

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 24, 2006

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Rose Krasnow, Chief
Catherine Conlon, Supervisor *CAK*
Development Review Division

FROM: Richard Weaver, Coordinator (301) 495-4544 *RAW*
Development Review Division

REVIEW TYPE: Preliminary Plan Review

APPLYING FOR: Subdivision of Part of Lot 20

PROJECT NAME: Long Branch Medical Building

CASE #: 120060240 (Formerly 1-06024)

REVIEW BASIS: Chapter 50, Montgomery County Subdivision Regulations

ZONE: C-1

LOCATION: Located at the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Flower Avenue and Arliss Avenue

MASTER PLAN: East Silver Spring

APPLICANT: Flower Avenue Shopping Center, LLP

ENGINEER: A. Morton Thomas & Associates, Inc.

HEARING DATE: March 9, 2006

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, pursuant to Chapter 50 of the Montgomery County Subdivision Regulations, and subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Approval under this preliminary plan is limited to a 57,900 gross square foot office building.
- 2) No clearing or grading prior to site plan signature set approval.
- 3) Final approval of the location of building, on-site parking and site circulation, will be determined at site plan.
- 4) A landscape and lighting plan must be submitted as part of the site plan application for review and approval by technical staff.
- 5) Site Plan #820060080 shall be approved by the Board and signed by the Development Review Staff prior to the approval of the record plat.
- 6) Road dedication as shown on preliminary plan to be reflected on record plat.
- 7) Compliance with conditions of MCDPWT letter dated, December 2, 2005, unless otherwise amended.
- 8) Compliance with the conditions of approval of the MCDPS stormwater management approval dated July 13, 2005.
- 9) The Adequate Public Facility (APF) review for the preliminary plan will remain valid for sixty-one (61) months from the date of mailing of the Planning Board opinion.
- 10) Other necessary easements.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The property, identified as Part of Lot 20 (Subject Property), is located in the Flower Village Center at the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Flower Avenue and Arliss Avenue (Attachment A). The Subject Property contains a total tract area of 0.91 acres, is zoned C-1, and is located in the East Silver Spring Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This is a preliminary plan application to create one (1) lot for the construction of a 55,800 square foot office building (Attachment B) which is slightly less square footage than could be constructed per the approved traffic study. This preliminary plan is being reviewed concurrently with Site Plan #8-20060080. Access to the site will be directly from Arliss Street and Flower Avenue.

DISCUSSION OF ISSUES:

MASTER PLAN

Zoning and Land Use

The proposed use on the subject property is a medical office building to be occupied by Adventist Health Care, Inc. As demonstrated in materials submitted by the

applicant, it is not uncommon for office buildings to be located on the edge of commercial districts across from single-family residential uses. The proposed use is permitted under the current zoning and it is consistent with the revitalization goal of the Overlay Zone and the master plan.

Under the CROZ, site plan review is required to help achieve development that is consistent with the vision and design guidance in the master plan. Although no reduction has been requested for the subject property, the Planning Board can reduce setbacks to accomplish master plan objectives. Under the CROZ, the Planning Board can also approve building height in excess of the normal 30' in the C-1 zone; height up to 42' can be approved with a finding of neighborhood compatibility and consistency with the intent of the master plan. The proposed project would be 40' in height.

Master Plan Conformance

Pursuant to the *December 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan*, the subject property was rezoned from R-60 to C-1/CROZ. The rest of the block was rezoned from C-2 to C-1/CROZ. This action by the County Council reflected a change in land use policy. The entire block bounded by Flower Avenue, Piney Branch Road and Arliss Street was consolidated as the commercial core for Long Branch with uniform commercial zoning. Whereas the 1977 Master Plan described the subject property—then R-60—as a buffer between the adjoining neighborhood and the C-2 property in Long Branch, the *December 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan* describes Arliss Street as providing “a transition area between the townhouses on the north side of the street and the commercial retail activity of the Flower Village Center.” (p. 76) The Master Plan recommends that Arliss Street be streetscaped to improve its role as a transitional element.

The Master Plan envisions the Flower Village Center as “the major neighborhood center and community focal point for neighborhoods in both East Silver Spring and Takoma Park.” (p. 39) The Plan notes that sensitivity needs to be shown when adding land uses next to commercial centers: “New or expanded structures should be sensitive to the character and the scale of adjoining neighborhoods. Buildings should not be significantly larger than nearby structures.” (p. 29)

As a result of its rezoning to C-1/CROZ, the subject property is part of the commercial center, not a new use to be located next to a commercial center. Nevertheless, the Master Plan provided specific guidance to ensure that the subject property was developed in a way that is sensitive to the nearby neighborhood. Specific master plan guidance is provided in the Master Plan that illustrates potential ways to achieve the street-oriented development recommended by the Plan. The proposed medical office building resembles alternative B in these illustrations (Attachment C). The Master Plan states “consideration should be given to the views of homeowners that face the site across Flower Avenue, as well as the residential properties on Arliss Street.” It then identifies a number of factors that affect the relationship between the proposed medical office building and nearby homes:

1. Height and bulk

Although the Master Plan states that townhouse development on this site would be appropriate as a transition to the residences across Flower Avenue and Arliss Street, townhouses are not necessarily the only type of development that would be appropriate; other types of buildings could also be appropriate if designed to be compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhood. The proposed building will be clearly identifiable as an office building, but it has been designed to avoid appearing as a monolithic structure. The building will have two wings rather than appearing as a single mass. Building articulation and materials will be used to break up the building mass.

