

**BLUEMONT CIVIC ASSOCIATION**  
**April 3, 2013**  
**Arlington Traditional School Gym**  
**SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

NOTE: This special meeting of the membership was called by BCA President George Rovder to accommodate a request of developer Mark Silverwood. The sole agenda item was the Safeway-Silverwood redevelopment proposal for Bluemont's Safeway. This special meeting was open to all Bluemont residents.

Attendance: George Rovder, President; Mark Haynes, 1<sup>st</sup> VP; VP; Nancy O'Doherty, Treasurer; Larry Smith, Neighborhood Conservation (NC) Representative; Suzanne Sundburg and Sandy Munnell, Civic Federation Delegates; Bernadette Wolford, Patty Stern, Paul Ducharme, David Van Wagner, and Maura Quinn, BCA Safeway Task Force members; Mark Silverwood and Brian Mowbray, Silverwood Associates; Avis Black, Michelle Shelton, Craig Muckle, and Nikki Nell, among others, representing Safeway; and approximately 100 attendees.

President Rovder called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. Briefly covering the process the BCA had followed, Rovder began with the initial work performed by the Bluemont Village Center Working Group and urban planner Jane Kim, who subsequently drafted a report. The Safeway Task Force (STF), formed in response to Safeway's request for proposal released in the spring of 2012, held two well-attended town hall meetings one in June and the other in December 2012 (which also were attended by Safeway representatives). Rovder noted that Silverwood and Safeway were asking for a change in zoning. He remarked that the county would look to the BCA, Bluemont's civic organization, for the membership's opinion on Safeway's redevelopment proposal.

Rovder introduced the members of the Safeway Task Force and then introduced developer Mark Silverwood and the Safeway delegation.

Safeway's Shelton presented a PowerPoint presentation explaining Safeway's new "Lifestyle" model, which is being proposed for the Bluemont site. Lifestyle Safeway stores are larger stores that concentrate on perishable items, including ready-to-eat options, fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Lifestyle Safeways have large selections of wines and specialty foods as well as full-service meat counters, bakeries, and delis. Inside these stores, Safeway co-locates Starbucks coffee shops and other small retailers.

Next, Silverwood described his plans for the site. Safeway would cover the entire ground floor, with approximately 57,000 sq ft of space and a height of 20 feet. The four stories of apartments above the store would comprise approximately 160 units, with a full building height of up to 65 feet. Below the store, Safeway would have 190 dedicated underground parking spaces on the first level, and there would be another 212 underground spaces serving apartment residents on the lower level.

Vehicles entering/exiting the Safeway and apartment underground parking lots would use driveways on N. Edison Street. The new store's proposed loading dock and trash bins (for 64-foot tractor-trailers and smaller trucks) would face N. Frederick Street, as would a few covered parking spaces serving the apartments' rental office.

Silverwood noted that there would be a pedestrian entrance at N. Edison Street and Wilson Blvd. In addition, another pedestrian entrance would be located at N. Frederick Street and Wilson Blvd. This entrance would be slightly above the store and would require a short elevator ride or trip down a few stairs to reach Safeway.

Silverwood stated that the 20-foot-high ground-floor level for Safeway would be constructed using concrete, but the four residential levels above would be wood, or “stick-built,” construction. Above the Safeway level, there would be two levels of housing at the back of the building next to the homes on N. 8<sup>th</sup> Road, with a height of 36 feet. Toward the front of the building, there would be 3 stories of residential housing along the Edison Street side, with a height of 40 feet, and four stories of residential housing at Wilson and Frederick Street with a height of 60 feet.

The first story of residential housing would contain a central courtyard and a swimming pool (at the back of the building overlooking the neighbors’ back yards).

Silverwood described his plans as “preliminary,” noting that he was still working with local Safeway staff and would meet next with representatives from the corporate headquarters. He said it would be a 4.1 site plan and rezoning application, which he planned to submit to the county in “a couple of months.”

With that, members of the Safeway Task Force posed a few initial questions.

**Q.** The scale of the project is greater than the community desires. Will Safeway work with the neighborhood on height and density? **A.** Black replied that Safeway would try to work with the neighborhood on this issue.

**Q.** How many trucks will be pulling into the loading dock on a daily basis, and what are the hours for these deliveries. **A.** Black replied that there would be 3 large tractor-trailer trucks per day and 13 to 18 smaller vendor trucks per day pulling into the loading dock. The hours for trucks are between 6 am and 10 pm.

**Q.** Many Safeway stores have been redeveloped without adding housing units on top. Why can’t the Bluemont store be renovated without housing? **A.** Black replied that Safeway looks at each site’s “unique circumstances” and feels that this site needs the apartments above due to the cost of underground parking.

**Q.** How does Safeway define a “neighborhood store”? **A.** Black stated that the population being served is the Bluemont neighborhood and will not be drawing customers from a wider region.

