



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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CLERK

February 17, 2015

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

SUBJECT:

2. The Gables

- A. SP#432 Site Plan** for LG Rolfe Street LLC to permit construction of approximately 391,369 square feet of development in three buildings with approximately 395 residential units, 14 dormitory units, and up to 1,000 square feet of retail and modifications of zoning ordinance for parking ratio, density exclusions, bonus density for LEED Gold and Silver certification, bonus density for on-site affordable dwelling units, bonus density for the provision of a community facility and other modifications as necessary to achieve the proposed development plan; located at North Rolfe Street and 14th Street North (RPC# 17-024-001 through -011, and -013 through -028).
- B.** Consideration of consistency with the adopted comprehensive plan of a proposed public transitional living facility; located at North Rhodes Street and North Fairfax Drive (RPC 17-024-001 through -011, and -013 though -028). Applicable policies: Fort Myer Heights North Plan; GLUP "Medium Residential" and Fort Meyer Heights North Special District.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. The Planning Commission finds that the general location or approximate location, character and extent of the proposed public facility are substantially in accord with the adopted Arlington County Comprehensive Plan or part thereof.**
- 2. The Planning Commission recommends the County Board adopt the site plan ordinance to approve Site Plan #432 as outlined in the staff report dated January 28, 2015 with the following amendments:**

P.C. #23.A.

A) Direct staff to reconsider including a power door opener and a video camera at the entrance of the transitional living facility.

B) Recommend that the County Board consider whether there is a need for additional density on the transitional living facility, Building C.

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard these items at its February 9, 2015 public hearing. Elizabeth Kays Weigle, CPHD, gave a presentation on the proposed project highlighting conformance with the General Land Use Plan and consistency with the Fort Myer Heights North Special District, conformance with the Zoning Ordinance with proposed modifications related to bonus density, density exclusion, and parking, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to construction of the transitional living facility, and site plan benefits. She noted there were five Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meetings for this project prior to the Planning Commission hearing. In addition, the Park and Recreation Commissioner reviewed the project in July 2014, the Tenant Landlord Commission reviewed it in October 2014, the Transportation Commission reviewed it on February 5, 2015, and the Housing Commission will review it on February 12, 2015. Other staff present included Joanne Gabor, Department of Environmental Services (DES), Transportation, Meliha Aljabar, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Melissa Cohen, CPHD, Housing, and Nancie Conolly, DHS.

Evan Pritchard, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich, & Walsh, representing the client, LG Rolfe Street LLC, gave a short introduction to the project process and overview of the benefits of the project which include consolidating and redeveloping the entire block, providing a public park at the corner of 14th Street North and North Rhodes Street, upgrading the trail along Fairfax Drive, and providing 39 on-site affordable units. Mr. Pritchard introduced the project architect, Rohit Anand, KTG Y Group, Inc. who gave a presentation on the project design and architecture. Mr. Anand presented an overview of the context, site design and building architecture, multi-modal access and transportation, and community benefits for the proposed project.

Public Speakers

Jim Hurysz stated that this site plan with 409 units including 14 transitional units and 190 onsite bike parking has no solar power or EV charging stations, an inadequate pocket park and affordable housing units. The onsite demand for low wage services typically used by market rate residents (i.e. apartment and condo cleaning) would generate demand for at least 12 units at 40% of Area Median Income (AMI). The gift of 19,000 square feet of County land and 85,000 square feet of bonus density is grossly unequal to community benefits received from the developer. This is another instance where high-density urban infrastructure is imposed on a low-density neighborhood facilitated by non-resident County staff to benefit a corporation headquartered out of state or in Fairfax County. The proposed giveaways to this developer versus benefits to the County and its residents are so egregious that this site plan can be characterized as misuse of public property.

Planning Commission Committee Reports

Commissioner Gutshall reported the Transportation Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the project. They discussed whether it would be difficult to access the main entrance to both buildings which is located on the very steep grade of the Rolfe Street elevation. They also discussed possible conflicts with pedestrians going to the bus stop on Fairfax Drive, the bike path, and the plantings that have been selected to try to minimize obscuring the field of view but could still create potential hazards.

