

**STAFF REPORT ON PETITION FOR ZONE MAP AMENDMENT**

**PLN-MAR-17-00026: LEESTOWN VA HOUSING, LLLP**

**DESCRIPTION**

**Zone Change:** From an Agricultural Urban (A-U) zone  
To a High Density Apartment (R-4) zone

**Acreage:** 10.68 net and gross acres

**Location:** 2250 Leestown Road (a portion of)

**EXISTING ZONING & LAND USE**

<b><u>Properties</u></b>	<b><u>Zoning</u></b>	<b><u>Existing Land Use</u></b>
Subject Property	A-U	Veterans Administration Medical Center
To North	A-U	Veterans Administration Medical Center
To East	A-U & P-1	Leestown Middle School & Professional Offices
To South	A-U	Bluegrass Community and Technical College
To West	A-U	Veterans Administration Medical Center

**URBAN SERVICES REPORT**

**Roads** – The subject property is located on the north side of Opportunity Way, an access easement that provides access to several institutional uses, including Leestown Middle School, and Bluegrass Community and Technical College campus, and the rear of the Veterans Administration Medical Center. Opportunity Way intersects with Leestown Road (US 421) approximately 600 feet from the subject property. Leestown Road was recently widened from New Circle Road to Bracktown Road, near Masterson Station Park. This major construction and improvement project was completed within the past two years. No new public streets are planned to be constructed by the developer for the proposed residential development, and existing roadways internal to the existing Veterans Administration Medical Campus site are planned to be severed.

**Curb/Gutter/Sidewalks** – Opportunity Way, as an access easement, has limited improvements along its right-of-way. Sidewalks exist along the south side of the street from the Leestown Middle School parking lot to Leestown Center Way. Since Opportunity Way is an access easement, further improvements are unlikely, but crosswalks and sidewalks are recommended from the Leestown Center and Opportunity Way intersection into the subject property. Curbs, gutters and sidewalks may be necessary internally, and if needed, should be provided by the developer.

**Storm Sewers** – The subject property is located in the Town Branch watershed. Stormwater management facilities will be necessary to serve the site, and should be constructed at the time of development in accordance with the Engineering Stormwater Manuals. No known flooding problems exist on the subject property or in the immediate area.

**Sanitary Sewers** – The subject property is located in the Town Branch sewershed and is served by the Town Branch Wastewater Treatment facility, which is located about 3/4 of a mile to the southeast of the property, inside New Circle Road near Leestown Road and Lisle Industrial Avenue. Existing sewer lines to the site are planned to be severed, and new lines will be extended from Leestown Road along Opportunity Way to serve the site.

**Refuse** – This portion of the Urban Service Area is served by the Urban County Government with solid waste collection on Thursdays. Supplemental service or use of compactors, provided by private refuse companies, is often desirable for multi-family residential uses.

**Police** – The site is located in Police Sector 1, and is served by the West Sector Roll Call Center, located on Old Frankfort Pike, less than one mile to the southwest of the subject property.

Fire/Ambulance – Fire Station #13 is located on Leestown Road, about one mile to the southeast of this location.

Utilities – Electric, gas, water, phone and cable television services are all existing in the area and can be extended into the subject property when further developed.

### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND PROPOSED USE**

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan's mission statement is to "provide flexible planning guidance to ensure that development of our community's resources and infrastructure preserves our quality of life, and fosters regional planning and economic development." The mission statement notes that this will be accomplished while protecting the environment, promoting successful, accessible neighborhoods, and preserving the unique Bluegrass landscape that has made Lexington-Fayette County the Horse Capital of the World.

The Plan encourages infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse that respects the area's context and design features (Theme A, Goal #2a), providing well-designed neighborhoods (Theme A, Goal #3); protecting the environment (Theme B); working to achieve an effective and comprehensive transportation system (Theme D, Goal #1); providing for accessible community facilities and services to meet the health, safety, and quality of life needs of residents and visitors (Theme D, Goal #2); protecting and enhance natural landscapes that give Lexington its unique identity and image (Theme D, Goal #3); compact and contiguous development within the Urban Service Area (Theme E, Goal #1); and encourages development of vacant and underutilized parcels (Theme E, Goal #3). Additional policy statements in the Plan are also relevant to the proposed zone change request.

The petitioner proposes to develop the 10-acre site with a mixture of townhouses and multi-family residential units, and the associated off-street parking. The petitioner proposes a total of 50 dwelling units, for a residential density of 4.7 dwelling units per acre.

### **CASE REVIEW**

The petitioner has requested a zone change from an Agricultural Urban (A-U) zone to a High Density Apartment (R-4) zone for approximately 10 acres of property, located on a portion of the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center campus.

