



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of December 9, 2006**

DATE: November 27, 2006

SUBJECT: U-3163-06-1 USE PERMIT (Carry-over) for Shirlington Neighborhoods, LLC, to permit a comprehensive sign plan for properties located at 3527 S. Four Mile Run Dr., 3400 Kemper Rd. (RPC #31-032-002, 003, 31-033-004)

Applicant:

Shirlington Neighborhoods LLC

By:

Tara Wiedeman, Agent/Attorney
Walsh, Colucci, Lubeley, Emrich and Walsh
2200 Clarendon Boulevard, 13th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the request for a comprehensive sign plan subject to the conditions of the staff report.

ISSUES: Should the County Board approve project identification signs which are not permitted under the current Zoning Ordinance?

SUMMARY: This is a request for a comprehensive sign plan for the Shirlington Crescent town house development currently under construction on South Four Mile Run Drive at its intersection of South Kemper Road. This project, a large scale residential development, has three major points of access: the two ends of South Kemper Road and a new internal street. The applicant is proposing a total of four signs – two project identification signs (located on retaining walls) at two of the entrances, and one neighborhood-style sign with a one commemorative plaque in a small plaza area at the intersection of South Shirlington Road and South Four Mile Run Drive. Such signs are not specifically permitted by the Zoning Ordinance for by-right projects. Rather, the Zoning Ordinance states that an applicant may apply for a comprehensive

County Manager: _____

County Attorney: _____

Staff: Jill Griffin, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-4568

sign plan by use permit. The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* do permit similar signs for multi-building projects. In using the guidelines for reference and continued work with the neighborhood, the applicant has developed a comprehensive sign plan that provides identity to the new development while reflecting the existing neighborhood and its history. Due to the importance of this visual link between the new development and the established community and the large scale of this residential development, staff recognize that the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* may require flexibility. Therefore, staff recommend that the County Board approved the comprehensive sign plan subject to the conditions of the staff report.

BACKGROUND: The subject site is comprised of approximately 11.04 acres currently under development. The final build-out of the site consists of approximately 171 town house dwelling units.

Site: The site is bound by South Four Mile Run Drive to the south, South Shirlington Road to the east, 25th Street South to the north and South Monroe Street to the west. The site is bifurcated by South Kemper Road. Primary access to the development will be from South Shirlington Road and South Four Mile Run Drive.

Zoning: The site is zoned “RA14-26” Apartment Dwelling Districts.

Land Use: The site is designated on the General Land Use Plan as “Low-Medium” Residential (16-36 units per acre). A small portion of the site, located at the northeast corner of the intersection of South Shirlington Road and South Kemper Road is “Service Commercial” (Personal and business services. Generally one to four stories. Maximum 1.5 FAR with special provisions within the Columbia Pike Special Revitalization District).

Neighborhood: The site is within the Nauck Civic Association.

DISCUSSION: The proposed comprehensive sign plan includes four signs – two project identification signs incorporated into a retaining wall system, one neighborhood-style sign and one commemorative plaque – totaling approximately 135 square feet. The signs are described below and have been developed with consultation of the larger Nauck community:

Entrance Sign (A): Located at the primary entrance to the development at the intersection of South Kemper Road and South Shirlington Road. The proposed area of the sign would be 31.5 square feet. The sign would be incorporated into a tiered retaining wall system. The sign would be on the second tier, an approximately 4-foot tall brick and stone wall. The sign would be on a precast panel mounted within the wall and up-lit from ground-mounted lights. The sign reads “Shirlington Crest at Nauck” and has crest logos flanking either side of the text. The structure is located approximately 12 feet from the right-of-way and almost 23.67 feet from the edge of pavement.

Entrance Sign (B): Located at the intersection of South Four Mile Run Drive and a new internal street. Again, the sign would be incorporated into a tiered retaining wall system. The sign would be on the second tier, an approximately 4-foot tall brick and stone wall. The sign would

be on a precast panel mounted within the wall and up-lit from ground-mounted lights. The sign reads “Shirlington Crest at Nauck” and has crest logos flanking either side of the text. The structure is located approximately 14.88 feet from the right-of-way and approximately 30.42 feet from the edge of pavement.

