



# ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

## ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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CLERK

November 12, 2017

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

**SUBJECTS: 5.** A. Z-2597-17-1 REZONING from "C-O" Mixed Use District to "RA8-18" Multiple-Family Dwelling District; and related update to ACZO Map 13-1 (sign map) to indicate the zoning district and to remove Line A around the property boundary for the property known as 6711 Lee Highway (RPC# 11- 006-012).

B. SP# 3 SITE PLAN AMENDMENT for NVR Inc. to permit construction of 27 townhouse dwelling units, with modifications for reduced street, side, and rear yard setbacks, increased lot coverage, increased building height, and other modifications as necessary to achieve the proposed development plan; located at 6711 Lee Highway (RPC# 11-006-012).

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Planning Commission recommends the County Board:

1. Adopt the attached resolution to approve the subject request for rezoning from "C-O" Mixed Use District to "RA8-18" Multiple-Family Dwelling District; and to update Rezoning and SP #3 Site Plan Amendment - 2 - 6711 Lee Highway PLA-7687 ACZO Map 13-1 (sign map) to indicate the zoning district and to remove Line A around the property boundary for the property known as 6711 Lee Highway.
2. Adopt the attached ordinance to approve an amendment to Site Plan #3 to permit development of 27 townhouse dwelling units, with modifications of Zoning Ordinance requirements for reduced street, side, and rear yard setbacks, increased lot coverage, increased building height, and other modifications as necessary to achieve the proposed development plan.

### With the following amendment:

Include site plan condition language requiring bonding on two trees located in Stewart Park.

P.C. #45.A.B.

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard this item at their November 9, 2017 public hearing. Matthew Ladd, Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development (CPHD) – Planning gave a presentation on the background of the project and the County Manager’s draft recommendation as outlined in the Draft staff report dated November 1, 2017. Additional staff present included Jane S. Kim, Department of Environmental Services (DES) – Transportation, Aaron Shriber, CPHD-Planning, and Diane Probus, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR).

The applicant was represented by Matthew Roberts from Bean, Kinney & Korman. Mr. Roberts provided a presentation on the proposed rezoning and site plan.

### **Public Speakers**

There were three public speakers for this item.

Susie Schied, resident of 2325 N. Underwood Street, has been a resident since 2004 and first heard about the proposed development from ArlNow. She attended the third Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) meeting and voiced concerns about the process and sent an email to Planning Commission members and received no response. She is concerned about the loss of the Bank Building and community benefits have not been shared with the neighbors. She is concerned about the impact the proposed development will have on the Tuckahoe School. She believes that traffic impacts were not appropriately analyzed and not truly representative of the area. The Planning Commission Chair did acknowledge receipt of Ms. Schied’s email.

Carol Mayberry, resident of 2303 N. Van Buren Court spoke on behalf of the Fenwick Court Homeowners Association (HOA), the town house development located west of the Sun Trust Bank site. She expressed concerns about proposed lot coverage and the inconsistencies with surrounding town house development, including storm water drainage and permeability. She is concerned about the placement of the proposed townhouses so close to property lines and adjacent development will result in “dark tunnels”. Further, she is concerned about traffic impacts and delivery/service vehicles stopping on Lee Highway. She noted that traffic speeds along Lee Highway west of Underwood Street toward Washington Boulevard and I-66 and believes that proposed town house units facing Lee Highway will present safety issues.

Wells Harrell a resident of 6559 24<sup>th</sup> Street spoke in support of the proposed rezoning and townhouses. Mr. Harrell noted that he understood his neighbors’ concerns about traffic, density, parking, and the need for multi-family housing and believes that these are legitimate concerns. However, he wants to welcome new families to the neighborhood and believes that surrounding existing town house developments at Fenwick Court, Laurel Mews and Sycamore Court all faced the same issues when proposed.

### **Public Review Process**

Commissioner Weir reported Transportation Commission heard the item on November 2 and noted that the Transportation Commission voted 6-0 unanimously to support the proposed zoning change and town houses. The question was raised about impact on bike paths on Lee Highway and there is no impact. The Transportation Commission noted the applicant’s willingness to make changes to the project. The loss of parking on the SunTrust site was raised. The

Transportation Commission noted that this was not public parking and outside the realm of impacts from the proposed town houses.

Commissioner Shelby provided the Site Plan Review Committee report (copy of the report is attached) and expressed appreciation to staff and Commissioner Gearin as this was her initial chairing of an item before the Site Plan Review Committee. She noted that the SPRC process resulted in positive changes to the proposed town house development including an improved layout with units facing North Underwood Street, improved building architecture and materials, and tree preservation on the adjacent Stewart Park. The proposed town house development is consistent with the *East Falls Church Area Plan* and the applicant has been responsive throughout the review process. Outstanding issues include pedestrian safety and walkability in the neighborhood and in providing direct pedestrian access to the East Falls Church Metro Station, building architecture, and traffic/construction parking, impacts on Stewart Park.

