

APPLICATION OF R.J.L. ASSOCIATES, INC.

NARRATIVE TO THE
MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
THE HIGHLANDS AT MANTUA

January 24, 2024
Revised September 30, 2024

This Narrative is included as part of the Master Development Plan as if fully set forth therein and should be read in coordination with the physical plan sheets contained in the Master Development Plan. The contents of this Narrative address the requirements contained in Section 3.8.2.C.1 and Section 6.6.8 of the City of Fairfax Zoning Ordinance, as amended.

I. INTRODUCTION

R.J.L. Associates, Inc. (“Owner”, “Applicant”, or “RJL”) has submitted an application to amend the City of Fairfax’s 2035 Comprehensive Plan (“Comprehensive Plan” or “Plan”) and to rezone a 2.12 acre portion of the existing Mantua Professional Center (the “Property”) to the Planned Development-Residential (“PD-R”) zoning district to permit redevelopment of the Property’s existing underutilized office buildings with a small residential townhome community. A separate, but concurrent, application has been submitted to amend the General Development Plan for the greater Mantua Professional Center (“Center”). The proposed townhomes will provide quality and energy efficient housing units that will generate fiscal benefits to the City of Fairfax (“City”), create open space while providing residential amenities, and preserve and respect the unique qualities and character of the neighborhood and surrounding vicinity.

The Property is bounded by Pickett Road and the Army Navy Country Club golf course to the west, the City-County boundary line and Mantua Hills subdivision (within Fairfax County) to the east, The Enclave multi-family condominium community and The New School of Northern Virginia to the north, and, to the south, Pickett’s Reserve subdivision and a recreational parcel of land owned by the Mantua Hills Swimming Association that is improved with portions of the Association’s pool and tennis courts. The Enclave and The New School of Northern Virginia comprise the remainder of the Mantua Professional Center. The adjacent Mantua Hills and Pickett’s Reserve subdivisions are comprised of single-family detached homes and are well-buffered from the Property by existing tree lines which will be preserved to the extent practicable. The Property consists of a single parcel, Parcel 58-2-10-001-A1 totaling 2.12 acres and is addressed as 9495 Silver King Court, Fairfax, Virginia 22031. Addresses issued to the existing office buildings range from 9461 – 9495 Silver King Court.

The Property is currently zoned Planned Development-Commercial (“PD-C”) and is designated as a Commercial Corridor by the City’s 2035 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map. The remainder of the Center is likewise zoned PD-C; the 2035 Future Land Use designations are Social and Civic Network for The New School of Northern Virginia’s parcel and Multifamily Neighborhood for The Enclave. The Applicant is requesting to change the PD-C zoning

designation of the Property to PD-R to allow for construction of fourteen (14) townhome units along with thirty-four centrally located parking spaces (inclusive of nine existing parking spaces to remain) which also serve to provide The Enclave owners and guests with access to shared parking during designated hours, in accordance with an existing recorded parking agreement.

As described in more detail below, townhomes within the portion of the Center currently designated as a Commercial Corridor (i.e., the subject Property) are specifically identified in the Land Use chapter of the City's current Comprehensive Plan as an appropriate alternative to the existing office buildings. The Comprehensive Plan amendment proposed herein will implement this recommendation and change the place type to Townhouse/Single-Family Attached Neighborhood.

The current office buildings on the Property comprise approximately 21,566 square feet of floor area and are outdated and outmoded for traditional office tenants; a significant portion of the office space has struggled to find suitable tenants that can pay fair market rents. This situation is likewise found in the City's office market at large, as prospective tenants seek out Class A office space in surrounding jurisdictions over Class B offerings in the City. This proposed redevelopment, therefore, will replace underutilized and less desirable office structures with a quality townhome community that is context-appropriate and compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Following site-specific guidance within the City's Comprehensive Plan, RJL proposes to redevelop a portion of the Mantua Professional Center to replace approximately 21,566 square feet of existing underutilized office buildings with a townhome community. The Applicant has collaborated with Staff and the Center's neighboring users (The Enclave and The New School of Northern Virginia) to carefully plan the Property to create a new community that will provide a needed increase in housing opportunities within the City while respecting the Center's two adjoining uses and the existing residential neighborhoods located adjacent to the Property.

