MAY 19, 2022 COMMUNITY MEETING QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/REPONSES

PROPOSED BONUS HEIGHT ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

Bonus Height | City of Alexandria, VA (alexandriava.gov) (City of Alexandria, VA's Bonus Height webpage Link Above)

- 1. Where can I find information regarding the April 12 Community Meeting and the May 19 Community Meeting pertaining to the proposed Bonus Height Zoning Text Amendment. *Response:* You can access information regarding those meetings and other materials on the link noted at the top of this page. Once you click on the link, you will see "Community Engagement." The link under that will lead you to "Meetings and Materials."
- 2. Is this [May 19th] presentation only to inform the public of changes that P&Z intends to amend? Does the community have any opportunity to stop this from happening, especially in Old Town non-historic districts? *Response:* There will be public hearings on this proposal as shown in the May 19th presentation. The public hearings are scheduled for Thursday, June 23, 7:00 p.m. at the Planning Commission and on Tuesday, July 5, 5:30 p.m. at the City Council. The City has not stopped listening. Moreover, those interested in sharing additional thoughts can communicate them to the City prior to the public hearings or at the public hearings. **Contact information for the City on this matter is listed on the last page of this document.** The City believes the May 19th presentation which is found here: Program (Alexandriava.Gov) reflects that some changes have occurred pursuant to earlier public feedback.
- 3. Why wasn't a notice sent out that answers were posted on May 12th? *Response:* I believe you may be referring to the Questions/Comments/Responses relative to the April 12th Community Meeting, as referenced in tonight's presentation (May 19). Please know that an eNews was sent out. Please see page 4 of the May 19th presentation for the date of said communication Proposed Bonus Density Height Provision Text Amendment Status Of Planning And Community Engagement Work Program (Alexandriava.Gov)

- 4. Will this be subject to a public hearing Special Use Permit process? *Response:* Yes; a public hearing Special Use Permit is currently required under Section 7-703(B) and that will *not* change under this amendment.
- 5. Very nice work on the map! Much more understandable. *Response:* Thank you for acknowledging the effort to make the map more readable. This occurred based on the feedback received at the April 12 Community Meeting and the City appreciates that feedback.
- 6. Does the map have all streets listed that one can see exactly where the areas are? *Response:* Major streets are called out, along with landmarks, metro station areas, and community names to facilitate orientation to the map.
- 7. Regarding the map of impacted areas, does the City intend to be fully transparent with its constituents through providing a digital map where users can zoom into specific streets? Listing street names places the burden on the constituents to figure out the City's intentions with this amendment. *Response:* Staff tried to create a map that provides as much orientation as possible for the user by including as many community names, metro stations and major streets as possible as noted above. One can enlarge slide #6 of the May 19th presentation to see these features more clearly (slide #6 of the May 19th presentation Proposed Bonus Density Height Provision Text Amendment Status Of Planning And Community Engagement Work Program (Alexandriava.Gov). Additionally, to supplement one's viewing of the map, the City's GIS tools can be used side by side with this map GIS and Maps | City of Alexandria, VA (alexandriava.gov)
- 8. The height district GIS viewer referenced earlier in the Q&A does not seem to match up with the map from this meeting. Can you explain? *Response:* Whereas the Height District GIS viewer shows the boundaries and height maximums for all Height Districts in the City, the height bonus applicability map shows where Bonus Height could be requested. On the height bonus applicability map, areas of the City which are covered by a Height District which has a height maximum of 50 feet or less would be highlighted in red, as Bonus Height cannot be used to exceed this height maximum. Areas of the City which are not covered by a Height District which has a height maximum of 50 feet of less would either be highlighted in hatched green, solid green, or red depending on the height

