

Docket Item #14  
Planning Commission Public Hearing  
December 8, 2021

Consideration of approval of the Planning Commission minutes of the Public Hearing meeting of December 8, 2021.

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ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – DECEMBER 8, 2021

**\* \* \* M I N U T E S \* \* \***

**ALEXANDRIA PLANNING COMMISSION**

December 8, 2021, 7:00 p.m.

Council Chamber (301 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia, 22314) and Electronically  
Alexandria, Virginia

**Members Present:**

Nathan Macek, Chair  
Melissa McMahon, Vice-Chair  
David Brown (attended electronically)  
Mindy Lyle  
Vivian Ramirez  
Jody Manor  
Stephen Koenig

**Members Absent:**

None

**Staff Present:**

Karl W. Moritz	Department of Planning & Zoning
Christina Zechman-Brown	Office of the City Attorney
Nancy Williams	Department of Planning & Zoning
Anh Vu	Department of Planning & Zoning
Jeffrey Farner	Department of Planning & Zoning
Carrie Beach	Department of Planning & Zoning
Jose C. Ayala	Department of Planning & Zoning
Katherine Carraway	Department of Planning & Zoning
Helen McIlvaine	Office of Housing
Eric Keeler	Office of Housing
Tamara Jovovic	Office of Housing
Hillary Orr	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Jesse Maines	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Megan Oleynik	Department of Transportation & Environmental Services

**1. Call to Order.**

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m., with Commissioner Brown participating remotely. All other members were present at the Call to Order.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND ITEMS PREVIOUSLY DEFERRED**

Chair Macek inquired as to whether there were any changes to tonight's Docket. Staff responded stating they are requesting a deferral of Docket Item #3, and that the applicant has requested a deferral of Docket Item #4. Staff is also requesting a deferral for the December 7, 2021 Planning Commission meeting minutes.

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2. Master Plan Amendment #2021-00012 (Translation services from English to Spanish will be provided)

Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan

(A) Initiation of a Master Plan Amendment; and (B) Public hearing and consideration of the creation of the Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan Chapter of the City's Master Plan, including the relevant portions of the Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan, and an amendment to Potomac West Small Area Plan Chapter of the City's Master Plan to remove the area that will become the Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan.

Applicant: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning

Jeff Farner, Carrie Beach, Jose Ayala (P&Z) and Tamara Jovovic (Office of Housing) presented the Docket Item and answered questions from the Planning Commission.

Speakers:

Alicia Cabrera, a business owner in the Arlandria-Chirilagua neighborhood for more than 17 years, indicated she was unaware of the planning process until recently. She shared her concern that the Small Area Plan (SAP) recommendations may cause the eventual displacement of her clients and employees and higher rents for small business retail space, all of which could potentially lead her to close her business.

Maria Cabrera, a long-term resident of New Brookside apartments in the neighborhood shared that the high cost of rent is a constant concern, especially during the pandemic when her employer reduced her income. She emphasized that the proposed SAP will not bring development that benefits her community and more deeply affordable housing must be guaranteed. She supports projects like the proposed Alexandria Housing Development Corporation (AHDC) development in the neighborhood that provides affordable housing. If the SAP is approved, Ms. Cabrera is concerned that it will accelerate displacement of the existing community.

Ana Gloria Rodriguez spoke on behalf of her husband, Hector Jose Rodriguez, both of whom have been business owners in the Arlandria-Chirilagua neighborhood for more than 30 years. They share a concern that their business will be displaced due to the development that is coming to the neighborhood and asked the Planning Commission not to approve the SAP without taking small business owners into consideration. They also shared that they have not been consulted as part of the planning process and do not feel that the SAP should move forward without everyone's input.

Ingris Moran, a representative of Tenants and Workers United (TWU), stated that TWU has been working against the displacement of neighborhood residents for many years. TWU is concerned with the SAP, believing that it does not include enough deeply

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affordable housing and believes it should: (a) allow an increase in height and density to developers in exchange for 30% of affordable housing for residents making 30-40% AMI; (b) provide a concrete plan for continued community engagement; (c) guarantee affordability to ensure all housing is sustainable and remains affordable over time; (d) give preference to existing residents; and (e) provide a clear timeline for community impact analysis with ongoing monitoring.

