

CITY OF HYATTSVILLE
PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES
JULY 20, 2021

Register in advance for this webinar:

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1. Introduction of Committee & Guest Members (7:00 PM)

- Maureen Foster, Committee Chair
- Marshall, Committee Member
- Nkosi Yearwood, Committee Member
- Will Seath, Committee Member
- Yohannes Bennehoff, Committee Member
- Greg Barnes, Committee Member
- Cliff Mayo, Committee Member
- Sam Denes, Council Liaison
- Ben Simasek, Council Liaison
- Kate Powers, Staff
- Chris Hatcher, Applicant
- Bobby Gilbane, Applicant
- David Bickel, Applicant
- Matt Michetti, Applicant
- Tom Haller, Applicant
- Nicholas Speech, Applicant
- Nihar Shah, Applicant
- Claire Panak
- Vince Biase
- EJ Evans
- Jason Swift

2. Committee Business

- Approve April & June 2021 minutes
 - Page 4 of June minutes – Maureen’s comment (**provided** not produced)
 - Page 3 of April minutes – Marshall’s comment (**have no questions** not comments)
 - Passed unanimously

3. DSP-21006: Parcel N, 6400 America Boulevard

- Presentation
 - Chris Hatcher, Applicant’s Representation
- Project Background

- This presentation will compress both applications – PPS and DSP – into one. However, there will be two separate Planning Board hearings.
- 6400 America Boulevard is a gateway into University Town Center (UTC). Parcel N is north of East-West Highway and borders Belcrest to the west. It is near the Safeway, Mall at Prince George's, and Prince George's Plaza metro station.
- The proposed building will be 310,00 square feet and 7-8 floors (due to the grade change), sitting lower to the east. The first two floors will be concrete with wood frame above that.
- The site will include a structured parking garage, co-working area, courtyard space, gym, and pet spa.
- Additionally, a pool terrace will be built on the 7th floor. The pool deck will be elevated alongside an outdoor amenity space.
- The ground floor entrance will be on the corner of East-West Highway and America Boulevard. The retail space is proposed at the corner of America Boulevard and Liberty Lane. The garage will be accessed on Liberty Lane. The garage will include a loading dock for retail deliveries, move-ins, and trash collection. This will help mitigate congestion on Liberty Lane.
- The exterior of the building pays homage to the vibrancy of the Arts District.
- Public art will be included in front of the main lobby area to be created by a local muralist. The mural will run along the ground level to the proposed retail space.
- Through its design, the building has been broken up into multiple sections to allow for more residential, traditional architecture along America Boulevard. The singular building looks like three separate buildings.
- There are no balconies proposed on East-West Highway.
- Landscaping will include natural and local vegetation and will be differentiated between the interior courtyard and exterior.
- The team is currently in the design development phase.
 1. Entitlement through Feb '22 (DSP full approval Jan '22)
 2. Hearing: September '21
 3. Permit requests: Jan '22 – June '22
 4. Construction: July '22 – June '24 (24-months)
 5. Lease up June: '24 – Nov '25
- Clarifying Questions
 - Yohannes: Will there be any improvements made to Liberty Lane besides a sidewalk and curb cuts?
 1. We will re-pave the area. Outside of that, we do not have any other improvements planned. We will the replace pavement and sidewalks.
 2. Yohannes: Will sidewalks be placed all the way around the property?
 3. Yes, there will be a full connection.
 4. Yohannes: Is Liberty Lane a public or private right-of-way?
 5. Liberty Lane is private.

