Housing.*** The Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace developments provide 645 rental housing units. Much of this housing is affordable to households at or near the regional median income. Substantial modification or redevelopment of either project could make this housing less affordable or unaffordable to many who now live in these developments, potentially dislocating many current residents.
- ***Land use, density and intensity of new development.*** Because the sale of Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace by VDOT may result in a decision by a new owner to redevelop or substantially rehabilitate either or both of these properties, the specific potential development under the current zoning and development standards was of concern to many.
- ***Character of new development.*** The planning area is at the entrance to Old Town from the south and on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The character of new development needs to consider the historic and memorial character of the parkway, the entry point to the City from the natural open spaces to the south, and the relation to Old Town.
- ***Historic Resources.*** The properties along Washington Street south of the Capital Beltway are in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and adjacent to the George Washington Memorial Parkway National Register Historic District. Maintaining the historic and memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway as change and development takes place is important. The planning area was occupied by a number of prior uses over its history, and respecting and interpreting the area's history is a City goal.
- ***Trails.*** The Mount Vernon Trail routing on the City's Bicycle Transportation and Multi-Use Trail Master Plan is along the waterside of the Porto Vecchio and Hunting Towers properties. Public ownership of the Hunting Towers property and the temporary location of this trail along the waterside of Hunting Towers provide a unique opportunity to achieve the objectives of this plan on the Hunting Towers site.
- ***City Gateway.*** The Hunting Creek area is at one of the City's important gateways, where the George Washington Memorial Parkway enters the City from the south. Because this is an important tourist route to and from Mount Vernon, the gateway takes on additional significance.
- ***Open Space and Natural Environment.*** The Hunting Creek area is one of the places where the natural environment of the area is accessible and visible to the public. Sensitive wetlands and shoreline areas are the unique features of the area.

Planning Principles

The plan was organized around a number of planning principles, based on the Council's Strategic Plan, the City's Master Plan goals, and the unique characteristics of the planning area. These planning principles are to:

- ***Create and reinforce neighborhoods.*** Enhance the neighborhood character within the planning area by design that provides identity and encourages community activities. Tie the area to nearby areas of Alexandria visually and physically.
 - Strengthen pedestrian linkages to adjacent areas of Alexandria by maintaining the parkway character north of the Beltway through the planning area, improving pedestrian connections from adjacent developments to the street, and providing a high-quality pedestrian experience along Washington Street.
 - Encourage the development of areas and facilities for common use and shared activities in any redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing developments in the planning area.
- ***Retain established residential areas in residential use.***
 - Protect residences from impacts of inappropriate or intrusive nonresidential uses.
 - Discourage development of nonresidential uses in the planning area that do not primarily serve residents and waterfront, trail and park visitors.
- ***Retain and enhance the character of Alexandria's historic districts.***
 - Follow the Board of Architectural Review's guidelines for development on Washington Street south of Wilkes Street with substantial setbacks and spacing between buildings.
- ***Enhance and celebrate the historic character of the southern gateway to the City along George Washington Memorial Parkway.***
 - Restore the historic parkway character by creating a broad, tree-lined parkway appearance as the parkway rises to cross the Capital Beltway.
 - Create a strong entry point to the City through attractive landscaping and appropriate scale and character of adjacent development.
- ***Maintain the availability of affordable workforce housing,*** and take advantage of opportunities to assure the continued availability of affordable housing for all economic segments of the community.

- Work with potential purchasers to encourage the inclusion of affordable housing providers as partners in the redevelopment or rehabilitation of the Hunting Terrace or Hunting Towers projects.
- Consider the possibility of modifying development standards in a way appropriate to the site and the project for a project that includes a substantial number of affordable housing units on the Hunting Towers or Hunting Terrace sites.
- ***Enhance the City's waterfront by providing continuous public access along the entire length of the City's Potomac River waterfront.*** Provide opportunities for the public to learn about and to appreciate the historic significance and natural environment of waterfront and wetland areas.
 - Obtain an easement for the Mount Vernon Trail along the water side of the Hunting Towers property as part of the development of wetland mitigation areas on the site.
 - Interpret the history and environment of the Hunting Creek and Jones Point areas in future plans for public improvements or site development.
- ***Enable convenient access for residents to and from work and neighborhood activities by a choice of circulation modes.*** In particular, provide convenient, safe and pleasant routes for pedestrians and bicyclists to transit and to local destinations such as schools, local retail districts, parks and recreational areas.
 - Provide comfortable and convenient transit stops on both the east and west sides of Washington Street in the planning area.
 - Raise the grade of adjacent areas to the new grade of Washington Street to ease pedestrian and bicycle connections and relate adjacent buildings to the street.
- ***Protect and enhance the natural habitat value of the City's natural open spaces.*** Provide visual and physical access to natural open spaces where access is consistent with protection of natural resource values.