A. Site Description

The Property is a 2.12-acre parcel and is currently zoned PD-C, with designation as a Commercial Corridor by the City's 2035 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map. It is bounded by Pickett Road and the Army Navy Country Club to the west, the City-County boundary line and a Fairfax County residential subdivision known as Mantua Hills to the east, the balance of the Mantua Professional Center to the north, and the Pickett's Reserve subdivision and a small portion of the Mantua Hills Swimming Association to the south. The Property is presently developed with one to three level buildings comprising approximately 21,566 square feet of office space, along with supporting parking and access. The surrounding land uses and zoning complement the proposed community, and the 2035 Comprehensive Plan specifically identifies the proposed townhome redevelopment as an appropriate alternative use in place of the existing office buildings.

B. Planned Development-Residential (Rezoning) Request

The proposed Rezoning would permit the replacement of underutilized office space with fourteen (14) front-loaded townhome units. Units will be twenty-four (24) feet wide and forty (40) feet deep. They will be four levels, with an option for a loft and decks. The maximum building height of each unit will be approximately forty-three (43) feet. All units will front the private street and will face the project's central green / amenity space, as well as the existing grassed area with picnic benches, located within the Mantua Professional Center. Additional amenity space will be provided between the two sticks of townhome units, and existing trees serving as a buffer to the adjacent residential neighborhoods will be kept in place to the extent practicable. The development will provide approximately forty percent (40%) open space, exceeding the twenty percent (20%) open space requirement specified in the Zoning Ordinance.

Additionally, the proposed development's location on the Pickett Road corridor places it within approximately one mile of multiple grocery stores, restaurants, commercial retail, parks, and trails. This includes the Fairfax Ice Arena and several shopping centers in the vicinity of Pickett Road's intersection with Main Street (VA-236) to the south and Gateway Regional Park and the Scout on the Circle mixed-use project to the north. Future residents will have exciting opportunities to live, work, and play in the area, while supporting and sustaining businesses within the corridor.

Lastly, the Applicant proposes construction of a unit type that is in high demand but low supply within the City. While the City includes a diverse mix of housing products, only thirteen percent (13%) are townhomes as of 2023 data.¹ Additionally, the Pickett Road corridor is comprised predominantly of apartments, condominiums, and single-family homes, with only a single recent townhome project approved in the area. Townhomes can serve as starter homes for young professionals and smaller families, while also appealing to older adults wishing to downsize and seeking a home that is easier to maintain. The proposed development will therefore expand the availability of quality and desirable housing stock in the City.

C. General Development Plan Amendment

The Applicant is requesting an amendment to the General Development Plan ("GDP") for the Mantua Professional Center. The Center was originally approved in 1975 as the first rezoning to a Commercial Planned Development ("CPD") in the City. The original GDP approved at that time permitted 62,000 square feet of office space in 21 low rise buildings along with an apartment building. The GDP was amended in 1985 to allow an additional 40,000 square feet of office space by removing the apartment building and reconfiguring some of the low rise office buildings. In 2004, another GDP Amendment was approved to allow for the expansion of The New School of Northern Virginia. This Amendment also divided the Mantua Professional Center into three parcels so that each parcel could be sold and owned independently.

In 2015, another GDP Amendment was approved to replace the approved but unbuilt office space with two residential multifamily condominium buildings containing 80 dwelling units known as The Enclave. The Enclave is a successful project and sold out quickly.

¹ City of Fairfax 2023 Fact Book, Figure 17: Housing Type (existing and approved)

The current GDP Amendment request would convert the remaining, underutilized office space into single family attached homes that are in high demand by both existing and new City residents. Both the owners of The New School and The Enclave have granted the Applicant permission to seek this Amendment, while retaining their rights to comment on the overall request.

D. Transportation and Parking

The Property is currently served by a looped portion of Silver King Court (a private street) providing two connections to the roadway. Silver King Court, in turn, loops through the Mantua Professional Center and connects twice to Pickett Road. Silver King Court's southern connection at Pickett Road provides for full movement and is the closer access point to the Property. The northern connection is limited to a right-in/right-out condition by a median within Pickett Road and offers an additional route to and from the new community. With redevelopment, the looped roadway will be converted to a one-way street. The access points to Silver King Court and the roadway's connections to Pickett Road will remain at their existing locations, with reconfiguration of the southern connection to Silver King Court to provide a right-in only entrance. The community is anticipated to reduce AM Peak, PM Peak, and Daily Weekday trips when compared to the estimated trips generated by the existing office use. As such, traffic impact will be minimal compared to existing conditions, and a full-scale traffic impact study is not required. Please reference the Trip Generation Memorandum for The Highlands at Mantua, prepared by IMEG and dated December 4, 2023.

