



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

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October 9, 2011

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

SUBJECT: 4. Consideration of adoption of the Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) goals and policy objectives, in accordance with the recommendations set forth in Arlington's Historic Preservation Master Plan. The Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) focuses on eight goals and supporting policy objectives which will be used to encourage and promote the preservation and rehabilitation of the historic buildings featured in the Phase 1 HRI list. Goals and Policy Objectives are: 1) Strengthen Arlington's sense of place by valuing historic buildings and human stories surrounding them. 2) Promote historic preservation as a viable and continuing community benefit. 3) Incorporate sustainable design principles in the renovation of all existing historic buildings and in new construction. 4) Promote the preservation of the Essential historic buildings in the HRI. 5) Promote the preservation of the Important historic buildings in the HRI. 6) Promote the preservation of the Notable buildings in the HRI. 7) Contribute to the lasting historic record of the County by documenting historic resources listed in the HRI prior to their demolition. 8) Continually integrate historic preservation planning principles into county policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Adopt the Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) Goals and Policy Objectives, as amended by the County Manager as of October 5, 2011, with the recommendation that the County Board consider additional flexibility in the use of transferrable development rights on Notable historic sites.

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard this item at its October 5, 2011 carryover meeting. Michael Leventhal, CPHD Historic Preservation Program Coordinator, described the Phase I Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) Goals and Policy Objectives. Also present was Cynthia Liccese-Torres, CPHD Historic Preservation. As a follow-up to the June 28, 2011 Planning Commission meeting,

PC. #24

Mr. Leventhal briefly described the new proposed ranking of two properties on the Phase 1 HRI list that the County Board directed staff to resurvey and analyze (3401 Fairfax Drive and 4800 31st Street South). It is the subject of an amendment to the Phase 1 HRI list that will be reviewed by the County Board only. Mr. Leventhal also described the policy guidance recommended in the Phase I HRI Goals and Policy Objectives, which includes eight primary HRI goals and supporting policy objectives. He also briefly described the community process.

Public Speakers

There were no public speakers.

Planning Commission Reports

Commissioner Monfort reported on the Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC) meeting, which was co-chaired by himself and Commissioner Klein. He noted that the eight goals and policy objectives outlined in the staff report are well defined and provide more specificity on the County's position relative to the goals than the draft that was presented to the LRPC. He also noted that most of the LRPC's recommendations have been incorporated.

Nancy Iacomini, representing the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), was asked to comment on the goals and policy objectives. She summarized the discussion at the HALRB, and noted its support of the more proactive language of the goals and objectives outlined in the staff report.

Commissioner Ciotti commended the staff, Commission/committee members, and volunteers for their hard work on this project, as it will facilitate a continuation of Arlington's story and underscores how important historic buildings are to Arlington's identity.

Planning Commission Discussion

Commissioner Malis sought clarification on the process for HALRB review of Important sites. Mr. Leventhal responded by describing the process. He stated that the process would be no different than the current review process. For sites that are a part of a site plan proposal, the HALRB would continue to have representatives on the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC). Commissioner Malis asked about the relationship and timing of the HALRB and SPRC review processes. Ms. Iacomini responded that the reviews are almost concurrent. Commissioner Malis inquired about the process for the Buckingham Village Unified Commercial Mixed Use Project, which started with reviews by the HALRB and went no further. Ms. Iacomini responded that the process was different for that project because it was located in a locally-designated historic district. In response to Commissioner Malis's question to pinpoint the process, Mr. Leventhal responded that the process would be different for different projects. Commissioner Malis recommended that the process be put in writing to allow greater clarification. Mr. Leventhal added that the focus is purely architectural. Commissioner Malis responded that procedures should be a part of the description of the policies.

Commissioner Cole asked about the distinction between goal #4, Essential historic properties, and goal #5, Important historic properties, and why the County will actively collaborate with the

property owners of Essential historic properties and not those of Important historic properties. Mr. Leventhal responded that the County will communicate more aggressively with the property owners of Essential properties, and perhaps the top one-third of Important properties, to pursue local or National Register designation. Ms. Iacomini concurred and noted that a distinction is made on the list on the County website between the top one-third Important properties and the other properties. Commissioner Cole expressed surprise that not all owners of Important properties will be communicated in the same way.

