



## ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item  
Meeting of February 7, 2004**

**DATE:** January 15, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Zoning Ordinance amendment to Section 36. Administration and Procedures of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance to amend regulations regarding the requirements for environmental statements that are part of use permit and site plan applications to require a LEED™ Scorecard submittal with associated information.

**C. M. RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt the attached ordinance to amend, reenact and recodify Section 36 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, in order to facilitate the creation of an environmentally sound and sustainable community; to encourage economic development; and other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice.

**ISSUE:** None.

**SUMMARY:** Arlington County strengthened its commitment to sustainable communities and green buildings by enhancing its green building incentive program with several elements, which include: a LEED™ accredited professional on all development projects; a specific and detailed site plan condition for LEED™ components; density bonus potentials for achieving one of the four LEED™ green building certifications; and a Green Building Fund with a contribution from site plan projects of \$0.03 per square foot of GFA. This proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment implements this commitment by formalizing the requirement to submit the LEED™ Scorecard as part of a development application. This Scorecard, along with more detailed documentation on the green components incorporated into the project, will provide staff with more information with which to evaluate and enforce the environmental components of the project.

**BACKGROUND:** “Green buildings” are defined as structures and their surrounding landscapes that are designed, constructed, operated, and dismantled in an environmentally responsible manner to minimize short- and long-term negative impacts on the environment. Green buildings not only provide owners and occupants with energy and water savings, good indoor air quality, and healthy, pleasant and productive surroundings, but also benefit the community by being resource-efficient and by conserving energy. Green buildings require a holistic approach from beginning sketches to final design to a functioning building. One way to educate developers

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

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

Staff: Joan Kelsch, DES and Jill Hunger, CPHD, Planning Division

PLA-3500

about green buildings and to encourage developers to integrate sustainable elements into site plan projects beginning at project conception is through submission of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED™) Green Building Rating Scorecard as part of the site plan application process. The LEED™ green building rating system is the tool that is being used to measure the “greenness” of projects in Arlington.

In order to standardize the evaluation of green buildings, the USGBC continues to refine the LEED™ Green Building Rating System. Experts from all segments of the building industry are included in the development of the rating system, including product manufacturers, environmental groups, building owners, building professionals, utilities, local government, research institutions, professional societies, and universities. The LEED™ Green Building Rating System is a voluntary, consensus-based, market-driven building rating system based on existing proven technology. It evaluates environmental performance from a “whole building” perspective over a building’s life cycle, providing a definitive standard for what constitutes a “green building.”

LEED™ is based on accepted energy and environmental principles and strikes a balance between known effective practices and emerging concepts that emphasize state of the art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. LEED™ is a system designed for rating new and existing commercial, institutional, and high-rise residential buildings. It is a feature-oriented system where credits are earned for satisfying each criterion. Different levels of green building certification (certified, silver, gold, and platinum) are awarded based on the total credits earned.<sup>1</sup> The project team, including a LEED™ accredited professional, evaluates the project based on the LEED™ system and determines a specific number of credits to be achieved. The developer submits required documentation for the building to the USGBC outlining the project’s green components. The USGBC evaluates the submission and certifies the project at a specific award level. The system is designed to be comprehensive in scope, yet simple in operation. The proposed amendments formalize the submission of the LEED™ Scorecard as part of the Zoning Ordinance.

**DISCUSSION:** In addition to the green building incentive enhancements, the Zoning Ordinance amendment proposed in this report would clarify the environmental information required for use permits and site plans. Currently, the information required by the Zoning Ordinance is submitted in the “Environmental Considerations” section of the site plan application found within the Administrative Regulation 4.1 Governing the Submittal of Site Plans (4.1 Submission). The information requested needs revision due the following deficits:

- It is general and qualitative.
- It does not capture all of the goals of an environmentally sound and sustainable community.
- It does not require information about the construction practices, materials and systems of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Credits required for LEED™ certification are as follows: Certified – 26-32 credits; Silver – 33-38 credits; Gold – 39-51 credits; Platinum – 52-69 credits.