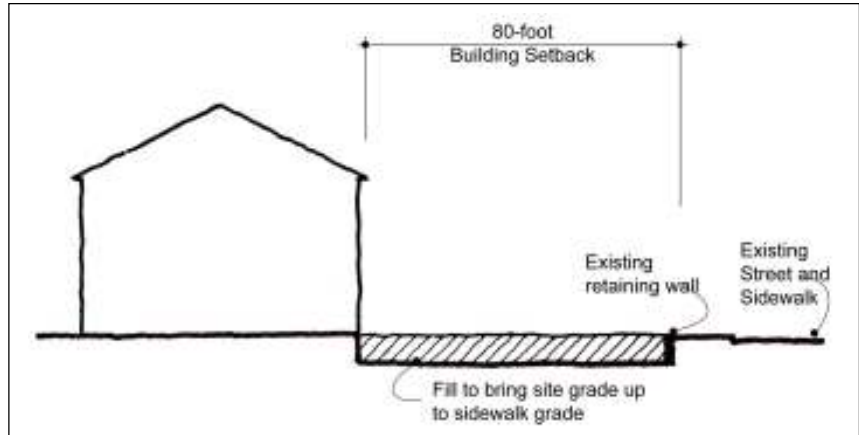
Plan Strategies

The plan has a number of components, organized around four main strategies:

1. Historic Preservation Strategy.

This strategy includes interpretation of the long history of the planning area in public areas, and adoption of design guidelines to implement the Board of Architectural Review's guidelines for Washington Street.

The historic and memorial character of George Washington Memorial Parkway is recognized by establishing Washington Street as an urban boulevard with a broad, parkway character through the planning area. This strategy will help to restore



the historic character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway through the planning area, and will create a strong visual entry to the City of Alexandria from the south. The guidelines envision a transition from the wide open spaces along the parkway to the south, along a broad, tree-lined boulevard through the planning area, to the large residential setbacks as you enter Old Town north of the beltway, to the tight urban pattern in the heart of Old Town. This component of the strategy is implemented through design guidelines for the Washington Street corridor that require an 80-foot front setback, redevelopment in character with Washington Street north of the Beltway, a double row of street trees, and bringing the areas between structures and Washington Street up to the grade of the street.

The plan also recommends that the City take opportunities to interpret the history of the area for residents and visitors, particularly in Jones Point Park and along the Mount Vernon Trail.

2. Urban Design and Streetscape Strategy.

This strategy is intended to more strongly tie the Hunting Creek area to the rest of Old Town and the City by creating a strong visual linkage and comfortable pedestrian connection across the Beltway into Old Town. Bringing adjacent areas up to the grade of the street will eliminate existing barriers to pedestrian movement between adjacent developments and Washington Street, and will help to create an impression that this area is related to the Parkway and areas to the north. The cross-section diagram above shows how the raising of the grade of the Parkway to cross the Capital Beltway has resulted in a barrier to pedestrian

This photo looking north along the east side of Washington Street shows the up to 8-foot grade separation between the Hunting Towers site and Washington Street as the street rises to cross the Capital Beltway. Raising the adjacent grade if new development takes place will restore the historic parkway character, allow the buildings to relate to the street, and eliminate a substantial barrier to pedestrian circulation in the planning area.



movement and a separation of the roadway from the adjacent Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace developments on the north end of the sites. Raising the adjacent grade to the grade of the street will connect the properties to the street and thereby to Old Town to the north much more strongly.

The key actions in this strategy will take place at the time of redevelopment or major rehabilitation of the existing Hunting Terrace and Hunting Towers properties. The creation of a broad parkway with adjacent areas brought up to the grade of the roadway is most practicable with a new development that incorporates underground parking and develops a more pedestrian-oriented character for the sites.

3. Affordable Housing Strategy.

This strategy has two parts. The first is to seek to partner through the Alexandria Housing Development Corporation, or to encourage partnership by another affordable housing provider, in the redevelopment or rehabilitation of either Hunting Towers or Hunting Terrace following the sale of these properties to the previous owner or a new owner. With such a partnership in the development, the City may be able to encourage retention of substantial affordable housing opportunities in these developments.

