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MEMORANDUM

TO: Tim Baroody, City Manager
FROM: Mike Craig, Senior Planner
DATE: August 3, 2020 (for the August 11 City Council meeting)
SUBJECT: JFH Fredericksburg II, LLC's request for an amendment to the 2015 Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map for Area 5B.

ISSUE

Should the City Council approve amendments to the 2015 Comprehensive Plan to sub-planning area 5B and the Future Land Use Map to enable an associated rezoning?

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment.

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

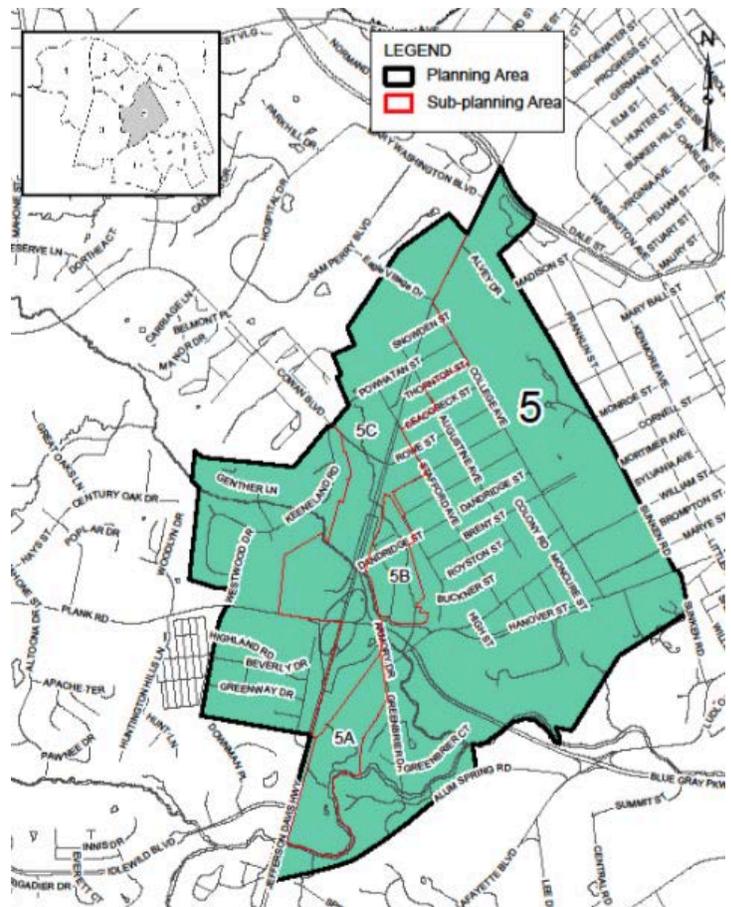
The City Council held a public hearing on this item on July 14, at which no one spoke. The item was deferred until the August 11 meeting to provide an opportunity for additional public comment.

PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING AND RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on this item on June 17th and accepted additional public comments through June 24th. Comments received during the June 17th public hearing primarily focused on the aspects of the rezoning. Only one public comment focused on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. It stated that Area 5B should include affordable housing potentially mixed with commercial development. After discussion on June 24th, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the Comprehensive Plan amendments to the City Council 6 – 0 with one member absent.

BACKGROUND

JFH Fredericksburg II, LLC requests consideration of a Comprehensive Plan amendment to sub-planning area 5B. The change would enable consideration of a rezoning and vacation of right-of-way request to redevelop a portion of the area between US Route 1, Spotsylvania Avenue, Rappahannock Avenue, and Brent Street for commercial and office use.



Area 5 is centered on the intersection of Route 3 and Route 1 and includes the College Heights and Greenbrier neighborhoods as well as the University of Mary Washington. Sub-Planning Area 5B is located at the northeast quadrant of the intersection of Route 3 and Route 1. This land was originally platted by the Fredericksburg Development Company and annexed into the City in 1951.

The existing land use pattern has remained much unchanged since the annexation. The former Fredericksburg Mobile Home Park makes up the northern end of 5B and is between U.S. Route 1 and Dandridge Street with frontage on Spotsylvania. The Payne Street right-of-way was vacated for use by the mobile home park in 1964. The mobile home park has been closed and vacant since March of 2018.

The southern end of area 5B includes a cluster of semi-industrial, commercial, and office uses. They are oriented to Olde William Street, which was a primary east-west highway prior to the construction of the Blue and Gray Parkway.