Commissioner Ciotti reported the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meetings were well attended. Discussions centered on views, setbacks, the depth of space from the build-to line to the sidewalk on Fairfax Drive, the drop-off area at the main entrance location, concern about the park and preservation of the trees, and placement of the loading and egress. Many of these issues were resolved with some remaining questions about whether the County could have gotten more affordable housing if it had developed the County parcels vs. the applicant. Ms. Weigle was able to outline that had the County developed the parcels it would have resulted in above ground parking and fewer committed affordable units. The County also would have passed up the opportunity to develop this whole block as called for in the Ft. Meyer Heights North plan, which was something that was desired but never really thought possible. Stan Carson sent an email stating that they have no issues with this development and are pleased with how it has come along.

Outstanding issues raised in SPRC included questions about the depth of the build-to line to the sidewalk on Fairfax Drive that has since been made deeper, and about setbacks although with additional pictures and views, most people seemed to be okay with the project as proposed.

Planning Commission Discussion

Density and Density bonuses/Land Use and Zoning

Commissioner Ciotti stated density and density bonuses were something that was brought up a few times, although it does comply with the GLUP and the Ft. Meyer Heights North Plan goals.

Commissioner Gutshall stated that the bonus density is related to the valuation of the County parcels in particular with respect to the bonus density for the provision of the transitional living facility. It is one thing to rebuild on land that is being provided or swapped by the County, and it is another to provide it out of applicant provided property. He asked staff how that calculation was made?

Ms. Weigle responded in terms of the community facility bonus, it is equal in size to the facility being provided. The County Board is permitted by the Zoning Ordinance to provide this bonus in exchange for a community facility. The Exchange Agreement itself includes a value of the County land, including the associated density the land generates. The main part of the Exchange Agreement is rebuilding the County facility. It is expected that the value to rebuild the facility will cost more than the value of the County land. If we were to count the community facility density, the value of the County's land would be less.

Commissioner Forinash asked if the value of the land includes the associated density. Ms. Weigle said the value does include the density, and the value will be provided in the report in the Exchange Agreement to the County Board.

Commissioner Forinash pointed out the County Board will weigh in on additional items that the Planning Commission will not hear, such as the Exchange Agreement for the transfer of County parcels, consent to including the county parcels in the site plan, and a Use Permit for the relocation of the living facility as well as a park naming action.

Commissioner Gutshall asked if the County Board will receive that report in Executive session. Ms. Weigle responded that the report will be on the public agenda.

Commissioner Cole asked where there is any precedent for density exclusions in any other site plan for maintenance, telecommunications equipment, and an electrical room. Ms. Weigle responded these are typical exclusions when located in the garage and not in occupiable space.

Commissioner Forinash asked if these facilities are located in the garage of the transitional facility or the main building. Ms. Weigle responded the main building.

Commissioner Cole noted that the two private buildings will be LEED Gold and asked how the County can justify only LEED Silver for the County building. Ms. Weigle responded that at first all of the buildings were LEED Silver but after redesign the applicant proposed bringing the residential buildings to LEED Gold. The County standard is LEED Silver and although getting LEED Gold would be positive, it is not something in terms of costing out this facility that we wanted to add to the requirement for LEED Gold. The County did not see the need to provide additional density for LEED Gold certification.

Commissioner Sockwell asked if there was consideration of increasing the density of the transitional living facility. Ms. Weigle responded the building is twice the size of the existing building and is a greatly improved space and design for this purpose. The program is designed and funded to serve a certain number of residents, so the County kept that program in place in the way it has been operating. Commissioner Sockwell asked if there was any thought about growth of the program. Ms. Weigle responded there is not a plan to expand the program at this time.

Commissioner Gutshall asked why the building is five stories and only 14 units. Ms. Weigle responded the footprint is 4,500 square feet and there are four units per level and the bottom floor is the garage, the second floor is common areas, kitchen and office for staff, and the top three stories are residential space.

Commissioner Cole asked why the County has decided not to increase the size of the program given that the County has increased population by 10 percent in the last four years alone and is projected to increase by another 20 percent over the next 25 years. Commissioner Cole asked if there is no expectation that there will be greater demand for services provided by this program.

Nancie Conolly, DHS, responded that the existing program has been in existence for 20 years and the utilization has changed over time and diminished. There are no funds available to address the increased operational costs of increasing the occupancy at this point in time.