According to the Master Plan, the purpose of the CROZ shall be achieved in part by limiting building heights to 30'; however, the Planning Board may permit up to 42' in building height for commercial development (or up to 50' for residential development) if the Planning Board finds the proposed development to be compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with the intent of the Master Plan (p. 37). The proposed medical office building will be 40' in height. Since Flower Avenue slopes downward as it approaches Piney Branch Road, the roof will be approximately 20' taller than the top of the Flower Theater.

The roof of the proposed building will be 15' higher than the peak of the roofs on the single-family detached homes across Flower Avenue and only 12' higher than the peak of the roof on the home across Arliss Street. CBP staff find this to be an acceptable relationship given a) the 115' distance between the face of the proposed building and the existing single-family detached homes across Flower Avenue, and b) the 115'-120' distance between the face of the proposed building and the homes across Arliss Street. (The distance between the face of the proposed building and the homes on the north side of Arliss Street increases as one moves east from Flower Avenue.) The applicant's shadow study demonstrates that the building will not significantly impact the homes across either street or other commercial structures.

2. Setbacks

Setback reductions are permitted by the CROZ, but no setback reductions have been requested. Instead, the building has been pushed back further than the required 10' setback along the two street frontages, providing an opportunity for additional landscaping along the edges. The proposed building setback along Flower Avenue aligns with the face of the Flower Theater down the block. As illustrated on page 40 of the Master Plan (Attachment 3), the Plan contemplated new buildings on this site that are located close to the street.

3. Location of the Building on the Site and Entrances to the Building

The proposed location of the medical office building on the site was contemplated in the Master Plan. The proposed building and the main entrance to the building are oriented to the street as called for by the Master Plan.

4. Neighborhood Friendly Pedestrian Access to the Building

The main entrance to the proposed medical office building is at an appropriate location on Flower Avenue. An existing concrete pedestrian refuge on Flower Avenue facilitates pedestrian crossings to the proposed medical office building. Pursuant to the Master Plan, the proposed project includes a neck down on Arliss Street at Flower Avenue. This facilitates a shorter crossing distance on Arliss Street for Long Branch residents who may wish to walk to the proposed medical office building or the other uses in the commercial core. The retention of on-street parking along Arliss Street also serves to buffer pedestrians from vehicles.

The streetscape recommendations in the Master Plan include a shared use (pedestrian and bicyclist) sidewalk along Flower Avenue. The application proposes a 15'-wide sidewalk (11' clear at the tree pits) that will accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists. The shared-use sidewalk will facilitate access to the proposed building as well as other uses on the block. A Class III bike route (signed, shared roadway) is also recommended on Flower Avenue. The site plan includes bike storage facilities at an appropriate location.

5. Vehicular Circulation and Parking on Site that is Sensitive to Pedestrians

An existing curb cut on Flower Avenue near the corner of Flower Avenue/Arliss Street will be removed to improve safety. Vehicular access points will be limited to a single entrance on Flower Avenue and a single entrance on Arliss Street—away from the Flower Avenue/Arliss Street intersection, at opposite corners of the site. Drivers who cannot find surface parking behind the building will be able to go directly into structured parking. A covered patient drop-off area that is internal to the site will remove this function from adjoining roadways.

As recommended in the Master Plan, the parking for the proposed building does not separate the building from the street. Both the parking and the loading area are screened from the residential uses across Flower Avenue and Arliss Street by the location of the proposed building.

Arliss and Flower Avenue are business streets with 70' minimum rights-of-way. No additional dedication is needed.

6. Landscaping

The mature street trees along Flower Avenue will be preserved or replaced in kind. The proposed landscaping along Flower Avenue and Arliss Street will make it more enjoyable to walk along both streets. The landscape materials along the building frontages will add color and variety throughout the year.

7. Building Materials

The proposed building will include a glass corner curtain wall; the remaining approximately 80 percent of the façade will be masonry (primarily brick) with vertical punch out windows typical of residential construction to break up the mass of the building.

8. Illumination

The applicant (not the tenant) will provide an architectural shading system for the building along both street frontages. These shades will significantly reduce the transmission of interior lighting to the exterior of the building after sunset.

9. Signage

Rather than use the neon signage typical of commercial buildings, the proposed building will use backlit signage to minimize its intrusiveness.

Based on the description above, staff concludes that the proposed building will not be incompatible with either the single-family homes outside the commercial core or the other commercial buildings on the same block, many of which are likely redevelopment candidates themselves.

TRANSPORTATION:

Local Area Transportation

The proposed maximum development of 57,900 square feet (55,800 sq. ft. building proposed) of medical office space is anticipated to generate 143 AM peak hour trips and 215 PM peak hour trips during a regular weekday peak periods. An LATR study was performed to determine the impact of the proposed development on the adjacent transportation infrastructure.