Commissioner Cole asked for clarification about goal #4, fourth policy objective regarding Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). When using TDRs on receiving sites that propose demolition of a HRI resource, he noted that the language suggests that all historic properties are of equal importance, and asked why it shouldn't apply to just the Essential and Important properties. Ms. Liccese-Torres referred to the final staff report that included additional language referring to Essential, Important and Notable historic properties in this particular policy objective. The final staff report was disseminated to the Commission members. Ms. Liccese-Torres noted that this was the only change to the goals and policy objectives portion of the staff report.

Commissioner Cole inquired about goal #4, fifth policy objective regarding weighing the impact on Essential properties when awarding bonus density. He asked about 1) the role of the HALRB when weighing the impacts of bonus density, 2) how it would feed into the SPRC process and the Planning Commission recommendation to the County Board, and 3) what the process would be to weigh the impacts. Ms. Iacomini responded that the HALRB would consider bonus density within the parameters of an adopted plan, such as a sector plan, and as part of a site plan proposal.

Commissioner Cole inquired about goal #7, fifth policy objective regarding maintenance of historic documentation materials in the County's Historic Preservation Program office. He asked why the building materials are not maintained in a public library archives. Mr. Leventhal responded that the public library is not an archive, nor does the County have a public archive. Furthermore, the Virginia Room at Central Library currently does not have the space to store the materials.

Commissioner Hunt thanked the staff for resurveying the realty building in Fairlington. She noted that the fire station on South Abingdon Street is not on the Phase 1 HRI list, and asked if the properties located at 4800 31st Street South have been included within the ranking of the larger Fairlington neighborhood. Mr. Leventhal responded that the properties at 4800 31st Street South are now included within the larger Fairlington neighborhood and moved from the "Important" to the "Essential" category. The fire station will be included in a future Phase 2 HRI list, most likely of civic buildings.

Commissioner Monfort inquired about goal #8, fourth policy objective regarding future HRI phases. Mr. Leventhal clarified that the next phase will include a listing of civic buildings, large lots, religious buildings, schools, and County buildings. This phase will most likely start in the spring of 2012, once the administrative aspects of Phase 1 are concluded.

Commissioner Savela asked if the HRI goals and policy objectives will be incorporated into the adopted Historic Preservation Master Plan. Ms. Liccese-Torres responded that it will become a

bound report, but staff will have to determine if it will become a part of the Historic Preservation Master Plan.

Commissioner Malis inquired about the number of properties that would be protected from demolition relative to the policy objective promoting TDRs. Mr. Leventhal responded that approximately 250 properties would fall under the Essential, Important, and Notable categories. Commissioner Malis noted that this seems broad, especially with the inclusion of Notable properties whose historic value is uncertain. Commissioner Monfort expressed concern for destroying historic properties in order to achieve redevelopment through TDRs, as the policy objectives do not preclude altering or integrating historic buildings into the redevelopment scenario. Commissioner Malis commented that her concern is when there are too many restrictions on the receiving sites it makes it more difficult to preserve the historic sending sites, and some opportunities for preservation may be lost when lesser value buildings are included.

Commissioner Savela asked if additional language could be added as a caveat, as she shares Commissioner Malis' concerns regarding the Notable resources. One of her favorite projects is Sheffield Court, and if a development proposal came forth to transfer density from that site to another site that included a Notable property for which demolition had to happen in order for the site to redevelop, there needs to be some way to value the merits and drawbacks of such a proposal. She asked if there could be a caveat that precludes the use of TDRs on a receiving site that proposes the demolition of an Essential or Important resource, and discourages the demolition of Notable resources unless significant community benefits are realized. Mr. Leventhal responded that the majority of the Notable resources are so small they have no real development potential. Commissioner Savela indicated that she is more concerned about the consolidation of properties, and wants to do everything possible to provide the incentives that property owners will need to realize the preservation of properties that are most important on the HRI list.

Commissioner Monfort noted that there is some merit to what Commissioners Savela and Malis have said and asked Ms. Iacomini if she had any comments. Ms. Iacomini reflected on the location of TDR receiving sites, and stated that while the County has not specifically identified potential TDR receiving sites, there are adopted plans, such as sector plans, that speak to this. In looking at the list of Notable resources, she does not believe that any of them are located in places that could become receiving sites. She stated she is willing to remove Notable resources from those resources protected from demolition on receiving sites, if it makes everyone more comfortable. Commissioner Monfort commented that staff and the HALRB should consider modified language of that specific policy objective in Goal 4 before it goes to the County Board. He suggests that there could be language that protects the Essential and Important resources, and that it would not offer the same protections for Notable sites in the absence of exceptional community benefits. Ms. Iacomini added that this should be discussed within the context of a site plan where the public can weigh in on the community benefits. Commissioner Malis added that opportunities for this discussion should not be restricted, but may also be a part of any future planning which may identify potential receiving sites.