The site will have ample parking, exceeding the requirement of two spaces per unit set forth in the Zoning Ordinance. Each townhome will have two garage spaces and two driveway spaces for a total of four parking spaces per unit. Additionally, the community will offer thirty-four centrally located parking spaces, inclusive of nine existing parking spaces that will remain onsite. The Property is currently subject to a limited shared parking agreement that permits owners and guests of The Enclave to utilize a portion of the existing office parking spaces during designated hours, and these central spaces will serve to provide continued access to overflow parking in accordance with the agreement.

E. RJL Community Outreach Statement

RJL initiated community outreach and met with representatives of The Enclave, The New School of Northern Virginia, and the Pickett's Reserve subdivision in the Summer of 2023. Letters were also sent to the abutting Mantua Hills subdivision property owners (within Fairfax County). The Planning Commission and the City Council also conducted pre-application Work Sessions during this time period. More recently, the Applicant mailed letters to abutting property owners and maintained contact with representatives of The Enclave and The New School. An on-site meeting was conducted on September 16, 2024 with some neighbors and representatives of Pickett's Reserve. The Applicant will have further discussions with all of these stakeholders as the application process continues.

The Applicant has also kept the remaining office tenants informed about this project and has informed them about the City's Economic Development Office's assistance programs such as the Lease Incentive for Fairfax Tenants (LIFFT) grants offering rent assistance for relocating in the City.

III. NARRATIVE PROVISIONS AND APPROVAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNED DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

In support of the Applicant's request to rezone the Property from the PD-C district to the PD-R district, the following information is provided to address each of the approval considerations set forth in Section 6.6.8 of the Zoning Ordinance.

A. Substantial conformance with the comprehensive plan;

The proposed development is in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan's specific recommendations for the Property, aligns with the Plan's vision for the Townhouse/Single-Family Attached Neighborhood Place Type, and advances multiple City goals set forth in the Plan related to, among others, land use, housing, neighborhoods, and parks and recreation.

Page 43 of the Comprehensive Plan reflects Parcel Specific Considerations specific to the Mantua Professional Center. In particular, the Plan contemplates alternative uses for the portion of the Center currently designated as Commercial Corridor (i.e., the Property) that includes townhomes. The proposed change of the Place Type to Townhouse/Single-Family Attached Neighborhood will facilitate this use as recommended within the Plan and ensures that development is complementary in accordance with Land Use Strategies Goal 1 (See Page 25 of the Plan). Page 29 of the Plan specifies certain physical characteristics applying to townhouse development that is adjacent to single-family detached residences, including the provision of landscape setbacks at the adjoining edges and building height of up to four stories (43 feet). The Place Type supports up to twelve dwelling units per acre. The Master Development Plan meets the Place Type criteria as evidenced through the architectural drawings provided within the plan set; landscape setbacks shown on the plans; and a proposed density of 6.6 dwelling units per acre, well within the twelve units per acre supported in the Townhouse/Single-Family Attached Neighborhood Place Type.

Beyond the site-specific recommendations, the proposed development meets several of the City's interconnected goals that are interwoven throughout the Plan. On Page 17, the Plan includes the observation that "as developable land has become scarcer, new residential development has been more dependent on infill and redevelopment sites." This observation is discussed further in the neighborhood context on Page 47. Relatedly, Page 20 identifies the issue of declining housing affordability, as rising housing values have outpaced increases in income. Completing this loop, Housing Goal 1 on Page 55 is the support of a wide range of housing types, with the Plan text specifically identifying the City's shortage of Townhomes and Outcome H1.1 calling for the continued development of underrepresented housing types. The Master Development Plan proposes infill development that adds a desired, and currently limited, housing type to the City's existing stock of housing units.

As noted on Page 61 of the Plan, most of the City’s properties are within the Architectural Control Overlay District (except for single-family residential properties and those properties within other overlay districts), and plans are reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review (and City staff) to confirm proposals meet design guidelines. The proposed development delivers quality construction and an attractive design, and provides energy efficient design features that meet the Plan’s Sustainability Initiative Outcome SI1.1 (See Page 111 of the Plan). The architectural design and materials are compatible with the remainder of the Center. As part of the processing of this rezoning request, the Applicant will concurrently process a review, and seek a positive recommendation from, the City’s Board of Architectural Review for a Certificate of Appropriateness. The application to the Board of Architectural Review was submitted on September 27, 2024.