Four intersections adjacent to the development were selected for analysis: Flower Avenue at Wayne Avenue, Flower Avenue at Arliss Street, Flower Avenue at Piney Branch Road (MD 320) and Arliss Street at Piney Branch Road (MD 320). There were no previously approved nearby projects for inclusion in the calculation of background traffic CLV for the intersections under study. As shown in the table below, all studied intersections are estimated to operate within the established Silver Spring/ Takoma Park Critical Lane Volume (CLV) threshold of 1,600 vehicles.

The following table shows the CLV analysis results for the studied intersections:

<u>Roadway Intersection</u>	Current CLV levels (AM / PM)	Projected Future CLV (AM / PM)
Flower Avenue / Arliss Street	940 / 1,096	950 / 1,147
Flower Avenue / Wayne Avenue	861 / 954	895 / 978
Flower Avenue / Piney Branch Road	866 / 805	882 / 813
Arliss Street / Piney Branch Road	693 / 789	731 / 830

CITIZEN CONCERNS

The Development Review Division (DRD) received several letters from citizens expressing concerns pertaining to the proposed building height, traffic generated from the site, the hours of operation of the urgent care facility, and the physical conditions of the surrounding properties.

Building Height

The citizens contend that the height of the building is 20 to 30 feet higher than the dwellings in the surrounding residential homes and, therefore, incompatible. The citizens also contend that the East Silver Spring Master Plan requires any structure on this site to be compatible with the surrounding residential homes in terms of height, bulk, setback and landscaping.

Under the C-1 Zoning standards building height is limited to 30 feet. However, under the provisions of the CROZ building height may go up to 42 feet with appropriate findings for compatibility and consistency with the intent of the Master Plan as part of the site plan being concurrently reviewed. Refer to the Community based Planning memorandum for details of these findings.

Traffic

Based on the traffic analysis contained in the "Transportation" section above, all studied intersections are estimated to operate within the established Silver Spring/Takoma Park Critical Lane Volume (CLV) threshold. Therefore, the application satisfies the Local Area Traffic Review Guidelines without need for roadway improvements.

Urgent Care Facility

The citizens expressed concerns pertaining to the potential disturbance caused by activity generated by the urgent care facility. The facility will be open to the public until 10:00 p.m., six days a week. According to the citizen letters, this use was not included in the initial plan for the site and is now viewed as a potential intrusion in the community.

Usually, an urgent care facility operates similar to a doctor's office, in that outpatient care is rendered, but on an emergency basis with or without scheduled appointments. Ambulance service, the associated sirens and alarms typical of hospital emergency care, is not proposed with this facility. In staff's opinion, the additional hours for this type of facility should not be a nuisance to the neighborhood.

Surrounding Physical Conditions

The citizens identified a need to address the revitalization of the entire commercial area. Although this application does not address this concern, the East Silver Spring Master Plan acknowledges the deteriorating conditions of the area and supports establishing a task force to examine issues and solutions affecting the East Silver Spring and Takoma Park area.

Community Outreach

The applicant initiated meetings with the Sligo Branview Community Association (SBCA) last summer and has since met with them three times (October 26 and November 9, 2005 and January 31, 2006). The design of the project was revised in several ways to respond to community concerns: the building setbacks were increased, the building height was reduced by two feet; the extent of masonry in the building façade was significantly increased; and the building articulation was refined. Some members of SBCA continue to have concerns regarding the project.

The applicant presented the proposed project to the Commercial and Economic Development Committee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) on September 21, 2005. The full CAB considered the project on October 10, 2005, and again on February 13, 2006, but has taken no official position. The applicant also presented the proposed project to the Long Branch Business League on June 15, 2005. On January 30, 2006, the League submitted a letter of support for the proposed project.

ANALYSIS

Staff's review of Preliminary Plan #120060240 (Formerly 1-06024), Long Branch Medical Building, indicates that the plan conforms to the East Silver Spring Master Plan. The proposed preliminary plan is consistent with the master plan goal to encourage revitalization and development in the central business district. Staff also finds that the proposed preliminary plan complies with Chapter 50 of the Montgomery County Code, Subdivision Regulations, in that public facilities will be adequate to support and service the area of the proposed subdivision. Staff further finds that the size, width, shape, and orientation of the proposed lot is appropriate for the location of the subdivision.

CONCLUSION:

Staff concludes that Preliminary Plan #1-06024, Long Branch Medical Building, conforms to the land use objectives of the East Silver Spring Master Plan, including the CROZ and meets all necessary requirements of the Subdivision Regulations (Checklist and Data Table attached). As such, Staff recommends approval of the preliminary plan, subject to the above conditions.