Commissioner Cole stated his question has to do with the fact the building will be here for another 75-100 years. Will expanding the program later require the County to spend the full average cost for each additional patient or should the County take advantage of marginal cost construction and increase the size now. Assuming there are certain fixed costs that will be covered by this building regardless, there are variable costs related to the size of the building that is how most building cost accounting is done and would the county be better off investing now at the marginal cost rate and saving money over the long run and increasing the size or would it be better off building another facility of equal size on land which it doesn't currently own sometime in the future.

Ms. Weigle responded she could not address the cost of increasing the program. Ms. Weigle responded she can't answer that question directly but we can talk to DHS about that.

Commissioner Gutshall mentioned the size might have been chosen based on the building being stick construction.

Ms. Weigle responded there was discussion of including the transitional living facility within the site plan development and there were advantages to having it be a standalone facility, such as it gets built first and the land will be dedicated in fee to the County and becomes a permanent asset. There was a decision made in terms of keeping this a separate facility, which leads to a lower height.

Commissioner Forinash asked Commissioner Brown if the Community Facilities Study includes transitional living facilities and other human services facilities. We have a limited supply of this public facility and we may not be increasing that supply while we have increasing population. Commissioner Brown said that it was not included in the Community Facilities Study.

Commissioner Gutshall asked if the interior was designed by the applicant's architect or by County staff. Ms. Weigle responded the applicant is the architect but the design was generated in cooperation with DHS staff and DES Facilities staff who would be maintaining the facility. The Exchange Agreement will have specifications and construction drawings, which shows the County has looked at this building in great detail as part of that transfer and is confident the building will meet the program's needs.

Land Use & Zoning

Site Design & Characteristics

There was no discussion of Site Design and Characteristics.

Architecture

Commissioner Harner asked if the applicant has unit plans to show layouts of the units. Mr. Pritchard responded they do not have specific layouts. Commissioner Harner pointed out that Planning Commission is often not getting unit floor plans, which have relevance in terms of livability, and asked for an explanation of the junior one bedroom since it seems like a very deep

building. Mr. Pritchard responded they do not typically get into the interior views of the building during the site plan submission.

Commissioner Cole asked if the 4.1 submission includes floor plans. Ms. Weigle responded floor plans are included but not layouts of the units. Commissioner Harner responded it appears the building is very deep and we've generally been used to deep buildings for residential and this looks to be 80-85 feet deep with narrow units and very limited windows. Commissioner Forinash pointed out that on sheet A2.6 which is the Building C level 5 it's actually 91 feet wide at that floor.

Rohit Anand clarified that at the base, the building is approximately 85- 90 feet at the first three or four floors but then it steps back 15 feet to a more typical depth. For those first floors, there are some intertwined units that have been successful elsewhere. Most are one bedrooms, and several have the living and dining rooms in the front and then bedroom in the rear. The general unit mix is approximately 20 percent two-bedrooms, 67 percent one-bedrooms, and 13 percent studios.

Commissioner Harner asked if they could show the layout of the bedroom at the rear and asked if this is a new development trend of bedrooms without windows. Windowless bedrooms seem to be standard.

Mr. Anand responded that for about eight years, the building code requirement of having bedrooms in the multi-family dwellings on the exterior was removed. With multi-family buildings, a certain percentage of the population prefers bedrooms in the rear and are happy with the front of the unit having a lot of light. A majority of these units are concentrated on the first few floors where the building is deeper.

Commissioner Forinash suggested having typical unit layouts prepared for CB.

Transportation

Commissioner Forinash asked staff if the County has secured an enhanced Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to counterbalance the reduced amount of parking. Joanne Gabor, DES, responded that this project is a standard 1:1 parking ratio and the County generally only does an enhanced TDM program for less than 1:1 parking ratio. Commissioner Forinash asked if that 1:1 ratio policy has been adopted by the Board. Ms. Gabor responded it has not been adopted by the Board.

