

# **WARRENTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH / HERO'S BRIDGE ZONING MAP AMENDMENT**

## **STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION**

**September 20, 2024**

The Trustees of Warrenton United Methodist Church seek a zoning map amendment from R-10, Residential, and RO, Residential Office, to R-PUD, Residential Planned United Development, on PINs 6984-16-5101 (portion), 6984-16-7013, 6984-15-1823 and 6984-15-1930. The area of the zoning map amendment is approximately 9.8640 acres (hereinafter, the "Property").

This Property is currently used for the Warrenton United Methodist Church. Hero's Bridge, in partnership with the Church, proposes the construction of a 44-unit affordable, cottage-like, two-family residential units to provide affordable housing to senior veterans 65 and older. Although the Church is the formal applicant, it and Hero's Bridge are referred to herein as the Applicants where appropriate.

## **REASONS FOR THE PROPOSED ZONING MAP AMENDMENT**

Hero's Bridge is a Fauquier-based nonprofit that aids principally those who served in Vietnam, Korea and World War II. Since its inception in 2016, it has assisted nearly 500 seniors in the five county Rappahannock Rapidan Health District. Hero's Bridge uses younger workers with the older clients ("Battle Buddies") using the rapidly growing Community Health Worker philosophy to address social determinants of health in this lower income, and to reach socially isolated senior veterans.<sup>1</sup> This work is important to the overall health and well-being of our local senior population. A recent market study indicated that 24% of our seniors are veterans, and nearly 13% of these live below the poverty line. Addressing isolation, nutrition, transportation, and housing needs in this vulnerable population helps relieve the burden and stress on local emergency services, publicly provided social services, and health systems. All residents are screened as other rental communities screen tenants, and Hero's Bridge does not rent to anyone convicted of a "barrier" crime, or who is listed on the sex offender registry. None of the residents can be active users of illicit drugs.

Since its inception, one of the most common reasons the community refers these older veterans to Hero's Bridge is the need to assist those living in substandard or unaffordable housing. For six years, Hero's Bridge has attempted to address individual situations through its HomeFront program, which involves helping clients remain in individual houses that may be in poor condition, and where maintenance is costly. Unfortunately, some of these situations cannot be remediated and there is simply insufficient housing stock available for independent seniors. The market study indicated that "[a]ll market area tax credit communities reported full occupancy with wait lists

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<sup>1</sup> Social determinants of health are generally the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age, that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.

ranging from three months to over two years.” It also says that “[t]he results of the Net Demand analysis indicate demand for 398 additional senior rental units over the next three years, with no identified senior rental projects in the pipeline.” (The emphasis is ours).<sup>2</sup> All of the Hero’s Bridge homes will be rental.

It is thus critical to increase the housing stock for seniors in this community. If this is accomplished it will also provide a relief valve on other areas of the housing market by freeing up additional homes for the workforce population.

Hero’s Bridge has evaluated numerous locations for these homes. Because the County requires new development to occur within “service districts” and at Vint Hill, there were no properties available, principally because of the lack of water and sewer infrastructure. At Vint Hill, where there is such infrastructure, Hero’s Bridge proposal was rejected by the Commonwealth whom wished to preserve available land for its own purposes. There was also concern about the ready availability of doctors, groceries, and a pharmacy. After many months of searching, the only parcel that is feasible is that which has been made available through the grace of the Warrenton United Methodist Church.

Actual housing is only one part of the problem, however. Many have consequential health needs, and Hero’s Bridge provides permanent supportive services through its Community Health Worker model. Necessary care is accomplished through visitations by a variety of health professionals, including daily visits from social workers, assistance with veterans benefits, and a 12-seat van for transport to other care givers and for shopping. These seniors are already living in this broader community and to the extent they require services from EMS companies, this program can relieve some of that burden and it places the residence in close proximity to EMS services when essential, and close to groceries, pharmacies, and the hospital.