Preliminary Plan Data Table and Checklist

Plan Name: Long Branch Medical Building				
Plan Number: 120060240				
Zoning: C-1				
# of Lots: 1				
# of Outlots: 0				
Dev. Type: One medical office building				
PLAN DATA	Zoning Ordinance Development Standard	Proposed for Approval on the Preliminary Plan	Verified	Date
Minimum Lot Area	None	39,657 s.f. proposed	RW	February 22, 2006
Lot Width	None			
Lot Frontage	None			February 22, 2006
Setbacks				
Front	Est. by site plan	Must not exceed minimum set by site plan	RW	February 22, 2006
Side	Est. by site plan	Must not exceed minimum set by site plan	RW	February 22, 2006
Rear	Est. by site plan	Must not exceed minimum set by site plan	RW	February 22, 2006
Height	*30 ft. Max.	Must not exceed maximum set by site plan	RW	February 22, 2006
Max Comm'l s.f. per Zoning	None			
Site Plan Req'd?	Yes	Yes	RW	February 22, 2006
FINDINGS				
SUBDIVISION				
Lot frontage on Public Street	Yes	Yes	RW	February 22, 2006
Road dedication and frontage improvements	Yes	Yes	DPWT memo	December 2, 2006
Environmental Guidelines	Yes	Yes	Environmental Planning memo	September 12, 2005
Forest Conservation	Yes	Exempted	Environmental Planning memo	June 24, 2005
Master Plan Compliance	Yes	Yes	Community Based Planning memo	February 16, 2006
ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES				
Stormwater Management	Yes	Yes	DPS memo	July 13, 2005
Water and Septic	Yes	Yes	DPS memo	September 12, 2005
Local Area Traffic Review	Yes	Yes	Transportation Planning memo	February 16, 2006
Fire and Rescue	Yes	Yes	MCFRS	January 20, 2006

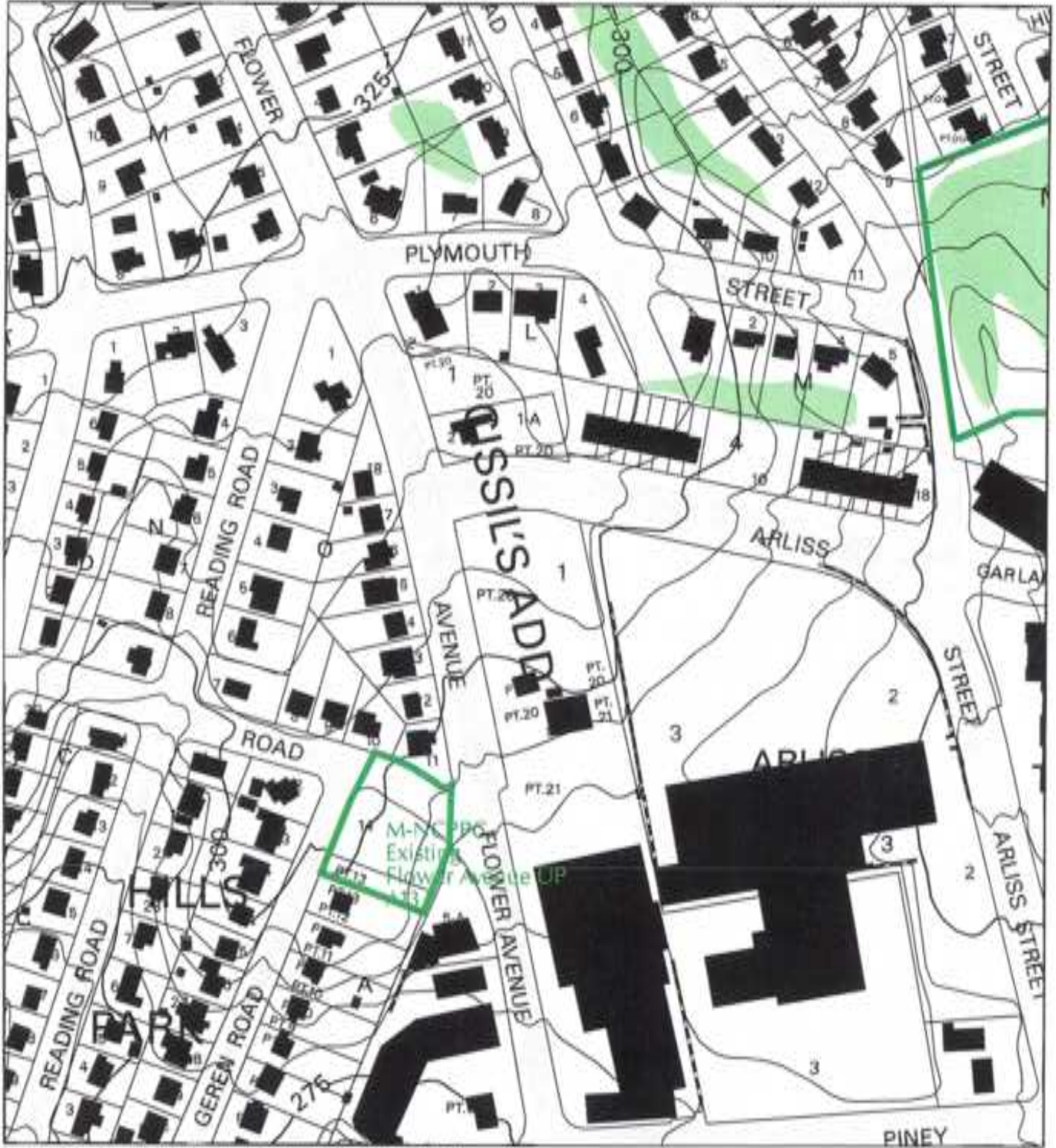
*May exceed minimum upon approval of a site plan by the Planning Board.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A	Vicinity Map
Attachment B	Preliminary Plan
Attachment C	Community Based Planning memo
Attachment D	Correspondence
Attachment E	Agency letters

