

Why Update Bluemont's "Neighborhood Conservation" (NC) Plan?

When Bob Peck sold to developers, the BCA faced an uphill battle in trying to minimize impact from that development on the residents in its shadow. A BCA Team led by Judah Dal Cais fought for the neighborhood's interests and learned much about the planning process. Ultimately, we gained some concessions, but the Association's 1999 Neighborhood Conservation Plan was out of date and out of step with current development and land use realities, so there was little written policy that we could use to help shape the project. The lack of an updated plan could also cause Bluemont to miss out on money from the NC Bond passed by voters that provides money for street, park and other neighborhood improvements. Many of the current leaders of BCA have been fully engaged in the Association since those interactions.

When did BCA start working on the NC Plan?

Over the last two years, diligent volunteer efforts have been underway to craft a new NC Plan. That work has included two BCA-wide surveys, both hand-delivered to all BCA businesses and residences, and two public fora, preceded by neighborhood-wide advertisement. The most recent survey garnered over 350 responses, nearly double the response rate that Arlington County looks for to validate conservation plan survey results. What did that survey tell us about the views of the members of our community? Among other findings, reinforced by the recent public fora, it was clear that a strong majority of us favored improvements to the "village" retail area — from walkability and aesthetic issues to better overall functionality and conduciveness to a neighborhood "center" where residents and families would be likely to come together. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed these improvements were needed — even if it might entail greater density and/or increased height.

How has Bluemont Village Center Concept evolved?

The Bluemont Village Center idea grew from community input as well as the surveys, and was intended to provide a community-backed vision when — not if — development would occur. This process, like all BCA efforts, has been open, transparent and reported continually in the BCA newsletter and on the BCA web site.

As part of crafting the Village Center plan, BCA enlisted volunteer assistance from a VaTech graduate student and a recent graduate in community planning/development. This was seen as a way to help make the plan more realistic and to help our neighborhood envision the possibilities for this area.

The first student worked with the NC survey data, conducted a well-attended Community Forum, and ana-

lyzed results. The graduate architect, whose mother lives in the neighborhood, used those results to create a more fleshed-out concept to provide the universe of possibilities and serve as a basis for further BCA discussions. In addition, as reported in BCA meetings and newsletter, an informal discussion was held with a local developer to provide Bluemont with an industry perspective on the usefulness and feasibility of those possibilities.

At the April General Meeting, revised conceptual drawings were presented using the input gathered over the past months. It became apparent at that meeting that many people had a basic confusion as to what the Neighborhood Conservation Plan and Village Center idea were and how they related to the conceptual presentation. Since the meeting, misunderstandings and misinformation, willful and otherwise, have only continued to increase. Accusations and suspicions have grown. When residents and business owners are confronted by all this, they are fearful.

That is unfortunate. BCA leadership understands the concerns that people have about potential development in our neighborhood. We share them. In fact, that is why we set in motion the effort to revise the Neighborhood Conservation Plan and to have it include a Village Center concept in the first place. We'd like the community to be able to shape and control future change when it does come. BCA leadership also understands that achieving this type of vision entails education, inclusiveness and dialogue. That is why we have been so deliberate and transparent over these past two years as we assemble BCA's Conservation Plan.

Why is your participation important?

The objective of the Association is to provide a forum for its members to respond to issues of common concern, promote involvement in neighborhood activities, and further the interests of the neighborhood within the Arlington County community. Your participation in elections on Wednesday and in the months ahead ensures that your voice is heard. BCA is only as strong as its active members.

What can I do next?

- BECOME A BCA MEMBER if you're not now, bring \$7.50 check/cash a drivers license to Wednesday's meeting.
- ASK QUESTIONS of all sides.
- FIND OUT what is fact and what is fiction
- FORM YOUR OWN OPINION about the prudent path forward for our community.
- COME to the BCA meeting at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, June 22nd at Arlington Traditional School.
- VOTE at any time during the meeting. (Write-ins are welcome).

Bluemont Development Timeline

JUNE 2011

A PUBLIC SERVICE OF YOUR BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

www.bluemontcivic.org

1999	Neighborhood Conservation Plan updated
October 2007	First Site Plan Review Committee meeting regarding Peck/Staples site development
July 2008	County Board votes to approve site plan for Peck–Staples (JBG)
July 2008	JBG Rosenfeld doing a study to see if Safeway site is feasible for development
November 2008	Neighborhood Conservation speaker recommends a 2009 update to the BCA Neighborhood Conservation Plan
December 2008	A developer has filed a site plan application to build a residential building on the site of Goodyear Tire
December 2008	First meeting of subcommittee of BCA members regarding the update of the NC plan with respect to development along Wilson Boulevard
February 2009	Preliminary site plan amendment to allow 115 unit residential building at site of Goodyear Tire
February 2009	Jordan Manor building torn down as prerequisite to construction at Peck/Staples site
April 2009	Surveys asking for feedback on whether residents of Bluemont would favor a “village center” approach to redevelopment hand distributed to all households and posted on website
June 2009	At the completion of the survey 120 respondents indicated 70% favored the village center concept
September 2009	Summary of survey results printed in BCA newsletter distributed to all households and presented at September General Membership Meeting
February 2010	Forum held inviting all residents of Bluemont and business owners to participate in articulating a vision for the commercial corridor adjacent to Safeway
April 2010	Copy of Neighborhood Conservation Plan survey included with newsletter in neighborhood-wide distribution and available online
July 2010	358 completed surveys submitted from 2200 households
September 2010	Summary of survey results included with neighborhood-wide newsletter distribution, presented at September meeting and posted on BCA website
January 2011	Ryan Arnold produces conceptual drawings to accompany updated NC plan
March 2011	Two homes on opposite side of Carlin Springs from Bluemont are torn down to be replaced by ten single family homes