- maximum of the given zone.
- 9. How would the map change if the City eliminates single-family zoning? *Response:* Single-family, two-family and townhome dwellings are not part of this proposal.
- 10. Where along Duke Street would the new height/density would apply? Are we talking Foxchase, both the apartments and the shopping center? The area where Sunrise is at Wheeler? *Response:* The map shown at the May 19th Community Meeting) is posted online on the Bonus Height webpage Bonus Height | City of Alexandria, VA (alexandriava.gov). A large shaded area is the Foxchase area, and there are areas along Wheeler, Dove, and Duke Streets.
- 11.On the map, what is the large green striped area in the west above Duke Street? *Response:* The area to which you may be referring is likely multi-family zoned properties.
- 12. The entire area in Seminary and Strawberry Hill is hashed green/white! Would you please be specific by streets as to the area that could be requested with approval of proposed updated bonus height/density. *Response:* The green and white hatched portion located just north of Duke Street would be the Foxchase Apartments and shopping center (zoned: RA/Multifamily and CG/Commercial General, respectively). Previously, this site was not eligible for Bonus Height because of the 45 50 ft height maximums. Similarly, along Van Dorn Street, there are the Brookeville Townhomes, Willow Run Apartments, and the Parkside at Alexandria Townhomes which are likewise zoned RA/Multifamily.
- 13. The map doesn't show the detail for Old Town, which is a patchwork. It APPEARS red, but the previous maps showed the patchwork. Has that been revised? *Response:* The City received feedback on the April 12th map requesting that it be revised to capture some of the regulations that areas would need to meet to take advantage of this proposed Text Amendment. That is why Old Town is now mostly red.
- 14.Do I correctly understand that the Safeway and Progressive sites at S. Royal and Gibbon Streets are no longer subject to this proposal? *Response:* Those sites are located within Height District #1 in the Old Town area with a height limit of 50 feet. Additionally, they are zoned

RM/Townhouse which does not permit multi-family development.

- 15.Does the initiative exempt those areas designated by the Department of the Interior to be historic districts? Park Fairfax, Town of Potomac (a portion of DelRay), Old and Historic, Alexandria Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Parker Gray, Old and Historic Alexandria National Historic Landmark? *Response:* Historic Districts are not specifically addressed under Section 7-700 and that has not changed under this proposed Text Amendment. Indirectly they may be addressed under applicable Height District provisions. It is important to note that *no* change is being made in terms of the relationship between the Old and Historic District and the Parkway.
- 16.It is hard to see if Mt. Vernon Avenue is hatched in green. The height defined by the Mt. Vernon Avenue Business Area Plan limits the height to 45 feet as long as a third floor is set back. Why is it hatched in green? *Response:* The Mt. Vernon Avenue Business Plan does allow 45 feet along Mt. Vernon Avenue, as long as the third floor is set back consistent with the Plan's design guidelines and undergoes a public hearing Special Use Permit process. If a property owner is able to meet the criteria of that Plan, through that Special Use Permit review process, then the property owner would also be able to apply for consideration of a Special Use Permit under this provision if it is adopted.
- 17. I would like to know which streets in Del Ray west of Mt Vernon Avenue can be requested with approval of the proposed updates? *Response:* Located just West of Mount Vernon Avenue, there is a small area of RA/Multifamily zoned properties which includes the current Lacy Court, Edinborough, and Manor House apartments sites.
- 18. Is the 25 feet to the top of the roof or can they extend with a parapet. Are all the units in the 25 foot set back angle because the Mt. Vernon Plan and the set back required. Will this apply If all the units are on this extension. *Response:* In order for a building with a flat roof and parapet wall to have its height measured to the roof line vs. the top of the parapet wall, the parapet must be 3 feet or less in height. If the parapet wall is more than 3 feet tall, height would need to be measured to the top of the parapet.
 - 19. What is the small solid square at Bradlee/Fairlington? *Response:* The square near the Bradlee/Fairlington area is a parcel that is zoned RC/High