## **CONSISTENCY OF THIS APPLICATION WITH THE TOWN’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Property is planned Medium Density Residential on the Town’s Future Land Use Plan Map. With an acreage of 9.8640 and 44 two-family residential units this equates to a density of 4.5 homes per net acre. It is also the case that the R-PUD is intended to be developed at a 0.40 FAR, and this proposal is at a density of 0.14 FAR. This unique proposal is consistent with numerous goals and objectives of the Town’s Plan, Warrenton 2040. In particular, Housing Recommendation H-1 is to ensure equitable, attainable housing opportunities across residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities by catering to the needs of a diverse community, including young families, professionals early in their careers, essential workforce, and those entering retirement. Recommendation H-4 is to create regional partnerships to address and enhance attainable housing

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<sup>2</sup> The assisted living centers and the Puller Veterans Care Center at Vint Hill cost between \$3,000 and \$8,000 per month, but the homes at the proposed site will be significantly more affordable.

supply.<sup>3</sup> This proposal not only provides attainable, affordable housing for senior veterans, but essential services, as well.

## **THE APPROXIMATE TIME SCHEDULE FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

The 44-unit affordable two-family residential units will be constructed with a Small Office / Community Center. The Small Office / Community Center will include a movie viewing area, a senior technology library, an arts and crafts area, a music area, an area for pet therapy for residents, and a fitness room.

## **IMPACT MITIGATION AND CONSISTENCY WITH R-PUD PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

1. The principal benefit to be derived from the approval of this application, of course, is the ability to fulfill a need for senior veterans in the community, in a safe environment and within the supporting arms of the Church itself.

2. With respect to the signal issues of transportation and parking, few of Hero's residents will have cars, which will result in a low traffic volume. The only other vehicles will be for deliveries and occasional visits (many, if not most, of the residents do not have family to support them). Hero's Bridge has committed to provide a Shuttle Bus Service (see Proffer #11).

The proposal only requires 1 parking space per home, even with the occasional outside vehicle. Because of the low traffic volume, there will be little impact on the existing roads surrounding the site. Principal access will be by Church Street, but Church is not a signalized intersection at Broadview and so it can be assumed that vehicles may also use Sullivan Street to access Waterloo. The total number of parking spaces required and provided is shown on the General Development Plan

3. The proposed buildings will be within the height permitted in the R-PUD. The only exception is the existing Church.

4. The engineering of the site will, by law, be required to provide stormwater management according to regulations far stricter today than were in place when any of the existing homes in the neighborhoods surrounding, or the Church, were built. This should improve existing conditions in the area.

5. The Applicant is proposing landscaping as depicted on the General Development Plan. The Property is otherwise currently home to the Church, and the remainder of the Property is largely cleared, graded, and maintained as a lawn. The Plans meet the 25% open space requirement.

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<sup>3</sup> The Plan also references the achievement of "attainable housing for all ages, incomes, and needs." Plan, Executive Summary, p. 5.

6. There will be little in the way of additional burden on community facilities or public services, because Hero's Bridge will effectively become an adjunct of those facilities by providing the services that are its core mission.