The second part of this strategy is to encourage retention and development of affordable housing in the planning area through support for an appropriate amendment to the zoning

ordinance to provide for a Special Use Permit for variations from development standards for height, setbacks, parking, or other standards if appropriate to the site and justified by a project involving a substantial number of affordable housing units. No zoning amendment for this purpose is proposed now. Instead, the plan anticipates that for the right project, it may be appropriate to make such amendments in the future to preserve and expand the affordable housing opportunities that are now provided in the planning area.

4. **Open Space Strategy.**

This strategy includes the acquisition of a trail easement for the Mount Vernon Trail on the water side of the Hunting Towers property, the maintenance of physical and visual access to open space within the planning area, and restoration of habitat as opportunities arise in Resource Protection Areas and other areas as sites are redeveloped or rehabilitated in the future.

The Mount Vernon Trail has been routed along the water side of Hunting Towers during the construction of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge project. This photo shows the trail on the south part of the Hunting Towers site near Porto Vecchio.

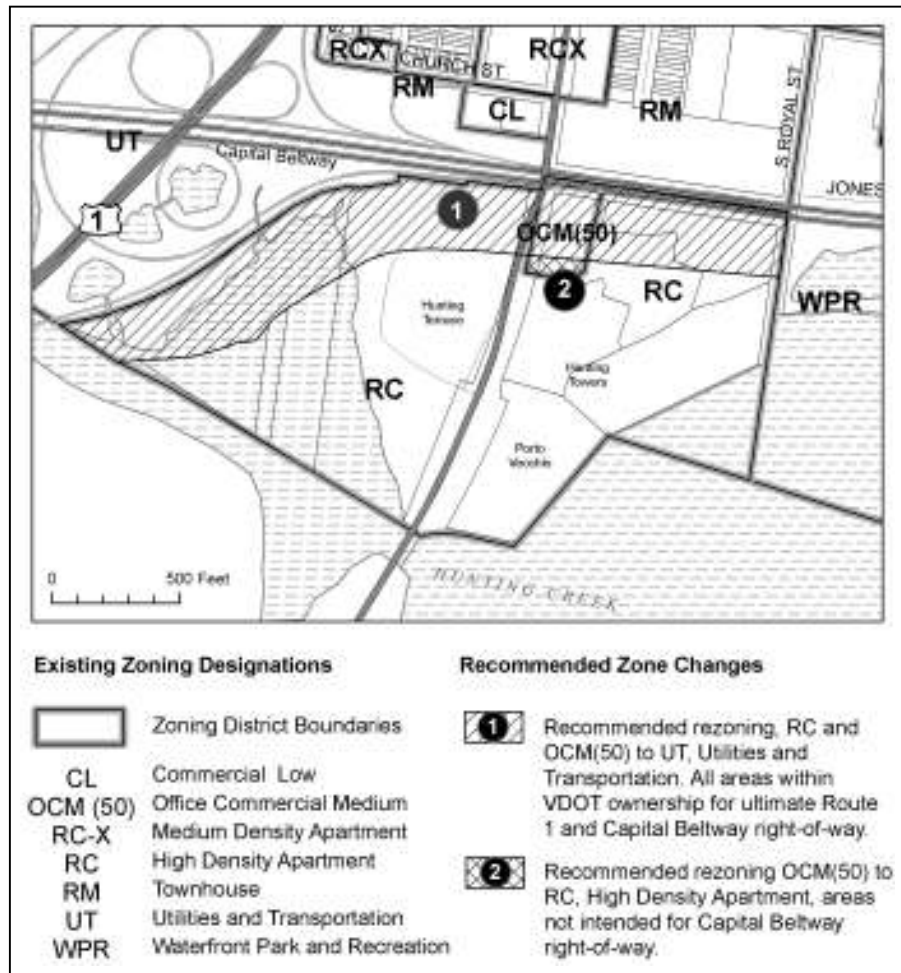


This wetland mitigation easement area on the south end of the Hunting Terrace site would remain visually and physically accessible from the south access roadway under the proposed design guidelines for development of the Hunting Terrace site.



In addition to these strategies, zone changes are recommended as a “housekeeping” measure to recognize the fact of the Beltway widening and to eliminate a remnant parcel of office commercial zoning. The areas within the Beltway right-of-way are recommended for zoning to UT, Utility and Transportation. The remnant area of office commercial zoning, the site of an office building that was demolished for Beltway construction, is recommended to be zoned RC, High Density Apartment, the same as the adjacent residential developments in the area.