**Q.** Once Safeway has obtained increased zoning for the Bluemont site (making it exponentially more valuable), what would prevent Safeway from cashing out and selling the property instead of returning to the site? **A.** Black said that it was not Safeway’s “intent” to do so; however, she pointedly declined to repeat previous assurances stated by other Safeway representatives that Safeway is committed to the site and would rebuild on the site whether or not its preferred design was approved.

**Q.** Will you ask for bonus density on this site? **A.** Silverwood replied that he would seek bonus density in exchange for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) gold-level certification for the Safeway store and LEED silver-level certification for the four levels of apartments. He was considering whether to try for gold-level certification for the apartments but has not yet decided. And he would also seek bonus density for the 10 or so on-site affordable dwelling units (ADUs). Beyond that, Silverwood said there would be no other additional bonus density as far as he was concerned.

**Q.** Have you considered the impact of traffic and potential conflicts with Arlington Traditional School, particularly in the mornings? **A.** No traffic studies have yet been performed. Silverwood stated that he is still working with Safeway on the plans. A traffic study is part of the zoning process, and Silverwood declined to speculate on what the traffic impact of the project would be. In the preliminary design (which has all vehicular traffic accessing the site on N. Edison Street), the goal was to look for a traffic signal to give cars the easiest way to get in and out. He stated that there would be room for seven cars to queue at the traffic light on N.

Edison Street at the intersection with Wilson Blvd. Silverwood mistakenly thought that Wilson Blvd. was still under VDOT control and said that he would consult with county and state transportation officials.

Follow-up: **Q.** Has Silverwood-Safeway contacted Arlington Traditional School to discuss the potential impact on the school? **A.** Silverwood said no one had contacted ATS to discuss the Safeway redevelopment proposal.

The Q&A was then opened up to the floor, and attendees lined up at the microphone to ask questions.

**Q.** What the reason for the proposed height of the project? **A.** Silverwood stated that economics are driving the project's height and density. Asphalt costs \$5,500/underground parking place, and each parking space costs \$30,000.

**Q.** What is the height allowed under the proposed C-O-1.0 zoning? **A.** Silverwood replied that the proposed C-O-1.0 zoning allows a building height of up to 65 feet, or 4 stories above the 20-foot Safeway level.

**Q.** Can the courtyard and pool areas (the open space) of the residential levels be filled in with more housing at any time in the future? **A.** Silverwood said, no; the zoning limits the number of housing units.

**Q.** What is the timeframe for construction? **A.** Silverwood stated that it would take approximately 18 months.

**Q.** Couldn't Safeway build a slightly smaller store with less density? **A.** Black replied that a smaller store wouldn't allow Safeway to offer "what we want to offer." Black described the site as being a "rectangle" and posited that Safeway preferred a "square" site for its Lifestyle stores—evidently this was meant as a justification for building a larger store.

As a follow up, an attendee noted that the Safeway store at nearby Willston Plaza was both a Lifestyle store and was rectangular in shape, but had no housing added on top of it.

**Q.** Has Safeway-Silverwood considered rooftop/structured parking instead of underground parking? **A.** Silverwood replied that rooftop or structured parking hadn't been considered because the costs would be the same as underground parking.

**Q.** If the store will be so much larger, why won't there be more delivery trucks serving the store? **A.** Black replied that trucks would be "fuller" and that additional trucks would not, therefore, be needed.

**Q.** One attendee expressed support for the redevelopment proposal but asked whether others could use Safeway's underground parking to visit other retailers along Wilson Blvd. and whether other storefront retail could be added along Wilson Blvd. to encourage pedestrian activity along Bluemont's Main Street? **A.** Black replied that Safeway understands the concept of a "shared" trip: meaning, a Safeway customer may choose to visit another nearby business in conjunction with a trip to Safeway. However, she added that Safeway parking was first and foremost for the benefit Safeway customers. So long as there was ample parking for Safeway customers, she shared-trip parking would be tolerated. But she also indicated that Safeway would take steps to reserve parking for Safeway customers when actively shopping on site if parking became an issue. Black noted that it would be "very difficult" to add any more retail to the plan because the "shape of the lot" doesn't "allow for it" and the lobby for the apartments needs to be at ground level.

**Q.** With the apartments' pool located just 18 feet or so above grade, what impact will it have on neighbors living directly behind Safeway (with respect to noise, privacy, etc.)? **A.** Silverwood replied that the homes were 120 feet away from the property line and the area around the pool will be landscaped. He said it would be no

different than any other neighbor with a pool. The courtyard will be about 20 feet above street level, and he said that it would be a landscaped area with patios for the apartments rather than a gathering spot.

