



**Date of Council Meeting: May 26, 2015**

**TOWN OF LEESBURG  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

**Subject:** Mobile Hope Life Skills Center

**Staff Contact:** Brian Boucher, Deputy Director, Planning & Zoning

**Council Action Requested:** None at this time. This memo is for informational purposes only. However, if the Council desires to pursue a potential ordinance amendment, direction should be given to staff to prepare a resolution to initiate said amendment while also providing direction to staff on work load priorities.

**Staff Recommendation:** None

**Commission Recommendation:** None required.

**Fiscal Impact:** No specific information at this time. The Mobile Hope Life Skills Center is a non-profit homeless shelter operation. As a result, there is a loss of revenue if the facility was located in a business district. However, the respective services provided enable residents to function better in society, thereby potentially decreasing other costs to the public.

**Executive Summary:** At the Town Council meeting on May 12, 2015 representatives of Mobile Hope Loudoun, a non-profit organization located at 31 Sycolin Road, S.E. in Leesburg requested that Town Council consider a Zoning Ordinance amendment to permit a homeless shelter at their current place of business. The Town of Leesburg Zoning Ordinance currently does not define a homeless shelter and the Zoning Administrator has determined that the use is not allowed in any district. Therefore, the Zoning Ordinance would have to be amended to allow the use.

The property at 31 Sycolin Road is currently used by Mobile Hope Loudoun for outreach services to disadvantaged individuals and they desire to provide overnight shelter to individuals from 18 to 21 years of age at the location. The lot at 31 Sycolin Road is currently occupied by two structures but has floodplain over approximately 70% of the lot area. However, this floodplain is classified as "backwater" and may be eliminated through a floodplain alteration, thereby reclaiming most of the lot area for development.

**Background:** At the Town Council meeting on May 12, 2015 representatives of Mobile Hope Loudoun, a non-profit organization located at 31 Sycolin Road, S.E. in Leesburg requested that Town Council consider a Zoning Ordinance amendment to permit a

homeless shelter at their current place of business. As stated on its website at <http://www.mobilehopeloudoun.org>, Mobile Hope currently provides “essential needs, emotional support and referrals for at-risk, precariously housed and homeless youth 21 years of age and younger living in Loudoun County.” The organization would like the zoning right to build a life skills center for those individuals 18 to 21 years of age who have aged out of youth shelters in order to provide services that will allow them to become successful adults.

**Subject Property Information:** The 31 Sycolin Road, S.E. property is approximately 1.43 acres in size (see Attachment 1). It contains two buildings, one of which is currently utilized by Mobil Hope for outreach services. Approximately 70% of the land is covered by floodplain. Arcadia Communities, Inc. owns this parcel and two more adjacent parcels (1.0 acre and a 0.31 acre, respectively) for a total of 2.74 acres. All three parcels were included as part of an office building plan submitted in 2005 but withdrawn by operation of law due to inactivity. Approximately 70% of these lots are in floodplain, which means that today no building can be erected within this area but it may be used for parking so long as Town and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) development regulations are met. However, the floodplain is also classified as “backwater” which means that the vast majority of this current floodplain area (over 90%) may be reclaimed for development so long as a floodplain alteration is approved by the Town and FEMA.

**Existing Zoning:** The subject property is located in the Crescent Design District and is zoned MUO (Mixed Use Optional) District which does not permit a homeless shelter with overnight accommodations. In fact, the Zoning Ordinance does not contain a use similar to this in any district, other than a “group home” which is required to be permitted in residential districts per state law and is limited to 8 beds. An “emergency [warming] shelter” (TLZO Sec. 9.4.4) is the closest listed use but that use is allowed on a limited, temporary basis subject to 15 performance criteria, including “Accessory Emergency Shelters hours of operation shall not exceed 12 hours in a 24 hour day”. The emergency shelter is also linked to weather and cannot open unless weather forecasts call for temperatures below 45 degrees or above 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Based on this, the Zoning Administrator determined that a homeless shelter is not a permitted or special exception use in the Town and is in fact a prohibited use in accordance with Town of Leesburg Zoning Ordinance (TLZO) Section 9.1.4 Unlisted Uses. Therefore, the use is not currently allowed in any zoning district in the Town. In such a situation, it is up to the Council to either initiate an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to permit the use in specific districts subject to performance standards, or to leave the Zoning Ordinance as currently configured.

**The Use Generally:** A “homeless shelter” is a use that is generally described in ordinances as a facility that provides services and temporary shelter to homeless individuals for a specified period of time. Homeless shelters can be separated into several categories – serving adults, families or young people. A “homeless youth shelter” generally serves individuals up to 18 years of age whereas a “homeless shelter” serves

adults. State agencies prescribe strict rules for the operation of such facilities. Besides a place to sleep such facilities typically provide support services to help individuals “get back on their feet” and usually have a time limit after which residents must move out of the facility.

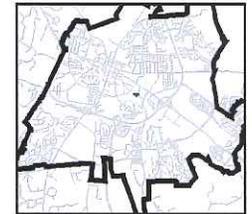
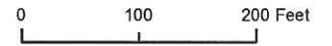
**Attachments:** (1) Map



**31 Sycolin Road SE  
Leesburg, VA 20175**



	31 Sycolin RD. SE
	Arcadia Properties



Map Prepared by  
Town of Leesburg DPZ  
May 21, 2015