



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA
ARLINGTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

2100 CLARENDON BOULEVARD, SUITE 700
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201
(703) 228-3525 • FAX (703) 228-3543



CHRISTOPHER FORINASH
CHAIR

NANCY IACOMINI
VICE CHAIR

MICHELLE STAHLHUT
COORDINATOR

GIZELE C. JOHNSON
CLERK

February 17, 2015

Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

SUBJECT:

6. **U-3402 -15-1, CARVER HOMES (N-FBC)** for the development of 50 townhouses including 73 residential units with a modification of ground story heights associated with accessible entrance requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Adopt the attached resolution to approve an amendment to the Master Transportation Plan to add a new segment of South Quinn Street and a new segment of 13th Street South within the block currently bounded by South Rolfe Street, 13th Road South, South Queen Street and 12th Road South.**
2. **Approve the subject use permit in accordance with the Columbia Pike neighborhoods form based code to construct 50 townhouses totaling 73 residential units with a modification of ground story finished floor heights and front facade entrances to address details associated with accessible entrance requirements subject to conditions of the staff report dated January 7, 2015.**

Dear County Board Members:

The Planning Commission heard these items at its February 11, 2015 public hearing. Matt Mattauszek, CPHD Planning, gave a presentation on the background of the Form Based Code (FBC) in this area and noted the FBC specifically calls for townhomes in this area. He provided details on the FBC Working Group (FBC WG) review and the development of the George Washington (GW) Carver Homes site, including the significant history of the site, the extensive community process, and details on the modification for the zero step entry and an ongoing discussion related to the specific density restriction that applies to this site. Joanne Gabor, DES, Development Services was also present.

Catherine Puskar, Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley & Walsh, spoke on behalf of the applicant, Craftmark Homes. She gave a short history of the background of the development process for this site. She

P.C. #27.A.B.

highlighted that the residents of the Carver Homes have worked very diligently on this application and this is their legacy and their future.

Public Speakers

Allison Smith, resident, GW Carver Homes, stated that its residents have a very long and proud history with Arlington County. The Carver Homes Housing Cooperative has many units owned by generational family owners for many decades. She stated that even though the residents love this property and the neighborhood, it is deteriorating and has been for many years. The residents of GW Carver Homes have been patiently waiting for a long time for the FBC to come along. The current zoning was R-5 and at every attempt at rezoning and moving forward to sell or redevelop, the community was told they could not move forward. They waited for the FBC process. Many homeowners and residents that do live in GW Carver Homes own existing properties in the Arlington View Civic Association area and will remain in the neighborhood. That was an important key element in selecting the developer that had value and vested interest in the neighborhood. They worked very closely with Arlington County staff and the Arlington County Civic Association to come to an agreement that would be a win-win for everyone. It's not possible to please everyone but they have pleased the majority. Please vote for it, they've waited a long time, and they need to move forward.

James Dill, resident, stated that he was born in the development 64 years ago and it is a wonderful neighborhood, however things have changed and it is time to move on. A few concerns include the fact that Carver Homes was built as a temporary housing development and over time the infrastructure has started to deteriorate. For people of modest income, it is a burden to try to keep these temporary structures going. The buildings are not suitable in their current condition for elderly people. In many cases there are several generations of families who are still there. One of the things that he has been taught is that one of the ways a family moves up the social ladder is to invest in real estate and sell that real estate and their children will benefit from that. For years, the Carver Association has been denied that piece of the American dream. It's time that they are able to participate in selling property and reaping the benefits and move on like everyone else in Arlington County. It is the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

Velma Henderson, resident, stated the cooperative was set up for temporary housing. As a resident, she knows first-hand that the cooperative is deteriorating fast and the Board of Directors has worked diligently with members of the Community, Arlington County, and numerous developers to do what's best for the community. She stated she was born and raised in GW Carver Homes and has been there for 68 years. It was important to handpick a developer that would consider the members and the neighborhood where she has family, friends, neighbors, in-laws and her church. GW Carver homes and its residents have a long and proud history in Arlington but for the last ten years, the members have barely survived while waiting for plans and the FBC to be developed and adopted. They do not want to just continue to survive as the buildings continue to decline. It is no longer an option to stay. They need to thrive and move to a better life. Craftmark will afford this much better life for the GW Carver Homes Association and it will be an asset to the community.

Patricia Fettman, legal counsel for GW Carver Homes, stated the sale and approval of this application is crucial to this community. Arlington County's records reflect that the Arlington

Housing Authority did a comprehensive engineering evaluation of the property in 2007. In reviewing all options available to them including complete redevelopment of the property and bringing in a developer, the engineering evaluation said it would cost more than \$3 million to upgrade the homes to make it livable. Electrical, sewer, water, and HVAC are all in need of repair. The application needs to be approved. Carver cannot use its own community building because the roof is leaking so badly. In spite of everything, Carver has worked hard with the community to find something that was acceptable to their neighbors. They have agreed to a limitation of 80 homes and have done everything possible to be a good neighbor. Please approve the application and use permit.