Commissioner Cole asked if electric vehicle (EV) charging stations were discussed with the applicant. Ms. Gabor responded there has been no discussion during SPRC or with the applicant on that topic. Commissioner Iacomini asked the applicant if they considered EV charging stations or if they have any in their other properties. Jorgen Punda, LG Rolfe Street LLC, responded that they typically include them in similar projects and it is popular. Commissioner Iacomini suggested they should mention how many they might have in time for the County Board, and Commissioner Cole suggested working with staff on a condition for them before the County Board hearing. Mr. Punda agreed to do this.

Commissioner Iacomini asked about the treatment of the garage door entrance on Fairfax Drive. Mr. Anand responded the garage doors leading to the transitional living facility building and to the B building are not visible from Fairfax Drive, so when a vehicle goes into that driveway, they make a right or a left turn. The garage door on the left is the loading area and that door would be treated as elsewhere in the County, with a high quality glazed translucent garage door and not painted metal.

Optional Retail space

Commissioner Ciotti stated that the idea of an optional retail space located near the park was an optional idea from the SPRC process, and asked the applicant the status of the retail space. Mr. Pritchard responded that one of the units has been identified as potential landing space for retail as shown on page A2.4 of the submission.

Commissioner Forinash asked for clarification on the two potential exits. Mr. Anand responded that the main public entrance would be through the door facing the public park that opens into a vestibule and also connects to an egress corridor for the building. There is an additional entrance from the mews which would not be open to the public.

Commissioner Siegel asked if the conversion would be direct and if the height of the ground floor space is adequate. Mr. Anand responded there is approximately 11 foot clear height which is more than the typical height for all of the ground floor. Commissioner Ciotti asked if both entrances are at-grade and the architect responded yes.

Commissioner Iacomini asked if the underlying zoning is changing and if a commercial retail space is permitted in an RA zone. Ms. Weigle responded the zoning is RA8-18 but is also within the Ft. Meyer Heights Special District which allows neighborhood retail and convenience uses. Commissioner Iacomini stated that having worked on the Ft. Meyer Heights North Plan, neighborhood serving corner stores and convenience retail is advantageous for the neighborhood and hopes the corner concept will continue to happen.

Community Benefits

Commissioner Harner asked if the site plan condition gives options for either on-site or contribution for public art, whether it was discussed at SPRC, and if there was a position from the Public Art Committee. John Hensley, Public Art Committee representative reported that a donation would be preferred but it would be acceptable to do on-site art.

Commissioner Cole stated that in previous site plans the Planning Commission has received more detail on community benefits, particularly the value and total aggregated amount for all benefits, asked why the Planning Commission did not receive that with this site plan and if that is a new standard. Ms. Weigle responded that Commissioner Cole was referring to Crystal City or Rosslyn projects where the community benefits are earned up to 10.0 FAR and there is usually a value associated with each of those. In this case the community benefits come from the bonus density requests and there is not a value placed on the bonus density.

Commissioner Cole asked if they are associated with the bonus density, how does staff know how much density is earned if staff does not know how much the benefit is worth. Ms. Weigle responded that for LEED certification, the County has a green building density program that establishes FAR that can be earned. Provided the applicant meets a level of LEED certification, they earn a certain amount of density. The affordable housing bonus density can be requested up to a maximum amount per the Zoning Ordinance. A portion of the bonus is dedicated as on-site units based on the value of the subsidy needed. In this case, 25 percent of the bonus or 8 on-site units will be provided. The third bonus is associated with transitional living facility and is the size of the transitional living facility.

Commissioner Cole asked if there is an in-building wireless community benefit. Ms. Weigle responded that the applicant is committing to in-building wireless. This is considered a typical community benefit and there is no value placed on it. The Board has encouraged developers to include in-building wireless but has not required it at this point. Commissioner Cole asked about the testing of the in-building wireless document included in the packet and if it is the first time it has been included in a packet. Ms. Weigle responded that it is the standard attachment that goes with the in-building wireless condition which has the standards that makes sure the system works once it is installed.

Commissioner Gutshall asked how the community might judge whether the County is being a good steward of limited land and limited resources. Ms. Weigle explained the Exchange Agreement will discuss the value of the parcels and details of the exchange. Commissioner Gutshall asked why Planning Commission does not review the Exchange Agreement. Ms. Weigle responded that it is not in the purview of the PC. Bob Duffy, Director, CPHD-Planning responded the Exchange Agreement involves a real estate transaction and the County Attorney's office. It is not directly a land use issue but a County asset involving assessments. If the PC would like a better description, the County Attorney can provide a better explanation. Mr. Duffy reassured the Planning Commission there has been extensive discussion with the applicant on the Exchange Agreement.