Area 5B is functionally separated from the College Heights neighborhood by the 175-foot-wide VEPCO Dominion Power Transmission Line. Though the rights-of-way of Brent and Buckner Streets are platted through this area, they are currently unimproved. Dandridge Street is a public street, which served the mobile home park and adjacent lots, but does not connect to Rappahannock Avenue. A large portion of the area is currently undeveloped with rolling topography. A stream runs through the area between Spotsylvania and Rappahannock Avenues. The southern portion of the stream is perennial, which requires a 100 foot wide Resource Protection Area buffer.

ANALYSIS

The area was originally designed as a continuation of the College Heights neighborhood with small lots on gridded streets. However, the transmission line easement, the stream, and proximity to Route 1 make expansion of the existing neighborhood pattern challenging. Area 5B is physically separated from the College Heights neighborhood limiting the potential for full connectivity, however pedestrian links are feasible.

Currently, the Future Land Use Map designates this area as ‘Medium Density Residential’. The City’s Comprehensive Plan states that this area: *has the potential to be redeveloped at a higher intensity. Potential uses include student housing as well as a mix of commercial and residential uses, as has occurred at Eagle Village. The basis of this level of development would be to provide much needed student housing and allow the College Heights neighborhood to recover from excessive numbers of rental uses. Redevelopment plans would need to be designed to become a positive contribution to the neighborhood and help reestablish itself as an owner-occupied community.* The president of Mary Washington University was asked about its interest in this property as a new location for student housing. He said the University plans on utilizing its existing owned land (on William Street and in Eagle Village) to provide additional housing when necessary in the next 5 – 10 years. In addition, he indicated that the University is not planning to expand enrollment and is focusing housing plans on improving existing facilities.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map are necessary to change the designations from low density residential use to more appropriate designations that would allow for the property owner’s desired redevelopment strategy.

Northern Area

The ‘General Commercial’ designation is appropriate on the northern end of 5B where the area has frontage, access, and visibility to Route 1. 5B is uniquely positioned near major roadways, regional transit, and two major institutional anchors: Mary Washington Hospital and the University of Mary

Washington. The location, coupled with its accessibility from U.S. Route 1, could provide space for some level of economic development in the form of commercial and office activity.

Any increase in the intensity of use in this area necessitates two site specific considerations. First, the transportation infrastructure in the area is substandard. Spotsylvania Avenue does not conform to contemporary street standards. The street needs to be realigned to meet modern horizontal alignment standards and the roadbed needs to be rebuilt. Also, the intersection with US Route 1 needs to be redesigned as traffic currently stacks in a 25-foot long stub that is perpendicular to the rest of the roadway. The intersection is located between the US Route 1 and Route 3 interchange and Cowan Boulevard's intersection with US Route 1. The major design objective for improvement to Spotsylvania Avenue is that it does not impede automobile traffic flow in this sensitive area. Also, Area 5B is one of the few areas left in the City east of US Route 1 that is disconnected from the City's pedestrian network. The area of the mobile home park has no pedestrian infrastructure at all.

Reconstructing Spotsylvania Avenue and expanding pedestrian infrastructure into this area require a substantial investment. The investment in this area is unlikely to come from the City. Permitting viable commercial development on the property would generate sufficient land use to justify a private sector investment in Area 5B's infrastructure.

Secondly, any increase in proposed land use should interface appropriately with the adjacent neighborhood. While automobile connections may be inappropriate, pedestrian connections would provide a link and destination between neighborhoods and local goods and services. Buffering should also be used to mitigate impacts to the neighborhood from commercial use and environmentally sensitive areas that currently screen the neighborhood from proposed development should be preserved. High impact auto-centric uses should be limited or considered only under special review.

Southern Area

The remainder of the area should be designated Commercial - Transitional / Office. The area has more environmental features than the northern portion of 5B and does not have direct access to major roadways. It is thus better suited as a transitional area.

CONCLUSION

Area 5B is currently described as appropriate for use as student housing. However, it is not in the University's plan for student housing. The transportation infrastructure currently serving the site is not suitable for increased levels of use. Commercial investment is one way to enhance the public infrastructure in the area without requiring a major capital investment by the City. The area is suitable for expanding the commercial use due to its proximity to three of the City's major roadway and the City's two major institutions. Permitting commercial use in this area will also expand the City's tax base.