- Density Apartment Zone, and it already allows use of Bonus Height.
- 20. Could a hatched area have any implications for areas in red? For instance, could an adjoining red area to a hatched area have a request for additional height? *Response*: No.
- 21. How can the community be reassured that the, as you stated, "Public hearing process and EXTENSIVE OUTREACH" will be followed when it was not followed for any project in OTN - i.e. Crown Plaza and 901 N Pitt St. Developers did not reach out to the community - they only posted a sign in front of the site which was missed by everyone. In the case of Pitt St ONLY the condo owners next door were notified personally. *Response*: This question relates to redevelopment that is occurring in Old Town North. Some of that redevelopment is using provisions that stem from the recent Old Town North Small Area Plan Update (OTN SAP Update) which entailed a process with a broad advisory board and many opportunities for community engagement. To be sure that questions regarding the OTN SAP Update are addressed directly, a section of the April 12th Questions/Comments/Responses is devoted to Old Town North: Bonus-Height-Community-Mtg-Q&A-20220512.pdf (alexandriava.gov) pages 17-18. Additionally, if there are any additional questions pertaining directly to the provisions of the OTN SAP Update the City can refer residents to the Old Town North Planning Team for more specificity around how that Plan addresses redevelopment.
- 22. Why is the applicable area of this change fairly limited? Would there be ways to enable bonus height more broadly? *Response:* The intent of this proposed Text Amendment is to provide an incremental change to generate additional units in a manner that can be accomplished with sensitivity to the character of a neighborhood. Additionally, if the question is inquiring as to whether there are plans to introduce an alternative to this version, the response is no. This is the version that is being advertised and anything different would need to go through another noticing and public review process.
- 23. The objectives were set based on analysis, assumption and needs pre-Covid, and a workforce in offices etc. Much of that has changed; will the analysis be revisited? *Response:* While there may be narrative that the demand for housing might be lowered by what has occurred during the past couple years, that actually has not been the case. The demand for

housing regionally has intensified as evidenced by the run up of pricing for housing as well as the rapid leasing of homes as they are built and, even more, the demand for affordable housing has accelerated for our most vulnerable who have found themselves needing affordable housing in greater number. Please see page 16 of the April 12 Questions/Comments/Responses - Bonus-Height-Community-Mtg-Q&A-20220512.pdf (alexandriava.gov).for further information from the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership pertaining to this question.

- 24. What is the duration that the specified units are required to remain affordable? *Response:* 40 years.
- 25.Extending the requirement to 1/3rd of an entire building would mean little to no utilization of this provision, and there are few if any additional housing units, committed affordable or otherwise. Ultimately housing is expensive due to a shortage. We need to make reforms to help end it. *Response:* Yes; we appreciate that point relative to the need for more affordable housing and this proposal is designed to help address the need, recognizing that fulfilling the City's affordable housing needs is an incremental process. The 1/3 provision currently exists under Section 7-700, and it applies to the increase in density (the bonus). Affordable units generated can be anywhere in the building.
- 26. Since everyone wants to live in Alexandria, especially Old Town, and every developer wants to build here, why can't the city set a NEW requirement, rather than believing they would encounter "economic Hardship," for developers to provide all of the bonus density as affordable units? *Response:* Bonus Density and Height are provided in exchange for 1/3 of the new units being affordable under Section 7-700. The affordable housing required by Section 7-700 of the Zoning Ordinance (at a 2:1 ratio, i.e., two market-rate units in exchange for every one affordable unit) was calibrated to maximize the community benefit of the zoning provision while ensuring an adequate incentive for the developer to apply for the optional increase in density and/or height.
- 27.If section 7-703B is not being used much in the zones where it is currently permitted, what is the logic suggesting it will be used more by expanding to more zones? Shouldn't the focus be on improving the uptake in the provisions where it applies now? *Response:* You are correct in that Section 7-703(B) is not being utilized as extensively as

Section 7-703(A) and so this proposed Text Amendment is to further incentivize interest in using it but recognizing that the additional height allowed – 25 feet – does *not* change and the process for achieving the added height continues to be subject to a public hearing Special Use Permit. All relevant regulations would continue to apply as well as an assessment of alignment with neighborhood design character.