Commissioner Forinash asked if the Planning Commission would take action if this was an easement. Mr. Duffy responded the Planning Commission would hear an easement. In this case, the County Board acquired that piece of real estate at a certain value and any transfer or sale of that real estate is an action by the County Board first and foremost but the Planning Commission deserves a complete legal opinion based on statute or ordinance and we'll provide that. He reassured the Planning Commission there has been extensive negotiation between County staff and the applicant on this transaction and he is confident that the County has an outstanding arrangement that this site plan and special exception allows us to proceed with and the transaction agreement that the County Board will consider will lay all of that out completely. From staff's perspective we have done our job in terms of negotiating and ensuring we have the best plan on the table that responds to the County assets that are in play. Commissioner Gutshall responded he can accept Mr. Duffy's answer and he looks forward to a further explanation from the County Attorney.

Commissioner Ciotti stated that to the credit of the applicant, they have agreed offline to Type A accessible units and roll-in showers and also to power doors at the main entrances and many people will be very grateful. Commissioner Ciotti said she heard that putting a power door on the front door of the County building was declined by staff because the delay in the power closer is a security risk. Ms. Conolly responded that was true. Commissioner Ciotti said she finds that startling and asked if

there were people with disabilities at the table when this decision was made on behalf of people with disabilities. Ms. Conolly responded no. The entrance to the facility is unstaffed and in order for staff to be aware of people coming and going, individuals have to go up to the next floor. If the door is open, someone could slip in behind someone and there's no direct observation of it and it's worrisome for operation of the facility.

Commissioner Ciotti responded that she can understand the sense of needing more security but it is the first time she has heard of the delay being a security risk. Anyone could slip behind anyone at any time, but to deny the possibility of an accessible accommodation when no one with disabilities was at the table to advocate or express advocacy for them is distressing and it happens way too often. Hopefully the facility will have counselors with disabilities who are wheelchair users working there and there will be clients with disabilities, and for them as a class of a people to have to buzz and wait for someone to come down to open the door and let them out of the rain or the snow is very disturbing. There are other types of openers that close quicker such as bi-fold doors. I want to be on record expressing dismay that decisions for the disability community were made without any input from the disability community. In this day and age that should not happen anymore. On behalf of the disability community and as a Planning Commissioner, I will make a motion that this be reconsidered with a different kind of power door so that people with disabilities who will work and come for treatment will be able to enter with the same dignity as able-bodied people and will not have to buzz and wait in the rain and the snow and the cold for someone to come down from the upstairs to get them because we feel like dogs when that happens and we wait for our masters to let us in. I hope in the future when anybody here makes a decision that will impact the disability community they will have them at the table and not make decisions for them because it is considered paternalistic.

Commissioner Cole suggested that in addition to a different kind of power door opener, they could also consider alternative technology such as a video camera. There are lots of relatively cheap solutions to the problem.

Commissioner Cole said that Commissioner Ciotti indicated that in some offline discussions the applicant had agreed to provide a certain number of accessible units, and asked if the number of accessible units is consistent with ADA or in excess of the requirements.

Mr. Anand responded they are at the Fair Housing and ADA standards and they are providing the number of units required by code and no more. By Fair Housing standards all of the units are adaptable if not accessible. Commissioner Cole asked about if the roll-in showers are code-required. Mr. Anand responded they are exceeding the requirement for roll-in showers.

Commissioner Cole made the observation that he thinks it is a problem when things like this are handled off-line and it is a problem because in many respects the applicant is being asked to devote resources to something which should be a public discussion so that others may be able to weigh in on it. He does not disagree with Commissioner Ciotti's goals but it is how it is being achieved. These should be public discussions so that people who do or don't agree have the opportunity to express their views. He asked staff to communicate that to Mr. Duffy so that in the future those discussions become part of the SPRC process in the same way that any issue can be brought up in the SPRC process.

