

**MEMORANDUM**

July 18, 2013

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Jim Wasilak, AICP, Chief of Planning

SUBJECT: Planning Commission recommendation on additional residential units in King Farm

The Planning Commission considered the request by King Farm Associates to approve additional residential units within the King Farm planned development at its meeting of July 10, 2013. The request is for Mayor and Council consent to allow 144 townhouse units to be constructed on two lots that are approved for 615,000 square feet of office development, located at 900 and 901 King Farm Boulevard. The King Farm concept plan approval allows up to an additional 400 residential units beyond the 3,200 approved, provided that the Mayor and Council approve such units.

Following the staff presentation, the Commission asked several questions, including whether there would be a corresponding decrease in the amount of office space approved within King Farm. Staff clarified that the request did not include a decrease in the approved amount of office potential, but that the remaining land area for office was limited such that much of the remaining potential office could not be built. Staff also clarified that the potential for 256 additional residential units of unspecified type would remain if the 144 units are approved. Commissioner Hill asked whether the proposal would comply with a stipulation of the original King Farm concept plan approval limiting the combination of single unit attached and detached dwellings to 1,570 units, and staff responded that, with the additional 144 townhouse units, the total will be 1,457 units, well under the 1,570 units. Commissioner Hill expressed a concern about the location of the units in close proximity to the off-ramps from I-270, and inquired about a potential shared parking situation between the Sheraton and the new townhouses, given the proximity of the existing surface parking lot. Commissioner Leiderman asked about noise impacts from I-270 on the residential units, and who would bear the burden of mitigating the effects. Staff noted that the new construction can mitigate the noise levels for interior spaces, and the applicant could study the issue to determine what the noise levels would be in this location and provide mitigation if required.

The applicant presented the request, and noted that many issues, including noise concerns, would be addressed as part of the Level 2 Site Plan process. Commissioner Leiderman asked about the units that would be located on the sloping grade toward Upper Rock. Chair Callistein asked why housing is proposed instead of office, and the applicant responded that adding residential to the Irvington Center area, which was approved almost exclusively for office, represents a continuation of the evolution in thinking about the King Farm plan by adding additional residential units in this area and creating more of a mixed-use area in Irvington Center. The applicant stated that the required Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) would be integrated throughout the development. The applicant noted that the townhomes would be built with rear garages accessed from alleys, and that they have met with representatives of the Sheraton property, who support the

proposal. The applicant clarified that the hotel did not have a shared parking arrangement with the office building but rather co-located parking. Commissioner Leiderman expressed a concern about the existing grading of the site near the Upper Rock project, and the applicant stated that final grading is still required, which would not be much different than the grading for the approved office building. Stormwater management is addressed by the regional system already installed and details will be addressed at the Site Plan review.

Commissioner Hill expressed a concern about the proximity of the townhouses to the parking garage for Upper Rock as well as the office parking garages across Piccard Drive from the development. The applicant's attorney stated that these compatibility issues would be reviewed at the Site Plan stage. Commissioner Hill expressed a concern that the proposal was a way to increase residential densities in this area because it is mixed-use. The applicant's attorney offered that this proposal along with the Ingleside continuing care community furthers the intent of the mixed-character of the development.

The King Farm Town Architect, Larry Frank, addressed the commission about the balance between office and residential use in the mixed-use community. He stated that additional residential provides more opportunities for residents to live and work in the community. Mr. Frank stated that although the potential daytime population would decrease under the proposal, there would be a population throughout the day and evening with more residential that would support King Farm service businesses. Mr. Frank also stated that he felt that the proposed units could be developed to comply with the adopted King Farm design guidelines. Mr. Frank added that screening would be required along the property line with Upper Rock, but that the landscaping adjacent to the two-story office parking garage was mature enough to provide screening. He also encouraged the Planning Commission to not remove office density from the King Farm plan if mixed-use is the goal.

Commissioner Leiderman expressed a concern that mixed-use development really means more residential, and that this particular site does not seem to be a good fit for residential given the development on surrounding properties. Commissioner Hill stated that he felt that finding 11 [*Will be suitable for the type of development, the use contemplated, and available public utilities and services*] in the staff recommendation is not met by the proposal to remove employment areas and replace them with residences. He also expressed concern that residential next to a major highway, transit facilities and parking structures is not appropriate. Commissioner Hadley expressed some agreement with the analysis that the proposal adds to the mixed-use character of the Irvington Center area expressed by Mr. Frank, and that trends indicate that some residents are willing to live closer to highways and transit facilities. He stated that the fact that additional residential is possible anticipated that the plan would evolve over time, and that a net reduction of traffic is a positive aspect. Commissioner Trahan stated that he supports more residential use given the housing crisis. Commissioner Tyner supported the proposal, which is one of a series of adjustments to the King Farm plan, and that many issues raised will be addressed at the Site Plan stage. Commissioner Callistein stated that he was somewhat ambivalent but that adding more office here was probably not desirable, and that there is residential nearby in the Upper Rock development.

The Commission discussed whether to recommend approval with a corresponding decrease in office floor area, and accepted testimony from the applicant's attorney that they would be agreeable to such a condition. Commissioner Hadley stated that he felt that adding residential sooner than the office might be built is a benefit to the community, while Commissioner Hill stated that in his opinion the proposal would ultimately erode the mixed-use concept.

After discussion concluded, Commissioner Trahan moved, seconded by Commissioner Tyner, to recommend the approval of 144 townhouse units in the King Farm development, based on findings 1 through 12 in the staff memorandum, with a condition that a commensurate decrease in office space be determined by the Approving Authority. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 – 2, with Commissioners Hill and Leiderman opposed and Commissioner Ostell absent. Commissioner Callistein encouraged Commissioners Hill and Leiderman to write a dissenting opinion.