- 28.Is the number of desired affordable housing units changed? Or is it still at 1,100 a year through 2030? and how much of that has been provided for in the existing plans? *Response:* There is a section in the April 12th Questions/Comments/Responses (pages 11-13) devoted to housing affordability. In terms of the 1,100 units, that is the average annual production of housing anticipated between 2020 2030. Approximately 800-870 units are being constructed on average per year now; augmenting that is the City's target of approximately 300 additional units under the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's Regional Housing Initiative (RHI) resulting in a goal 1,100 units per year. Three thousand (3,000) units would result from the additional 300 RHI units over the tenyear period. Three quarters of the 3,000 units (or 2,250) is targeted to be affordable/workforce affordable under the RHI.
- 29. What about the parking waivers mentioned originally? City tends to approve all requested waivers, as they did for EVA at Robinson Landing. *Response:* This question is specific to the Robinson Terminal South (Robinson Landing) project, and it came up as part of the April 12th Community Meeting. An extensive response is provided in the April 12th Questions/Comments/Responses See pages 10 -11 under the Parking and Infrastructure Section Bonus-Height-Community-Mtg-Q&A-20220512.pdf (alexandriava.gov). On a general note, parking reductions may be considered on a basis other than affordable housing and are not approved automatically but are subject to a Special Use Permit.
- 30.Has/will the City consider(ed) the impact of additional density on the infrastructure (e.g., schools, ball fields, traffic, storm sewers, etc.)? *Response:* This question came up at the April 12th Community Meeting. There is a full section on Parking and Infrastructure in the April 12th Questions/Comments/Responses document: Bonus-Height-Community-Mtg-Q&A-20220512.pdf (alexandriava.gov) see pages 10 and 11. The requirements pertaining to regulations/conditions relative to infrastructure will continue to be assessed through the public hearing Special Use Permit

process.

- 31. With the changes to streets to reduce lanes for additional bike lanes, and the new speed limit restrictions for safety, how does the city foresee dealing with the additional density and traffic it will bring? *Response:* As we evaluate each proposal through a Special Use Permit or Development Special Use Permit process, the City will assess all potential impacts including but not limited to traffic. This is in keeping with the City's goal and responsibility to keep our communities operable but safe for all modes of transportation. Safety is emphasized through the City's Transportation Master Plan and through regulatory requirements to which discretionary requests are subject.
- 32. For the city, I'd recommend no actions be taken until it is coordinated with city schools and infrastructure issues are addressed. *Response:* The City will always take infrastructure into account, and it works very closely with the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) through an interdepartmental team. The City and ACPS have regular ongoing discussions on properties owned by ACPS and how those sites are being developed to project for and address student growth rates.
- 33. How do staff define "neighborhood character?" *Response:* In this context what we are typically talking about is how height is arranged in the proposed structure. For example, in the case of a four-story building next to a two-story building, we are asking for architectural treatment to move the additional height away from the lower part of the building to minimize street level visual impacts and impacts on the relationship to neighboring buildings.
- 34. Some areas that would be affected by the change do not have character compatible with bonus height increases. Has P&Z considered that the SUP process burdens city staff and imposes costs on developers to evaluate this case by case? Can the neighborhood character be considered in advance of passing the provision? *Response:* In the earlier response related to neighborhood character, there was a focus on adjacent properties buildings in the immediate proximity. However, design solutions may vary. Many Small Area Plans (SAPs) have design guidelines to help provide resources for defining neighborhood character. These are important for property owners to reference as they are among the criteria upon which a

development will be assessed.

- 35. Strawberry hill is mostly residential. *Response:* Correct.
- 36.It's confusing: If the height re-zoned is limited by existing height zones but can be used anywhere there is multi-family housing, that seems like it could be pretty much most of Old Town. Can you clarify this? *Response:* It isn't an either; it is a both. In order to use this provision, a property needs to be zoned multi-family and it has to meet the provision of #2 under the proposed text. See page 5 of the May 19th presentation:

