
Committee Resolutions

PLANNING & ZONING

PZ-2009-07: RESOLUTION ON THE ALEXANDER COMPANY DRAFT MASTER PLAN FOR THE LAUREL HILL ADAPTIVE REUSE AREA

1. WHEREAS The closure of the Lorton prison complex and the transfer of the federal land to Fairfax County created opportunities to revitalize the South County area, which now includes the South County Secondary School, the Workhouse Arts Center, the Laurel Hill Elementary School, an approved site for a planned South County Middle School, the Laurel Hill Golf Course, and hundreds of acres for Laurel Hill Park, and

2. WHEREAS The transfer designated two adaptive reuse areas, one at the former Workhouse site, and one at the former Reformatory site, and

3. WHEREAS Adaptive reuse seeks to balance the competing demands of historic preservation, community needs and preferences, and economic viability for the property, and

4. WHEREAS In November 2004, the Citizens Task Force, with representatives from throughout Fairfax County, voted for a set of recommendations for mixed use development at the Reformatory site to include residential, commercial and retail uses, and

5. WHEREAS The Board of Supervisors at its December 10, 2004 and February 7, 2005 meetings unanimously approved motions to move forward with the Task Force recommendations and created a Laurel Hill Project Citizens Advisory & Oversight Committee ("PAC") to ensure faithful implementation, transparency, and citizen input, and

6. WHEREAS The County, with support of the PAC, secured the services of a developer (Alexander Company) to develop a master plan for the adaptive reuse site, and

7. WHEREAS The master plan concept proposed by Alexander calls for mixed use development of retail, office and residential development, including new residential construction and magnet/workforce housing, and

8. WHEREAS The latest version of the proposed master plan contains new details on the financing needed to make the plan viable, which includes a heavy reliance on increased numbers of townhomes, on federal and state historic preservation tax credits, on public low income housing tax credits, and on direct funding by Fairfax County, and

9. WHEREAS The latest version of the proposed master plan effectively changes the proposed magnet/workforce housing for modest income Fairfax County workers into publicly subsidized low income housing, and

10. WHEREAS The latest version of the proposed master plan does not include adequate consideration of preserving the few quality trees and fails to provide large undeveloped areas for tree replanting,

A) THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations (Council) opposes the proposed master plan for the former Lorton Reformatory site at this time for the following reasons:

1) The Council has serious questions about the financial viability and sustainability of the proposed master plan, specifically the reliance on public low income housing tax credits, unsubstantiated estimates of historic preservation tax credits, and uncertainty about the level of financial contribution that the County will be able to afford in the current fiscal environment,

2) The Council does not support the substitution of publicly subsidized, low income housing for the proposed magnet/workforce housing that was originally planned to benefit important components of the County's workforce, a proposal that was unanimously recommended by the Task Force, adopted by the County and supported by the Council, and

3) The Council is not satisfied with the proposed scope and mix of new housing units, which must be significantly changed in a manner that offers different types of housing, constrains potential school impacts, and adds more visual variety and style of appearance, as is normally proposed and consistent with other new developments in the South County area.

B) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in order to ensure success of this plan, the Council calls on the County to:

1) Conduct an independent financial and economic analysis of this and any future proposed master plan to ensure that the project is both viable in the near term and sustainable for the long term; and
2) Conduct a thorough review of all available contracting options, including competitive bidding, before reaching an agreement with a master developer for the project.

C) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County, Alexander Company and any other developer chosen to implement this or future adaptive reuse plans must continue to seek and make good faith efforts to incorporate additional citizen input throughout the remaining development process in order to further refine and improve the plan.

D) BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alexander Company and County staff give greater consideration to preserving and creating tree areas, and that a tree preservation commitment is included as a specific factor in the Master Plan for Laurel Hill.