



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
 THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Staff Report: Site Plan 82003032B Orchard Avenue Offices

CONSENT ITEM #: _____

MCPB HEARING DATE: June 19, 2008

REPORT DATE: June 2, 2008

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Rose Krasnow, Chief *RK*
 Robert Kronenberg, Supervisor *RAC*
 Development Review Division

FROM: Michele Oaks, Planner Coordinator *M*
 Development Review Division
 301.495.4573
 michele.oaks@mncppc-mc.org



APPLICATION DESCRIPTION: Proposal to amend an approved Site Plan, for an office building in the C-2 CROZ (Commercial Revitalization Overlay) Zone. Located on Orchard Avenue 140 feet west/northwest of Sligo Mill Road; within the Takoma Park/Langley Master Plan.

APPLICANT: Orchard Avenue Offices, LLC

FILING DATE: September 11, 2007

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of the proposed amendment to Site Plan 82003032A and approval of the attached draft Planning Board Resolution for the Site Plan 82003032B.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The amendment requests modifications to the approved site plan including landscape alterations, a parking space waiver request, parking lot alterations, and changes to sidewalks.

The building contains 5,595 square feet of office space on three floors. Vehicular access is provided via a 20' wide alley adjoining the east boundary of the site that provides direct connection to the ribbon of head-in parking.

The site features a lead sidewalk to an exterior split-level staircase. The landscaping plan was designed to screen the parking from the street, and provide stormwater management; utilizing low walls and plantings.

All proposed changes have been reviewed by M-NCPPC and Takoma Park Planning Staff and both support the proposed changes in this site plan amendment.

BACKGROUND

The Applicant submitted an incomplete application for this site plan amendment on April 11, 2007. Staffs from the City of Takoma Park and M-NCPPC have been working through the project's outstanding issues since the original submittal. The City of Takoma Park Community Development Coordinator has reviewed the recently submitted drawings for this case. A letter dated May 15, 2008, provides the Planning Board with the City of Takoma Park's formal recommendation for this project (Attachment A).

SITE VICINITY

The property is located on Orchard Avenue 140 feet west/northwest of Sligo Mill Road in Takoma Park, Maryland. The site lies approximately 500-600 feet west of New Hampshire Avenue and 850 feet north of Eastern Avenue. The site is zoned C-2 within the Takoma Park Master Plan Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone. Surrounding land uses include a public alley directly to the east. This alley is flanked by a two-story commercial building, zoned C-2, with frontage on both Orchard Avenue and Sligo Mill Road. A wooded lot adjoins the site to the west. This lot contains a segment of the Takoma Branch Stream which feeds into the Sligo Creek Watershed.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is trapezoidal in shape, measuring 0.12 acres in size, with an approx. a 75' width along Orchard Avenue and 85' depth. The building on the 2003 approved site plan has been constructed and is occupied. The all trees and plantings on site are recent and have not yet matured.



Vicinity Map

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Previous Approvals

Preliminary Plan 120030820 was approved by the Planning Board concurrently with the original site plan 820030320 on July 24, 2003.

In April 2005, the Applicant proposed to amend the approved site plan to incorporate 1,865 sq. ft. of the building's cellar area as ancillary office space, which diminished the approved above-ground FAR office density (Floor Area Ratio) from 3,996 sq. ft. to 3,730 sq. ft. and added 1,865 sq. ft. of leasable below grade cellar space. This amendment was approved by the Planning Board on April 7, 2005 with an opinion date May 11, 2005.

There are no other previous approvals that encumber this site.