 Proposed Bonus Density Height Provision Text Amendment Status Of Planning And Community Engagement Work Program (Alexandriava.Gov)
- 37. The Samuel Madden homes at the convergence of Patrick & Henry are presently zoned RB townhouse and appear to be within Height District #2 and limited to 50' height. Based on your current text, Bonus Height would not apply to these blocks. However, the concept review presentation to the BAR last night proposed multifamily buildings with 85' heights. What is the process they are using to achieve this and what would preclude its use on other sites in the historic districts in the future? *Response:* Samuel Madden is using the Residential Multi-family zone (RMF) zone which is bound by the heights in the Braddock East Master Plan (maximum height of 50-60 feet on the southern block and 60-70 feet on the northern block). The RMF rezoning to would allow the heights in the Master Plan through a public hearing rezoning process.
- 38.Can you speak to the SW Quadrant much of which is in the OHAD and you show in red? What do the solid green and hatch marks along Duke St. near the SW Quadrant represent? It looks like the Heritage in the SW Quadrant area is in red therefore shows that change cannot be requested? Is that correct? Does this mean the current height limits not be changed? Thank you very much. *Response:* The hatched green area along Duke Street represents pockets of OCM (50)/Office Commercial Medium (50), OC/Office Commercial, and CD/Commercial Downtown zoning, all of which have height maximums of 50 feet and, thus, are not currently areas in which Bonus Height could be requested, but would be with approval of the proposed Text Amendment. The height of the Heritage project remains unchanged from what was approved by City Council.

- 39. For Chirilagua, how will these requests be reviewed in relation to the city's commitment to maintain that community's current culture in light of concerns that new development in crystal city will lead to the deterioration of that neighborhood. While they are not historical buildings, will maintaining the communities current look and feel be taken into account? *Response:* The recently adopted Arlandria-Chirilagua Small Area Plan (SAP), contains two fundamental elements which underpin the SAP's intent: enabling residents to remain in their community and ensuring the community and its unique culture can continue to thrive. You are right in that culture is important and it should be preserved. Toward that end the SAP reflects the importance of culture being represented by the people who live there through intangibles such as customs, traditions, food, as well as the tangibles such as building form and type, streetscape, amenities, institutions, materials etc. It is important that the culture of all communities be preserved in multiple ways.
- 40. What is the process for changing height district boundaries and height district limits? *Response:* There are a number of questions that are speculative, and the City does not want to infer there is anything on the table or contemplated that would modify anything beyond what is stated in this particular proposal. To achieve a regulatory change, it must go through a public review process including specific noticing that speaks directly to the nature of a proposed change. To change the nature of a proposal beyond what is noticed would require a whole new process. There is no intent to change anything beyond what is stated on page 5 of the May 19th presentation: Proposed Bonus Density Height Provision Text Amendment Status Of Planning And Community Engagement Work Program (Alexandriava.Gov)
- 41. What would prevent the Planning Commission or City Council from changing the proposed language for the bonus height density to allow for its application in single family and townhouse communities? *Response:* Again, when staff brings a proposal forward for a public body to consider, it must be advertised in the newspaper in a manner that characterizes the proposed change, and it is that proposal on which the City Council will act.
- 42. Have concern that people are beginning to realize that zoning in general is always amendable. You can't count on it staying the same. That is really

hurting the City and people are again realizing that zoning is subject to the political process. This vastly increases the concerns of citizens that what is approved today can be changed in the future. They are right next door to something that could add up to 75 feet. *Response:* There are a number of factors that have to be taken into account even if a parcel would be eligible for this proposed Text Amendment – configuration of the site, other zoning/regulatory considerations beyond use and height, neighborhood context, project economics, etc., all of which will have to be assessed and reviewed through a public hearing Special Use Permit process.