Former Commissioner Malis chaired the Form Based Code Advisory Working Group (FBC AWG) through December 2014. The FBC WG reviewed this project in November 2014. It does a checklist review to determine all the points of compliance. The issues on the accessibility and modifications that were necessary were initiated because the FBC group is very concerned about accessibility and they support this solution. The other issue was the interpretation of the unit count and whether the ratio or unit count controlled. Once the code is adopted, it looks to the attorneys to determine what the language says. To the extent that the intent of the language from the community's perspective enters into it in this case, this provision was developed after the FBC WG had stopped meeting on the regulation so they cannot add any background as to what the intent was, so we rely on staff and those who negotiated that provision in the very late stages of approval. They are willing to abide by whatever the interpretation is of the authority who makes that decision in which case staff or the Zoning Administrator has no issues with the project.

Charles Matta, Historic and Landmark Review Board (HALRB), gave a report on the HALRB review of the project. He said the GW Carver Homes is a garden apartment site that was developed 70 years ago at the same time as some other historic communities in Arlington such as Fairlington. That community is protected. The GW Carver community is not protected. The architect, Albert Cassell, was a noted African American architect in the D.C. area. He also designed the Founder's Library at Howard University. With deepest respect to the current residents, the HALRB is concerned that Arlington will be losing an entire site that is not only eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and listed as important in the County's Historic Resources Inventory and has played such a prominent role in Arlington and Arlington's African American community since its construction in 1945. This site does contribute to the lasting historic record of the County. Recognizing the development is largely compliant with the neighborhood FBC, the HALRB recommends that two markers be installed to tell the story of this unique property. One of them should be dedicated to the African American history of the site which traces its roots back to the Freedmans Village and end of slavery in the nation. The second should focus on Albert Cassell, dean of the School of Architecture at Howard University. He designed the GW Carver Homes, the campus of Howard University, Morgan State University, and many houses, churches, and stores in the D.C. area. In terms of the applicant's concerns about overcrowding the mini-park with markers, the HALRB recommends that one be located in the mini-park and the other facing Hoffman-Boston school where it can be seen by a maximum number of people. Further, they recommend salvaging materials and incorporating them into the site and markers. The HALRB would appreciate the opportunity to comment on this process and advocates that the 70-year history of the Carver Homes be respected and honored.

Commissioner Gutshall reported the Transportation Commission reviewed the MTP amendment recommendation, and they voted to recommend approval.

Planning Commission Motion

Commissioner Ciotti made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the County Board that they adopt the attached resolution to approve an amendment to the Master Transportation Plan to add a new segment of South Quinn Street and a new segment of 13th Street South within the block currently bounded by South Rolfe Street, 13th Road South, South Queen Street and 12th Road South. Commissioner Gutshall seconded the motion.

The Planning Commission voted to support the motion 8-0 with Commissioners Siegel, Ciotti, Iacomini, Forinash, Cole, Harner, Sockwell, and Gutshall in support.

Commissioner Ciotti made a motion that the Planning Commission recommend to the County Board to approve the subject use permit in accordance with the Columbia Pike neighborhoods form based code to construct 50 townhouses totally 73 residential units with a modification of ground story finished floor heights and front facade entrances to address details associated with accessible entrance requirements subject to conditions of the staff report dated January 7, 2015. Commissioner Gutshall seconded the motion.

Commissioner Iacomini stated that as former Chairman, member, and now Planning Commission liaison to HALRB, she knows that it is not within the purview of the Planning Commission to require the developer to do two markers although there is a condition about markers in the use permit. However, she hoped that given the importance of Carver Homes and their uniqueness in the neighborhood, two markers would be very appropriate and very welcome and be provided by the developer. The architect of Carver Homes, Mr. Cassell, passed in 1969 and as recently as 1995 there was an exhibition concerning all of his buildings and his life and work at Howard University. This is someone whose spirit is still very much alive and was a well-respected architect in the greater Washington area. Carver Homes itself and all of the families and the generations that have been here are important to the community too. The oral history project is a great idea but some educatory markers with photos would not be remiss in this area. She supports the request of the HALRB for two markers. Commissioner Iacomini thanked the community members who spoke as well as those in attendance who did not speak for their involvement. She noted the brevity with which the Planning Commission is considering this is simply a reflection of the fact that the community has worked very hard for so long and it is in very good shape.

Commissioner Gutshall wanted to support Commissioner Iacomini's comments and encourage preservation of the name because it is part of the history of this neighborhood and Arlington's history. His third grade report was on George Washington Carver and he remembers that George Washington Carver was amazing and ahead of his time with what he accomplished with limited resources. He congratulated the community for their perseverance and patience and sticking it through the Arlington Way all the way to the very end.

Commissioner Forinash supported the comments of the other commissioners and noted that Condition 31 speaks to photo documentation, historical markers, and the oral history.

The Planning Commission voted to support the motion 8-0 with Commissioners Siegel, Ciotti, Iacomini, Forinash, Cole, Harner, Sockwell, and Gutshall in support.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlington County Planning Commission

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Forinash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Christopher Forinash
Planning Commission Chair