6. Yohannes: It's been a concern with other developments – people choose not to use the designated loading docks and end up double parking. Has the project team planned for this and how will this be dealt with operationally?
 7. We will write it specifically into the retail lease – leases will be required to use the loading dock for deliveries.
 8. Yohannes: Will balconies be included all the way down Liberty Lane?
 9. They will be included through the corner but not all the way down Liberty Lane.
 10. Yohannes: Based on where the property line is, will the sidewalk be expanded?
 11. Liberty Lane is totally within the subject parcel. The sidewalks will be pushed out to be ADA compliant. We will follow streetscape guidelines. We will be redoing the sidewalks on American Boulevard.
 12. Yohannes: What will the sidewalk width be along East-West Highway?
 13. They will meet ADA compliance.
 14. Yohannes: Does the plan include addition street trees?
 15. Yes, streetscape will include additional trees. The rendering is somewhat fictitious and does not show exactly where the proposed trees will be generally. We will not be requesting any alterations to the streetscape and landscape standards.
 16. Yohannes: There is a broken sidewalk by this parcel along East-West Highway towards Belcrest. Will you be addressing this in any way?
 17. We are only proposing improvements within the property boundary. We have no jurisdiction beyond that.
 18. Yohannes: Will you be requesting any design exemptions?
 19. We will be requesting modifications to the build-to line (BTL) along American Boulevard and Liberty Lane.
- Greg: I have some parking-related questions. You have a total of 272 parking spaces. How many are reserved for guests and for retail use?
1. There will be some parking spaces reserved for retail employees on the first floor of the parking garage, as well as spaces allocated for guests of residents and leasing lobby spaces. We want to avoid these individuals parking on America Boulevard.
 2. Greg: Do you have a breakdown of how many spaces are being allocated for each category?
 3. We will have 20 total to be used by all categories.
 4. Greg: There will be no parking spaces allocated for the general public, correct?
 5. Yes, that is correct.
 6. Greg: The proposed retail space is 2,000 square feet. Will this be reserved for one tenant or partitioned for multiple tenants?

7. We haven't talked to the retailer yet. We imagined only one retailer using this space. We've found through experience that most retailers want at least 1,500 square feet, however, there is the ability to partition the space if desired.
 8. Greg: Will there be any type of shared space for overflow storage?
 9. Yes, there are a bunch of storage cages for residents, including a package room and refrigeration for groceries.
- Cliff: Looking at the floor plan, it appears that there is only one elevator shaft. Was there a reason for this?
 1. We will include three elevators in the building – two in the lobby and one at the loading dock area.
 2. Cliff: What percentage of the amenity space will be made up of co-working space? Is this space only open to building residents? Can this be used as community or business space?
 3. We envision this area to only be used by building residents. 5,000 square feet will be dedicated to the co-working space with a total amenity space of 9,000 square feet.
 - Will Seath: You mentioned requesting modifications to the build-to line standards. How will you be using this space to enhance the public streetscape?
 1. We will have drawings outlining where the modifications will be.
 2. Will Seath: One of our Councilmembers mentioned that this may be the most walkable site in Hyattsville due to its proximity to metro. How do you plan to use the area to enhance the civic space? Will there be amenities for families?
 3. There is no specific lot planned on-site. Through our market research, we believe our demo to be 25 – 45-year-olds, new families, and younger couples.
 4. Will Seath: Can you tell us more about the podium construction and masonry planned for the building?
 5. It will be cast in place, poured concrete.
 6. Will Seath: What about the upper floors?
 7. It will be brick veneer.
 8. Will Seath: Will it be full common brick or thin brick?
 9. I would need to ask our construction team.
 - Nkosi: Is the proposed streetscape consistent with what's existing towards the Safeway?
 1. Yes, they are similar. The variances requested will help the proposed development reflect the Safeway and existing UTC area.
 2. Nkosi: We recently passed an affordable housing strategy. Does this project make any contributions towards achieving the City's policies?
 3. We have looked into tax credits associated with affordable housing, however, this development will not be utilizing that program.
 - Marshall: It appears the building will have wood frame above concrete. Why did you decide to include wood in the upper floors?

