



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

### County Board Agenda Item Meeting of April 22, 2006

**DATE:** March 30, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Adoption of proposed amendment to Section 31.A. of the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that the intent of the Unified Residential Development provision provides for pedestrian connectivity.

#### **C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt the attached ordinance to amend, reenact, and recodify Section 31. Special Provisions, Subsection A. Use, Subsubsection 13. of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to clarify that the intent of the Unified Residential Development provision is to also provide for pedestrian connectivity. The amendment is proposed in order to encourage orderly and efficient land use development; and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice.

**ISSUE:** None.

**SUMMARY:** Pedestrian connectivity has been a long-standing goal within Arlington. Due to the County's commitment to this goal, Arlington is nationally recognized as walkable community. The Unified Residential Development (URD) provision of the Zoning Ordinance sets forth many goals of the county in its intent. However, pedestrian connectivity was not included within this listing. By including the goal of pedestrian connectivity within the intent statement of the URD process, the County Board firmly establishes its intent on maintaining and improving the pedestrian networks within Arlington.

**BACKGROUND:** In July 1997, the County Board amended Section 31. of the Zoning Ordinance to permit Unified Residential Developments (URD). In its adoption, the County Board set forth the following purpose for the URD:

“...to provide for flexible, site specific solutions for the development of one-family detached dwellings in certain zoning districts, to implement the purposes of the General Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance; promote the compatibility of one-family residential developments with surrounding neighborhoods by coordinating building forms, the bulk, scale and placement of new buildings, and the relationship between

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buildings and structures within the development and surrounding properties; and to preserve natural land forms, irreplaceable historical features, and significant trees and foliage.”

Since its adoption in 1997, the URD provision has been used successfully by developers 20 times. These URDs have typically resulted in a better development form than that of a by-right proposal, and have included neighborhood involvement.

**DISCUSSION:** Through the evolution of the URD process, developers, communities, staff, commissions and the County Board have refined the ideals of the URD. Each subsequent URD has benefited from these refinements. However, in reviewing several recent URD proposals, the County Board recognized that a significant element, pedestrian connectivity, was missing from these goals set forth in the original language of the Zoning Ordinance.

Pedestrian connectivity has been a long-standing goal within Arlington. The network of sidewalks and trails within Arlington has led to numerous awards bestowed upon Arlington for its creation of a walkable community. Most recently Arlington was honored as the number one place in America for walking, topping the American Podiatric Medical Association’s list of the “Top 10 Best U.S. Walking Cities.”

**CONCLUSION:** By including the goal of pedestrian connectivity within the intent statement of the URD process, the County Board firmly establishes its intent on maintaining and improving the pedestrian networks within Arlington. The proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment would promote an attractive and harmonious community; and is recommended for other reasons required by public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice. Therefore, staff recommends that the County Board adopt the proposed amendment to Section 31.A.13 of the Zoning Ordinance to clarify that one of the purposes of the Unified Residential Development provision is to provide for pedestrian connectivity.

**ORDINANCE TO AMEND, REENACT, RECODIFY SECTION 31. SPECIAL PROVISIONS, SUBSECTION A. USE, SUB-SUBSECTION 13. OF THE ARLINGTON COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE TO CLARIFY THAT THE INTENT OF THE UNIFIED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROVISION PROVIDES FOR PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY.**

BE IT ORDAINED, by the County Board of Arlington County, that Section 31. Special Provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, Subsection A. Use, Subsubsection 13. is amended, reenacted and recodified as follows to clarify the intent of the Unified Residential Development provision in order to encourage orderly and efficient development of public facilities; to facilitate the creation of a convenient, attractive and harmonious community; and for other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice:

\* \* \*

**SECTION 31. SPECIAL PROVISIONS**

\* \* \*

A. Use.

13. *Unified Residential Development*: The purpose of this subsection is to provide for flexible, site specific solutions for the development of one-family detached dwellings in certain zoning districts, to implement the purposes of the General Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance; promote the compatibility of one-family residential developments with surrounding neighborhoods by coordinating building forms, the bulk, scale and placement of new buildings, and the relationship between buildings and structures within the development and surrounding properties; **provide pedestrian connectivity;** and to preserve natural land forms, irreplaceable historical features, and significant trees and foliage.