

DATE: OCTOBER 12, 2012
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
FROM: DAVID BAKER, CHAIRMAN, BEAUREGARD REZONING ADVISORY GROUP
SUBJECT: BRAC 133 OPEN SPACE FUND

ISSUE: BRAC-133 Open Space Acquisition Site

RECOMMENDATION:

The Beauregard Rezoning Advisory Group recommends that the Polk/Pelham site (Site 8 – *Attachment 1*) be the preferred site for open space acquisition using the BRAC 133 funds. In the event that the Polk/Pelham site is not available after all reasonable efforts are made to acquire the site, then the Town Center/Parking Lot site (Site 1 – *Attachment 1*) is the second preferred site of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group also recommends that City staff provide update(s) to the Advisory Group on the Council decision and status of the negotiations, as appropriate.

BACKGROUND:

On behalf of the eleven-member Beauregard Rezoning Advisory Group, I am forwarding the recommendation of the Advisory Group regarding the use of the \$1,500,000 BRAC 133 funds allocated for open space. Based on the October 11, 2011, letter from Duke Realty, the funding is to be provided for “the purpose of acquiring additional open space in the City’s West End.” (*Attachment 2*)

In order to analyze potential sites, the Advisory Group created a process where members of the Advisory Group, and the community, had the opportunity to nominate potential open space sites as part of the Open Space Acquisition Process (http://alexandriava.gov/news_display.aspx?id=63388). There were eight sites nominated and evaluated by the Advisory Group.

Prior to discussing the eight sites, the Advisory Group conducted a site tour, during which the Advisory Group visited all of the proposed sites (excluding Site 7 – IDA Vacant Land – *Attachment 1*). In addition, the Advisory Group worked with City staff and the developers to have the two less clearly defined sites (Town Center/Parking Lot and Foster Fairbanks staked out by the engineers to clearly define the boundaries of these sites. In addition to the Advisory Group, approximately 30 members of the public participated in the site tour and on-site discussion of each location.

The site tour was helpful to analyze elements for each site such as topography, tree canopy, existing buildings, adjoining streets, and the context and character of each neighborhood.

Following the site tour, the Advisory Group held a meeting on August 22, 2012. At the meeting, the Advisory Group eliminated sites that were not economically feasible with the allocated funds and/or did not have a known willing seller.

The eliminated sites:

- Winston Court (Site 2);
- Garden Apartments - Hillwood (Site 3);
- Foster Fairbanks (Site 4);
- Trail Connection – Linear Park (Site 6); and,
- IDA Vacant Land (Site 7).

The remaining sites:

- Polk/Pelham (Site 8);
- Town Center/Parking Lot (Site 1); and,
- Seminary/Echols (Site 5).

The Advisory Group and community members provided comments on the three remaining sites. Topics of discussion included functionality of the sites, timing of when they would become available, physical characteristics, costs, connectivity of open space, the importance of place-making, and accessibility of the site as a resource to the greater community.

During the open comment period of the meeting, the community raised additional questions including site security, the needs and desires of particular neighborhoods, density of the adjacent neighborhoods, and the importance of ecological considerations in the development of any of the sites.

The Advisory Group subsequently agreed that the group would use the open space criteria approved by the City Council for open space acquisition to evaluate the three sites.

Based on the open space criteria, the three sites scored as follows (*Attachment 3*)

Polk: 169.5

Town Center/Parking Lot: 116.5

Seminary/Echols: 101.5

The Advisory Group held a meeting on October 1, 2012, to finalize their recommendation to City Council. Based on the open space criteria, site tour, community and Advisory Group discussion, the Advisory Group unanimously agreed that the Polk/Pelham was the preferred alternative for use of the BRAC 133 funding, and recommends the following:

The Beauregard Rezoning Advisory Group recommends that the Polk/Pelham site (Site 8 – Attachment 1) be the preferred site for open space acquisition using the BRAC 133 funds. In the event that the Polk/Pelham site is not available after all reasonable efforts are made to acquire the site, then the Town Center/Parking Lot site (Site 1 – Attachment 1) is the second preferred site of the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group also recommends that City

staff provide update(s) to the Advisory Group on the Council decision and status of the negotiations, as appropriate.

The proposed site is consistent with the intent of the Beaugard Small Area Plan to design neighborhood parks “to serve a variety of uses and serve as gathering places for residents and visitors” and for “accessibility of parks... [to] invite walking rather than driving” and intent of the open space plan to “develop innovative opportunities for creating additional open space” and “create public open space from vacant land.” In addition, the Polk/Pelham site selection is one that is supported by the community.

While not currently a viable site, the Advisory Group believes strongly that the Trail Connection from Foster Fairbanks (Site 4 - *Attachment 1*) to the adjoining Alexandria Campus of Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) should be considered as part of a future rezoning and/or development review process.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the Advisory Group and the many community members who provided valuable information and insight during the site evaluation and selection processes.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Nominated Open Space Sites:

Site 8, Polk Pelham;

Site 1, Town Center Parking Lot;

Site 6, Trail Connection – Linear Park

Attachment 2: Duke Realty Letter, Dated 10/11/11

Attachment 3: Open Space Site Scores

CC:

Chairman and Members of the Planning Commission

Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager

Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning

James Spengler, Director, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Jeffrey Farner, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning

Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities

Amy Friedlander, Urban Planner, Planning and Zoning