1. Wood is more cost effective than concrete. It is a common construction type in the region.
 2. Marshall: Are you using board and batten siding or hardie plank?
 3. We are using fiber cement panel, with a 20-year warranty. We will have vertical joists on top of horizontal to create a pattern.
 4. Marshall: Will there be any accessible, income-based units made for seniors?
 5. We have accessibility consultants on our team and are working through all that currently. We do not have an exact number at the moment.
 6. Marshall: Will balconies be included on all residential floors?
 7. Balconies will start on the 2nd floor with grade change as it varies. Privacy and security are taken into consideration in our evaluation.
 8. Marshall: When describing the additional parking spaces, are the rental and retail spaces counted separately?
 9. There will be a total of 20 spaces for retail users and visitors.
- Claire Panak: Are there any plans for a playground or other outdoor recreational areas for children?
 1. We do not currently have any plans to include a playground in the amenities.
 - Yohannes: Any plan to design the garage in a way that is adaptable in case there is low parking occupancy? That way, you could add more units or amenities.
 1. The top floor of the garage could potentially be converted to more amenity space.
 - Maureen: Will the speed limit on Liberty Lane be changed?
 1. Liberty Lane is a private right-of-way and is more like a driveway than anything. It will likely be 15 mph, but will not be posted.
 - Will: Is the pool proposed for on top of the parking garage?
 1. The pool area can be accessed through the accompanying amenity space on the 7th floor.
 - Ben: Do you anticipate widening Liberty Lane to accommodate trash pick-up?
 1. We have done a study and do not anticipate needed to widen the street.
 - Yohannes: The parking lot is oriented towards the courtyard. Will there be screening from noise and fumes? Will it be solid or open?
 1. The first two floors will be ventilated, and it will be screened beyond that.
- Committee Comments
 - Greg: No current comments. It was a good presentation.
 - Will: Any use for this space beyond a surface lot is an improvement. The walkability of the site is an important consideration for this project. I am underwhelmed by the quality of the proposed architecture. Podium is

common and is permitted by code, however, I have some serious reservations about how it will be maintained and age over time. I worry that these types of buildings will become a blight on our landscape. Generally, the form of the building would be more pleasing with traditional proportions. Also, there is no clear entrance. There is no clarity in design, and I believe more work needs to be done.

- Cliff: I have no comments at this time.
- Nkosi: I share some of the concerns with the overall design. How can we make it better? The façade on East-West Highway needs more attention. The inclusion of Romeo and Juliet balconies can indicate that this is a residential building. The design needs to clearly demarcate the building entrance. It needs to have a better presence. Also, the brick façade can be extended along American Boulevard. The proposed project is an improvement over the existing parking lot; however, it is a low bar. This is a critical site and there are many regional examples to pull from.
- Marshall: I agree with Will and Nkosi. I find the color scheme to be underwhelming. I also have concerns with the building materials. There are a low number of parking spaces associated with this project. Do not reduce the number of parking spaces. UTC is already parking themselves out of business. I would also like to see a few income-based units for seniors on a fixed income.

The Planning Committee recognizes that the proposed project is an improvement over the existing surface parking lot. However, as a critical site in Hyattsville, the architecture needs to highlight its importance and greater attention needs to be paid to the East-West Highway façade. (Passes, 6 to 1)

The Planning Committee suggests that the brick pattern be extended vertically to make the façade less of an afterthought. (Passes, 5 to 2)

The Planning Committee recommends the site continue to improve walkability and pedestrian connectivity with wider sidewalks, an enhanced streetscape, as well as appropriate traffic calming devices and speed limits. (Passes, 7 to 0)

The Planning Committee recommends the building entrance be clearly demarcated. (Passes, 6 to 0 and 1 abstention)

The Planning Committee finds the building color scheme somewhat underwhelming. (Fails, 1 to 6)

The Planning Committee has concerns about the podium construction and its durability. (Fails, 3 to 4)

The Planning Committee recommends the applicant ensure adequate parking for retail uses and visitors. (Passes, 5 to 2)

The Planning Committee recommends that affordable and accessible senior units be included within the building. (Passes, 7 to 0)

~~4. DSP 10011-02: Queens Chapel Town Center~~

- ~~● Presentation
 - ~~○ Dan Lynch, Applicant's Representation~~~~
- ~~● Project Background~~
- ~~● Clarifying Questions~~
- ~~● Committee Comments~~

Application withdrawn by applicant; therefore, no presentation is needed.

