



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of October 13, 2007**

DATE: September 25, 2007

SUBJECT: Request to Advertise public hearings on a proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Section 20 (Appendix A) "CP-FBC," Columbia Pike – Form Based Code Districts of the Zoning Ordinance to modify Section III (C) - Regulating Plans for properties located in the Town Center to show a revised alignment of the Required Building Lines along South Highland Street, between Columbia Pike and 11th Street South. The proposed alignment would run parallel to the existing street, from a point directly across Columbia Pike from the existing intersection of the north side of Columbia Pike and South Highland Street, to 11th Street South.

C. M. RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize advertisement of public hearings by the Planning Commission on October 29, 2007, and the County Board on November 13, 2007, to consider adoption of the attached amendments to Section 20 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance. The proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment would amend, reenact, and recodify Section 20 to modify the alignment of the South Highland Street Required Building Lines from Columbia Pike to 11th Street South on the Form Based Code Town Center Regulating Plan, which will serve to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; to protect against destruction of or encroachment upon historic areas; and to encourage economic development activities that provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base.

ISSUE: None.

SUMMARY: Staff is recommending modifications to the location of South Highland Street and Required Building Lines between Columbia Pike and 11th Street South in order to facilitate development using the Form Based Code.

BACKGROUND: In March 2002, the *Columbia Pike Initiative-A Revitalization Plan* was adopted by the County Board. A major recommendation of the plan was to develop a new review process to evaluate redevelopment proposals in the corridor, which became the Columbia Pike Form Based Code (the Code). In February 2003, the County Board adopted the Code,

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Richard Hartman, DES, Transportation
Jennifer Smith, CPHD, Planning

PLA-4791

including the Regulating Plan for the Town Center development node. The Regulating Plan, among other things, locates Required Building Lines (RBLs) for new development along existing or proposed new streets. Creating several new streets and realigning other existing streets was also recommended in the *Columbia Pike Initiative-A Revitalization Plan*, including a portion of South Highland Street. In order to improve the connectivity across Columbia Pike and to eliminate an offset intersection, the Regulating Plan shows South Highland Street realigned between Columbia Pike and 11th Street South.

Periodically, staff has initiated amendments to the Form Based Code to clarify the intent of the Code and facilitate redevelopment in accordance with the vision for revitalization of the Columbia Pike corridor. During further discussions with the community regarding South Highland Street, partly in response to imminent development nearby at the corner of Walter Reed Drive and Columbia Pike and future traffic demands, the alignment of South Highland Street shown on the Regulating Plan was questioned as to whether it facilitates or hinders redevelopment prospects on adjacent properties. Staff has analyzed this issue and now recommends that the County Board authorize the advertisement of public hearings to consider an alternative alignment that would likely better facilitate revitalization in this area. Should the County Board subsequently approve the proposed alignment, the Town Center Regulating Plan would be revised to indicate the new alignment.

DISCUSSION: The realigned segment of South Highland Street as currently located on the Regulating Plan is depicted in Attachment 1. This segment is one of two street segments along the Columbia Pike corridor originally recommended for realignment when the Form Based Code was approved in 2003 as a way of eliminating offset intersections and improving pedestrian connections across Columbia Pike. The existing legs of South Highland Street are approximately 140 feet apart along Columbia Pike. The realignment depicted on the adopted Regulating Plan divides existing properties and leaves small segments that are unlikely to develop. With the adopted alignment, redevelopment along this block of South Highland Street is feasible only with consolidation of adjacent properties. Also, this realignment requires removal, and the likely environmental remediation, of an existing gas station.

As a follow-up action to the approval of the first Form Based Code development project located at Walter Reed Drive and Columbia Pike (The Halstead project), staff were directed to analyze the traffic movements around the project and to study the existing traffic signal operations at South Highland Street and Columbia Pike. The analysis, completed by a traffic engineering consultant, indicated that without realigning Highland Street it would not be advisable to install traffic signals on both legs of Highland at its intersection with Columbia Pike. However, to date, the adopted alignment shown in the Code has not resulted in any redevelopment projects for the adjacent properties. Therefore, staff reevaluated the recommendation to realign South Highland Street and met with the Columbia Pike Implementation Team (CPIT), a citizen advisory group, to discuss the option of retaining the existing alignment of South Highland Street, south of Columbia Pike (see Attachment 2).