ATTACHMENT A

LONG BRANCH MEDICAL BUILDING (1-06024) (8-06008)



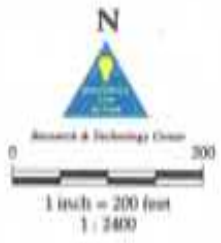
Map compiled on August 31, 2005 at 3:11 PM | Site located on base sheet no. - 211N001

NOTICE

The planimetric, property, and topographic information shown on this map is based on copyrighted Map Products from the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and may not be copied or reproduced without written permission from M-NCPPC.

Property lines are compiled by adjusting the property lines to topography created from aerial photography and should not be interpreted as actual field surveys. Planimetric features were compiled from 1:14400 scale aerial photography using stereo photogrammetric methods.

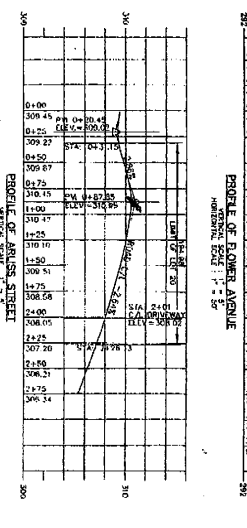
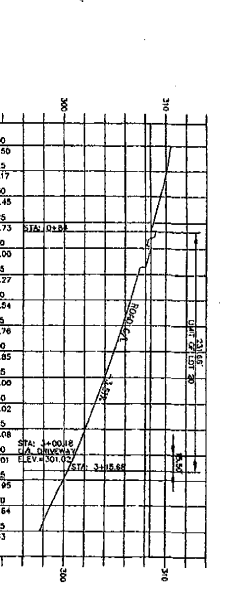
This map is created from a variety of data sources, and may not reflect the most current conditions in any one location and may not be completely accurate or up to date. All map features are approximately within five feet of their true location. This map may not be the same as a map of the same area plotted at an earlier time as the data is continuously updated. Use of this map, other than for general planning purposes is not recommended. Copyright 1998



ATTACHMENT B

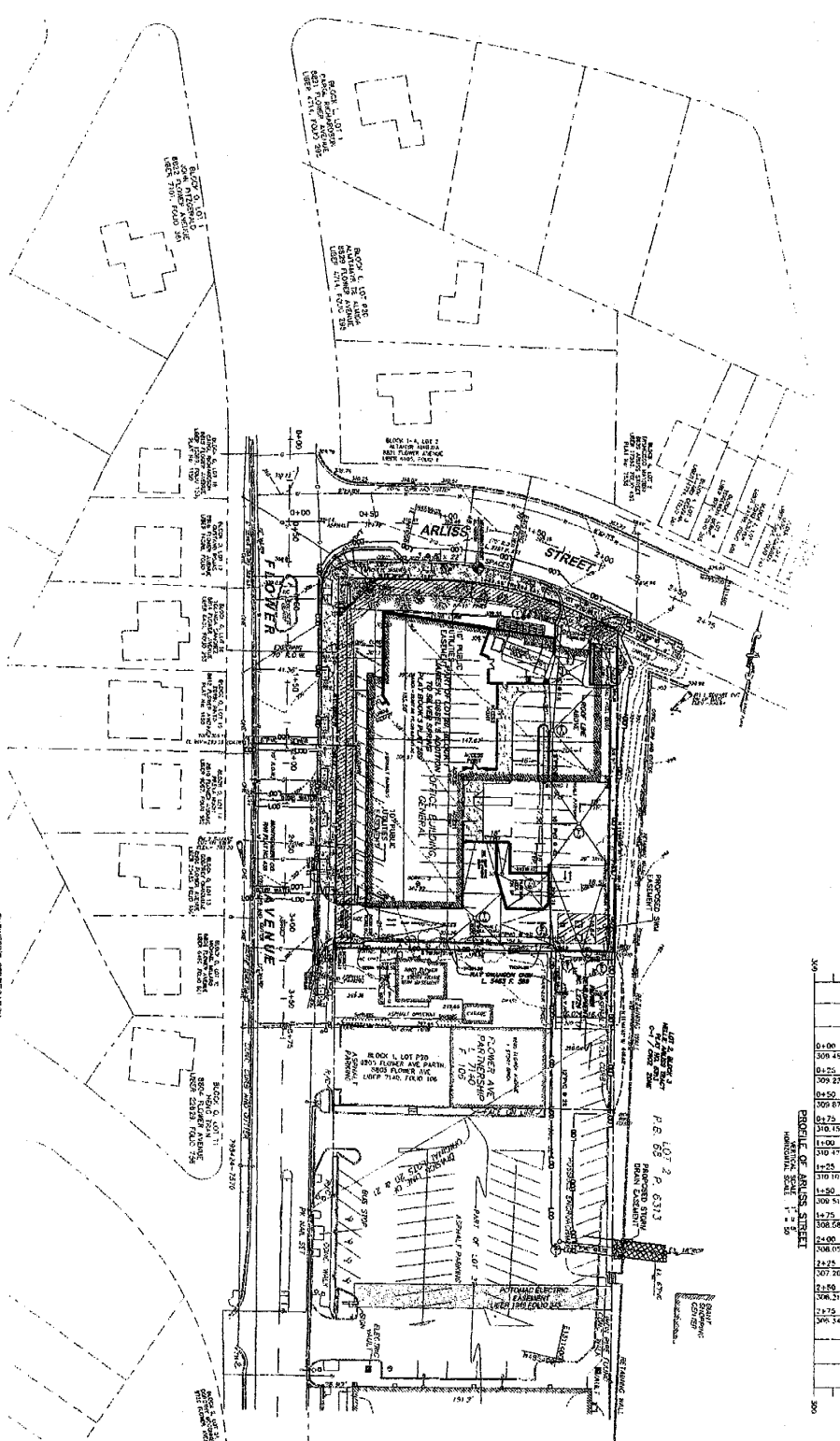
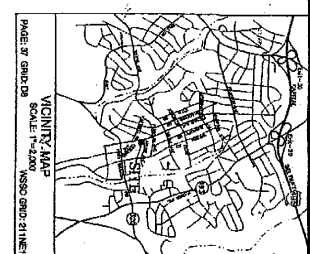
LEGEND