**Q.** How will the 212 parking spaces be allocated amongst the 160 apartment units (less than 2 spaces per unit) and will these spaces be free? **A.** Silverwood noted that his Westmoreland project next to the Arlington-Fall Church City line had 1.3 parking spaces per unit. He added that most units on the Safeway site would be 1-bedroom units and characterized the Safeway project as “a little overparked” by Arlington standards. He made no comment about whether tenants would have to pay extra for parking.

**Q.** Will there be bike parking on the Safeway site? **A.** Silverwood confirmed that there would be secure bike storage in the underground parking levels, both for Safeway customers and apartment residents, for which he would get LEED points. He said he is also looking into the possibility of locating a Bikeshare kiosk, and reserving some spaces for Zipcar and electric car parking.

**Q.** To reduce the building’s footprint, would it be possible to use a double-decker design for store (putting it on two levels) with a smaller amount of underground parking and more surface parking? **A.** Black replied that Safeway had not considered it due to the “narrowness of the site.” Safeway doesn’t feel this layout is convenient for shoppers, and Safeway would use second level would only for production/back-room space.

**Q.** Because these plans are “preliminary,” how might they change? **A.** Silverwood said that he will continue to work with Safeway and changes will be made up until the point he files the plans with the county in June. But he also said that the number of residential units won’t change and the height won’t change.

**Q.** With all the crime taking place in the Ballston Common parking garage and other parking garages, what type of security measures will be utilized in the Safeway underground garage? **A.** Black stated that Safeway has standards to make customers “feel safe,” including 10-foot ceilings, white paint, and lots of lighting so that people will “feel comfortable.” She mentioned no specific security measures.

**Q.** The basements of nearby homes frequently flood due to runoff from the Safeway parking lot. What measures will be taken to keep water out of the garage and out of neighbors’ basements? **A.** Silverwood replied that there was a “toxic stew” of chemicals in the soil (and thus any water) beneath the site. He said he planned to build a “bathtub” to seal the water and pollutants out of the garage. He posited that water naturally drained toward Wilson Blvd., a notion disputed by some attendees. He didn’t provide an explanation as to how he would prevent water from being diverted into the basements of nearby homeowners.

**Q.** A homeowner on 8<sup>th</sup> Road North explained that his back yard sat next to the mechanical area noted of the plans. He has children and doesn’t want the kids exposed to fumes or to have all the light blocked from the back yard by the new building. **A.** Silverwood responded by saying that he would perform a sun/shade study and would share those studies with residents. Due to the distance between the building and adjacent homes, he posited that the building would not cast shade on any of the homes.

**Q.** How many households does it take to make a store viable? Are there any Lifestyle stores with underground or structured parking that do not have a housing component. **A.** Black replied that it took all kinds of households to make a store viable. She said that there were stores with underground/structured parking that did not have a residential component. But she said “there are lots of factors.” Each store is unique and she wasn’t sure that “pointing out a particular store” would answer the question.

**Q.** Can Safeway share with the community the financial analysis that it uses to decide how and whether a store could be economically viable? **A.** Black refused to provide any details on the analysis it uses to evaluate

sites—calling the information “proprietary”—but did allow that the analysis doesn’t break down according to the number of households.

**Q.** What is the by-right height limit versus the C-O-1.0 height limit? **A.** Silverwood replied that the C-1 by-right zoning height limit was 35 feet plus a 23-foot penthouse level for a total building height of 58 feet. The height limit for the proposed C-O-1.0 zoning is 65 feet [under a site plan process].

**Q.** How far along in the process are these plans? **A.** Silverwood said that nothing had been submitted to or approved by the county.

**Q.** How long does it take for trucks to enter the loading dock area? **A.** Black responded by saying that it takes truck drivers about “1 minute” to back up a truck and pull it fully inside the building where the loading dock would be located.

**Q.** What about garbage trucks? How many trucks would there be for the 160 residential units? **A.** Silverwood responded first, saying that there would be two trash compactors: one on N. Frederick and one on N. Edison Street. Trash for the apartments would be hauled twice a week.

Follow-up question: **Q.** Are there any limits on the timing of the trucks’ visits? **A.** Black replied that she would have to discuss Safeway’s garbage removal with other staff. Safeway now composts, which reduces demand for garbage removal, but she said she didn’t know how many trash trucks would be visiting the site.

**Q.** One attendee noted that the Bluemont Safeway’s quality had declined over the years but that the community had continued to support the store and has “learned to live with the minimum.” He asked whether the store would fail if the numbers (number of customer visits) don’t change—adding that the community is a captive audience and only really wants fresh produce. **A.** Black responded, saying that the store is a 1970s version and that “things don’t always stay the same.” She said that Safeway wants to give the community a “state-of-the-art” store.