The City Council should adopt the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments – Area 5B Text
2. Current and Proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Future Land Use Map



MOTION:

**August 11, 2020
Regular Meeting
Resolution No. 20-**

SECOND:

RE: Amending the Comprehensive Plan to update Chapter 11 Small Planning Area 5B and the Future Land Use Map for General Commercial Use

ACTION: APPROVED: Ayes: 0; Nays: 0

The purpose of this amendment is to amend Chapter 11 Small Planning Area 5B and the Future Land Use Map to accommodate a requested rezoning for a commercial / office park called Cowan Station. The change will reset the vision for the area from a higher intensity mix of student housing and commercial uses to a general commercial area with appropriate infrastructure and transitions to adjacent residential areas.

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on these amendments on June 17, 2020. The Planning Commission recommended adoption of the amendments at its meeting on June 24, 2020. City Council finds that these amendments will improve the public health, safety, convenience, and welfare of residents and provides adequate room for the future development of the City.

Therefore, the City Council hereby resolves that Chapter 11 sub-planning area 5B and the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan is amended as submitted for approval.

Votes:

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent from Vote:

Absent from Meeting:

Clerk's Certificate

I certify that I am Clerk of Council of the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia, and that the foregoing is a true copy of Resolution No. 20- adopted at a meeting of the City Council held August 11, 2020 at which a quorum was present and voted.

***Tonya B. Lacey, MMC
Clerk of Council***

LAND USE POTENTIAL

This planning area has been extensively developed and is beginning to see extensive redevelopment. The College Heights and College Terrace neighborhoods are attractive and accessible, due to their traditional street grid. College Terrace is not going to change much, except for a limited amount of infill development and additions to homes. College Terrace will also be considerably enhanced by a systematic reclamation of the existing alleys, which will relieve on-street parking and keep service functions at the rear of properties. College Heights, on the other hand, is more subject to the influences of the University of Mary Washington and of the U.S. Route 1 Bypass. As redevelopment occurs in the College Heights area, the highly functional street grid will need to be respected and kept intact.

TABLE 11-24 LAND USE POTENTIAL IN PLANNING AREA 5

SUB PLANNING AREA	SIZE	CURRENT ZONING	RECOMMENDED USE
5A	34.7 acres	R-2 Residential	Low Density Residential
5B	30 acres	Commercial Transitional, R-4 Residential, and Mobile Home	Commercial-General; Commercial-Transitional/Office
5C	1.3 miles of the U.S. Route 1 Bypass Corridor	Planned Development-Medical Campus, Commercial-Highway, Commercial-Shopping Center, Commercial-Transitional/Office, R-12 Residential	Commercial-General; Commercial-Transitional/Office; Institutional

SUB PLANNING AREA 5A

This 34.7-acre tract is controlled by the University of Mary Washington and has frontage on the U.S. Route 1 Bypass as well as Greenbrier Drive. Potential uses include student housing, but there could also be a potential mix of commercial and residential uses, as has occurred at Eagle Village. This level of development could provide much needed student housing and allow the College Heights neighborhood to recover from excessive numbers of rental units and reestablish itself as an owner-occupied community.