5. PPS 4-20040: West Hyattsville Multifamily Buildings

- Presentation
 - Robert Gilbane, Applicant
- Project Background
 - This is a preliminary plan for the first phase of multifamily buildings at the Riverfront at West Hyattsville project.
 - This is part of the third overall phase. 182 townhouses are currently being built on-site. Also, the Kaiser building is under construction.
 - The third and fourth phases of the property are the subject of this presentation.
 - The subject application is part of an old preliminary plan and is being resubmitted.
 - There are three parcels in total including the recently required property from WMATA to the southwest.
 - We have been working with DPIE for stormwater approval. A conceptual gravel wetland amenity will be included as part of the project. We have been looking at a few concepts to extend the compensatory storage and recreation area. It will be a continuation of what is already built and extend the work we've already done.
 - In terms of project connectivity, this property is immediately adjacent to the West Hyattsville metro station.
 - There is an existing stormwater easement between the two parcels which will be utilized as a promenade connecting to the metro. This will be created in the second phase.
 - The property will also include 3,000 square feet of retail space. We anticipate the use will serve the immediate community.
 - We have been in discussions with WMATA to upgrade the lighting and pedestrian walkway. We want to improve and enhance the pedestrian walkway to create a cohesive project.
 - We anticipate the promenade will include two retail bays, hardscape and landscape features, and scenic elements. We are working with landscape architects to activate the space. Connectivity to metro is one of the critical

goals of the TDDP. We want to bring energy and activation to a previously dormant site.

- Clarifying Questions

- Nkosi: Is this a PPS or DSP application?

- 1. This is a new PPS application. We had to revise the preliminary plan to include the Kaiser building. Both multifamily buildings are covered by the new PPS.

- Marshall: What is the proposed number of units and parking spaces?

- 1. We are currently programming 288 units and 315 parking spaces.
 - 2. Marshall: What about the retail stores?
 - 3. Currently, we are programming two retail bays along Little Branch Run.
 - 4. Marshall: Who will own and maintain the property?
 - 5. The development entity, Gilbane Development, will be managing the properties.

- Will: Is the existing metro connection public or private right-of-way?

- 1. We are in discussion with WMATA to upgrade the existing walkway including widening the walkway from 5-6 feet to 8 feet and upgrade/replace the lighting with LEDs. WMATA would maintain the walkway while Gilbane completes the upgrades.
 - 2. Will: Will the connection be at the same grade?
 - 3. It will be 6-8 feet above the WMATA property to bring the site out of the floodplain. Ramps and stairways will allow for ADA compliant access for pedestrians.
 - 4. Will: What finishing materials are proposed?
 - 5. We are proposing construction of five stories of wood, a structured precast garage, and a façade with a variety of brick and masonry, hardie panels, and accent panels.
 - 6. Will: Will there be any levels of masonry?
 - 7. The buildings will have masonry, but not as a structural element.
 - 8. Will: I see bump outs on the plan – there are changes in the envelope of the building. Will there be any balconies?
 - 9. These are the initial site plans so you can expect some changes in the final plans. There are some bump outs and plane changes, and we are proposing balconies on a significant number of units. Approximately, a third of the units will have balconies.
 - 10. Will: Have you considered a more direct route to metro? A straighter route from metro to the central public space would make people feel more comfortable, especially late at night.
 - 11. These are items we will work on during the second phase. We are under some constraints as the route is dictated by the existing stormwater easement. We will include safety and lighting improvements to positively impact the development. We will try to create the most direct line while having a cohesive design.

- Cliff: I have no additional comments.