Lastly, the Plan includes a handful of related content and goals under the headings of Parks and Recreation and Sustainability Initiatives. On Page 113, Sustainability Initiatives Outcome SI2.2 includes access to parks, recreation, trails, and open space. Similarly, Page 134 highlights the “essential contribution” recreation and open space make to a healthier population and greener city. The proposed development is just a short walk to existing community and linear parks (See Page 125 of the Plan for a map of parks by type), and the Property itself has been designed to provide approximately forty percent (40%) open space, twice the area specified by the City’s Zoning Ordinance. Residents will have access to a park-like setting when they walk out their front door, and can then easily stroll or bike to the City’s network of public parks and open space areas.

For the reasons set forth above, the proposed development is in substantial conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

B. Any greater benefits the proposed planned development provides to the city than would a development carried out in accordance with the general zoning district regulations;

The proposed development will provide substantial benefits to the City beyond those that would be realized by the existing improvements and a development conducted under the existing zoning regulations. Most directly, the existing Planned Development-Commercial (“PD-C”) zoning would not permit the Townhouse use now proposed (See Section 3.8.5.B of the Zoning Ordinance). The current office buildings are underutilized and thus offer a limited tax benefit to the City. As discussed above, replacement of the office use with a small residential infill community conforms with the Comprehensive Plan and preserves the unique qualities and character of the neighborhood and surrounding vicinity, while generating a fiscal benefit for the City.

Also of note, the City’s Comprehensive Plan contemplates provision of either multi-family residential or townhome units at this site. The Applicant notes that a townhome community is a fitting use and reflects consideration of the site’s location adjacent to single family detached subdivisions located to both the south and east of the property. The new community will allow for a smooth transition from these homes to the rest of the Center,

providing the City with not only needed housing stock but also an enhanced transition between existing adjacent uses.

C. Suitability of the subject property for the development and uses permitted by the general zoning district regulations versus the proposed district;

The Property is well suited for a small infill townhome development. The site is served by existing road and utility infrastructure that require limited modifications to facilitate the townhome use, and the proposed use change is directly identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan as an appropriate alternative for the subject parcel.

D. Adequacy of existing or proposed public facilities such as public transportation facilities, public safety facilities, public school facilities, and public parks;

The community is expected to reduce AM Peak, PM Peak, and Daily Weekday trips when compared to the estimated trips generated by the existing office use and will have a negligible impact on existing public facilities. The site is also served by both Metrobus and the City's CUE bus system, with an existing stop serving both systems located at the intersection of Pickett Road and Silver King Court (southern connection). And as previously noted, the community is both well-served by the City's existing network of parks and open space and will include twice the area of open space as required under the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed small infill development is adequately served by the City's existing public facilities.

E. Adequacy of existing and proposed public utility infrastructure;

The community will be served by the following existing utilities: sewer, water, gas, and dry utilities. The Applicant has included a sanitary sewer analysis within the Master Development Plan (see Sheet C600) and has confirmed with City staff that there is adequate domestic water and gas service for the proposed community.

F. Consistency with the applicable requirements of this chapter, including the general provisions of §3.8.2;

The proposed development is consistent with Zoning Ordinance requirements, including general provisions set forth in Section 3.8.2, except for certain waivers and modifications listed on the Cover Sheet of the Master Development Plan and below.

G. Compatibility of the proposed planned development with the adjacent community;

The proposed development is compatible with the adjacent residential communities and the remaining portion of the Mantua Professional Center. The use of quality architecture and materials provides compatibility with the surrounding uses, and the Master Development Plan conforms with requirements for physical characteristics of townhomes built adjacent to existing single-family detached communities, as set forth in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Further

guidelines set forth in both the Comprehensive Plan and the City's Zoning Ordinance ensure that appropriate transitions between the adjacent uses are provided, and the Applicant has maintained existing forest buffer at the site limits to the extent practicable.

