



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

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

**DATE:** November 28, 2006

**SUBJECT:** 1) Request to adopt the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan as an element of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

2) Request to approve the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan Implementation Framework as an administrative guide for the Historic Preservation Master Plan.

**C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Adopt the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan as a new element of the County's Comprehensive Plan.
2. Approve the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan Implementation Framework as an administrative guide.

**ISSUES:** None.

**SUMMARY:** The purpose of the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan is to establish an overall vision for historic preservation efforts in the County and to support the retention of Arlington's special character as the County continues to evolve. The Master Plan indicates that the County considers historic preservation, its historic resources, and its history to be important and valuable assets that can be used to promote community pride, quality of life, education, heritage tourism, and current and future Countywide planning efforts. The Master Plan (Attachment A) is a policy framework that establishes goals for historic preservation efforts in Arlington and articulates strategies for attaining them. The Master Plan focuses on dynamic strategies to:

- Enhance understanding of Arlington's history and historic character;
- Better integrate preservation values into County planning, land use, and other policies and practices; and
- Protect historic neighborhoods, corridors, commercial centers, and civic buildings.

County Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

County Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff: Michael Leventhal, CPHD

The Historic Preservation Master Plan is recommended to be approved as the ninth (9<sup>th</sup>) element of the County's Comprehensive Plan. To guide the County in achieving these goals, an administrative guide was developed. The Historic Preservation Master Plan Implementation Framework (Attachment B) offers a rational and objective approach over the next ten years for further integrating historic preservation into the County's overall planning and development strategies, in accordance with the proposed Historic Preservation Master Plan.

**BACKGROUND:** As a result of a work session with the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) in November 2001, the County Board approved funds in the FY 2003 budget for a consultant to be hired to assist the County in investigating and developing a proposed Historic Preservation Master Plan. A consultant (Mary Means + Associates) was hired in January 2003.

Over the course of the past three years, two major documents – the Master Plan and an Implementation Framework – were developed. Numerous revised drafts of each document underwent significant review, with feedback obtained at public forums in 2003 and 2006, as well as from members of a specially-created Master Plan Advisory Committee and an Interdepartmental Task Force. The drafts also were reviewed and discussed by several County commissions, including the HALRB, Planning, Parks and Recreation, Public Art, Transportation, Housing, and Neighborhood Conservation. The documents also were vetted by concerned staff, beyond those already participating in one of the above mentioned categories. With each review period came recommendations, points of study, analysis, and reinforcement. The final documents that emerged from this lengthy review process represent a broad community consensus for both a proactive historic preservation policy and a practical action implementation approach.

**DISCUSSION:** The overall intent of the proposed Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan is to assist the County in balancing the preservation of its historic architectural and cultural past with the challenges of planning for the County's present and future. To sustain itself as a successful urban village, Arlington will need to retain the distinctive character and resources of its many historic neighborhoods and commercial centers. This can be accomplished through an integrated and creative approach that includes such tactics as public education and outreach, historical-focused programs, historic preservation incentives, and supportive land use tactics.

The proposed Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan sets goals for historic preservation efforts in Arlington and articulates strategies for attaining them. Within the proposed Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan, there are three goals: 1) enhance understanding of Arlington's history and historic character; 2) better integrate preservation values into county planning, land use, and other policies and practices; and 3) protect historic neighborhoods, corridors, commercial centers, and civic buildings. Within each goal are a series of strategies that cumulatively builds a supportive stewardship amongst the County residents and within the County government for the County's historic resources.

In Goal 1 of the Historic Preservation Master Plan are polices covering interpretive / educational activities and efforts to heighten public awareness of preservation benefits. The focus is on amassing a more complete and comprehensive historical record of the County and creating a

variety of vehicles to communicate Arlington's heritage and history to its residents and visitors. Connecting people with their historical surroundings, visually and through text, will begin the process of developing a stewardship ethic that reinforces a County Historic Preservation Master Plan.

Goal 2 recognizes the need by the County to develop a system that can objectively assess the existing 10,000 plus historic resources identified in the multi-year Countywide Historic Resources Survey, now nearing completion, into a prioritized, or ranked, inventory of building and sites. Creating a Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) will establish a hierarchy of historic resources using four different tiers of significance (Essential, Important, Notable, and Minor). The end data will be merged with the County's GIS system and other county planning and development policies and practices, and most importantly, the data will be easily accessible by County agencies, staff, and the public. Such an activity is evidence of a strong commitment to developing a range of creative and proactive preservation interventions and strategies designed to preserve the most significant of the County's historic resources.

Goal 3 recognizes the need to find balance between the development pressures within Arlington with the need to protect historic neighborhoods, corridors, commercial centers and civic buildings with an approach that is reasoned and looks to explore a wide range of protection strategies. Part of this analysis will involve an exploration of alternative types of historic designation status such as the creation of neighborhood character conservation districts; the expanded role of the HALRB in reviewing various County projects (i.e., Form Based Code, sector plans) outside of its usual scope of CoA approvals in local historic districts, general historical programming; and identifying available incentives and opportunities for historic preservation.

The proposed Implementation Framework document offers a rational and objective approach to be followed over the next ten years for achieving the goals of the Master Plan by integrating historic preservation principles and practices into the County's overall planning and development strategies. This will ensure that historic preservation planning is integral to County planning considerations and will help to prevent some conflicts concerning historic resources in the future. The Implementation Framework would serve as an internal administrative document and is proposed for approval by the County Board.

The addition of the Historic Preservation Master Plan to the County's existing comprehensive plan underscores that the remaining physical historical resources of the County, that have shaped its history and character, are indeed important and need to be integrated in how the County plans and manages for its future. It further recognizes that these valuable historic assets can be used to promote a variety of community values and programs, including community pride, quality of life, education, and heritage tourism. Adopting the Historic Preservation Master Plan provides both a statement of intent, as well as a vehicle for action. Approving the Historic Preservation Implementation Framework provides an administrative guide for staff and the community achieving these goals.

Therefore, staff recommends: 1) that the County Board adopt the Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan for inclusion in the County's Comprehensive Master Plan; and 2) that the County

Board approve the Historic Preservation Master Plan Implementation Framework as an internal administrative document for accomplishing the strategies outlined in the Historic Preservation Master Plan.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A: Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan Policy  
Framework

Attachment B: Arlington Historic Preservation Master Plan Implementation  
Framework