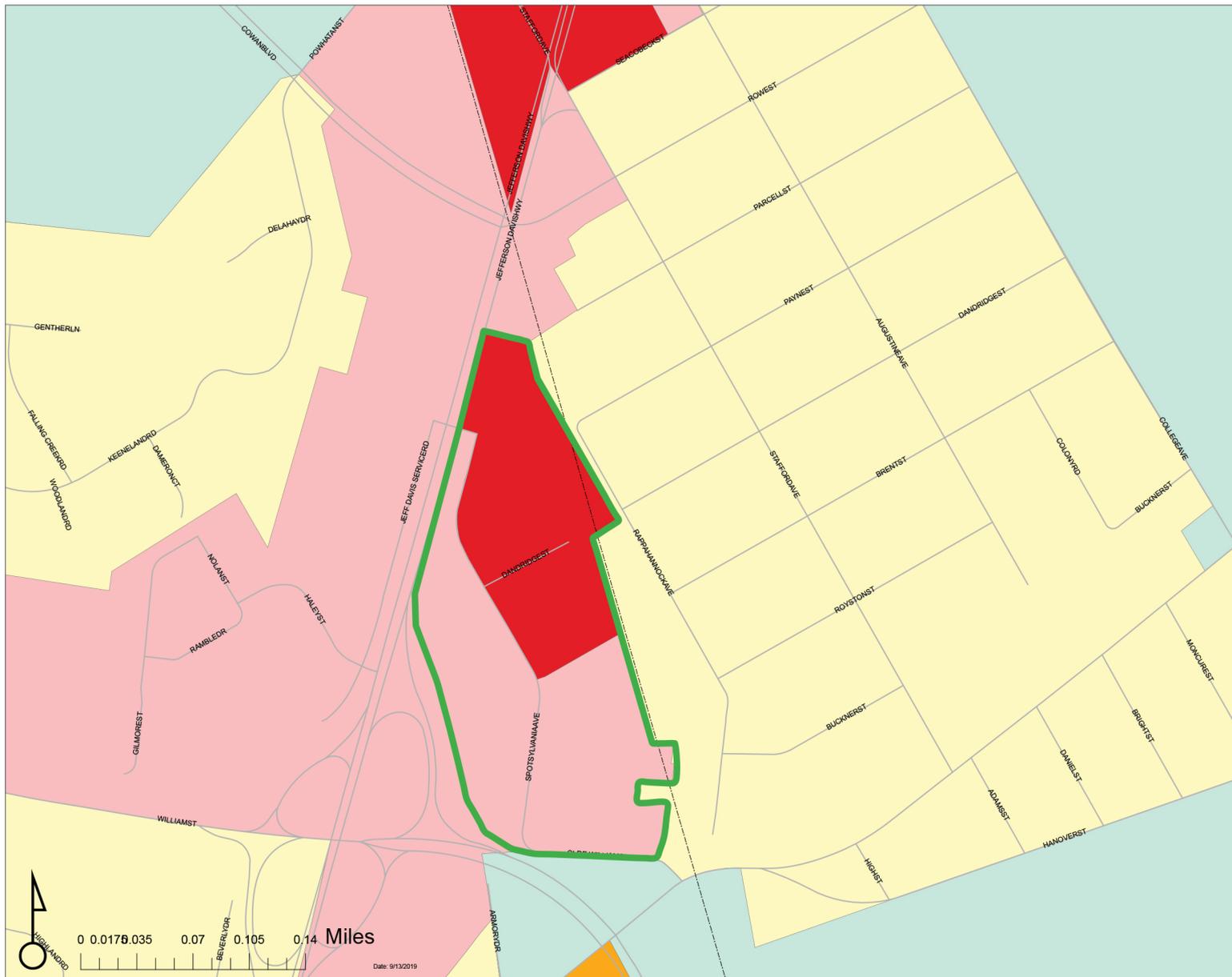
SUB PLANNING AREA 5B

The northeast quadrant of the intersection of State Route 3 and U.S. Route 1 exists currently as a remnant of the original Fredericksburg Development Company's platting with an assemblage of uses. Natural features and the Dominion Transmission Line functionally separate this area from the College Heights Neighborhood. The original configuration of streets and small lots is no longer practical particularly given the proximity to U.S. Route 1 and disconnection from College Heights. The existing layout, including vestiges of undeveloped rights-of-way, could be reassembled to support future evolution of the site. This area is uniquely positioned near major roadways, regional transit, and two major institutional anchors and could provide space for commercial and office activity. Serving as a walkable center, future development should link neighborhoods and local goods and services. A cohesive redevelopment could provide new uses where appropriate buffering ensures minimal effect to the adjoining neighborhood. To ensure this sensitivity, automobile centered uses and activities should only be considered under special review.

SUB PLANNING AREA 5C (U.S. ROUTE 1 BYPASS CORRIDOR)

The U.S. Route 1 Bypass/Jefferson Davis Highway became functional when a new Falmouth Bridge was completed in the 1940s, providing a way for travelers to avoid driving through downtown Fredericksburg when they did not intend to stop there. Commercial development followed the new traffic pattern and over the years a great variety of uses have gravitated to that roadway. A more cohesive commercial corridor could provide appropriate transitional land uses between the commercial activity along the highway and the nearby residential neighborhoods.

FUTURE LAND USE - PROPOSED



Legend

LAND USE DESIGNATION

TRANSECTS

- Civic
- T1
- T3E
- T3
- T4
- T4M
- T5M
- T5C
- T5W

RESIDENTIAL

- Low Density
- Medium Density
- High Density
- Planned Development/Mixed Use

COMMERCIAL

- Transitional/Office
- Downtown
- General Commercial
- Planned Development/Commercial

INDUSTRIAL

- General Industrial
- Light/ Research & Development

OTHER

- Institutional
- Parkland
- Preservation

CENTERLINES

- Existing
- Planned

Area Plan Boundaries

Power Lines