- Greg: There is a significant interplay between the metro, walkways, and bike trails. I'd like to learn more about the plans for bike riders and storage racks.
 1. We have bike stations by the amphitheater and along Ager Road. We will have a significant amount of bike storage for residents and a variety of exterior bike racks in front of retail and in the promenade area. They will also be near the northwest branch trail alongside the townhouses. This is a bike and pedestrian friendly development.
- Yohannes: Does this project qualify for Amazon's affordable housing program focused on areas by metro?
 1. This is one of the projects that WMATA proposed to Amazon as a potential subject for their equity fund. We would love the opportunity and are still figuring out the specifics of the program.
 2. Yohannes: Do you have plans to include affordable units if the Amazon program doesn't work out?
 3. To date we have not advanced that conversation. Analysis has been done on that and we are in conversations with the County's EDC. The costs incurred from getting the project out of the floodplain may make it difficult to include affordable units. We are looking for innovative ways to include permanently affordable units.
 4. Yohannes: Will you be requesting any exemptions or exceptions?
 5. We are currently drafting our statement of justification which will include any requested modifications to the sector plan.
- EJ Evans: Will the townhouse residents have access to the multifamily amenities?
 1. Due to safety, security, and insurance concerns, amenities will be separate.
- Marshall: Will accessible units be included? Will income-based units for seniors be included?
 1. We will meet all code requirements related to accessibility. Hopefully we can work with Amazon to include income restricted units.
 2. Marshall: What is the number of accessible unit included in the buildings?
 3. We do not have a number yet.
- Sam: To get to the main entrance of the building, will individuals need to cross a driveway?
 1. Yes, but it has been changed. We have a proposed loading area to avoid traffic going further into the site.
 2. Sam: Will there be entrances off the promenade?
 3. We are looking at different options, potentially a pet walk and spa area in the back. We want to allow for the greatest ease of use. Our biggest concern is safety and security so we may need to restrict access for the safety of residents.
- Maureen: What is the total number of units proposed?
 1. The overall proposal includes 650 units combined.
 2. Maureen: Do you expect occupancy by the end of 2025?

3. Construction will occur over the next year with a two-year construction timeline. We anticipate delivering the first phase in 2024 and second phase in the following 1-2 years.
 4. Maureen: Do you plan to widen the current roads in the Riverfront project?
 5. We are not planning on widen any roads, as we just put them in. They meet streetscape standards and there are no internal roads associated with the multifamily buildings.
- Committee Comments
 - Nkosi: I am supportive of the PPS application. Looking forward for this project is come back for DSP review.
 - Marshall: As I've already mentioned, I want to emphasize my concerns about seniors having a place to live. I want this concern to stay in the forefront of the plan.
 - Cliff: I have no comments currently. I will have comments at the DSP phase. I would like to see improvements to the renderings. This project is next to metro, so lots of people are riding by and seeing it. These buildings can be more interesting than the standard stick frame façade.
 - Will: I share the same concerns with Cliff. The architecture is of concern, from complexity to massing. The scale of the buildings can benefit from some of this plane change that is happening. The massing is difficult to apprehend aesthetically. Simplicity can be good – increase symmetry and proportion of buildings in plane and elevation. Development is needed here. The WSSC public easement is haphazard and not an inviting to walk through. It may be better to use this as a public space rather than a walk-through. More attention needs to be given to that area, especially the massing and architecture of these buildings.
 - Greg: No comments at this time.
 - Yohannes: No comments at this time.

The Planning Committee is supportive of the PPS application and encourages the developer to continue to work with City and other partners to support the Hyattsville Affordable Housing Strategy. Also, the Committee encourages the applicant to address the architectural details, massing, and public spaces in the DSP. (Passes, 7 to 0)

6. Development Update

- Clay Property – *Planning Board Action July 15*
- Bike/Ped Infrastructure on Lancer Drive and Ager Road
- Structured Parking Garage on Baltimore Avenue
- New Police Building and Teen Center

7. Additional Questions & Discussion

8. Adjourn (9:25 PM)