Neighborhood-Style Sign and Commemorative Plaque (C & D): Located at the intersection of South Shirlington Road and South Four Mile Run Drive. Two signs are proposed for this area: a neighborhood-style sign reading “Nauck Neighborhood – Established 1844” and a bronze plaque which would set forth the history of the site and list the names of the original founders of the Dunbar Mutual Homes Association. The neighborhood-style sign would be similar in appearance to the neighborhood signs found in the Nauck community with modifications to the color and scale of the word “Neighborhood.” The neighborhood-style sign would measure 6 feet wide by 4 feet high and would be placed on the second tier of a retaining wall system and would be up-lit. The bronze plaque would measure 1.5 feet high by 18 feet long and would be mounted, at an angled position, on the first tier of the retaining wall system. This sign would be approximately three feet from the ground elevation. The signs are incorporated into a small plaza area designed with a paving treatment, landscaping and benches. While the plaza area is located within the public right-of-way, both signs are within the subject property.

The Zoning Ordinance defines a “subdivision/apartment/identification sign” as the following: “A sign located at the entrance to a residential subdivision or apartment project, which bears any one or all of the following: the logo, the name of the subdivision or apartment project, and the street number.” The Zoning Ordinance, however, does not specifically permit such signs by-right. Rather, the Zoning Ordinance states that an applicant may apply for a comprehensive sign plan by use permit. This comprehensive sign plan shall establish the placement of the signs, the hours of lighting, the height of the signs, the total number of square feet of sign surface, and the number of signs to be placed on a site. The *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* indicate that multi-building projects may have freestanding project identification signs – more than one may be approved if there is more than one major street entrance into the project. These identification signs must meet the following criteria: the message is limited to the project name, address and standardized directional information; and the sign shall be no greater than ten feet in height with a maximum sign area of 60 square feet and shall be designed as an integral part of the site landscaping and located to guide and orient pedestrian and vehicular traffic going to the site.

The project is a multi-building project (171 units) with three major street entrances: South Kemper Road (two locations) and a new internal street. The two project identification signs are incorporated into the retaining walls which have been designed as part of the landscaping features of the project. The signs, including the text and the crest logos, are 44 square feet – under the maximum permitted of 60 square feet. These signs would orient both pedestrian and vehicular traffic into the site. Therefore, Entrance Sign A and B are consistent with the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings* for project identification signs.

The neighborhood-style sign and commemorative plaque are signs not specifically addressed in the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. However, these freestanding signs identify the neighborhood as well as explain the history of the site – a broader definition of project

identification. These signs, incorporated into a small public plaza, are an integral part of the landscaping and reflect the larger Nauck community and its history. In fact, members of the Nauck community have worked closely with the applicant in the development and placement of these signs. The signs would be approximately 20 square feet for the “Nauck Neighborhood – Established 1844” sign and approximately 27 square feet for the bronze plaque. These signs also fit into the criteria established by the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. Further, the opportunity that these particular signs have to link this new, large scale development with the existing community is important enough to justify additional flexibility of the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. It is not expected that such flexibility would be applied to comprehensive sign plans submitted for smaller infill projects which are more typical within the County.

CONCLUSION: The signs, all which provide project identification, meet the criteria set forth in the *Sign Guidelines for Site Plan Buildings*. The signs have been developed in consultation with members of the Nauck community. The signs have been designed, through placement and text, to establish a connection between the new development and the established neighborhood. Additionally, the large size of this residential development, containing three entrances into a 171 unit townhouse development, merits additional flexibility of the guidelines to ensure this visual connection between the new development and the established neighborhood. Therefore, staff recommends that the County Board approve the proposed comprehensive sign plan subject to the following conditions.

New Conditions:

1. The applicant agrees to limit signs on the site to the comprehensive sign plan as approved by the County Board on December 9, 2006. The developer agrees that the total area of signs shall not exceed 135 square feet as set forth in the comprehensive sign plan prepared by Lewis Scully Gionet, Inc. and dated November 2006. The signs permitted shall include the following:

Project Identification – Entrance – Sign A:	44 square feet
Shirlington Crest at Nauck	31.5 square feet
Shirlington Crest Logos	6.25 square feet (2)
 Project Identification – Entrance – Sign B:	 44 square feet
Shirlington Crest at Nauck	31.5 square feet
Shirlington Crest Logos	6.25 square feet (2)
 Neighborhood-Style & Commemorative Plaque	 47 square feet
Nauck Neighborhood	20 square feet
Bronze Plaque	27 square feet

2. The applicant agrees that the Neighborhood-Style and Commemorative Plaque Signs shall be installed prior to the installation of the two Entrance signs.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

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| September 16, 2006 | Deferred a use permit (U-3163-06-1) request for a comprehensive sign plan to the October 14, 2006 County Board meeting. |
| October 14, 2006 | Deferred a use permit (U-3163-06-1) request for a comprehensive sign plan to the November 14, 2006 County Board meeting. |
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