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Position Paper:

Renaissance Park Development

Application of South Independence Acquisition, LLC

Respectfully submitted by:

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Virginia Beach City Councilmember
District 1 – Centerville**

June 25, 2007

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this position paper is to bring forward background information to concerned parties and the public regarding the upcoming City Council vote on June 26, 2007 concerning the Conditional Change of Zoning for the property know as the Spence Farm.

BACKGROUND:

The property encompasses 133.8 acres, bordered by Princess Anne Road, Lynnhaven Parkway, and Salem Road.

The property is currently zoned R-5D Residential, allowing 803 by-right single or duplex units.

The Planning Commission unanimously passed this application on April 11, 2007. The developer at this time agreed to a reduction of 100 units in order to mitigate traffic due to density. They also agreed to convert an additional 100 units to age restricted (senior housing) to lessen the impact on schools.

Under consideration is the development of 26.3 acres of Conditional B-4 Mixed Use District for retail, hotel, and office. In addition to 84.4 acres of Conditional A-12 Apartment District consisting of 103 single dwelling homes, 347 townhomes, and 230 twin townhomes. On the east side of South Independence Blvd. the applicant proposes to rezone 23.1 acres to Conditional A-36 for 400 apartment units and senior housing.

The project includes a mixed pricing concept, with 62 units priced at \$170,000 to \$190,000 to accommodate workforce considerations. It is hope that such an initiative will induce police, fire and other valuable workers to become a fabric of this community. The other units would sell for approximately in the \$200,000/ \$300,000 range. All units would be integrated within the community for uniformity and aesthetics. The proffers in the application provide for a high quality throughout.

PLANNING STAFF INPUT:

- * No AICUZ (jet noise) issues related to this property, therefore a good candidate for residential development where large tracts of property located outside of the noise zones are becoming scarce. We are in fact relocating non-compatible

properties to compatible properties given the building restrictions in the transition area and inter-facility traffic area between NAS Oceana & Fentress Field.

- * This large site can be considered comprehensively with coordinated architectural styles, integrated layout between vehicular and pedestrian connectivity.**
- * The applicant has proffered a development plan that provides a variety of housing types, a street and open space layouts that encourages pedestrian movement and interaction.**
- * Site has wonderful infrastructure in place – bordered by two major thoroughfares, located in a desirable part of the City, close to amenities and employment possibilities.**
- * The proposed retail acts as a unifying element of the community, serving the future residents as well as those in adjacent neighborhoods and the nearby educational centers and business.**
- * Impact on public services of the proposal is shown to be similar to the impact that would occur were designed with existing zoning. (It should be noted that local community leaders expressed concerned about the impact of this project on essential public safety in regard diminished coverage. The suggestion from these leaders is that in the future such impact analysis is included as part of any application.)**
- * The revised proffer reduces the originally stated 21,212 traffic trips per day to 18,879; an 11% reduction. This was the result of a further reduction in the retail component by the developer at the request of the leaders of the adjacent communities.**

MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS:

The Centerville District in Virginia Beach is both blessed and cursed in respect to land development. Though heavily dense with population, several areas of potential significant develop still exist.

The Spence Farm is indeed a desirable location for development. It has neither jet noise implications nor wetland concerns. It is a pristine spot with better than adequate road structure.

There is a need for mixed-price housing that accommodates the City's workforce needs. There is also a need for a hotel in the area given the academic and health

care facilities, as well as other business entities. The food shopping, restaurants, business and retail stores will serve the adjacent communities as well as bring others to the Centerville District. This project has the potential to bring significant tax dollars to the City's coffers. This could justify and facilitate the funding of much needed infrastructure improvements in the Centerville District.

To balance this equation the concerns of the citizens must be considered. Ongoing dialogue between the developer, City staff, Councilmembers and concerned citizens have been ongoing since a Town Hall meeting this past December. Meaningful dialogue has resulted in concessions by the developer in reducing both residential and retail components.

The primary concern of many is the potential impact on traffic in the community. Several of Council's recent actions will help to mitigate this impact. Funds were diverted from several under funded road projects to facilitate the widening of Princess Anne Road between Damn Neck Road and the Municipal Center, as well as complete work on Nimmo Parkway.

This will improve traffic flow east of the project, allowing ready access to police, fire and EMS units but 3.3 miles away. Given the concern of public safety availability the improved roads will provide quicker response times. It should be noted that Sentara currently has an emergency facility in regional proximity to the project and plans for a hospital in the area are in the early planning stages.

The passage of the Regional Transportation Authority paves the way for the Southeastern Expressway, which will serve to decompress traffic on Indian River Road (currently the City's highest at 84,000 trips per day between Route 64 and Centerville Turnpike) and loop in front of the Sportsplex, a short distance from the proposed Renaissance Park. This will provide significant traffic relief on completion. Given that the proposed build out of the project is eight years, the responsibility of the City is to ensure that road construction stays current to needs.

A Town Hall meeting was convened in January to address citizen's concerns regarding traffic, public safety, storm water management, school demographics, and other issues. City employees from the appropriate departments were available to address these and satisfy concerns.

Citizens also expressed concerns about the "workforce housing" factor having a negative impact on property values. It should be emphasized that these units will be integrated into the design and layout of the development to avoid such a negative impact on values.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

Given the location and logistics of the Spence Farm there was never a question that a project of significant magnitude would one day occupy this space. The challenge to City leaders is to give owners the highest and best use of their property while balancing the needs of the community, maintaining a high quality of life.

The process over the past six months included numerous interactions between the citizens, developers, City Staff & Councilmembers. The dialogue was both civil in nature and productive. While a number of concessions were made, some will no doubt remain adamant in opposition. Others appreciate that a project of such magnitude was inevitable for this location, but relies on the City leaders to provide for better roads, public safety, and essential city services.

Twelve civic groups united to engage in dialogue, education and negotiation with the developer and City leaders with regard to this project. Given the City's challenges of future growth and development, this group should continue to function in order to continually provide input and demand accountability of their elected leaders with regard to growth and development. Strong consideration should be given to revise the City's Comprehensive Plan in order to better reflect the City's future and allow for significant citizen input.

The Centerville District will also offer the opportunity for other civic associations and groups to join the dialogue. A website will be constructed to connect all of the civic groups within the Centerville District in order to keep citizens abreast with city planning and other issues. Periodic meetings will be conducted specific to the Centerville District.

Thanks are given to the many individuals who devoted time and energy into this process. Hopefully this will be continued on a greater scale in the future.