Planning Commission Motion

Commissioner Ciotti made a motion that the Planning Commission finds that the general location or approximate location, character and extent of the proposed public facility are substantially in accord with the adopted Arlington County Comprehensive Plan or part thereof. Commissioner Forinash seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission voted 8-0 to approve the motion with Commissioners Siegel, Ciotti, Iacomini, Forinash, Cole, Harner, Sockwell, Gutshall, and Brown in support.

Commissioner Ciotti made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend the County Board adopt the site plan ordinance to approve Site Plan #432 as outlined in the staff report dated January 28, 2015. Commissioner Forinash seconded the motion.

Commissioner Ciotti asked for unanimous consent to include consideration of an alternate power door without delayed opening and video camera for entrance of the transitional treatment facility. Commissioner Harner objected.

Commissioner Ciotti made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the County Board that they include consideration of a power door alternate without delayed opening as well as a video camera to the transitional living facility. Commissioner Gutshall seconded the motion.

Commissioner Harner asked for an explanation why the existing proposal does not meet code.

Commissioner Ciotti responded that it meets ADA without it, but it is possible to do better. Developers have been putting power doors on multi-family dwellings and office buildings and this should be treated equally. Commissioner Harner responded he was not clear on how this solves the waiting in the rain argument. Commissioner Ciotti responded that with a power door they fob the door and it opens. The alternative is someone has to hit a buzzer and wait for someone to answer and come down and open the door for them.

Commissioner Harner asked if a door is accessible, wouldn't it be possible to open a regular door that's unlocked and available for access in the same way as a power door swings open. Commissioner Ciotti responded there is an associated pull pressure on external doors and many people who are wheelchair users don't have the strength to open the door and we have to wait for someone to open them. There is not a standard for external door pull pressure. Commissioner Harner clarified that the argument is that a door that meets code is not something that is easily operable by someone with a disability. Commissioner Ciotti agreed.

Commissioner Brown said she thought the standard is usually there is a first door that can be opened and then there is a security door inside. Commissioner Ciotti responded it is a design option that is commonly used but not all the time and it is not code. It is an option for this building, although it is small with limited space.

Commissioner Iacomini wanted to clarify that the wording is for it to be reconsidered.
Commissioner Ciotti agreed.

Commissioner Gutshall stated support for the motion and that it is an issue worthy of raising to the Board. Security is a paramount concern, but he shared Commissioner Ciotti's concern about whether all of the tradeoffs were adequately vetted since it seems there is a better solution here and the applicant will build it if we decide what we want.

The Planning Commission voted to support the motion to amend the main motion 8-1 with Commissioners Siegel, Ciotti, Iacomini, Forinash, Cole, Gutshall, Sockwell and Brown in support, and Commissioner Harner opposed.

Commissioner Sockwell stated he intends to support the main motion and thinks it is an appropriate place for the density, but added that the transitional living building is obviously a site that could support more density. This is an opportunity for the County to add more units of whatever type it chooses and there are a number of programs that need those types of units. In this particular case, added density fits the surrounding context. Replacing the current five story with an additional five story building is a muted attempt on the part of the County. He also noted that in the site plan, SPRC members specifically asked staff to evaluate the option of achieving more affordable housing by building on the County's vacant parcels instead of partnering with the developer, and staff concluded that actually this Site Plan was the most cost effective way of proceeding. He still thinks there is a question that he would like to flag for the County Board. Consideration of programmatic needs is beyond scope of the Planning Commission but the Planning Commission does consider density and this is an opportunity for additional density.

Commissioner Sockwell asked for unanimous consent to amend the main motion to ask the staff to consider whether additional density is needed for Building C, the transitional living facility.
Commissioner Forinash objected.

Commissioner Sockwell made a motion that the Planning Commission amend the main motion to direct staff to consider the need for additional density on the site of Building C, the transitional living facility. Commissioner Cole seconded the motion.

Commissioner Cole stated we want to recommend to the Board that it consider additional density instead of directing staff. Commissioner Sockwell amended the motion to recommend to the Board instead of staff.

Commissioner Gutshall supported the intent of the motion but stated that the reality on this site is that five stories is a magic number in terms of stick built construction and moving to steel and concrete will result in having to be much bigger to make up for those costs. Raising it for the Board is an academic discussion because the answer is that it would be a complete site redesign and it is not going to happen. As a practical matter, there will not be any fundamental change on this site.