H. *Consistency with the general purpose of the planned development districts in §3.8.1 and the stated purposes of §3.2.3;*

The proposed development is consistent with both the general purposes stated in Section 3.8.1 and specific purposes associated with Planned Development Residential districts as set forth in Section 3.2.3.A. The Applicant has utilized the flexibility inherent in the PD-R district to design a unique residential townhome infill community with unit access off an existing private roadway. The community conforms with guidance and recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan (as discussed above) and is sensitive to its surrounding context.

I. *Compatibility of each component of the overall development with all other components of the proposed planned development;*

The Applicant proposes a single-component project comprised of residential uses and compatibility of multiple components within an overall development is therefore not applicable to this project. See also the response within item 'G,' above.

J. *The quality of design intended for each component of the project and the ability of the overall master development plan to ensure a unified, cohesive environment at full build-out;*

As noted above, the Applicant proposes a single-component project comprised of residential uses. Specific to this use, the Applicant is proposing a high-quality and attractive design to create a unique community that is context-sensitive and achieves vision and policy objectives the City has established within the Comprehensive Plan. The outdoor public spaces of "Highlands at Mantua" create a sense of enhanced community for its residents through providing a pedestrian friendly environment that link two main recreation amenity areas. A large circular shaped patio space is provided on the central part of the site. This area includes a pergola, grills, and seating surrounded by lush shrub and perennial landscaping, and will serve as the heart of the community, providing a social hub for everyday neighborly interaction. A secondary recreation area in between the townhome buildings provides a multi-purpose lawn area for residents of all ages to play on and enjoy. The lawn is surrounded by pathway, seating areas, and additional landscaping, which allows users a more secluded outdoor experience.

K. *Self-sufficiency requirements for each phase of the overall project of §3.8.2.H;*

The Property is a 2.12-acre infill development and phasing this redevelopment is not proposed for the project.

L. The effectiveness with which the proposed planned development protects and preserves the ecologically sensitive areas within the development; and

The Property is currently developed, with no significant ecologically sensitive areas. The Applicant has maximized tree preservation to the extent practicable, which includes the preservation of significant forest areas that will continue to serve as a buffer between the new townhomes and existing residential subdivisions to the east and south.

M. The extent to which the residential component of the proposed planned development promotes the creation and preservation of affordable housing suitable for supporting the current and future needs of the city.

While the proposed community is not subject to affordable housing requirements,² the Applicant notes that the provision of additional housing stock yields the general benefit of offering newly built homes to individuals and families seeking to move into or relocate within the City, and that increasing the supply of available units can help control rising housing costs in the market. This relief of pressure on both pricing and the age of the City's housing stock in turn aligns with the City's desire to preserve "naturally occurring affordable housing" as stated within the 2035 Comprehensive Plan, notably Housing Goal 2 (see Page 57 of the Plan).

IV. WAIVERS AND MODIFICATIONS

The proposed development will provide residential development, and, to the best knowledge of the Applicant, will conform to all applicable ordinances, regulations, and adopted standards, except for the following waiver and modification requests:

- A waiver of the Zoning Ordinance Section 4.5.6.B requirement for street trees along the southern and eastern sides of the one-way private street (Silver King Court) due to the proposed townhome design with front loaded driveways and garages. Street trees will be provided along the northern and western sides of the street to the best extent possible.
- A modification to PFM Detail 401.01: Typical Curb and Gutter Street Section, to allow for a reduction in road width of the private one-way road (Silver King Court) from 30 feet to 23 feet. This reduction allows the Applicant to better meet the buffer requirements and provide site amenities. The Property's narrowness at this location also contributes to the need for this modification. Line of sight angles will be safe.
- A waiver of the Subdivision Ordinance Section 2.3.4.A requirement for a sidewalk on both sides of the street for the southern and eastern portions of Silver King Court to reduce the impact into the existing tree areas along the southern and eastern portions of the Property.

² Under Section 3.9.2.B.1 ('Applicability') of the Zoning Ordinance an application for less than thirty (30) dwelling units is not subject to the City's Affordable Dwelling Units Program.

- A modification of the Zoning Ordinance Section 4.5.5.D requirement for a fence along the Transitional Screening Yard 2. Additional trees are proposed to be substituted for the required fence via the provisions of “alternative compliance” contained in Zoning Ordinance Section 4.5.10.
- A modification of the Zoning Ordinance Section 4.5.6.B requirement for street trees to be located along Pickett Road due to an existing easement. The street trees will be located further away from Pickett Road out of the easement area. The required number of trees will be met.