



SunCal seeks new approval from Prince William County for Potomac Shores

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The sprawling, upscale [Potomac Shores](#) development in eastern Prince William County is moving forward after years of languishing; model homes have been constructed and county officials have approved a new financing initiative.

But developers face a hurdle in coming weeks for their vision to come to fruition.

On July 16, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors is scheduled to take up a new rezoning request, as the site's developer, Irvine, Calif.-based SunCal, seeks to put its imprint on plans originally approved more than a decade ago under a different owner.

The heart of the new vision formulated by developers is still the same as those contemplated in past years. About 3,800 homes are planned, along with

3.7 million square feet of commercial space in a sprawling area on Route 1 between Dale City and Dumfries. The site backs up to the Potomac River, and officials hope that the huge development will reinvigorate the Route One corridor and open up significant waterfront development.

A new Jack Nicklaus-branded golf course and a Virginia Railway Express station are also being planned, and developers hope to lure a new [FBI headquarters](#) to the site.

SunCal's new plans have the federal government's wishes in mind. They have placed the future VRE station at the heart of the development's "town center," as well as expanded the center's employment and retail space, prompting the need to seek a rezoning approval from the county.

The ability for FBI employees — or employees of another major [government facility](#) — to get off public transit and access their office building should appeal to federal officials, said David Soyka, a SunCal spokesman. Sites in the District, Springfield and Maryland also are under consideration as the FBI seeks to move out of its outdated District building on Pennsylvania Avenue NW.

Last week, the county Planning Commission, an advisory panel, recommended that supervisors approve SunCal's rezoning request.

"We think we have a better plan to take advantage of public transportation and that will be a key factor to attract the D.C. market," Soyka said.

Developers have also proposed eight to 10 new playing fields for sports groups, as well as more open space. Supervisor Maureen S. Caddigan (R-Potomac) said she had originally voted against the project when it came up for its original approval in 2001. She said that from what she's seen so far, SunCal has made the project better.

The biggest concern, she said, is whether SunCal has addressed concerns about congestion at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 234. The already crowded intersection would be significantly impacted when the development is finished.

Soyka said that developers have proposed a solution to mitigate the impact, but hope that a good portion of those who live in Potomac Shores use the VRE station. “We agree that the car isn’t the answer,” he said.

In a related matter last week, Potomac Shores was designated by Prince William supervisors as a tourism zone, which will allow developers to help pay off future debt using county and state tax dollars matched by developers.

Infrastructure around the site, totaling \$30 million, would be split equally among the state, county and the developer, said Steve Solomon, the county’s finance director. Only tax dollars generated by the site would go to pay for the site’s debt, officials said.

The county’s portion would be paid through the Transient and Occupancy Tax (TOT), which is tacked onto hotel bills. A portion of the tax that feeds the school system’s coffers has been exempted from helping repay the site debt, Solomon said.

The new state program to encourage tourism-related development then allows for 1 percent of state sales tax generated throughout Potomac Shores to go toward the site’s development.

The local dollars would normally go into a larger pot for funding tourism-related initiatives across the county. County officials say, however, that they are a wise investment because the county will reap \$2.6 million in tax collections the first year from the site once the hotel opens. The county projects those numbers will climb with room and home prices, Solomon said.

Caddigan said the tourism zone and associated tax dollars are the “shot in the arm” the development needs. Developers have said that Potomac Shores could take between 10 and 20 years to build out, depending on market conditions.