EXISTING		NEW	
SHRUB	---	SHRUB	---
FRUIT TREE	---	FRUIT TREE	---
NON FRUIT TREE	---	NON FRUIT TREE	---
CONCRETE	---	CONCRETE	---
ASPHALT	---	ASPHALT	---
PAVEMENT	---	PAVEMENT	---
GRAVEL	---	GRAVEL	---
DIRT	---	DIRT	---
ROCK	---	ROCK	---
WATER	---	WATER	---
SEWER	---	SEWER	---
STORM DRAIN	---	STORM DRAIN	---
OVERHEAD ELECTRIC	---	OVERHEAD ELECTRIC	---



PLAN NOTES

- CURRENT ZONING: C-1
- GRASS LOT AREA: 38,657 sq. ft. OR 0.91 acre
- PERMITS: 307-28 sq. ft. OR 0.007 acre
- NET LOT AREA: 38,348 sq. ft. OR 0.876 acre
- GRASS AREA: 55,800 sq. ft.
- PERMITS AREA: 71,443 sq. ft.
- FLOOR AREA RATIO: 325% sq. ft.
- BUILDING HEIGHT: 15
- MAXIMUM HEIGHT PERMITTED (per code): 42 feet
- MANUAL HEIGHT PROPOSED: 40 feet
- BUILDING COVERAGE: 18,800 sq. ft.
- PROPOSED BUILDING USE: OFFICE, GENERAL
- OFFICE, GENERAL: 55,800 sq. ft.
- ON-SITE PARKING: 134 spaces
- REQUIRED: 134 spaces
- PROVIDED: 134 spaces
- REMARKS: 134 spaces
- WATER: 134 spaces
- SEWER: 134 spaces
- STORM DRAIN: 134 spaces
- THE PROPOSED SITE HEIGHT DOES NOT EXCEED THE FLOOD HAZARD AREA ESTABLISHED BY THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM, SPECIFIED BY THE US DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, FEDERAL INSURANCE ADMINISTRATION FOR MONROE COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, COMMUNITY FIRM NO. 240 046 0200 C, DATED JULY 2, 1978.
- THERE ARE NO WETLANDS ON THIS PROPERTY.
- ELECTRICAL SERVICE IS PROVIDED BY PEPSCO.
- GAS IS PROVIDED BY WASHINGTON GAS COMPANY.
- TELEPHONE SERVICE IS PROVIDED BY VERIZON.
- WATER AND SEWER ARE PROVIDED BY WSCC.
- EXISTING SITE TOPOGRAPHY BASED ON FIELD SURVEY BY A. WORTON THOMAS AND ASSOCIATES, INC. IN 1991.
- PROPOSED SITE PLAN AND STATE PLAT AND 1983 / 1991.
- VERTICAL CURVE - 1000' 1929' BASED ON GPS OBSERVATION.



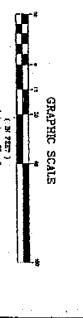
WORTON THOMAS AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

PROPOSED ADDRESS: 134 SPACES

PROPOSED ADDRESS: 134 SPACES

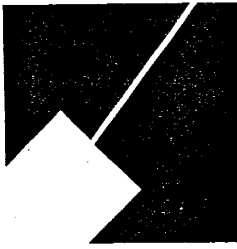
PRELIMINARY PLAN

GRAPHIC SCALE



ATTACHMENT C

M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760
301-495-4500, www.mncppc.org

February 16, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Linda Komes, Planner Coordinator
Development Review Division

Richard Weaver, Principal Planner
Development Review Division

FROM: Glenn Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring/Takoma Park
Community-Based Planning Division *GK*

Miguel Iraola, ASLA, Planner Coordinator *MI*
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Long Branch Medical Building
Site Plan #8-20060080
Preliminary Plan #1-20060240

The Community-Based Planning staff has reviewed the above-referenced plans for conformance with the December 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan. We recommend approval of the proposed preliminary plan and site plan. We believe that this project is critical to the future revitalization of Long Branch as envisioned in the Master Plan and in subsequent reports by such groups as the Long Branch Task Force. The proposed project will foster economic vitality in the area by creating jobs, providing customers for other local businesses, and providing parking that can be used by the community during evenings and weekends. It will provide important medical services to the community and help to activate the streets, thereby contributing to public safety. The investment in new Class A space will encourage other redevelopment in the area consistent with the vision identified for Long Branch by a technical panel from the Urban Land Institute.