Further, much of the requested information duplicates the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and other elements of the Arlington County Code including:

- Storm water runoff - Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance
- Erosion; stream sedimentation - Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance
- Vegetation - Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance/Landscape Plan/Tree Protection Plan
- Noise levels - Noise Ordinance and mitigation efforts for construction noise with site plan conditions.
- Solid waste production & disposal - Recycling Ordinance, 4.1 Regulations and a site plan condition related to construction debris recycling
- Health & safety hazards - Zoning Ordinance
- Existing use of surrounding land - 4.1 Regulations
- Traffic & parking generation - 4.1 Regulations
- Unique natural features - 4.1 Regulations and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance (as it relates to wetlands and trees)

In addition, the 4.1 Regulations have a phrase requesting, as part of a submittal, “any special plans or data that may be necessary (zoning plat, TIA, roof plan, etc).”

This amendment to the Zoning Ordinance would require developers to complete the LEED™ Scorecard with an explanation of each LEED™ credit, describing how they intend to achieve the credit or why they are unable to incorporate the component into the project. This information, along with the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance information, will provide staff with a more comprehensive analysis of the project’s environmental impact.

The enhancements to Arlington’s green building incentive program are designed to ensure that Arlington remains a sustainable community, particularly as the density of development in the County continues to increase, by reducing the environmental impacts of development. Staff concludes that the Administrative Regulation 4.1, the site plan review process, the LEED™ Scorecard with detailed documentation on the green components incorporated into the project, and other regulations within the County more adequately cover the "environmental considerations" of the project and allow staff to more readily evaluate and enforce the environmental components of the project. Therefore, the Zoning Ordinance amendment in this report is proposed to amend, reenact and recodify Subsection 36 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, requiring information provided for use permits and site plans, to facilitate the creation of an environmentally sound and sustainable community; to encourage economic development; and other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice. Staff recommends that the County Board approve the proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment to Section 36 Administration and Procedures.

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND, REENACT AND RECODIFY SECTION 36, ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES OF THE ARLINGTON COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE, TO AMEND REGULATIONS REGARDING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENTS TO REQUIRE A LEED™ SCORECARD SUBMITTAL WITH ASSOCIATED INFORMATION.

Be it Ordained that Section 36 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance, including requirements for environmental statements to require a LEED™ Scorecard submittal, is hereby amended, reenacted, and recodified as follows, in order to facilitate the creation of an environmentally sound and sustainable community; to encourage economic development; and other reasons required by the public necessity, convenience and general welfare and good zoning practice.

\* \* \*

SECTION 36. ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

G. Use Permits

\* \* \*

5. Every applicant for a use permit which would allow the construction of: ~~(1) a new structure; or (2) a parking area for more than ten (10) automobiles~~, shall file with his application information as defined in Section 36, paragraph J.

\* \* \*

J. Use Permit and Site Plan Information.

1. Every applicant who files an application for a site plan approval or a use permit, as defined in Section 36, paragraphs G.5. and H.8., shall provide a completed LEED™ Scorecard or other comparable reporting mechanism that is acceptable to the County Manager as part of the site plan or use permit application. The applicant shall analyze the LEED™ credits for various components of sustainable design and describe how and/or why each credit can or cannot be achieved. ~~information on forms approved by the county manager as to the effects of the proposed development in the following areas:~~

- ~~a. Storm water runoff.~~
- ~~b. Erosion; stream sedimentation.~~
- ~~c. Vegetation.~~
- ~~d. Noise levels.~~
- ~~e. Air quality.~~
- ~~f. Solid waste production and disposal.~~
- ~~g. Health and safety hazards.~~
- ~~h. Existing use of surrounding land.~~
- ~~i. Traffic and parking generation.~~
- ~~j. Unique natural features.~~

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