

APPENDIX 13

GUIDELINES FOR OFFICE BUILDING REPURPOSING

High office vacancy rates are caused in part by the evolving needs and preferences of office tenants. Many older office buildings can no longer compete with newer office buildings built in transit-accessible, mixed-use activity centers. Often the vacant buildings cannot readily be leased, resulting in the need to consider improving and marketing the buildings for a different use. Office repurposing encourages the development of a wide range of alternative uses that support the planning objectives for the county's activity centers and helps to reduce office vacancy and improve the County's economy. The repurposing of office buildings can be an important element in the county's strategy to revitalize communities, provide needed housing, and accommodate emerging development trends and uses. Emerging uses, such as food incubators, urban agriculture or flexible live/work units, have been shown to promote economic development and the diversity and vitality that characterize successful communities.

The Guidelines for Office Building Repurposing are intended to facilitate the conversion of vacant, partially vacant, and underutilized office buildings to alternative land uses not envisioned under the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

Office buildings that are repurposed per these guidelines may be deemed to be in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. Flexibility is anticipated when applying Plan guidance in the review of zoning applications. Office building repurposing should not preclude future redevelopment nor critical logical consolidation, roadway improvements, parks, and/or other public facilities. Moreover, a repurposed office building should not result in land use conflicts that will compromise the use and/or operations of properties nearby.

The following types or mixture of types of repurposing may be appropriate in the Tysons Urban Center, Community Business Centers (CBCs), Transit Station Areas (TSAs), Suburban Centers, Industrial Areas, Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas:

- Office to Light Industrial or Urban Agriculture. This can include industrial/flex, light manufacturing uses such as makerspaces and 3-D printing; and/or
- Office to Institutional and/or Public Facilities uses.

The following types or mixture of types of repurposing may be appropriate in the Tysons Urban Center, CBCs, TSAs, Suburban Centers, Suburban Neighborhoods and Low Density Residential Areas:

- Office to Retail and other Commercial uses;
- Office to Indoor Recreational uses;
- Office to Residential use;
- Office to Live/Work use; and/or
- Office to Hotel use.

The following performance-based strategy is intended to be used to review proposals for repurposing existing office buildings for alternative uses. This guidance sets forth criteria to ensure proposals are compatible with surrounding uses and can be supported by existing infrastructure. Because the repurposing of office buildings presents unique challenges and opportunities, flexibility in achieving certain objectives may be afforded, particularly when the conversion will not significantly change the building form and footprint.

Although there are recommendations and guidance for residential development and uses throughout the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Plan does not and should not be read to suggest, request, or require any proffered condition for any particular site, development or use.

1. Compatibility:

Office repurposing should occur in a manner that is compatible with the existing and planned surrounding development. A complementary relationship is expected with adjoining properties and surrounding neighborhoods, especially in cases of proximity to lower density residential uses. Office building repurposing in areas within or adjacent to Suburban Neighborhood Areas or Low Density Residential Areas should be rigorously reviewed and should be considered only when the use will not adversely impact adjacent land uses and the overall character of the neighborhood. Landscaped buffers and screening should be utilized where necessary to achieve visual separation to minimize potential adverse impacts.

Consideration of the location of residential conversions should ensure that the new use is not isolated from other residential uses and is located in areas where services and amenities that support residential uses, such as schools, shopping, parks, and other recreational opportunities are provided.

2. Transportation:

Opportunities to improve site access, internal circulation, frontage, and off-site connections and reduce excess parking should be assessed and provided for all transportation modes. Incorporating multimodal frontage improvements should enhance the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit user's experience. An evaluation of the transportation impacts should be provided. A proposed development that is equal to or generates less vehicle trips than an occupied office building and/or has the ability to implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to lessen the vehicle impacts from the proposed use is encouraged. If the proposed use generates additional traffic, then appropriate mitigations, including a TDM program, should be provided.

3. Site Design:

The repurposing of existing office buildings should include consideration of streetscape, landscaping and stormwater management improvements. High quality site design is encouraged. The streetscape should be designed to promote a pleasant pedestrian experience. This includes well-landscaped public spaces such as squares and plazas; urban parks; courtyards; an integrated pedestrian system; and measures to mitigate the visual impact and presence of parking. Additional landscaping may improve the general appearance of a site and provide a buffer between uses as appropriate to create effective transitions as needed. Repurposing may afford opportunities to replace excess surface parking with stormwater management facilities, open space, or other site amenities. Flexibility in applying these objectives is appropriate when considering office buildings with unique site characteristics or constraints.

4. Schools, Parks, And Other Public Facilities:

Proposals should demonstrate that impacts to schools, parks, and other public facilities caused by any change to residential use will be addressed proportionally to the number

and type of units, using the standards typically used to evaluate rezoning applications. The Urban Parks Framework should be applied as appropriate to ensure that office building repurposing results in quality, on-site public park space and recreational

amenities to serve new residents, employees, and visitors. Opportunities for providing community meeting rooms should be evaluated with repurposing proposals.

5. Environment:

The repurposing of buildings may provide opportunities for improvements in energy efficiency and other green building practices. Such opportunities should be identified and considered for incorporation into building and/or site design. Similarly, noise mitigation should be provided where needed and feasible. Stormwater objectives should be met; however, in cases where site constraints render achieving stormwater management objectives impractical, other opportunities to reduce impervious surfaces and implement quality and quantity controls should be identified. The repurposing of buildings should be pursued in a manner that will support the protection and restoration of tree canopy. Efforts should be pursued to protect high quality vegetation and provide additional tree cover within landscaping concepts, consistent with site design needs.

6. Affordable And Workforce Dwelling Units:

For office to residential conversions, affordable housing should be provided in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance and the Workforce Housing policy. However, some flexibility may be appropriate when applying the policy to live/work conversions.”

7. Historic Preservation:

Buildings subject to conversion should first undergo appropriate historic preservation review, including coordination with county staff, to foster preservation and minimize potential impacts to structures that may have historic significance.