Planning Commission Motion

Commissioner Monfort moved that the Planning Commission recommend that the County Board 1) amend the Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory list by moving 3401 Fairfax Drive from the

“Demolished” to “Minor” category and 4800 31st Street South from the “Important” to “Essential” category; and 2) adopt the Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory Goals and Policy Objectives with the recommendation that the County Board consider additional flexibility in the use of transferrable development rights on Notable historic sites. Commissioner Savela seconded the motion.

Ms. Wray noted that the action before the Planning Commission is only item #2, adoption of the Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory Goals and Policy Objectives. Item #1 requires action by the County Board only.

Commissioner Hunt asked for unanimous consent to remove from the motion item #1, to amend the Phase 1 Historic Resources Inventory list by moving 3401 Fairfax Drive from the “Demolished” to “Minor” category and 4800 31st Street South from the “Important” to “Essential” category; and to amend the motion for item #2 to add “as amended by the County Manager as of October 5, 2011”, referring to the final edited version of the staff report (with signatures). There were no objections so the amended motion became the main motion.

The Planning Commission voted 7-1 to support the amended motion. Commissioners Ciotti, Cole, Hunt, Malis, Monfort, Savela, and Serie supported the motion. Commissioner Harner abstained.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlington County Planning Commission



Rosemary Ciotti
Planning Commission Chair



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September 29, 2011

Dear Property Owner:

I am writing to provide you with an update about the **Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) initiative** currently being undertaken by the County. In the early part of this year, County staff held several meetings with groups of property owners, as well as hosted a community forum on the HRI in March.

Since then, the HRI project has made tremendous strides forward. **In July 2011, the County Board unanimously adopted the first official Phase 1 HRI list** of ranked historic garden apartments, shopping centers, and commercial buildings. This list includes a total of 393 historic buildings, which were surveyed and ranked according to their historical and architectural significance and then placed into different categories:

1. **Essential** – County's top priorities for preservation that include the most significant, best preserved, and key resources that best define Arlington history (23);
2. **Important** – Central to understanding the County's history, but less distinctive than and/or have less physical integrity than Essential (133);
3. **Notable** – Have historic elements related to the County's history, but lack sufficient historic context, integrity, and/or significance compared to Essential and Important (81);
4. **Minor** – Altered substantially over time and/or not distinctive examples of their building type (23);
5. **Altered/Not Historic** (35); and
6. **Demolished** (98).

The next step of the project involves bringing the proposed Phase 1 HRI Goals and Policy Objectives forward to the County Board for its consideration at the upcoming public hearing on October 15, 2011. If adopted, the Goals and Policy Objectives would become County policy and provide short- and long-term planning guidance for those historic buildings included in the Phase 1 HRI list. However, it must be reiterated that **the HRI will not change in any way a property owner's by-right development or rehabilitation options, nor does it alter or change an individual property's zoning classification.**

The HRI is designed to inform property owners, architects, developers, County staff, and County officials about Arlington's most valuable historic resources and how best to address preservation goals and development options simultaneously. As an information-sharing tool, the HRI is intended to better inform the County planning process as it relates to historic buildings and will initiate open dialogue between property owners and the County in the early planning stages of development projects.

Having an adopted list of ranked historic properties gives the County, for the first time ever, clear preservation priorities for a specific grouping of historic buildings. A preservation tool kit, which includes various financial and zoning incentives, also is available and illustrates how the proposed HRI Goals and Policy Objectives can be accomplished.

The staff report to the County Board, the proposed language for the HRI Goals and Policy Objectives, and the HRI tool kit, will be available for review online in advance of the County Board meeting. Please visit:

http://arlington.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=2

Detailed information about the HRI initiative -- including the adopted Phase 1 list arranged by ranking category, an overview of the HRI project, and details on the Essential-ranked buildings -- can be found on the Historic Preservation Program's website here:

www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/ons/hp/page82412.aspx

Arlington is proud to be the first locality in the Commonwealth of Virginia to undertake a comprehensive ranking of its historic buildings. And please know that the County is grateful to the property owners who have done so much to preserve and maintain these valuable historic buildings. I encourage you to visit the County website and do not hesitate to contact me with your specific questions or concerns. I may be reached directly at 703.228.3813 or *mleventhal@arlingtonva.us*.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Leventhal
Historic Preservation Program Coordinator