### **Planning Commission Discussion**

Planning Commission Chair Gutshall suggested using Commissioner Shelby's SPRC report to guide discussion on Land Use Zoning, Transportation, and Construction Issues.

#### *Land Use & Zoning*

Commissioner Shelby asked about proposed townhouse setbacks along Stewart Park and how they compare with the adjacent Fenwick Court townhouses. Matt Ladd responded the setbacks proposed along property line with Fenwick Court is 12-14 feet and are consistent or greater than the setbacks provided in Fenwick Court townhouses (11 feet). Mr. Ladd provided setbacks for all townhouse sticks as shown on page 5 of the draft staff report.

Commissioner Siegel asked about lot coverage and the proposed modification from the required 56%. She asked how staff evaluates coverage ratios, what is the limit and when does it become too much. Matthew Ladd noted that he evaluated adjacent site plan modifications on a case-by-case basis and there is specific language in the zoning ordinance that allows townhouses to modify the setbacks. The proposed coverage ratio is consistent with East Falls Church Plan. During the review process, staff reviewed coverage ratios in adjacent townhouse projects. The requirement of visitor parking contributes to lot coverage. The applicant could reduce lot coverage by reducing the number of visitor parking spaces. However, residents of Fenwick Court noted during the review process that their visitor parking spaces are highly utilized and encouraged the applicant not to reduce visitor parking.

Commissioner Siegel asked if drainage issues were examined and Jane Kim, DES staff, noted that the proposed townhouses slightly decrease amount of impervious coverage on the site over the existing bank and surface parking lot. The applicant would be expected to treat all of the impervious coverage on the site.

Commissioner Schroll appreciate staff responses to examine other projects coverage ratios and to duplicate that level of effort on future projects as having this information early in the review process would be helpful.

Commissioner Gutshall asked about what could be built on the site with Low-Medium land use consistent with the *East Falls Church Area Plan*. Matt Ladd responded that the Plan would

support either townhouses or multi-family development. Commissioner Gutshall asked if a mews style development with a green space was considered and if there is any analysis of the change in lot coverage if the surface parking lot was eliminated. Matt Roberts confirmed that the lot coverage would be reduced. Commissioner Gutshall is concerned that the lot coverage ratio is driven by the drive aisles and believes that townhouses are not the most efficient housing form. He further asked about mews style townhouse project and whether that was considered. Matt Roberts noted that it was cost prohibitive.

Commissioner Schroll asked the applicant about the required parking driving the design including the height of the townhouses. Matt Roberts noted that the required parking of 2.2 spaces per townhouse unit contributes to the height. Pat Donahue representing NVR homes, noted that demand on townhouses is for two parking spaces. Customers prefer a two-car garage.

Commissioner Gutshall asked about market value of providing more open space. Matt Roberts noted that the site is adjacent to Stewart Park. The applicant worked with the Fire Department to reduce the width of the internal drive-ways to reduce lot coverage. Pat Donahue noted that there is a market for open space but in close proximity to a Metro station the land values are high.

Commissioner Weir asked if the fire drive access is part of a design manual. Jane Kim noted that the 26 feet is required width from fire equipment including outriggers to reach 4-story units.

#### *Transportation*

Commissioner Weir asked about Condition #41 and survey of residents and why staff removed the more detailed study and replaced it with a more general requirement. Jane Kim responded that standard language dealt with multi-family residential buildings for 27 units but that level of analysis is not required. This was the same condition that was used on the Ballston Oak town houses, the most recent town house project approval.

Commissioner Gutshall asked about deliveries and service vehicles accessing the site what is the response to community concerns. Matt Ladd looked at the *East Falls Church Area Plan* and best practices to have units face the street. Staff wanted the units along Lee Highway to face the street. Delivery vehicle traffic should be directed to the interior of the site. This was discussed at length at SPRC process. Jane Kim noted that there will not be signs on Lee Highway. Adjacent town house projects facing Lee Highway currently do not have a problem with delivery/loading from Lee Highway. Commissioner Gutshall noted that it was a reasonable concern from the community. It would be nice to know how this could be managed if it becomes an issue.

Commissioner Gearin asked about how the trees are being preserved in Stewart Park and how this will be continued in the future. Matt Ladd noted that the County's Urban Forester will ensure that root matting is used on the trees and that standard replacement language is included to ensure that it works. Jane Kim noted that the County's standards and specifications could include the Urban Forester. Commissioner Gutshall asked about bonding and Matt Ladd noted that bonds have been provided for on-site landscaping and trees but not off-site. Matt Roberts noted that these are above and beyond standard protection measures. Commissioner Siegel noted that the root matting keeps the soil from compacting.