Larisa Zehr identified herself as an attorney with Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC), speaking in support of TWU. LAJC believes the SAP must do more to meet the needs of the Arlandria-Chirilagua residents and recommends the following: (a) increase requirements for deeply affordable housing, (b) dedicate investment, and (c) guarantee affordability and accessibility. She stated that residents are already being displaced and the SAP must do more to protect them, including: (a) recommending that additional density and height are only approved where 30% of new units are deeply affordable; (b) establishing a guaranteed investment fund for deeply affordable housing in this neighborhood; (c) recommending a comprehensive community impact and racial equity analysis; and (d) making all new and preserved affordable housing guaranteed over the long term.

Colleen Stover, a neighborhood resident, and former President of Hume Springs Civic Association, indicated that the SAP format is confusing and difficult to read. Ms. Stover shared her concern that the potential heights recommended by the SAP were not clearly communicated during the planning process and are not compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. She suggested that more clarification is needed regarding: (a) recommendations for the Cora Kelly school site; (b) recommendations for a bonus that increases height in exchange for only 10% affordable units should be removed; (c) developers should not have the ability to pay into the Housing Trust Fund instead of providing onsite units; (d) offsite tree canopy shouldn't be allowed for new development; and (e) the SAP should clarify recommendations regarding the location of retail spaces on ground floor.

Adriana Gomez Schellhaas, the Executive Director of Casa Chirilagua, stated that changes coming to the City will negatively affect thousands of residents in the neighborhood if the SAP recommendations are not adjusted, and that the SAP's recommended percentage of affordable units and level of affordability translates to a low number of units relative to residents who need them. Ms. Gomez also believes that new development in the neighborhood will increase the neighborhoods' area median income, resulting in a rent increase of all units. She also stated that taller buildings are not compatible with the neighborhood and that if the SAP moves forward, as is, there are few protections against residents being priced out of their homes.

Cathy Puskar identified herself as an attorney for St. Rita's Catholic Church and School.

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St. Rita is very concerned with pedestrian safety and believes that the SAP's recommendations should address this issue. Another concern of the church is regarding the lack of on-street parking, and they encourage staff to look at opportunities for additional on-street parking on Glebe Road and Mt. Vernon Avenue. The church plans to expand its building to meet the needs of the church and school and is requesting assurances from the City that they will be able to add a multi-purpose room with parking under existing zoning.

Jon Frederick, President, AHDC, stated that he appreciates the focus on affordable housing in the SAP as it helps to set the stage for a future that is inclusive. He noted that it is just a start and that it will take years of effort from everyone to keep focused and will require trade-offs such as height and density. AHDC looks forward to bringing an affordable housing project to Planning Commission in January which is a first step in ensuring diversity in the community.

Blagovest Stoychev, 3915 Elbert Avenue, identified himself as the husband of Stefana Dimova, stated that for the neighborhood to remain vibrant and attractive, development needs to occur. Currently, the neighborhood has overcrowded apartment buildings and crumbling infrastructure – investment will bring jobs and improve conditions for business owners and the overall desirability of the area. He noted that he is glad this SAP is coming forward.

Joshua Bowman lives in Warwick Village and is a parishioner at St. Rita's. He shared concern with stormwater issues in the neighborhood and traffic/pedestrian safety. He noted there have been multiple pedestrian fatalities in this area and that the intersections need major improvement. He also noted that parking shortages in the neighborhood cause difficulties for the businesses.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commission Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

### Discussion:

Chair Macek asked staff to clarify the intent of recommendation 59 regarding retail. Mr. Ayala explained that retail must be provided in the Retail Focus Area shown in Figure 9, and it may also be provided elsewhere if consistent with the intent of the SAP. The purpose is to concentrate retail in the core to provide a critical mass of retail within walking distance.