**Q.** How confident of the zoning is Silverwood-Safeway. Would they still build if they could not get the desired zoning? **A.** Silverwood remarked that he’s “into housing.” Arlington projects it will need 36,000 more housing units over the next several years. He said he “would take everything into account” if they couldn’t get the desired zoning and still “might” try to build. Black said that she couldn’t answer a question “in the abstract.” She said Safeway would have to know what the project would entail in order to know whether it would “meet their needs.”

**Q.** Would Silverwood/Safeway consider moving the loading dock to a different spot? **A.** Silverwood replied that these were “preliminary plans” and that he would be looking to the county for “feedback.”

**Q.** How will people with disabilities access the store? Will there be handicapped parking? **A.** Silverwood said that there would be 8 ADA-compliant spaces in the garage. Black said that there would be motorized carts in the store for the disabled to use. When using the garage, someone would have to take “vertical transit”—an elevator or escalator—to reach the store. The Edison Street entrance would be at street level. The Frederick Street entrance would require taking an elevator/escalator down a short distance to the store.

**Q.** There is at-grade parking available at the new Georgetown Safeway. Why not use that model here? **A.** Black said that the cost of structured parking does not make a single store “possible” in Bluemont and that there is not enough room for surface parking and a store.

**Q.** Can the area where the dumpsters are located be totally enclosed with a door in order to keep the noise contained while the trash is being dumped? **A.** Silverwood said that there would have to be sufficient height to dump trash inside the structure—implying that it wouldn't be possible in this case.

**Q.** How many 3-bedroom units are planned? Has Silverwood/Safeway considered the impact on Arlington's already overcrowded schools? **A.** Silverwood said that most of the units would be 1-bedroom w/den and 2-bedroom units and that there would be no 3-bedroom units. He told the assembly that the anticipated number of students in the 160-unit building would be "low."

**Q.** Is Safeway aware of the 200 signatures on a community petition asking Safeway to keep the height and zoning the same as for the existing store? **A.** Black said that Safeway had received the petition. She remarked that Safeway was hoping to come up with a design of varied height to make the community "comfortable," and not just a "numbers" focus.

**Q.** Has Safeway considered alternate layouts? For example, has Safeway considered locating the store on the west side of the parcel with a central drive and open space in the middle and other retail on the east side? **A.** Black said that Safeway would continue "to look at the plan." But she cautioned that Safeway's needs would not be met if the site were broken into two parts.

Follow-up comment: There are several successful grocery stores with less than 60,000 sq ft of space.

**Q.** Is Safeway/Silverwood aware of the proposal to reduce the number of lanes on Wilson Blvd. down to 1 through-lane in each direction? Will this reconfiguration be taken into account when the traffic study is done? **A.** Black said that she couldn't "say how the county will look at" the reconfiguration of Wilson Blvd.

**Q.** Considering the narrowness of N. Frederick Street, how could a tractor-trailer maneuver? Will the current street parking be turned into a no-parking zone? **A.** Black said that she couldn't "say at this point in time how truck maneuvering would work."

**Q.** When would demolition begin? **A.** Silverwood replied it would begin after the permitting was approved.

**Q.** New stores are often open 24 hours. Would the new Bluemont store be open 24 hours? **A.** Black said that scheduling was based on demand and that there was "no set schedule" yet.

**Q.** Considering the narrow sliver of parking available on N. Frederick Street—that Carlisle Park residents use for guest and overflow parking—does the plan propose to eliminate street parking from N. Frederick Street? **A.** Silverwood said that they have not looked at uses of the roads with the county or with engineers.

**Q.** When would residents be notified of changes being proposed? **A.** Silverwood said notification would be made once the plan is formally submitted.

**Q.** Has Silverwood/Safeway looked at the impact on nearby streets and homes? **A.** Silverwood said that the green space/pool areas for the apartments would be 18 to 40 feet above neighbors' back yards and shouldn't have any more impact than any other neighbor. He said that the LEED mechanical equipment is quiet and that there would be no fumes coming from the equipment used for the residential units. Black said there should be no fumes from Safeway's mechanical area. She wasn't certain whether any cooking equipment could emit fumes but said she would take the comments back to Safeway.

Q. What are the milestones as far as the schedule is concerned? When would the store close, etc.? A. Black described the store's closing date as a "moving target" that would depend on the number of site plan meetings. Black said that sometimes there was one meeting, sometimes there were several meetings but that the process "does not move quickly."

Q. With the distance from Metro rail being well outside of the "bullseye" that restricts parking, someone asked about the parking ratio, which was typically 1.8 spaces per unit at this distance from Metro. A. Silverwood replied that the project would have a parking ratio no higher than that.

With that, the questioning concluded. Haynes reminded attendees that the upcoming vote on Safeway's redevelopment proposal would take place at the 4/24 general membership meeting. He said that there would be at least three positions to choose from and that voting was restricted to members only who attended the meeting in person. Members must be age 16 or over in good standing to be eligible. No e-mail or proxy voting would be allowed.

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:30 pm.