

24 June 2022

Hello neighbors

Here are some important updates on upcoming City meetings and plans, specifically on **Duke Street, Strawberry Run, changes to zoning height restrictions, and increased affordable housing** (to include along Duke Street):

About the **Duke Street initiative**, which our 20 June newsletter discussed: In response to SRCA's request for a Zoom link for the **30 June meeting** (which we thought would be available). we received the following response from Hillary Orr:

"the June 30th Duke Street Advisory Group meeting... will be an in-person only meeting, and it is open to the public. The main goal of this meeting is to go over the approved 2012 plan so the members can get a better understanding of what was proposed at that time and determine where elements of that plan do or do not meet the adopted vision and guiding principles for this effort. ... For those that cannot attend in person, there will be meeting notes available after the meeting. No decisions are being made at this meeting.
"Also I have received a number of comments in these requests stating concern for the “proposed changes”. To be clear, nothing has been decided at this time. There are no “proposed changes”. After the project team gets feedback on the 2012 plan, they will be developing a variety of conceptual design options that will go out to the community for input this fall. There will be a number of opportunities for people to provide input with extensive engagement once those ideas make it on to paper."

SRCA has also now posted the city's summary of public feedback received in its 2021 "community outreach" - please see the second-to-last item under “Duke Street” on our “Issues of Interest” page on [seminaryridge.net](http://seminaryridge.net/). This summary points out that the focus of the Duke Street initiative is to encourage more use of buses on Duke Street. We encourage you to look over this document as well as the city's page on the project, <https://www.alexandriava.gov/DukeInMotion>, and to participate in the 30 June meeting if interested.

**Strawberry Run**: On **Monday, 27 June**, the city will brief the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC) on “why” the stream restoration of the southern part of Strawberry Run along Fort Williams Parkway failed. After SRCA pointed out that the stream restoration had failed, the city delayed its proposed stream restoration in the middle portion of Strawberry Run until it learned “why" (doing what is referred to as a “forensic analysis”). After 13 months, and a FOIA request, the city will brief the EPC on the failure (this is important because it will help lead to the best method of restoring the middle portion of the stream). The forensic analysis and presentation material are on the seminaryridge.net website under “Strawberry Run” on the “Issues of Interest” page.

Those interested are encouraged to attend in person (27 June, 7:30-9:30pm at City Hall, 301 King Street, Room 2000), but a Zoom link is also available:
Registration Link:
https://zoom.us/j/99988850662
Webinar ID: 999 8885 0662
Webinar Password: 550833
Dial-In Phone: 1 301 715 8592

**Proposed zoning changes to height restrictions**: The City of Alexandria is proposing to change the City’s zoning policies (amending 7-703(B)) to remove 45-foot building height restrictions to allow for the construction of buildings up to 70 feet tall. The current staff draft of this proposal excludes single-family, two-family and townhouse communities, but nothing prevents the City from changing their proposal to make it apply to single-family, two-family and townhouse communities either before or after it goes to City Council for a vote. In addition, the current proposal does not protect any particular zoning category. It does say that this bonus height zoning overlay cannot be used to add a story or two or three to the top of your house. It does not protect any neighborhood which currently is zoned for townhouses to be rezoned to residential multifamily or anything else.

Based on City staffs map of likely areas where this proposal could be applied, the potentially impacted areas include Alexandria West, Arlandria/Chirilagua, Beauregard, Eisenhower East and West, Landmark/Van Dorn, Northeast, Old Town, areas along Duke, Mt. Vernon, Potomac Yards, South Washington Streets, and Strawberry/Seminary Hill.

The above summary was provided to SRCA by the West End Coalition Chair; for additional information, please see <https://www.alexandriava.gov/zoning/bonus-height>

This proposal was before Planning Commission on 6/23/22 and will be before City Council on 7/5/22 at 7PM.

**Affordable Housing**: According to the Metropolitan Washington Planning Framework for 2030, there are plans to increase Alexandria’s affordable housing: at least 320,000 housing units should be added in the region between 2020 and 2030. This is an additional 75,000 units beyond the units already forecast for this period ... At least 75% of new housing should be affordable to low- and middle-income households.

A June 2022 City presentation on this Framework notes that "[a]t least 75% of all new housing should be in Activity Centers or near high-capacity transit." It should be noted that the Duke Street corridor is now considered a "high-capacity transit" area due to the Duke Street Transitway. This also means that 25% will be in areas that are inappropriate for multi-family housing and located in areas where either the zoning or small area plan prohibits such high-density development.

The above summary was provided to SRCA by the West End Coalition Chair; for the full City presentation, please see our website, seminaryridge.net under “housing” on our “issues of interest” page.