

RZ06-6  
Luray Heights, LLC  
To Rezone 128.8 Acres  
From B1, R1, R2, and R5  
To Planned Neighborhood Development District (PND)

**Overview of the Planned Neighborhood Development Process**

The Planned Neighborhood Development (PND) zoning ordinance is intended to allow for planned neighborhood developments on large tracts of land characterized by “unified site design for a variety of housing types and densities, clustering of building, common open space, and a mix of building types and land uses...” Further, the purpose of the PND ordinance is to provide for an alternative form of development that trades larger individual lot sizes for considerable natural open space.

The PND process has three significant phases. These phases are as follows: Concept Plan, Master Land Use Plan, and Development Plan.

The applicant, Luray Heights, LLC, submitted a Concept Plan which was reviewed and approved by the Town’s Planning Commission and Town Council in October and November of 2006 respectively.

This submission - which the Planning Commission is presently considering - is the applicant’s Master Land Use Plan. During this phase of the PND process, the Planning Commission will receive public comment. Additionally, the PND ordinance requires the applicant to address 23 specific topics as part of the Master Land Use Plan submission – which the applicant has completed and submitted to the Town.

**Location**

The site is located south of West Main Street (Route 211 Business) and is bordered to the east by South Court Street, and to the west by Leakesville Road.

**Proposed Uses**

The applicant is proposing to rezone a total of 128.8 acres from B1, R1, R2, and R5 to a Planned Neighborhood Development District (PND). The PND is a residential development with open space, and recreational amenities.

**Residential Area**

A total of 509 residential units are proposed – 369 townhouses and 140 single-family houses. The applicant’s Master Land Use Plan indicates the proposed development will consist of three distinct neighborhoods, which are connected via sidewalks and walking trails.

**Width of Townhouses**

The applicant proposes townhouses with widths ranging from 24’ to 36’. The applicant indicates that wider townhouses typically include a master bedroom on the first floor,

allowing for the single-level living that is most popular with a more senior demographic. The second floor of such wider townhouse units generally incorporates a smaller footprint for a loft and second bedroom, and is often offered to the purchaser as an option. While the applicant anticipates that the development will be most attractive to an older, active adult buyer, the applicant is not interested in restricting the age of purchasers. The lack of any age restriction is more consistent with the intent of the PND and the desire to preserve the Town's distinctive small town character

### **Recreational Areas**

The applicant is proposing a one-acre site for a community recreation/amenity building. Additionally, approximately two miles of trails are proposed through a linear park-like network of open space.

### **Phasing**

Twelve phases are proposed, with development initially commencing along the south side of the existing section of Court Lane. A connection to West Main Street is constructed in phase three, and then development activity moves eastward to complete the road connection to South Court Street in phase four. Latter phases spread outward from the Main Street and Court Street linkages. The last phases scheduled to be developed are adjacent to Leakesville Road (phase 10) and adjacent to the Forest Hills neighborhood (phase 12).

Depending on market forces and other factors, the applicant anticipates that build-out of the PND could be achieved between 7 to 15 years.

### **Exiting Zoning**

Existing zoning provides for low density single-family dwellings with 15,000 square foot minimum lot sizes on the approximately 72 acres of R1 zoned land. Medium density single-family dwellings with 10,000 square foot minimum lot sizes are currently allowed on approximately 47 acres zoned R2. The highest residential density of R5 on approximately 8 acres of the property permits townhouses and garden apartments. The B1 portion of the property is less than one acre and likely too narrow for any use other than an entrance road as proposed.

### **Utilities**

Luray's Sewage Treatment Plant is currently operating at approximately 50% capacity, adequate sewer service is available. The applicant has submitted engineering data which indicates that all new sewer lines will be gravity served. Further, there is adequate water source capacity in the Town's water system.

The applicant will be responsible for paying water and sewer tap fees, and all cost associated with installing on-site water and sewer mains. Additionally, the developer will be responsible for all cost associated with off-site improvements deemed necessary by the Town to provide water and sewer to the site.

### **Emergency Services**

The applicant submitted a summary of interviews with police, fire and rescue officials. Staff concurs with the general consensus that the project is not likely to cause a significant negative impact on emergency services.