ZONING AND LAND USE

The subject property has a gross area of 0.91 acres (39,657 square feet) and a net area after dedications of 0.84 acres (39,344.51 square feet). It is bordered by Arliss Street to the north and Flower Avenue to the west. Arliss Street consists of 48' of pavement plus two 10' sidewalks in a 70' right-of-way. Flower Avenue consists of three travel lanes; a median that is concrete in some places and painted in others; and sidewalks on both sides in a 70' right-of-way.

The subject property is currently occupied by a surface parking lot. A mixture of commercial uses exist along Flower Avenue to the south, including a dental appliance

business; El Gavilan restaurant; the former Flower Theater, now occupied by a church; and various retailers in the Flower Village Center including a County liquor store. A second surface parking lot is also located to the south. The parking lot for the Giant food store adjoins the subject property on the east. This entire block is zoned C-1 with the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone (CROZ).

Across Flower Avenue to the west of the subject property are single-family detached homes in the R-60 Zone. Across Arliss Street to the north is a single-family detached house at the intersection with Flower Avenue and townhouses along Arliss Street in the RT-12.5 Zone.

The proposed use on the subject property is a medical office building to be occupied by Adventist Health Care, Inc. As demonstrated in materials submitted by the applicant, it is not uncommon for office buildings to be located on the edge of commercial districts across from single-family residential uses. The proposed use is permitted under the current zoning and it is consistent with the revitalization goal of the Overlay Zone and the master plan.

Under the CROZ, site plan review is required to help achieve development that is consistent with the vision and design guidance in the master plan. Although no reduction has been requested for the subject property, the Planning Board can reduce setbacks to accomplish master plan objectives. Under the CROZ, the Planning Board can also approve building height in excess of the normal 30' in the C-1 zone; height up to 42' can be approved with a finding of neighborhood compatibility and consistency with the intent of the master plan. The proposed project would be 40' in height.

RELEVANT PUBLIC POLICIES

Enterprise Zone

The subject property is located within the Long Branch-Takoma Park Enterprise Zone. This zone was designated in 2003 to provide incentives for economic development in the target area.

Urban Land Institute (ULI) Report

The February 2005 report of the ULI Technical Assistance Panel indicated that the density and height allowed by the CROZ in the commercial core needed to be even greater than what the zone presently allows. According to the report, "The panel agrees with the County that the proposed location at the northwest edge of the study area at the corner of Flower Avenue and Arliss Street is an appropriate location for the medical office building."

Long Branch Task Force

The Long Branch Task Force endorsed the ULI recommendations in their May 2005 annual report.

Centers and Boulevards

Emerging public policy regarding the redevelopment of mature commercial centers is described in the *Planning Framework Report: Revitalizing Centers, Reshaping*

Boulevards, and Creating Great Public Spaces. This report envisions Montgomery County in transition from a large auto-dependent suburb to a more urban form. It recognizes that future growth will take the form of infill development and redevelopment away from the Agricultural Reserve. Much of this growth will be accommodated by the redevelopment of aging commercial centers and along the frontage of the roads and transit routes that connect the centers. The redevelopment of commercial centers as envisioned in the Framework Report could help return these commercial centers to their historic role as focal points of community life and provide multiple community benefits, including: community-serving retail, offices, services, market-rate and affordable housing, public spaces and linkages to the surrounding communities.

Bi-County Transitway

At least one potential alignment for the Bi-County Transitway (BCT) passes the subject property. The Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) has indicated that the proposed project does not impact potential BCT alignments.

MASTER PLAN CONFORMANCE

Pursuant to the *December 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan*, the subject property was rezoned from R-60 to C-1/CROZ. The rest of the block was rezoned from C-2 to C-1/CROZ (Attachments 1-2). This action by the County Council reflected a change in land use policy. The entire block bounded by Flower Avenue, Piney Branch Road and Arliss Street was consolidated as the commercial core for Long Branch with uniform commercial zoning. Whereas the 1977 Master Plan described the subject property—then R-60—as a buffer between the adjoining neighborhood and the C-2 property in Long Branch, the *December 2000 East Silver Spring Master Plan* describes Arliss Street as providing “a transition area between the townhouses on the north side of the street and the commercial retail activity of the Flower Village Center.” (p. 76) The Master Plan recommends that Arliss Street be streetscaped to improve its role as a transitional element.

