

## **DEVELOPMENT REVIEW DIVISION**

*Richard C. Hawthorne, P.E., Acting Chief*

During the reporting period, the Division experienced significant turnover at the management level with the retirement of former Chief, Joe Davis, and the untimely passing of Malcolm Shaneman, Subdivision Supervisor. Although acting staff were expeditiously appointed, the loss of historical memory and many years of experience has had an impact. However, the descriptions below indicate that both larger and smaller cases continued to be successfully resolved through this transition period.

### **REGULATORY REVIEWS**

The various application review processes are summarized on the following pages with a table of application data presented at the end of the Development Review section of this Report. The table indicates the amount of work activity for the current period, the previous six-month period and the same period last year so that trends can be observed.

#### **Zoning**

- In August, staff assisted in developing comprehensive zoning legislation that was introduced by the Council to strengthen the MPDU program. Other activities included discussion and review of text amendments concerning regulatory issues regarding hospital expansion, accessory apartments, creation of an Environmental Overlay Zone for the Upper Rock Creek, and rural open space requirements in the RNC Zone. A major rezoning application and associated text amendment for the National Park Seminary site reuse was also filed in the month of August.
- A high level of staff attention was given to the nine Zoning Text Amendments going to the Board and Council in September and October of 2004. Much of the work related to the CBD zones and the master plan work that is directly relevant to the comprehensive rewrite of the Zoning Code.
- Two Zoning Analysts were hired during the last part of the reporting period. These staff will enable the Department to better accomplish the responsibility of preparing and presenting technical staff reports to the Planning Board and the Board of Appeals. A summary of the zoning activity for this period includes:

9 rezoning cases,  
3 developments plan amendments,  
12 zoning text amendments, and  
31 special exception cases.

#### **Subdivision Review**

- A pre-preliminary plan was reviewed for a large redevelopment proposal for the Indian Springs Country Club in Silver Spring. This project proposes redeveloping the existing Indian Springs Country Club as a golf course community with approximately 560 residential lots, an 18-hole golf course and a conference center, and there are significant issues involving environmental resources on the site. The preliminary plan review for this subdivision is

currently underway. The Board approved the Giancola Quarry project on River Road at Old Seven Locks Road in Potomac, a subdivision and site plan proposal that will convert the existing quarry use into a residential development with 30 lots. In Rockville, the Twinbrook Commons approved project includes 1,114 multi-family units with 140 MPDUs, located adjacent to the Twinbrook Metrorail station.

- The subdivision plan for United Therapeutics in the Silver Spring CBD was also reviewed and presented. This project includes 148,598 square feet of office, 48,434 square feet of laboratory space, and 16,000 square feet of retail located at the intersection of Cameron and Spring Streets. Another significant subdivision this period was the first phase of the Cabin Branch Neighborhood in Clarksburg, located in the southwest quadrant of MD 121 and I-270. The proposal includes 1600 residential units in a neo-traditional neighborhood, 500 senior housing units, and 1,538,000 square feet of employment/retail/public space.
- Two final projects of note that were reviewed and presented in this period were the North Airpark Business Park and the Kensington Safeway. The proposal for North Airpark Business Park, an I-4 zoned property on Snouffer School Road in Gaithersburg, includes 10 lots on 134 acres which will include up to a total of 310,870 square feet of office and 405,405 square feet of retail. The Kensington Safeway proposal increases the size of the existing Safeway store located at Howard and Armory Avenues in Kensington, from 22,704 square feet to 54,235 square feet with 42,000 square feet of grocery area.

#### **Site Plan and Project Plan Review**

- Site plan and project plan applications presented to the Planning Board during this period included several major mixed-use development projects, including United Therapeutics Headquarters, Bethesda View, Woodmont Corner, and Ripley Street in the Bethesda and Silver Spring downtown areas and Fortune Parc in North Bethesda. Other major development proposals currently under review include Portico, Fairland Golf Community, Silver Spring Gateway amendment, and Clarksburg Town Center amendments. These mixed-use developments will provide needed housing, both market-rate and affordable units, for the county residents. Staff approved 20 site plan amendment applications administratively.
- During this period, the Site Plan Review staff made significant progress on Landscape and on Lighting Guidelines, with technical content and staff coordination from other Divisions and the development community. The Guidelines will be presented to the Planning Board by the end of the year.

#### **Building Permit Reviews**

- Residential building permit applications increased substantially, more than 81%, over the last reporting period from 1,764 to 3,197. The main cause for the increase was applications submitted before the new impact tax fees, approved as part of the Annual Growth Policy that became effective on March 1, 2004. These applications were processed during the reporting period. More than 800 of the permit applications were attributed to large multi-family projects.

#### **Inspections and Enforcement Activities**

- Enforcement is operating at full staffing with three inspectors. Inspection activity increased by about 42% for this period in relation to last period, 830 total inspections versus 582 last

period. Forest Conservation Plan inspections occupy over half of all inspection activity for this period representing just over 60% or 501 inspections. This is followed by Site Plan inspections at 28% or 230.

- Inspection staff continues to monitor projects under construction such as Clarksburg Town Center, Clarksburg Village, Greenway Village and Bancroft Properties. These and other large-scale developments are expected to increase the demands placed on the inspection staff as more phases of these developments are brought on-line. Also, during this time period there were 11 citations issued for plan violations of which three involved civil administrative penalties.

### **Public Information Activities**

- The Information & Records Section is often the first line of communication for the Department with many citizens. This Section also continues to interface with the entire Department on zoning, planning, transportation, environmental, and historic issues so as to be aware of items of potential interest to visitors.
- Two public computer stations were upgraded during this period. The new equipment serves as a major communication tool and has been very well received by the many users of the information counter services.
- Software is being developed to assist staff in the assignment of addresses. Each year thousands of addresses are provided, and software to support this work will both reduce opportunities for errors and increase the efficiency of the process.

### **INTEGRATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMPUTER SYSTEM INTO DAILY OPERATIONS**

- The Hansen Information System is the Department's software system that stores the information on development review cases. As a "relational database" it can be used for tracking current cases as well as for easy retrieval of information on prior cases. Development Review is responsible for integrating this system into the work processes of each division, including structuring Hansen to best meet the needs of the Department, coordinating data flow and working with staff to improve data quality. Data quality and flow will be much improved with the completion of stage progression setups for each project application type allowing planning staff to monitor, input data and identify any delays as the review process advances.
- New application forms are designed to improve data entry and are a precursor to implementing an electronic application. Staff anticipates soon having Hansen's Dynamic Portal software available on-line which will allow filing applications, paying fees and reviewing the status of projects through an Internet connection.
- New software will allow interested parties to see a list of projects that are pending approval by the Planning Board or currently under construction. All that is needed is a mouse click on the "Where am I?" map and the software will generate a list of projects and other sites such as libraries, schools, etc.
- Contract negotiations are underway with Hansen to purchase the GIS Viewer and Dynamic Portal. The GIS Viewer will allow direct access to GIS data through Hansen without leaving the Hansen interface, making both tools more effective. Staff is also identifying planning procedures and processes that can be automated, reducing staff time on repetitive functions.