### *Building Architecture & Design*

Commissioner Schroll asked about town house placement on the *East Falls Church Area Plan* regarding synthetic materials facing public street or public spaces, in this case Stewart Park. Matt Ladd has proposed the applicant has changed from vinyl to hardy-plank materials which is an improvement. The SPRC became comfortable with these materials, in addition to landscaping and the retaining walls. The facades will not be real visible from the park.

Commissioners Schroll and Lantelme complimented the applicant on their willingness and responsiveness to make changes through the review process. Commissioner Lantelme asked if more urban style town houses were considered. Commissioner Siegel also noted that more urban style townhouses are currently being proposed in Ballston (11<sup>th</sup> Street and N. Vermont) and comments from the Lee Highway Alliance. The applicant noted that much thought was put in the design of the project and what architecture works best on the site. A more modern twist on a contemporary town house is what they believe works best to fit into the context of the area.

### *Construction Issues*

Commissioner Schroll asked about the phasing of the project from the park towards Lee Highway and noted that pedestrian access during the construction is important given proximity to the East Falls Church Metro. He encouraged pedestrian access be maintained during construction.

### **Planning Commission Motion**

Commissioner Shelby made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend the County Board approve a rezoning of Z-2597-17 from C-O Mixed Use to RA8-18 Multiple-Family Dwelling District, and to update ZO Map 13-1 to indicate the zoning district, to remove the “Commercial, Mixed Use, and Industrial Zoning” designation, and to remove Line A around the property boundary known as 6711 Lee Highway, and to Approve Site Plan #3, to permit construction of 27 town house dwelling units with modifications for reduced street, side, and rear yard setbacks, increased lot coverage, increased building height, and other modifications as necessary to achieve the proposed development plan. The motion was seconded by Commission Gearin.

Commissioner Shelby made an amendment to the motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the County Board to look for ways to fund a pedestrian crosswalk across Lee Highway in close proximity to 6711 Lee Highway, though the Capital Improvement Process. Commissioner Weir seconded the amendment to the motion.

Commissioner Gearin supports the motion and noted the differences of neighborhoods and the width of streets, and crossing Lee Highway. She particularly noted how challenging this particular part of Arlington is for pedestrians, especially children getting to nearby schools, and for more proactive planning. Commissioner Gutshall asked about contribution toward the crossing. Jane Kim noted that the nexus between the proposed town house development and pedestrian access to the East Falls Church Metro is not present. There are bigger issues involved than just crossing Lee Highway such as how pedestrians cross Washington Boulevard mid-block between Lee Highway and Sycamore Street. She further noted numerous infrastructure

challenges beyond just providing a pedestrian crosswalk mid-block. Staff is very aware of the challenges in getting to the Metro from the subject site.

Commissioner Gearin noted the kind of guidance that the Planning Commission can bring forward for improving pedestrian access to Metro and noted that there is not a quick and easy solution through the CIP. Commissioner Gutshall noted that there is no quick and easy answer. A more thorough analysis is required. There are always more projects than funding. He is not prepared tonight to say that he understood this completely. The value is in that the staff has heard and is aware about the challenges of pedestrian access to Metro in this area. Commissioner Lantelme noted that he concurs with the chair and more systematic approach is needed to improve pedestrian access.

The proposed amendment to the motion failed by a 3-4 vote. Commissioners Shelby, Gearin and Weir voted in support of the amended motion. Commissioners Siegel, Gutshall, Schroll and Lantelme voted against the amended motion.

Commissioner Gutshall made an amendment to the motion to move that the Planning Commission recommend to County Board to include site plan condition language requiring bonding on two trees located in Stewart Park. The amended motion was seconded by Commissioner Siegel.

The amendment to the motion was approved by a 6-0-1 vote. Commissioners Gutshall, Siegel, Schroll, Lantelme, Gearin and Shelby voted in support. Commissioner Weir abstained.

Commissioner Siegel noted that the applicant has been responsive. She did however note that the Lee Highway Alliance preferred a mixed-use development on the site with a small grocer. That is the community's fault and that should have been included in the plan. There is more work to be done on Lee Highway. She supports motion but wanted to be on the record expressing some disappointment, although it is a lovely development.

Commissioner Gutshall noted that this is a fine plan. He believes that the County is moving rapidly in the opposite direction of what could have been done with this site. How else would this be specific with the *East Falls Church Area Plan*. It is incumbent on the County to find better solutions to development, to provide better tools within the Zoning Ordinance to find alternative housing solutions for the "missing middle".

The Planning Commission voted unanimously 7-0 to support the main motion, as amended. Commissioners Gutshall, Siegel, Gearin, Schroll, Lantelme, Shelby and Weir voted in support of the main motion as amended.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arlington County Planning Commission  
Erik Gutshall

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Bell', located in the upper center of the page.