Chair Macek asked staff to respond to a community concern regarding the parking recommendations, including: (a) "unbundling," (b) impact on affordable housing, (c) impact on businesses, and (d) consistency with City policy. Ms. Jovovic responded that

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for affordable housing developments, parking is a significant cost and the City's current parking regulations allow for reductions for affordable housing. Ms. Oleynik, Department of Transportation & Environmental Services (T&ES) agreed with Ms. Jovovic and further stated that the SAP does suggest a review of curbside management and staff will evaluate off peak parking on Glebe Road and the applicability of parking tools successful in Old Town such as meters. The opportunity for unbundling applies to market and affordable projects alike and is consistent with City-wide policy.

Chair Macek asked staff to provide more information on double bonus height for affordable housing. Ms. Jovovic responded that Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance is an option here and elsewhere in the City. Mr. Farner further elaborated that Eisenhower East has a similar requirement for affordable housing with net new development and allows Section 7-700 as well.

Chair Macek asked staff to respond to community comments regarding how the land use map portrays the Cora Kelly School and Leonard "Chick" Armstrong Recreation Center sites. Mr. Farner responded that what is shown is consistent with the existing residential zoning in place – the SAP does not suggest changes to the zoning.

Chair Macek asked staff to provide more information on outreach, specifically to businesses. Mr. Ayala responded that staff engaged businesses and property owners through multiple means, multiple times, including A-frame signage on the sidewalks, phone calls, letters, and visits. Ms. Jovovic added that targeted outreach to business owners is underway now and will continue to assess current needs and challenges and provide assistance through the City's Small Business Development Center, as well as future monitoring to address changing needs as new development occurs.

Chair Macek asked staff to respond to community comments regarding increasing deeply affordable housing, targeted investment, and guaranteed affordability. Ms. Jovovic responded that 10% of net new development will be affordable to renters at 40-50% of area median income. Economic analysis conducted indicated that this was the most that could be required and incentivize development that brings affordable housing, rather than renovation and raised rent. Housing Trust fund Gap investment over the next few years will also be dedicated to Arlandria-Chirilagua. Regarding guaranteed affordability, the City has tools including affordable homeownership and deed restrictions to preserve affordability.

Chair Macek asked staff to respond to community concerns regarding pedestrian safety, especially regarding the intersection of Mt. Vernon Avenue and Glebe Road. Ms. Oleynik responded that staff will be looking at opportunities to address that and other intersections identified for safety improvements in the SAP.

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Chair Macek expressed that there would be limited affordable housing progress without this SAP. The SAP lays a framework of very strong tools. Adding more affordable housing is the key result and there is no other way for us to do that than with density pulling us toward that goal.

Vice Chair McMahon asked staff to respond to community comments regarding the location of trees as part of the tree canopy requirements off site if not feasible onsite. Ms. Beach confirmed that the SAP recommends off site trees to be in Four Mile Run Park.

Vice Chair McMahon asked staff to provide more information about how the Affordable Housing Trust Fund operates and on the statutory limitations on the City's power to impact property rights to produce affordable housing. Ms. Jovovic explained the City's tools to achieve affordable housing through new development are limited to "bonus density," and that the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Opportunity Fund provide City gap funding for creating and preserving additional affordable housing. Christina Brown, Assistant City Attorney, further explained that the City's ability to ask for affordable housing is limited; the contribution policy is voluntary; and rent increase caps are not allowable under state law.

Vice Chair McMahon asked staff to respond to community requests for current resident priority in new affordable housing. Ms. Jovovic responded that the City is pursuing a waiver from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to prioritize current residents, in addition to providing training so that they are "ready to rent" and have completed required paperwork.

Vice Chair McMahon concurred with Chair Macek that density and growth are needed to fund improvement and the SAP lays a foundation for the Commission and staff to work with to serve the community.

Commissioner Brown thanked staff for the transparency of the building height graphics used. He further commented that the City's bonus density and voluntary contribution programs are addressing the problem as best as we can given the City's limited authority under the Dillon Rule.

