

Docket Item #10-A  
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2003-0006  
OPEN SPACE

Planning Commission Meeting  
May 8, 2003

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for an amendment to the City's Master Plan, adopting the Open Space Plan as a chapter of the Master Plan.

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**CITY COUNCIL ACTION, MAY 17, 2003:** City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, MAY 8, 2003:** On a motion by Mr. Robinson, seconded by Mr. Leibach, the Planning Commission approved the master plan amendment, with the specific amendments attached below. The vote carried on a 7-0 vote.

**Reason:** The Commission endorsed the long work by many parties on an Open Space Plan and a Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation. Having been involved in the process itself, the Commission noted how inclusive it was and thanked staff and involved citizens for their efforts. With regard to the content of both plans, Commission members noted how easily they and others talk about the benefits of open space, parks and recreation, but that without specific goals to guide them, it is difficult to achieve specific results. The Commission stated that it looked forward to working with staff in the future as the goals of both plans were implemented.

**Speakers:**

Ellen Pickering, spoke in support of the plans and requested that a series of specific language amendments be incorporated related to: referencing the need for additional parkland on the Waterfront, and making specific reference to the need to connect stream valleys and other natural areas. The Commission incorporated the changes, asking staff to assist in the drafting. The proposed Commission changes are attached.

Cindy DeGroot, Environmental Policy Commission, spoke in support and endorsed the hard work by many people over the past several years.

Poul Hertel, spoke in support, but suggested that Peter Harnick's speech from the Open Space Summit be included as an appendix to the Open Space Plan.

Judy Noritake, Parks and Recreation Commission, spoke in support of the process as well as the resulting plans.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission initiate, on its own motion, an amendment to the City's Master Plan, adopting the attached Open Space Plan as a chapter to the Master Plan.

## DISCUSSION

The attached Open Space Plan is the culmination of two years of work by each interested sector, faction and constituent group in Alexandria related to the issue: City Council, City staff, hundreds of citizens, members of the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Environmental Policy Commission, and professional consultants, themselves residents of the City. The effort was guided by an Open Space Steering Committee which met frequently with consultants and staff to advise and adjust the progress of the work. There has been an Open Space Summit; each of the above Commissions has devoted time to the issue on their agendas and City Council addressed open space as a priority issue at its 2002 Council Retreat.

The result is a document which outlines the City's goals and policies with respect to open space generally, and directs those efforts the City needs to undertake in the future in order to retain and preserve existing open space and to attain additional open space. More importantly, the result of all of the work of the last two years, by all of the groups and individuals involved, is a new way of thinking about open space that elevates the subject matter in a variety of contexts. Each development application, each infill project, and each landscaped treatment becomes a discussion about the value of open space.

At the same time as the Open Space work was proceeding, the City also undertook to address its parks and recreational needs through a separate Needs Assessment Study, the results of which are now before the Planning Commission as the Strategic Plan for Recreation, Parks and Cultural Resources. The two studies coincide in their goals to enhance the outdoor experience for all Alexandrians, and the need to obtain additional open space for both passive and active pursuits.

One of the important features of the Open Space Plan is that it inventories all of the existing open space in the City, and lists and maps each site by its classification. After explaining the City's open space history, it discusses the City's needs for additional open space, and then frames the open space issue for Alexandria in a list of 15 simple and direct goal statements each with objectives and strategies. Finally, the Plan lists Priority Actions, and discusses funding and implementation measures.

The open space planning effort is now coupled with a Council initiative to devote one penny of the tax rate to open space acquisition. The Open Space Plan then provides the framework for moving ahead both to preserve and enhance the open space we have and to obtain the additional land area Alexandria needs to retain its quality of life for the future.

**STAFF:** Sandra Whitmore, Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities;  
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning.

RESOLUTION NO. MPA 2003-0006

WHEREAS, under the Provisions of Section 9.05 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission may adopt amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Alexandria and submit to the City Council such revisions in said plans as changing conditions may make necessary; and

WHEREAS, an Open Space Steering Committee has worked with outside consultants for over two years to assess the City's open spaces and its goals for the future.

WHEREAS, there have been numerous public forums and meetings to gather citizen input on the subject of open space, including an Open Space Summit:

WHEREAS, the proposed Open Space Plan has been reviewed by city staff from a number of city agencies; by the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Environmental Policy Commission; by the Open Space Steering Committee; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on May 8, 2003, with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendment is necessary and desirable to guide and accomplish the coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the City of Alexandria;
2. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with, indeed furthers the overall goals and objectives of the 1992 Master Plan; and
3. The proposed amendment includes direction and guidance for the City in its effort to achieve a quality of life for its citizens that includes the benefit of open spaces of all types and sizes; and
4. Based on the foregoing findings and all other facts and circumstances of which the Planning Commission may properly take notice in making and adopting a master plan for the City of Alexandria, adoption of the Open Space Plan as a chapter of the 1992 Master Plan will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents of the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Alexandria that:

1. The Open Space Plan is hereby adopted in its entirety as a new chapter to the 1992 Master Plan of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in accordance with Section 9.05 of the Charter of the City of Alexandria, Virginia:
2. This resolution shall be signed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission and attested by its secretary, and a true copy of this resolution forwarded and certified to the City Council.

ADOPTED the 8th day of May, 2003.

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Eric Wagner, Chairman  
Alexandria Planning Commission

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eileen P. Fogarty, Secretary