7. The development would be served by public water and sewer and we understand that both are available.

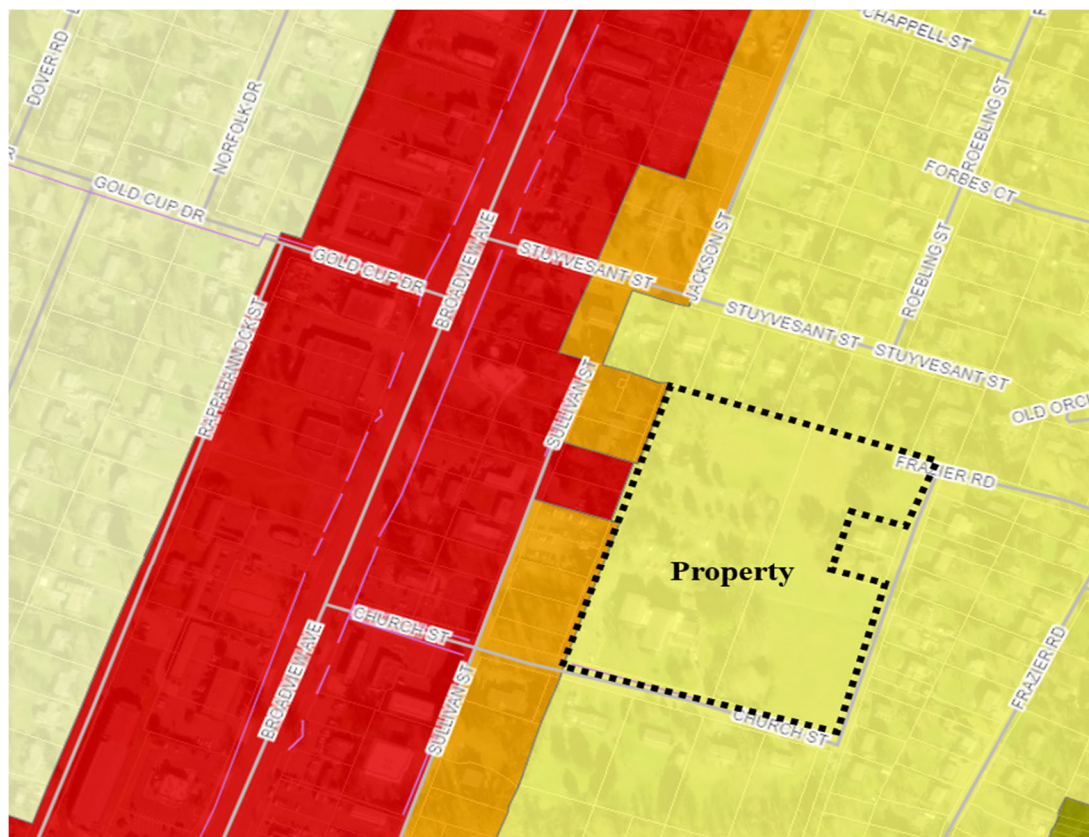
## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Even before submitting an application for this Rezoning, the Church and Hero's Bridge actively engaged with adjacent property owners and the neighborhood for about a year. The goal was to understand anticipated impacts and to address them at the outset of the application. To that end, the Hero's Bridge website reflects the substance of those discussions and has both updates and a FAQ page that can be readily accessed by interested persons.

## THE CHARACTER OF THE SURROUNDING AREA

The surrounding area is zoned residential and is so developed. The Property is near the Broadview Avenue Corridor, which is commercial. Below is a zoning map that shows the surrounding residential and nearby commercial. The proposal corresponds with the Town's Future Land Use Plan Map.

Zoning Map:



## MODIFICATIONS TO THE R-PUD REQUIRED

The Applicants have evaluated the Town's different zoning classifications in detail to determine which might be suitable for this proposal. None of the existing districts are a perfect match for this use, even though it would advance a Comprehensive Plan goal and would offer a needed service to a worthy community. No residential district permits development as proposed. The C (Commercial) District has a Mixed-Use Option by Special Use Permit, but there is no secondary use proposed that would satisfy the requirements of that Option, and the Applicants are concerned that it would propose a commercially zoned property in the midst of these otherwise residential neighborhoods, and could require consideration of a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The use that is offered here is residential and not commercial.

Ultimately, and after discussions with Staff, the Applicants determined that they should apply for a proffered R-PUD. At present, however, the Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum lot of 25 acres for such a rezoning. This site is just over 9 acres in size. Staff has suggested that there are two options to pursue, either a zoning text amendment to alter the minimum lot size generally, or tailored to specific conditions, or employment of the Council's power to use proffers to amend the Zoning Ordinance in a given case, as the Supreme Court has decided is lawful and proper with Council concurrence in Rowland v. Town Council of Warrenton, 298 Va. 703 (2020). The staff has not expressed to the Applicants a preference either way, believing that to be a question for the Council.

The Applicants suggest that Rowland means what it says, that the conditional zoning system is intended to address each property according to its needs and that, as the Court wrote, "we conclude that the General Assembly intended for these statutes to grant localities the authority to permit deviations from the requirements of a zoning ordinance by accepting voluntary proffers as part of a rezoning application. . . . [W]e are of opinion . . . the zoning applicant may make, or the locality may suggest, any proffer which can be viewed as beneficial to the community, even if that proffer creates a condition 'not generally applicable to land similarly zoned.'" Id. at 717-18, and the emphasis is in the original.

Therefore, the Applicants propose that the Council consider, and if it is disposed to grant the rezoning applied for, approve a proffer statement that alters the minimum required acreage for an R-PUD and those requirements that would otherwise preclude this proposal, leaving it subject to all other applicable provisions of the Town's Ordinances.