The proposed changes to the zoning map are a housekeeping measure to change the zoning designation within the Beltway right-of-way and eliminate a small remnant parcel of office commercial zoning. No changes to the zoning designations of the existing residential developments or Jones Point Park are proposed.



Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Comments. The Hunting Towers and Hunting Terrace properties are owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation. They were acquired by VDOT and approximately one-third of the housing units and two office buildings were demolished in order to widen the Beltway for the Woodrow Wilson Bridge approaches and Route 1 interchange ramps. VDOT intends to sell these parcels in the near future.

VDOT submitted comments on the draft plan in the form of a redline-strikeout copy of the plan text. The comments included some additions and corrections to factual information in the plan and background information that have been incorporated where appropriate. VDOT recommended deletion of all reference to the Board of Architectural Review standards and guidelines that now apply in the planning area, and deletion of all design guidelines and standards included in the draft plan that would apply to development within the planning area.

Justification for Including Design Guidelines in Hunting Creek Plan. The City's Washington Street Design Guidelines applicable to the Old and Historic District provide the principles used in developing the design guidelines for the planning area. The guidelines were established to protect the historic and memorial character of the George Washington Parkway as it passes through the City. The Washington Street Guidelines for this area of Washington Street include the following:

Scale and character. This sector of Washington Street is largely residential in nature with considerable setbacks from the roadway. Projects are specifically encouraged to retain the open feeling of this area. . . .

Spacing Between Buildings. . . . For example, in this sector it is appropriate to have a considerable separation between buildings.



The Gunston Hall Apartments in the 900 block of South Washington Street illustrate the setbacks and building spacing referred to in the Washington Street Guidelines of the Board of Architectural Review for areas south of Wilkes Street.

The multi-family developments just north of the Capital Beltway typically have a 45- to 50-foot setback from Washington Street, and have large open courtyards and other features that provide considerable open space along the street in this area.

The design guidelines in the Hunting Creek plan require an 80-foot setback for development along Washington Street. There are a number of justifications for the guidelines and for the 80-foot setback at this location, compared to the 45- to 50-foot setback typical of the largest apartment developments just north of the Beltway on Washington Street:

- The unusually large size and depth of the sites along the roadway provides design flexibility for a developer. The 80-foot setback on a parcel 400 to 500 feet deep such as the Hunting Terrace parcel represents a smaller percentage of the site than a 50-foot setback on an Old Town block such as the Gunston Hall block with a depth of 240 feet.
- The landscaped portions of the setback area contribute important usable open space with high public benefit to the 40% open space required within the developments by the standards of the RC zone.
- The importance of the south gateway to the City justifies a strong statement of the character of the parkway as it enters the City.
- The wide setback provides a logical transition between the extensive open areas of Belle Haven to the south and the 45- to 50-foot setbacks typical of the larger apartment developments just north of the Beltway along Washington Street.
- The use of frontage areas for bus stops and for frontage roads to provide for buses to turn around means that more setback than in those areas just north of the beltway is required to achieve the same green space and parkway effect. The additional setback accommodates a 24-foot roadway with bus stop and sidewalk while retaining at least a 24-foot landscaped area along the side of Washington Street for a tree-lined boulevard. It provides a substantial setback for potentially 50-foot tall buildings from the frontage road and bus stop.
- The raising of the area between buildings and the street to the grade of Washington Street will eliminate a substantial barrier to pedestrian movement between the north portions of the sites and other areas of Old Town. The proposed parkway design will provide a strong visual and physical connection of the planning area to Old Town, linking the

Urban Deck across the beltway and the gateway landscaping between the Hunting Creek bridge and Alfred Street.

For these reasons, the staff considers the inclusion of the design guidelines and the substantial setback along Washington Street to be an important parts of the plan that should be adopted.

LAND USE AND ZONING ACTIONS

In order to incorporate the Hunting Creek Area Plan within the City's Master Plan and to implement the zoning recommendations of the Plan, the following actions are necessary:

1. Amendment to the Master Plan to remove the Supplement to the Old Town Small Area Plan and replace it with the Hunting Creek Area Plan.