The Master Plan envisions the Flower Village Center as “the major neighborhood center and community focal point for neighborhoods in both East Silver Spring and Takoma Park.” (p. 39) The Plan notes that sensitivity needs to be shown when adding land uses next to commercial centers: “New or expanded structures should be sensitive to the character and the scale of adjoining neighborhoods. Buildings should not be significantly larger than nearby structures.” (p. 29)

As a result of its rezoning to C-1/CROZ, the subject property is part of the commercial center, not a new use to be located next to a commercial center. Nevertheless, the Master Plan provided specific guidance to ensure that the subject property was developed in a way that is sensitive to the nearby neighborhood. Specific master plan guidance is provided on page 39 of the Master Plan; Figure 2 on page 40 illustrates potential ways to achieve the street-oriented development recommended by the Plan (attachments). The proposed medical office building resembles alternative B in these illustrations. The Master Plan states that “consideration should be given to the views of homeowners that face the site across Flower Avenue, as well as the residential

properties on Arliss Street.” (p. 39) It then identifies a number of factors that affect the relationship between the proposed medical office building and nearby homes:

1. Height and bulk

Although the Master Plan states that townhouse development on this site would be appropriate as a transition to the residences across Flower Avenue and Arliss Street, townhouses are not necessarily the only type of development that would be appropriate; other types of buildings could also be appropriate if designed to be compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhood. The proposed building will be clearly identifiable as an office building, but it has been designed to avoid appearing as a monolithic structure. The building will have two wings rather than appearing as a single mass. Building articulation and materials will be used to break up the building mass.

According to the Master Plan, the purpose of the CROZ shall be achieved in part by limiting building heights to 30'; however, the Planning Board may permit up to 42' in building height for commercial development (or up to 50' for residential development) if the Planning Board finds the proposed development to be compatible with the neighborhood and consistent with the intent of the Master Plan (p. 37). The proposed medical office building will be 40' in height. Since Flower Avenue slopes downward as it approaches Piney Branch Road, the roof will be approximately 20' taller than the top of the Flower Theater.

The roof of the proposed building will be 15' higher than the peak of the roofs on the single-family detached homes across Flower Avenue and only 12' higher than the peak of the roof on the home across Arliss Street. We find this to be an acceptable relationship given a) the 115' distance between the face of the proposed building and the existing single-family detached homes across Flower Avenue, and b) the 115'-120' distance between the face of the proposed building and the homes across Arliss Street. (The distance between the face of the proposed building and the homes on the north side of Arliss Street increases as one moves east from Flower Avenue.) The applicant's shadow study demonstrates that the building will not significantly impact the homes across either street or other commercial structures.

2. Setbacks

Setback reductions are permitted by the CROZ, but no setback reductions have been requested. Instead, the building has been pushed back further than the required 10' setback along the two street frontages, providing an opportunity for additional landscaping along the edges. The proposed building setback along Flower Avenue aligns with the face of the Flower Theater down the block. As illustrated on page 40 of the Master Plan (Attachment 3), the Plan contemplated new buildings on this site that are located close to the street.

3. Location of the Building on the Site and Entrances to the Building

As illustrated on page 40 of the Master Plan, the proposed location of the medical office building on the site was contemplated in the Plan. The proposed

building and the main entrance to the building are oriented to the street as called for by the Master Plan.

4. Neighborhood Friendly Pedestrian Access to the Building

The main entrance to the proposed medical office building is at an appropriate location on Flower Avenue. An existing concrete pedestrian refuge on Flower Avenue facilitates pedestrian crossings to the proposed medical office building. Pursuant to the Master Plan, the proposed project includes a neck down on Arliss Street at Flower Avenue. This facilitates a shorter crossing distance on Arliss Street for Long Branch residents who may wish to walk to the proposed medical office building or the other uses in the commercial core. The retention of on-street parking along Arliss Street also serves to buffer pedestrians from vehicles.

The streetscape recommendations in the Master Plan include a shared use (pedestrian and bicyclist) sidewalk along Flower Avenue. The application proposes a 15'-wide sidewalk (11' clear at the tree pits) that will accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists. The shared-use sidewalk will facilitate access to the proposed building as well as other uses on the block. A Class III bike route (signed, shared roadway) is also recommended on Flower Avenue. The site plan includes bike storage facilities at an appropriate location.

5. Vehicular Circulation and Parking on Site that is Sensitive to Pedestrians

An existing curb cut on Flower Avenue near the corner of Flower Avenue/Arliss Street will be removed to improve safety. Vehicular access points will be limited to a single entrance on Flower Avenue and a single entrance on Arliss Street—away from the Flower Avenue/Arliss Street intersection, at opposite corners of the site. Drivers who cannot find surface parking behind the building will be able to go directly into structured parking. A covered patient drop-off area that is internal to the site will remove this function from adjoining roadways.

As recommended in the Master Plan, the parking for the proposed building does not separate the building from the street. Both the parking and the loading area are screened from the residential uses across Flower Avenue and Arliss Street by the location of the proposed building.

Arliss and Flower Avenue are business streets with 70' minimum rights-of-way. No additional dedication is needed.

6. Landscaping

The mature street trees along Flower Avenue will be preserved or replaced in kind. The proposed landscaping along Flower Avenue and Arliss Street will make it more enjoyable to walk along both streets. The landscape materials along the building frontages will add color and variety throughout the year.