The site is located on the south side of Leestown Road, just outside of New Circle Road, along Opportunity Way, which is a private access easement from Leestown Road to the Bluegrass Community and Technical College (BCTC). Across Leestown Road from the VA campus is a business park, which is in a Light Industrial (I-1) zone. There are also industrial parks to the northwest, west and southwest of the campus, also located in the I-1 zone. A number of other land uses exist between Opportunity Way and New Circle Road, including BCTC, Leestown Middle School, professional offices and an apartment complex (adaptive re-use of vacant office buildings).

The petitioner has a long-term lease contract with the VA in order to develop 50 dwelling units and associated off-street parking for the primary purpose of providing low-income housing, with preference given to veterans. The site was the former location of medical facilities and staff living quarters, but the existing structures, on the site, have been unoccupied since the 1980s.

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan focuses on general land use policies, such as land use compatibility; well-designed neighborhoods; improving a desirable community; protecting the natural landscapes and the environment; and making the best use of land inside the Urban Service Boundary for the protection of the surrounding rural areas. The Plan no longer relies upon a future land use map with specific land use recommendations. However, the general concepts, policies and guiding principles of the Plan should always be considered by the Planning Commission and the Urban County Council.

The Plan encourages expanded housing choices, specifically safe, affordable, and accessible housing to meet the needs of older and/or disadvantaged residents (Theme A, Goal #1c.); infill, redevelopment,

and adaptive reuse that respects the area's context and design features (Theme A, Goal #2a); well-designed neighborhoods which include mixed-type housing (Theme A, Goal #3); accessible community facilities and services to meet the health, safety, and quality of life needs of residents and visitors (Theme D, Goal #2); compact and contiguous development within the Urban Service Area (Theme E, Goal #1); and encourages development of vacant and underutilized parcels (Theme E, Goal #3).

The 2013 Comprehensive Plan did not identify the subject property as vacant land during its inventory analysis, as the land is and has been held by the federal government since the 1930s as part of the VA. Now that a portion of the parcel is being made available for development, the staff considers the parcel "found land" and encourages its future development as an infill site.

The petitioner contends that the requested zone change is in agreement with the 2013 Comprehensive Plan. The applicant further opines that the proposed project meets several of the Goals and Objectives of the Plan, most notably the provision of housing for disadvantaged populations, in this case, veterans. The VA Medical Campus is not only "found land," but is considered underutilized based upon its vast acreage and abundant open spaces. The petitioner's proposal includes adaptively re-using several structures, as well as adding two buildings. There will remain an opportunity for a second phase of development to allow further infill development of the site. The proposed residential development will also have direct access to services provided by the Veterans Administration, as well as access to educational services. The staff agrees with the petitioner's assertion and recommends approval of the requested rezoning.

**The Staff Recommends: Approval, for the following reasons:**

1. The requested High Density Apartment (R-4) zoning is in agreement with the 2013 Comprehensive Plan, for the following reasons:
  - a. The Goals and Objectives of the Plan encourage expanded housing choices, specifically safe, affordable, and accessible housing to meet the needs of older and/or disadvantaged residents (Theme A, Goal #1c.). The project will be comprised of 50 dwelling units that are deed restricted for low income households, with preference given to military veterans.
  - b. Additionally, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan recommends infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse that respects the area's context and design features (Theme A, Goal #2a); compact and contiguous development within the Urban Service Area (Theme E, Goal #1) and encourages development of vacant and underutilized parcels (Theme E, Goal #3). The petitioner plans to adaptively reuse four structures on the VA Medical Campus and construct six new buildings to provide necessary housing for disadvantaged populations. The VA Medical Campus is not only "found land," but is considered underutilized based upon its vast acreage and abundant open spaces. There will be an opportunity in the future to increase the density of the underutilized subject property above the density currently proposed.
  - c. The Goals and Objectives recommend well-designed neighborhoods that include mixed-type housing (Theme A, Goal #3), which the petitioner is providing with a combination of townhouses and multi-family dwelling units.
  - d. The 2013 Comprehensive Plan Goals and Objectives encourage accessible community facilities and services to meet the health, safety, and quality of life needs of residents and visitors (Theme D, Goal #2). The proposed residential development will have direct access to services provided by the Veterans Administration, as well as access to educational services.
2. This recommendation is made subject to approval and certification of PLN-MJDP-17-00076: Leestown VA Housing, prior to forwarding a recommendation to the Urban County Council. This certification must be accomplished within two weeks of the Planning Commission's approval.