

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 5, 2023

TO: CHAIR MACEK AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: KARL MORITZ, DIRECTOR; DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

SUBJECT: DSUP #2023-10009/301 North Fairfax Street

ISSUE:

1. Commissioner Brown issued a memo and an updated memo related to concerns with the proposed rezoning, and staff is providing a response.
2. Commissioners requested examples of projects where an SUP to increase the density up to 2.5 has been granted for a residential only project in CRMU zones.
3. Commissioner Lyle requested language regarding quarterly updates on construction during the construction process to be added as a condition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Proposed Rezoning Considerations

Per the 1992 Old Town Small Area Plan (OTSAP), 301 North Fairfax Street envisioned commercial land use at the property under CD zoning; CD zoning allows FAR of up to 1.25 for residential and up to 2.5 for commercial uses. In his memo to staff, Commissioner Brown noted that the applicant may utilize Section 7-700 to increase density by an additional 30%, which would allow approximately 9,400 additional square feet of development; of this, one-third would be required to be provided as committed affordable units (CAU). Under this methodology, Commissioner Brown found that the project would deliver fewer overall units but provide two committed affordable CAUs.

When staff reviews requests for rezoning during the concept phase, staff evaluates various zoning paths to achieve a desirable project that both maximize public benefits while resulting in a viable project. Staff finds that the proposed rezoning supports the 1992 Old Town Small Area Plan's intent for a mixed use neighborhood (this is further detailed in the staff report). A larger number of overall units at the site, made possible through rezoning, will support the City's commitment toward the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' Regional Housing Initiative (RHI), which calls for the expansion of production beyond projected levels to meet the demand for housing by the region's growing workforce. The RHI allocated 3,000 additional housing units, out of its overall regional goal, to the City over the 10-year period between 2020-2030.

Consistent with the 2020/2021 Housing Contribution Policy Update, the project must provide 10% of the increase in residential development secured through rezoning as CAUs; the project's Affordable Housing Plan proposes two units, including one one-bedroom plus den and one three-bedroom unit. Though this is the same number of units that would be required through the use of CD zoning and Section 7-700, the project's scale provides opportunity for larger unit types than otherwise may have been secured through an alternate scenario. Larger unit types, including den units and three-bedroom units are more suitable for families and support the City's Housing Master Plan (HMP) goal of facilitating a variety of housing options for households of all incomes. Additionally, the project's location in Old Town supports the HMP goal to provide affordable housing in transit-oriented, amenity-rich areas. Therefore, staff supports the rezoning for its consistency with the intent of the OTSAP, its ability to further the City's housing goals and for providing a design that is compatible with the neighborhood.

Additionally, reducing the FAR might not cause the building to appear materially different or less massive from the street. Specifically, the height would remain the same.

SUP Requests for Residential Projects in CRMU Zones

The provisions of Section 5-305(C), which allow an applicant to request an SUP to increase the FAR to 2.5 for either mixed use or all residential buildings was adopted to encourage residential development in the city. This provision requires a minimum amount of residential and a maximum amount of commercial for a mixed use SUP, but does not state a maximum FAR for residential, except for the overall cap at 2.5. The heading allows for the SUP to be granted for **either** mixed use **or** residential.

This provision has been applied consistently in at least five other recently approved projects in CRMU-H or CRMU-X zones, provided below. Each of these projects were rezoned to a mixed-use zone (CRMU-H or CRMU-X) and received the SUP to increase the FAR to up to 2.5 for residential uses only:

1. DSUP2021-10020: 805 North Columbus Street, approved October 16, 2021;
(Link to docket:
<https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5180746&GUID=5CC65C60-B271-4C35-98D0-2AA3DE81E295&Options=&Search=>)
2. DSUP2017-0011: The Venue/901 North Fairfax Street, approved April 14, 2018;
(Link to docket:
<https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3472504&GUID=FECBBBC5-EE55-4C80-9FFE-F135CFB0B071&Options=&Search=>)
3. DSUP2017-0025: The Muse/1201 North Royal Street, approved January 12, 2019;
(Link to docket:
<https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3829132&GUID=76546D8F-0F03-425F-A0D6-BF9A74758BE7&Options=&Search=>)
4. DSUP2018-0014: The Alexan (formerly the "Bus Barn")/600 North Royal Street, approved February 23, 2019;
(Link to docket:
<https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3863160&GUID=009597F3-FE0F-4208-8D4D-05603194C48D&Options=&Search=>) and
5. DSUP2020-10026: Newport Village/4898 West Braddock Road, approved February 20, 2021

(Link to docket:

[https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4796597&GUID=9D9F1246-2A7B-4ABF-8A0A-C5D06DD24FF8&Options=&Search=\)](https://alexandria.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4796597&GUID=9D9F1246-2A7B-4ABF-8A0A-C5D06DD24FF8&Options=&Search=))

Quarterly Construction Meetings

At the request of Commissioner Lyle, staff is providing additional language requiring the applicant to host quarterly, virtual meetings during the construction process for the benefit of neighbors. Staff does not find that this additional language is necessary because the standard conditions related to a pre-construction meeting and the requirement to have a community liaison throughout construction, including with emergency contact information, is sufficient for typical construction projects. Therefore, staff is providing the requested language but does not recommend the condition be amended.

77. Conduct an in-person or virtual meeting to review the location of construction worker parking, plan for temporary pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and hours and overall schedule for construction prior to commencing demolition, clearing, and grading of the site. Notice all adjoining property owners, civic associations, and the Departments of P&Z and T&ES at least 14 calendar days before the meeting. Hold the meeting before any permits are issued. (P&Z) (T&ES) **
 - a. **Once construction begins, the applicant shall host quarterly meetings (virtual) related to construction matters.**

STAFF:

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