2. Amendment to the zoning maps to make the zoning map consistent with the widening of the Capital Beltway and rezone a remnant parcel of office commercial zoning to RC, High Density Apartment. The zoning maps currently show RC, High Density Apartment zoning in the area of the Beltway widening previously occupied by the north tower of Hunting Towers, the three north buildings of Hunting Terrace, and OCM (50), Office Commercial zoning in the area formerly occupied by two office buildings. There is a small remnant area of OCM (50) zoning that is south of the Capital Beltway right-of-way that has been developed as surface parking for Hunting Towers.

Rezoning of this area to lower density or to provide for other uses was considered as an option in the planning process. However, the current height limit and Washington Street Guidelines and standards provide for substantial control on the character of potential development along Washington Street to keep it compatible with the character of Washington Street. The Capital Beltway provides a substantial buffer between the RC-zoned area south of the Beltway and the RC(X)-zoned area north of the Beltway occupied by the Gunston Hall Apartments and other multi-family developments along Washington Street. The RC zoning maintains the best opportunities for affordable housing development if a partnership with an affordable housing developer can be found if the properties are redeveloped or substantially rehabilitated.

3. Text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to provide for design guidelines and standards for development on Washington Street south of the Capital Beltway. Amendment of Section 3-906 pertaining to the bulk and open space regulations in the RC Zone and addition of Section 3-908 to the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance establishing design guidelines and development standards for properties abutting the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

The proposed text amendment provides for specific implementation of the Board of Architectural Review's guidelines and standards for Washington Street in the area south of the Beltway. The specification of an 80-foot setback provides for a broad parkway appearance and provides the potential for an attractive, tree-lined street with a setback scaled to provide for 50-foot buildings at the setback line while still maintaining the character of George Washington Parkway.

The requirement to raise the adjacent areas between buildings and Washington Street to the grade of the sidewalk provides a further definition of the broad parkway while substantially improving the relation of buildings to the street and the pedestrian connectivity of the area to Washington Street and Old Town to the north.

The guideline for establishment of the development area north of the south access roadway on the Hunting Terrace site provides for the maintenance of existing views and access to the open space areas of Hunting Creek to the south and west of Washington Street in this area, and ensures that this area will be accessible to all residents of the project and the public in general as a visual and natural resource rather than reserved as rear yards for residences along the south side of the project.

CONCLUSION

The Hunting Creek Area Plan presents a plan and strategy for the long-term future of the area south of the Beltway that implements principles of creating neighborhoods, preserving our historic character and natural environment, and providing housing opportunities for all income segments of the community.

The changes to the zoning map eliminate an area of inappropriate zoning within and adjacent to the Beltway right-of-way that has resulted from the widening of the Capital Beltway. The map changes will eliminate a small remnant area of office zoning, making its designation the same as that of the adjacent residential use.

The zoning text amendment implementing design standards and landscape guidelines anticipates potential redevelopment of the area but ensures that redevelopment will happen in a way that protects and enhances the character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway entrance into the City of Alexandria.

Staff recommends adoption of the plan amendment, changes to the zoning map and zoning text amendment to implement the Hunting Creek Area Plan.

MPA #2005-0003
REZ #2005-0004
TA #2005-0004
Hunting Creek Area Plan

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Kimberley Fogle, Chief, Neighborhood Planning;
P. Patrick Mann, Urban Planner.

RESOLUTION NO. MPA 2005-0003

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, the City initiated a community participation process to advise the City on the direction for the future development of the Hunting Creek area; and

WHEREAS, the community planning process culminated in the development of the Hunting Creek Area Plan that provides a comprehensive approach to guide and manage future development of the Hunting Creek area; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on September 8, 2005, with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendments are necessary and desirable to guide and accomplish the coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the Hunting Creek section of the City; and
2. The proposed amendments are generally consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the 1992 Master Plan; and
3. The proposed amendments show the Planning Commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the Hunting Creek 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 amendments to the Old Town 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;

RESOLUTION NO. **MPA 2005-2003**

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

1. The previously adopted Supplement to the Old Town Small Area Plan is hereby deleted from the Master Plan.
2. The Hunting Creek Area Plan is hereby adopted in its entirety as an amended Supplement to the Old Town Small Area Plan, a 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.
3. 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 8th day of September, 2005

Eric R. Wagner, Chairman
Alexandria Planning Commission

ATTEST:

Eileen P. Fogarty, Secretary

**REPORT ATTACHMENTS
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE OR VISIT THE WEBPAGE
BELOW**

http://alexandriava.gov/planningandzoning/hunting_creek.php