

The Facts about the RRLRAIA and The Village of Lake Roland

Preliminary conceptual plans to develop the 6200 block of Falls Road (an area north of Princeton Sports and south of Sunnyfields) into The Village of Lake Roland were unveiled by local real estate developer Vanguard Equities during a community input meeting last month. This site is currently home to Hollins Organic Products and several other commercial and industrial businesses. The redevelopment plans include upscale residential apartments, as well as spaces for retail shopping and restaurants.

Community Plan 2001 and Community Plan 2010

The Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland Area Improvement Association's *Community Plan 2001* and *Community Plan 2010* identify several opportunities to enhance our communities. A number of recommendations made in our community plans have become reality, such as the revitalization of Lake Roland, an initiative spearheaded by RRLRAIA.

A major component of *Community Plan 2010* is to steer redevelopment in Bare Hills away from the manufacturing and industrial uses allowed by much of the area's current zoning to community-friendly, mixed-use redevelopments. The plan's intent is to attract interest in properties that RRLRAIA neither owns nor controls, and to propose potential future uses, understanding that not all suggestions would be economically feasible and that, in essence, the cost of the property would dictate certain future uses. Recent redevelopments along Falls Road including the 1407 Clarkview Road building (home to Earth, Wood & Fire and Atwater's) and the Penniman and Browne site that is now the new home of Simply Beautiful Flowers, sidewalks on Clarkview Road, traffic lights and turn lanes at the intersection of Old Pimlico Road and Clarkview Road, a series of renovations in place of existing industrial structures on Clarkview Road for higher and better uses have been the result of *Community Plan 2010* and the ongoing active role of RRLRAIA in the community.



Current site conditions of 6241-6247 Falls Road show extensive impervious surface and a mulch operation that is environmentally detrimental to Lake Roland. © 2016 Google

The Role of the RRLRAIA

During the 2016 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP) – the quadrennial process that allows properties in Baltimore County to seek rezoning designations – the RRLRAIA worked with Vanguard Equities and County Councilwoman Vicki Almond to change the zoning designation of the site. Of significant importance for both the neighborhood and the environment, this change eliminated potentially undesirable uses of the property, such as automotive services and industrial storage and distribution, to make way for a mixed-use project.

The zoning granted as a part of the 2016 CZMP still allowed the property to be used in a number of ways that are not compatible with the surrounding community. Consequently, the Association entered into a restrictive covenant agreement (RCA) with the developer that places significant additional restrictions on the property. Crucially, the RCA in no way restricts the Association, any of its members, or any member of the community from opposing or supporting aspects of the proposed project as it goes through the full Baltimore County development review process. The RCA accomplishes concessions from the developer in exchange for the Association's support of the zoning changes, not support of the project, per se.

In addition to preventing dozens of otherwise permitted uses for the property, the RCA guides the location of commercial and residential buildings, imposes size and height restrictions (to prevent the opening of big box stores) and limits the height of buildings fronting on Falls Road to one story. Notably, the site elevation drops by more than 30 feet going from the front to the rear of the site, and to comply with the RCA, the highest structures are proposed for the rear of the site. Moreover, the RCA prohibits changeable copy signage within the development. Finally, Vanguard agreed to subject the entire project, commercial and residential, to the Baltimore County Design Review Panel (DRP) for review and approval, even though only the residential portion is subject to the DRP by County regulation.

The developer has now embarked on the development review phase of the project, and in December 2016 filed an application for a Planned Unit Development (PUD). This multi-step process is estimated to take 12 to 18 months. The preliminary conceptual plan proposes to eliminate approximately 100 feet of curb cuts along Falls Road. In addition, traffic will be channeled into a single access point at the signalized intersection of Falls Road and Clarkview Road, and a left-turn lane into the development is proposed to facilitate traffic flow.

Potential Environmental and Quality-of-Life Improvements

At the present time, storm water from this site is not managed, leading to long-standing concerns about run-off into a nearby stream that empties into Lake Roland. Vanguard will have to meet strict storm water management standards for the entire six acres when this site is redeveloped.

Further, the developer has proposed to construct a parking area on adjacent Park property along with a path to connect with the Park's Orange Trail. This will provide safe pedestrian access to the west side of Lake Roland by small maintenance vehicles and will allow much needed park and trail maintenance. In addition, this redevelopment should significantly reduce the heavy commercial truck traffic that currently traverses Falls Road to reach both the existing mulch processing facility and other industrial activities that currently occur on the site.

The development review phase, as a Baltimore County requirement, will address any and all issues related to the impact this project could have on traffic, the environment, municipal infrastructure ranging from sewer to water supply, among other concerns.

Concerns Going Forward

A number of residents have contacted us with concerns about the impact this redevelopment will have on traffic, storm water and the environment, and the visual impact of the proposed residential building on the Park. We have communicated these concerns to both the developer and Councilwoman Almond, and we will continue to work with them, our members, and the community as a whole as the project proceeds through the development process. To that end, there will be more opportunities for both the Association and residents to provide input. These include the concept plan conference with Baltimore County agencies, another community input meeting, a hearing before a hearing officer, and before the Baltimore County Design Review Panel.

If you are interested in receiving notifications about the community input meeting and other opportunities for input, please send your email address to office@rrlraia.org or call our office at 410-494-7577.