



Text Amendment #2017-0007 – CR Zone

Issue: (A) Initiation of a Text Amendment; and (B) Public hearing and consideration of a request for an amendment to Section 4-702 of the Zoning Ordinance to permit homeless shelters in the CR zone.	Planning Commission Hearing:	September 5, 2017
	City Council Hearing:	September 16, 2017
Staff: Alex Dambach, AICP, alex.dambach@alexandriava.gov ; Femi Adelakun femi.adelakun@alexandriava.gov		

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, SEPTEMBER 5, 2017: By unanimous consent, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the request.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis.

I. Issue

Proposed is a text amendment to Section 4-702 of Article VII of the Zoning Ordinance to include Homeless shelters as a permitted use until March 2021.

II. Background

The current edition of the Zoning Ordinance was adopted by the Alexandria City Council on June 24, 1992, with the CR/Commercial regional zone created to provide areas suitable for large scale shopping centers that serve regional needs. The CR Zone encompasses only one section of the City consisting of the parking lot and the end portions of the building at Landmark Mall.

Landmark Mall's retail activity has significantly diminished. Plans were approved (Development Site Plan #2015-0003) to redevelop the site as a mixed-use commercial and residential center but construction has not yet come to fruition. At this time, only a Sears store is operating in the CR zone after the closure of the balance of the mall in late January 2017.

Carpenter's Shelter, a homeless shelter in the Braddock area, is about to undergo a major redevelopment. During redevelopment, its property will not be able to serve the needs of the City's homeless. For several reasons including the terms of its financing (Low Income Housing Tax Credits), the redevelopment must be completed within a defined timeframe. Howard Hughes, the owners of the mall and the Macy's store, which is vacant, has expressed a willingness to accommodate the shelter's activities during the limited time period of the redevelopment (anticipated to be completed no later than December 2020). This situation prompted a staff review of the suitability of the CR zone for the temporary homeless shelter use, and staff is now proposing a text amendment to permit the homeless shelter use in the CR zone.

It is anticipated that the CR zone itself will ultimately be eliminated in accordance with the recommendations of the adopted Landmark/Van Dorn Corridor Plan, which recommends Coordinated Development District zoning for the site's redevelopment.

III. Discussion of proposed text changes

The proposed text amendment to Section 4-700 of the Zoning Ordinance modifies and adds the Homeless Shelter use to the permitted uses Section 4-702. The proposed text amendment is intended to enable currently vacant buildings or parts of buildings in the CR Zone to be repurposed for homeless shelter use until the mall site can be redeveloped and until the permanent facility for the homeless can be re-opened following redevelopment.

The CR Zone is uniquely suitable for providing a temporary location for by-right homeless shelters. It has excellent access to public transit with four bus lines serving the zone and access to employment opportunities for residents within ½ mile. The Carpenter's Shelter redevelopment will displace current tenants for 18 to 24 months. This creates the need to provide an alternate location lasting the course of the shelter redevelopment.

IV. Recommendation

Staff recommends that this text amendment be approved in order to ensure the active use of the CR zone while providing a suitable zone for providing a facility to address the City's homeless needs.

Attachments: 1. Proposed Zoning Text Changes

Attachment 1

Proposed Change:

Sec.4-700 CR/Commercial regional

4-701 - Purpose.

The CR zone is intended to provide areas suitable for large scale shopping centers serving regional needs. Such centers are characterized by uses offering retail comparison shopper goods, locations accessible from regional highways, and an integrated and connected complex of structures with internal roadways.

4-702 - Permitted uses.

(A) Amusement enterprise;

(A.1) Animal care facility with no overnight accommodation;

(A.2) Day care center;

(B) Health and athletic club;

(B.1) Homeless shelter. This subsection shall expire on March 1, 2021. Any homeless shelters permitted under the authority of this subsection shall be removed by that date.

(C) Light auto repair or drive through facility located in a freestanding building not part of an integrated and connected complex of structures;

(D) Motor vehicle parking or storage;

(E) Personal service establishment;

(E.1) Reserved;

(E.2) Private school, commercial;

(E.3) Public school;

(F) Restaurant;

(G) Retail shopping establishment;


(H) Utilities, as permitted by section 7-1200;

(I) Accessory uses, as permitted by section 7-100:

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 30, 2017

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON LANDMARK MALL REDEVELOPMENT

In June 2013, the Alexandria City Council approved the Phase I Landmark Mall redevelopment plan proposed by the Howard Hughes Company ("HHC"). At the time, HHC owned only the in-line store section between Macy's and Sears (approximately 21.9 acres of the 51-acre Landmark Mall site), so the Phase I redevelopment plan did not embrace the entire site. The plan called for about 300,000 square feet of mixed-use retail, restaurants and entertainment, and some 400 apartment units planned in an open air, town center setting. In June 2015, HHC requested and was granted an amendment to add approximately 55,000 square feet of residential and flex space.

HHC proceeded with detailed implementation planning based on the original plan as amended, but the decline of Macy's and Sears' sales and the national shift towards online retailers caused HHC to rethink its redevelopment strategy. In 2016, HHC purchased the Macy's store and adjacent parking (approximately 11.4 acres). Sears announced at around the same time that it would spin off 258 of its sites into a new real estate company named "Seritage," with the goal of selling some of these sites for redevelopment.

HHC approached Seritage to discuss the possibility of incorporating the Sears site into the redevelopment plan, so the entire 51-acre Landmark Mall site could be improved together. HHC and City staff agree that a single, site-wide plan will produce a better long-term real estate development than a partial redevelopment, and will better reflect the City's 2009 Landmark-Van Dorn Corridor Plan. This will also allow for a comprehensive transportation plan, and more cost-effective use of resources. A redeveloped Landmark Mall site could be the "town center" for West Alexandria for decades to come, so it is important to pursue very high quality redevelopment plans even if that takes longer than originally anticipated before the market changes described above.

Given that the demolition of Landmark Mall and the subsequent construction of new buildings, parks and roads is several years away, HHC has been in discussions with the non-profit Carpenter's Shelter organization to use the former Macy's site for short-term housing (approximately 60 beds year round plus 30 winter shelter beds) while a new permanent shelter is being constructed in Old Town North. The City has already approved the permanent facility, and Carpenter's Shelter has its financing largely in place. The interim housing at the former Macy's site would only be permitted by HHC and the City because it is a known short-term use prior to demolition of the existing structures. It is important to the City and HHC that accommodating Carpenter's Shelter does not slow down or encumber redevelopment of Landmark. Therefore, an arrangement with Carpenter's Shelter will require that they move out no later than around January 2020. The City projects that HHC will be ready to start the entire Landmark Mall redevelopment planning process during the first half of 2018, with demolition likely to start after January 2020.

From: Nancy Williams
Sent: Thursday, August 31, 2017 9:17 AM
To: Kristen Walentisch
Cc: Alex Dambach; Maya Contreras
Subject: FW: Landmark redevelopment project (CR Zone Text Change)

From: Caroline Kemper [<mailto:ckemper1964@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, August 30, 2017 4:42 PM
To: Nancy Williams
Subject: Landmark redevelopment project

Macy's does not have the facilities for a shelter. No kitchen, no showers. This shelter would push back the redevelopment project.