

The Capital Arundel Report

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Arundel Gateway rezoning supported by GDP

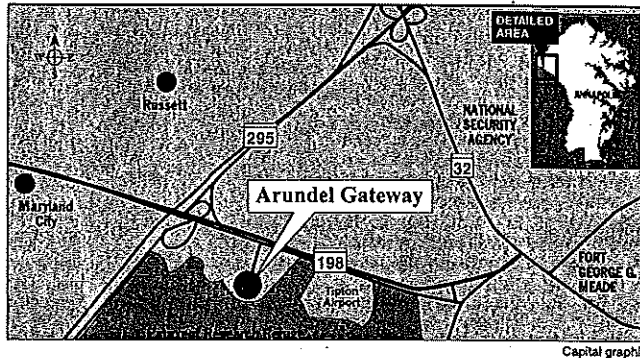
Helps clear way for massive development

By JOSHUA STEWART
Staff Writer

The zoning changes developers would need to transform a large swath of west county land into a mix of shops, offices and 1,600 homes is included in the proposed update of the county General Development Plan.

Arundel Gateway, a 300-acre project that also is slated to include a supermarket and several restaurants, is in line for zoning changes that are crucial for the developers — Ribera Development and Greenberg Gibbons Commercial — to break ground.

Currently, the land is zoned for industrial use for buildings like warehouses. But if it is rezoned to commercial



mixed-use, the developers will be able to build their mix of homes and businesses as planned.

John Stamato, president of Ribera,

said plans for the project are moving along well. He also said he plans to perform a traffic analysis for the project and make accommodations to

minimize its impact.

The recommendation in the county's plan doesn't mean the rezoning is certain, the county administration said. Citizens can still fight it later. The county updates the General Development Plan every 10 years to provide a master blueprint for development throughout Anne Arundel County.

When and if the GDP is approved by the County Council, parcels that could be rezoned will be reviewed and vetted. The landowner would have to support the rezoning, but citizens may oppose it, too, said Larry Tom, director of the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Councilman Jamie Benoit, D-Crownsville, said he didn't know if he would support the rezoning for the property, which is in his district.

He said people who already live (See ZONING, Page A8)

ZONING

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In the area are against the project, particularly all the homes, but if it isn't rezoned the land could be turned into a large commercial or industrial complex. That would be less desirable than the balance of uses the developer is planning, he said.

"I haven't made a commitment one way or the other on how I'm going to vote," Benoit said.

Critics of Arundel Gateway have argued that too much traffic will be put on nearby roads because of the 1,600 homes there. Additionally, they said they are doubtful the utility systems and streets they depend on will be improved to accommodate the new people.

Rezoning the land carries problems, said Tim Reyburn, a member of a group that advised the county through the GDP process. It runs the risk of straining roads and utility systems and overwhelming schools, especially if money isn't invested in upgrading them, he said.

The county wants to rezone the Arundel Gateway property because of the tens of thousands of jobs headed to Fort George G. Meade in the next few years. This project, if built, could help house many of them, said Reyburn, who also is president

of the Russett Community Association.

But at the same time, the area may not be ready for all of this, he said.

The job surge at the fort is good, "but do we really have the sufficient infrastructure or the ability to spend impact fees? I don't think so," Reyburn said.

The far western corner of the county has been chronically forgotten, and it seems as if the General Development Plan is just another example of that, he said.

The Arundel Gateway project is the largest of the eight land-use changes proposed in the draft of the plan and was one of the few rezonings that were added toward the end of the revision process. At first, 44 zoning changes were suggested. When that drew protests, the number went to zero, then to 44 again, and then finally down to eight, people involved in the process said.

Overall the proposed plan holds the status quo. On the polar ends of the development spectrum, it will continue to keep south county rural and will direct development to west county. The priority funding areas — locations where the county tries to funnel new development — are mostly in west and north county, much like they were in the '90s.

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