Maintaining the existing alignment of each leg of South Highland Street would respect the existing property lines and would not require further consolidation or removal of the gas station

use in order to develop in accordance with the Code. However, at the March 26, 2007 CPIT meeting, the community members were not supportive of this option, as this option would not create a traditional four-way intersection. CPIT members strongly recommended maintaining the realignment as shown on the Regulating Plan.

Staff developed another realignment option to respond to additional questions raised by CPIT. This option (see Attachment 3) eliminates the offset intersection at Columbia Pike by moving the south leg of South Highland Street to the west, parallel to the existing alignment. An offset intersection would be created at the new intersection of South Highland Street and 11th Street. This option was discussed at a CPIT meeting on June 26, 2007, where it received general approval. On July 19, 2007, this option was presented at a meeting with representatives of the Douglas Park and Arlington Heights civic associations, where it received unanimous support.

The South Highland Street realignment option shown in Attachment 3 is favored by community members and is recommended by staff. It has a number of advantages over the options shown in Attachments 1 and 2:

- It provides a regular four-way intersection at Columbia Pike, permitting full signalization and improving safety for both pedestrians and vehicles;
- It results in more regularly shaped parcels, with property lines parallel to S. Highland Street, that can more easily be redeveloped;
- It does not require consolidation of any parcels for redevelopment;
- It maintains economic viability for current properties adjacent to S. Highland Street;
- It affects fewer properties and businesses than the realignment currently shown on the Regulating Plan;
- It avoids the existing gas station property and the resulting environmental mitigation that would be involved in building a new street; and
- It minimizes the likelihood of cut-through traffic in the neighborhoods south and north of Columbia Pike.

Staff recommends maintaining the 75-foot RBL-to-RBL street width and the street type frontages (which govern building heights and other building characteristics) shown on the Regulating Plan for this block of South Highland Street. The current Town Center Regulating Plan is depicted on Attachment 4. The recommended revision with the realigned South Highland Street is depicted on Attachment 5.

CONCLUSION: Staff recommends that the County Board authorize public hearings by the Planning Commission on October 29, 2007, and the County Board on November 13, 2007, to consider the proposed amendments to Section 20 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to modify the alignment of the South Highland Street RBLs between Columbia Pike and 11th Street South on the Form Based Code Regulating Plan, which will serve to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; to protect against destruction of or encroachment upon historic areas; and to encourage economic development activities that provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base.

RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE ADVERTISEMENT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS AT THE OCTOBER 29, 2007 PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE NOVEMBER 13, 2007 COUNTY BOARD MEETING TO CONSIDER AMENDING, REENACTING, AND RECODIFYING SECTION 20. "CP-FBC" COLUMBIA PIKE FORM BASED CODE DISTRICTS [APPENDIX A.] OF THE ARLINGTON COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE, TO MODIFY SECTION III (C) – REGULATING PLANS FOR PROPERTIES LOCATED IN THE TOWN CENTER TO SHOW A REVISED ALIGNMENT OF THE REQUIRED BUILDING LINES ALONG SOUTH HIGHLAND STREET, BETWEEN COLUMBIA PIKE AND 11TH STREET SOUTH.

The County Board of Arlington hereby resolves that the following amendment to Section 20, "CP-FBC" Columbia Pike Form Based Code District [Appendix A.] of the Zoning Ordinance, as shown on Attachment 5 hereto, shall be advertised for public hearings by the Planning Commission on October 29, 2007 and the County Board on November 13, 2007 to amend, reenact, and re-codify Zoning Ordinance provisions to preserve and promote mixed-use retail and other commercial activity within commercial districts; and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice; as well as to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; to protect against destruction of or encroachment upon historic areas; and to encourage economic development activities that provide desirable employment and enlarge the tax base.

* * *

1. Replace the Columbia Pike Regulating Plan for the Town Center with revised version that is Attachment 5 hereto.