Commissioner Lyle asked staff for more information on ongoing small business engagement and retention efforts. Mr. Farner agreed that slowing commercial redevelopment and maintaining affordable rents will be an ongoing effort. Mr. Ayala elaborated that services will be in place to assist existing commercial businesses and keep them in place.

Commissioner Koenig commented that with this SAP the Commission and staff

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recognize what is at stake and will continually work to find the balance point to make the SAP as powerful as it can be while limiting impacts from rising rents and market rate housing.

Commissioner Ramirez commented on the robustness of the process and the need for a focus on implementation beyond just the land use portions of the SAP - i.e., for greater neighborhood support referenced in the SAP.

Commissioner Manor commented on the importance of the affordable housing expansion and the further education needed to improve participation in the process and empower the community to participate in future processes.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to initiate Master Plan Amendment #2021-00012. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of Master Plan Resolution #2021-00012 to amend the master plan. The motion carried on vote of 7 to 0.

**Reason:** The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

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3. **Staff has requested for deferral of this item.**

Zoning Text Amendment #2021-00009

A Text Amendment to the CDD #12 Zoning Table

(A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; and (B) Public Hearing and consideration of a Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to amend Section 5-602(A), CDD #12, development guidelines, to increase the Maximum Height limit within the CDD to conform to the height limits of the Arlandria/Chirilagua Plan.

Applicant: City of Alexandria, Department of Planning & Zoning and Office of Housing

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to defer Zoning Text Amendment #2021-00009. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

4. **Staff has requested for deferral of this item.**

City Charter Section 9.06 Case #2021-00006

Coordinated Development District Conceptual Design Plan #2021-00005



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A Coordinated Development District Special Use Permit with Site Plan #2021-10024

Transportation Management Plan Special Use Permit #2021-00063

Vacation #2021-00001

221 West Glebe Road and 3606, 3610, 3612 and 3700 Mount Vernon Avenue - AHDC  
Glebe/Mt. Vernon

Public Hearing and consideration of requests for: (A) Planning Commission to review whether the proposed sale of property (3700 Mount Vernon Avenue) by the City of Alexandria is consistent with the City of Alexandria Master Plan pursuant to Section 9.06 of the City Charter; (B) a Coordinated Development District (CDD) Conceptual Design Plan; (C) a Coordinated Development District Special Use Permit with Site Plan including special use permits for additional density through the provision of affordable housing pursuant to Section 7 700 and for a parking reduction; modifications to the height to setback ratio, the line at zone transition, and the front yard setback as per Sections 6 403, 7 902(A) and 7 902(B) respectively, to construct a mixed use affordable housing multifamily development with structured parking; (D) a Transportation Management Plan Special Use Permit for Tier III TMP; and, (E) the vacation of a portion of City owned alley; zoned: CDD #12/Coordinated Development District #12.  
Applicant: Alexandria Housing Development Corporation (AHDC), represented by Duncan W. Blair, attorney, and the City of Alexandria (Section 9.06 Case).

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to defer City Charter Section 9.06 Case #2021-00006, Coordinated Development District Conceptual Design Plan #2021-00005, A Coordinated Development District Special Use Permit with Site Plan #2021-10024, Transportation Management Plan Special Use Permit #2021-00063, and Vacation #2021-00001. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

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#### 5. Commissioners' Reports, Comments, and Questions.

Vice Chair McMahon referenced Atlanta's neighborhood planning meetings, which are not the same as civic association meetings, as a model for how to create a bridge between making a SAP and implementing a SAP. Vice Chair McMahon suggested having a conversation around how the Planning Commission can make suggestions to City Council about tools to support SAP implementation and community discussion.

### **MINUTES:**

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#### 6. Consideration of the minutes from the December 7, 2021 Planning Commission meeting.

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**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** On a motion by Vice Chair McMahon, seconded by Commissioner Lyle, the Planning Commission voted to defer minutes from the December 7, 2021 Planning Commission meeting. The motion carried on a vote of 7-0.

**ADJOURNMENT**

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7. The Planning Commission Public Hearing was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.