



SITE PLANNING

LESSONS LEARNED FROM WORKING SITE PLANS

MICHAEL BRUCE

WAYCROFT WOODLAWN CIVIC ASSOCIATION – PRESIDENT

NOVEMBER 12, 2024

This Presentation Results Viewpoints Learned During Multiple County Site Plan Engagements
I am NOT an attorney. I AM civic activist who CARES about Community-centric Government

BEFORE PUBLIC HEARINGS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Know the Process – Major vs Minor Site Plan
 - Minor Site Plan **DOES NOT** Require Public Engagement Prior to Coming to Board for a VOTE
 - **ACTIVELY ENGAGE** CPHD Staff, SPRC Members and County Board Member to **LOBBY** Resident and CA Viewpoints
 - Well Financed Developers employ Land Use Attorneys – **CONTACTING COUNTY STAFF & BOARD MEMBERS**
- Developers Submission of **Preliminary Site Plans** Well Before the Public is Informed
 - **Public Notification Of A Site Plan – CAN BE MADE DAYS BEFORE THE DEVELOPER SUBMITS PLAN**
 - **SITE PLAN HAS ALREADY BEEN IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNTY CPHD STAFF**
- What Can Communities Do?
 - Know and Understand the Staff Plan Staff Report Template
 - Template contains many items that a site plan must address:
 - ENSURE ALL ASPECTS OF A PLAN ARE ADDRESSED IN PUBLIC MEETINGS
 - PUSH BACK IF ALL ITEMS ARE NOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESSED
 - Watch Local Real Estate News Source: Urban Turf, Washington Business Journal, etc.

BEFORE PUBLIC HEARINGS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Engage a Developer Outside the Formal County Process
- Gain Private Agreements with the Developer to Bring to CPHD Staff
 - EXAMPLE: Statement of Engagement Signed With VHC Health
 - MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING – to be completed
 - Community Meetings Process
 - Remediations with Penalties for Non-Compliance With Site Plan Related Issues
- Bring Agreements to CPHD Staff and County Hearings
 - A NOVEL APPROACH that CPHD Staff Cannot Yet Grasp
 - Expect Developer Pushback and CPHS Staff Pushback
 - Takes CPHD Staff Out of Shepherding the Process - Community-centric versus Staff-centric

DURING THE PUBLIC PROCESS

- Minor Site Plans – Staff does NOT have to hold public meeting. Communities must LOBBY for such
- Major Site Plans – Go Through a Formal SPRC process that is Adversarial versus Conversational
 - Developer/Land-Use Attorney Presentations followed by Q&A. No joint problem and issue solving in real-time.
 - Abutting Communities must FORCE hearing to address ALL matters that are contained in a FINAL SITE PLAN
 - Communities FORCE developers to bring all experts on plans, construction, processes, demolition, etc. to hearings
- STAFF REPORT
 - Often released A WEEK or DAYS before County Board Hearing
 - Communities are NOT provided early access to drafts in order to make comments and recommendation
 - Staff DOES NOT take community written site plan content and reflect these in options or language given to board
 - Staff pushes back on Statements of Engagement and MOUs agreed to outside the Staff Management Process
- BOARD
 - Must vote approval and make changes
 - As in many public processes – “The Vote Memorializes The Decision The Board Has Already Made”
 - Communities must Lobby heavily at Open Door Mondays, One-on-One Meetings, and Open Board Meetings

AFTER A SITE PLAN IS APPROVED

- Developer Can Make Site Plan Changes Outside Any Public Process
 - ZONING ADMINISTRATOR (ZA) can receive requests By Developer to changes Site Plan Conditions
 - ZA reviews and approves such changes without public comment or notification requests
 - Developer will claim “Change Has No or Minor Community Impact”; Yet they have not engaged impacted communities
- ZA Changes to Site Plans
 - Are not Public Posted and Are Not Made Known to the Public
 - Public has 30-days to State Objections to ZA Changes
 - ZA Does not Respond to public inquires made by community organizations
- Site Plan Enforcement – Under the Permitting Office
 - Staff DO NOT issue site plan citations when a site plan condition is violated
 - Site Plan Inspectors are directed to work with developers to correct deficiencies
 - There are no Public Records of non-conformity unless a citation is issued – Thus public as no knowledge of impacts
 - Staff are not allowed to share internal “Site Plan Compliance Checklists and Records” with community
- LOBBYING Sympathetic Board Members seems to be the only way to gain traction with Developers

NEWS MEDIA PROJECT ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Washington Business Journal – Oct 28 2024

VHC Health's Behavioral Health and Rehabilitation Facility

Location: 601 S. Carlin Springs Road

Estimated cost: \$161 million

Estimated completion: First quarter 2027

VHC Health is working to bring a **146-bed acute-care hospital for psychiatric and addiction treatment** to a property a few miles south of its main hospital campus. The facility would include 96 beds for behavioral health and 50 for medical rehabilitation.

The project requires VHC to **buy back a 5.8-acre property it previously sold to Arlington County**. The system expects the construction process to take about 12 to 18 months once it begins in June, **a later start than original estimates** because of rising construction and building costs. It comes at a critical time for behavioral health, with demand for such care far exceeding the supply amid the opioid drug crisis.

It also **supports VHC's ongoing expansion**, as the health system shifts outpatient services from its 453-bed flagship hospital to a **\$250 million outpatient pavilion that opened in 2023**.

The **hospital building's expansion** stands to result in 65 new hospital beds and another 30 observation beds, all to be completed by the second quarter of 2026 — a **\$45 million endeavor**.

■ Washington Business Journal – April 11 & Sept 16, 2024

Penzance is moving forward with plans to redevelop Ballston One, a 1980s-era Arlington office tower it recently acquired for cheap, with a new multifamily building. The DC real estate firm bought the 253,000-square-foot, 12-story office at **4601 N. Fairfax Drive** in 2023 for \$25 million —and then, this past spring, floated plans to raze and replace it with new apartments. A preliminary site plan application filed Sept. 13 with Arlington County's CPHD indicates the project is advancing apace. (NOTE: **Location currently houses DHS-CISA HQ**)

The submitted preliminary site plan shows an eight-story multifamily building, comprising 328 units in about 310,000 square feet — larger but squatter than the existing office — including an unspecified penthouse amenity.

The proposed building is shorter than the **16 stories allowed there**. In their published comments on Penzance's earlier submitted conceptual site plan, **county staff suggested considering a taller building with a reduced footprint, creating more space for streetscaping and water runoff absorption**.