### **Floodplain**

There are no mapped floodplains on the property. A submitted site analysis map shows existing slopes, vegetation, and ponds.

### **Storm Water Management**

The plan incorporates a series of on-site storm water management facilities designed to manage the quality and quantity of storm water runoff from the development and minimize any impact on natural features. At a minimum, the quality and quantity of storm water will be maintained at pre-development rates.

### **Overview of Access to the Development**

The plan proposes six new connections to the Town's road system. In addition to minimizing the impact of traffic by dispersing it onto numerous existing roads, the road system of the project provides new alternative and time saving routes for existing residents and emergency services.

### **Leakesville Road**

The applicant proposes one connection to Leakesville Road to be made in one of the latter phases of development. This connection would improve access from the Town to the new high school on Leakesville Road. Additionally, the applicant – through voluntary proffers - has dedicated 15-feet of right-of-way to VDOT along its Leakesville Road frontage for potential road widening.

### **West Main Street**

The application includes a proposed purchase of a strip of land on which to create access to West Main Street and a connection through the community to South Court Street. Along with the necessary re-alignment of Northcott Drive, the applicant has agreed to fund the cost of the traffic signal at West Main Street and Northcott Drive as recommended by the submitted Traffic Impact Study.

### **South Court Street**

The applicant has agreed to improve the atypical geometry of the intersection of South Court Street and Mill Creek Road and create a four-way stop intersection upon its connection to South Court Street.

### **VDOT's 2020 Transportation Plan**

The proposed plan incorporates a section of VDOT's planned Southeastern Connector Roadway. The applicant has been responsive to this plan by proposing an alley behind the townhouses that front this roadway as a means to minimize driveway connections to this limited access through street.

### **Variances from the Town's Subdivision Ordinance**

The applicant has requested six exceptions to the Subdivision Ordinance that are all consistent with the purpose and intent of the PND ordinance to encourage innovative residential development and a walkable environment.

### **Other Considerations**

The PND ordinance provides that residential bonus density of up to 6.0 dwelling units per acre be granted upon finding that it promotes the purposes of the PND and provides additional public benefit. The applicant has requested a density bonus of approximately 10% (47 dwelling units) over the 462 units of base density established in the PND ordinance. The applicant offers the justification that the proposed plan includes 33.7% open space rather than 25% as required by the ordinance, and over two miles of trails are proposed for public use.

### **Staff Recommendation: Approval**

**December 6, 2006**

The stated intent of the Planned Neighborhood Development ordinance is to “allow planned neighborhood development on large tracts of land characterized by unified site design for a variety of housing types and densities, clustering of buildings, common open space, and a mix of building types and land uses...” The proposed Planned Neighborhood Development submitted by Luray Heights, LLC strongly adheres to the spirit and intent of this ordinance.

The subject site is zoned residential and could be platted by a matter of right for residential purposes. Though the applicant has not expressed an interest in developing the site by right, by doing so the applicant would not be required to provide recreational amenities or provide common open space (with the exception of the R5 zoned land). The Town would have limited ability to require a by right development to accommodate future VDOT plans, and the number of access points into the development would likely be reduced.

It is envisioned that this proposed Planned Neighborhood Development will be an asset to the Town and surrounding area. Aside from the amenities associated with this PND, much of the Town's cost to provide utility infrastructure to the site is mitigated as a result of the applicant's willingness to make both on-site and off-site utility improvements should the site be allowed to be developed as a PND. Should the applicant develop the site within the parameters of the existing zoning, the infrastructure costs to the Town - to provide water and sewer service - could be significant.

Additionally, a by right development pattern would most likely not incorporate the progressive planning principles that are associated with this proposed PND. When weighting the benefits of this proposed PND, with the alternative by right development options, one should consider that over a 7 to 15 year period this site could by right yield a significant number of residential units. Though the cumulative number of by right residential units developed on this site would be lower than this proposed PND, the infrastructure and transportation impacts on the Town would likely be comparable – with minimal contributions provided by the developer to offset these impacts.