- 43. What are two specific sites on the map in the OTN area? *Response:* The site that you are inquiring about appears to be Robinson Terminal North (the west side). It is zoned to 66 feet under the Department of Interior Settlement Agreement. The other site further north appears to be the Tidelock on Fairfax Street, a mixed-use redevelopment project.
- 44. Has the power plant been rezoned? *Response:* The power plant is not currently zoned in a way that allows multi-family development. It is in currently in the final stages of the development review process; the OTN SAP Update does envision additional height for the site for when it is rezoned. The power plant site Coordinated Development District application will come to hearing late June and July.
- 45.Can you give an example of this? What would be the maximum height? Why is this necessary to change zoning if a waiver can be granted? Where are the "zone or height district" areas? *Response:* The allowable additional height is 25 feet above the height that is permitted under a given zone. As stated previously, it is important to note that regulations and conditions would need to be met in order to utilize the proposed Text Amendment as specified under the Special Use Permit process and the zoning. Height District regulations can be found in Section 6-400 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- 46.Can you tell me if the height provisions of Section 7-700 would affect any current height limits areas and where do I find materials from the April 12th Meeting? *Response:* The proposed Bonus Height Amendment would allow the use of Section 7-703 (B) in areas with a height of 45 feet or above. Currently, Section 7-703 (B) is applicable in zones where the height limits are above 50 feet. Additionally, what Section 7-703(B) states and what is *not* proposed for change is that Section 7-703(B) is not applicable in

areas where the Height District is 50 feet or less. An example of that would be most of Old Town which has two Height Districts: (1) Height District #1 which covers most of Old Town and Parker Gray and (2) Height District #3 which covers the area in Old Town along the Potomac River.

Materials from both the April 12th Community Meeting and the May 19th Community Meeting can be found on the Bonus Height webpage through this link: https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/bonus-height

- April 12th Questions/Comments/Responses Can be found here: https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Bonus-Height-Community-Mtg-Q%26A-20220512.pdf
- o May 19th Questions/Comments/Responses
 - Recording: https://zoom.us/rec/play/cwNjEsXGmgkRC0CPbw
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 - Presentation:
 https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Meeting-Presentation-20220519.pdf
- 47. What protections will there be so lots currently zoned RM and RB with lower height limits and not eligible for section 7-700, are restricted from being rezoned and subject to Section 7-700A rezoning would change them into a different zoning classification making them eligible for Section 7-700. So, what protections will be in place so this won't happen? *Response:* Because a public hearing Special Use Permit is required, a property owner choosing to pursue this provision, if it is approved, would need to adhere to the regulatory requirements of the zone; in addition the Special Use Permit would be assessed for impacts to neighborhood character and against any relevant Small Area Plan (SAP) guidelines.
- 48.Is there a reason why the City uses the Alexandria Times for noticing and, if a City of Alexandria community member/resident does not have Internet access, is not aware of eNews, or does not regularly read the Alexandria Times, how else can that resident become aware of City activities? *Response:* In terms of the Department of Planning & Zoning's use of the Alex Times, we do so for consistency. We want the public to know that if they are seeking information about a public hearing for any given month,

they can for the most part go to a given paper to see what is being docketed for Planning Commission for that month. The Alex Times is free and is distributed in both hard copy as well as electronically. It is a paper of general circulation and its website notes that 9,600 copies are delivered each week to high traffic businesses and in boxes throughout the City. You can find a list of where to find it each Thursday by clicking on this link: https://alextimes.com/about-us/where-to-find-the-paper/; because it is free and distributed widely, anyone with a computer can access it r they can locate it in hard copy in one of those places.

- 49. What is the City's policy justification for no written or placard requirement for Zoning Text Amendments such as this proposed text amendment to 7-700? *Response:* Please know that for noticing, in general, the Department of Planning & Zoning follows both City Code and State Code guidelines for public hearings for land use matters for which we are responsible. Also, for community meetings, such as the ones held at the April and May Community Meeting on the proposed Bonus Height Zoning Text Amendment, staff utilize a variety of outreach tools including emails, the website, sharing of information via community partners, announcements etc.
- 50.Can you provide an image of a smaller scale building that might qualify for this proposed Text Amendment? *Response:* As you know the proposed Text Amendment would be applicable to multi-family (not single-family, two-family or townhome dwellings). Those multi-family eligible buildings would need to be located in zones which allow heights of 45 feet or more and they would need to meet other regulatory criteria. Smaller scale buildings less than 45 feet would not be eligible.

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