Commissioner Forinash pointed out that the entire ground floor is being used for parking and utilities so if there was a desire to put four more units in a five story building, the Planning Commission could recommend eliminating the parking.

Commissioner Brown stated that another practical matter is operation of the affordable housing. If we do not have a non-profit developer already working with the County, practically speaking there are not enough units to make it feasible.

Commissioner Cole said that his understanding is that the break-even point for going from stick to concrete built was eight floors. Mr. Anand responded the current building code does not allow more than five stories of wood construction and it is a complicated question because it involves parking ratios, numbers of units, etc. With such a narrow footprint it would be impractical to actually go higher because any more than this would involve steel and concrete and it would be a whole different equation in terms of the financial numbers.

Commissioner Forinash called the motion. Commissioner Sockwell repeated the motion that the Planning Commission recommends the County Board consider adding additional density on the side of Building C, the transitional living facility.

The Planning Commission voted to support the motion 8-1 with Commissioners Siegel, Ciotti, Iacomini, Forinash, Cole, Sockwell, Gutshall, and Harner in support, and Commissioner Brown opposed.

Commissioner Gutshall said that he attended the first SPRC for this project but was not able to make subsequent ones. It came a long way and he finds it to be an attractive project. The fact the community is behind it speaks volumes about what the applicant has achieved. Getting the rebuilt facility is a nice community benefit but it is interesting how there is a double-edged sword for all the good things there are still some things that leave question marks. A project like this highlights the issues we are facing as a community, such as transparency and ability for the community to ascertain how wise of stewards of our precious County resources we are. Commissioner Gutshall thanked Commissioner Harner for highlighting that this project includes bedrooms without windows, as allowed by the revised building codes, which is a sign of the changing times, changing demographics and values, and the thirst for third places, which is what Commissioner Gutshall hopes the onsite retail becomes. It dovetails with the affordable housing discussion because as we create these units with the ability to create more bedrooms in a given floorplate and to widen the floorplate yields more units and more square footage which should drive down the overall cost per unit of construction. He's curious whether or not that is true and who does that benefit accrue to, all of which factors into the affordable housing equation. In terms of the long term, there might be an immediate short term boost which may or may not accrue to the developer, but there is also the potential for a long term degradation if it turns out that in 10-15 years these units are undesirable because the next generation does not want to live in a bedroom with no windows.

Commissioner Harner agreed with Commissioner Gutshall and appreciates the handsome architecture and site planning with this project and it is a positive contribution to this site. With regard to Commissioner Gutshall's questions about the real estate transaction, he stated it is a legitimate question to ask about in the public interest when does that transparency and public discussion come into fray. It would be good for us to explore that and have a strong discussion about it. With regard to Commissioner Cole's comments about the accessibility discussion, I do think it is an important discussion that should be part of the site plan process and as much as Commissioner Ciotti might say there is no balance question here, he thinks on a lot of our issues we do look at

balance and I think that looking at what we as a community require that goes beyond the building code. In terms of sustainability and the building floor plan issue, it's ironic that trends in office market are to make buildings narrower with more access to light because it used to be what drove down your energy costs because you weren't lighting the building artificially as much. But with LED lights coming on line that equation has changed to some degree. He expressed concerns as a community about the kinds of buildings that are being built which is a sustainability issue.

We get a lot of LEED points on a lot of these projects because of their location, but when you look at the energy equation it merits discussion with staff as to the footprint of a building. Buildings that are deep and units that have fewer windows have less natural ventilation, rely more on artificial lighting and mechanical heating and cooling. He asked staff for typical unit plans in the site plan submission. The loft project on 10th Street which was loaded with interior bedrooms and he wonders about the long term sustainability of those without wholly remodeling those units. I really do appreciate this application and look forward to seeing it built.

Commissioner Forinash stated it was a good project coming in and substantially improved through the SPRC review process. Commissioner Forinash called the vote.

The Planning Commission voted to support the main motion as amended 9-0 with Commissioners Siegel, Ciotti, Iacomini, Forinash, Cole, Sockwell, Gutshall, Harner and Brown in support.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlington County Planning Commission

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Forinash", written in a cursive style.

Christopher J. Forinash
Planning Commission Chair