Proposed Amendment

The approved site plan (with previous approved amendment "A") included the construction of a 3,730 sq. ft. above ground and 1,865 sq. ft. of leasable cellar space. The requested changes to the approved site and landscape plans are:

1. Consolidate two, lower level walkways into one walkway.
2. Request an additional parking space waiver and change, three regular parking spaces into three compact spaces
3. Revise the design of the sidewalk which connects Orchard Avenue to the parking lot
4. Change material of parking lot from "Geo-block" to standard asphalt paving
5. Remove canopy to be installed over stairway entrance door on second level
6. Replace CMU pedestrian barrier with 42" black metal fence on top of bio-retention pond
7. Remove 6" curb abutting parking lot
8. Alter on-site landscaping plan and install the last of the four trees required off-site on M-NCPPC Parkland
9. Reconfigure Handicap parking layout to conform to site conditions/building access
10. Relocate trees on approved landscape plan within site boundaries.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A notice and copy of the proposed plan was sent to the Adjacent Property Owners of record by the applicant on April 16, 2008. The File of Record has been supplied with a copy of the Notice of Application. The notice gave the parties 15 days to review and comment on the contents of the amended site plan. Staff did not receive any comments from the Adjacent Property Owners of record for the proposed application during this period.

A copy of the proposed plan was sent electronically to the City of Takoma Park Community Development Coordinator for review on March 28, 2008.

Signage required by the Montgomery County Planning Board was posted on or about April 16, 2008. The Applicant has supplied the File of Record with photo documentation.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the site plan amendment 82003032B, Orchard Avenue Offices at 6411 Orchard Avenue, Takoma Park for minor changes which include exterior landscaping, building entrance re-design, a parking waiver, parking lot surface material changes, and other minor changes, on 0.12 gross acres. The proposed changes are consistent with the Takoma Park Master Plan, the Guidelines outlined in the Commercial Revitalization Overlay Zone, and the development standards within the County Zoning Ordinance. All site development elements, as revised, are shown on the site plan stamped "Received" by the M-NCPPC on May 5, 2008.

APPENDICES

- A. Letter from City of Takoma Park; May 12, 2008
- B. Applicant's letter

City of Takoma Park



Housing & Community Development

Telephone: (301) 891-7119
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7500 Maple Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

May 12, 2008

Michele Oaks, Planner Coordinator
Site Plan/Project Plan Review
Development Review Division
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: 82003032B (Orchard Avenue Offices, 6411 Orchard Avenue, Takoma Park)

Dear Ms. Oaks,

City of Takoma Park staff has reviewed the application of Dan Robinson to revise the site plan for the Orchard Avenue Offices at 6411 Orchard Avenue. The City has determined that the development is compatible with the neighborhood, provides good multi-modal access, and is an overall improvement to the neighborhood.

While the stormwater management bioretention pond is not yet functioning and the current condition negatively impacts the improvements to the City's right-of-way, the City will hold the Work in the Right-of-Way bond until correction of this issue.

The City recommends that the Planning Board approve the site plan amendment. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Ilona Blanchard
Community Development Coordinator

Cc: Dan Robinson, Orchard Avenue Offices, LLC
Barbara B. Matthews, City Manager
Sara Daines, Housing and Community Development Director
Daryl Braithwaite, Director of Public Works

April 15, 2008

Ms. Michele Oaks
MNCPPC Development Review Division
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Amendment Cover Letter of Explanation

Re: 6411 Orchard Avenue # 8-03032B – second Site Plan Amendment

Dear Ms. Oaks:

This Amendment Cover Letter of Explanation is for modifications to the approved 6411 Orchard Avenue Site Plan, as amended. The revisions are related to the construction of the stormwater bio-retention facility to the specifications listed on the Site Plan, and to the existing alley conditions and on-site grading issues.

The stormwater bio-retention facility requirement was for 246 square feet. It was shown on the Site Plan in the public right of way (ROW). When built to this specification and moved off the ROW, several changes followed from this relocated facility.

1. Consolidation of two basement entrances.

Original design: two basement entrance walkways, each with one entrance door.

Current design: single basement entrance walkway with two entrance doors.

Rationale: The relocated bio-retention pond made an upper entrance infeasible. One consolidated walkway between the two former walkways with two entrances works well aesthetically and structurally on the steeply sloping street. This change was approved in an earlier Montgomery County Planning Board Opinion (see note below.) It is included in this letter for the sake of completeness.

NOTE: The second paragraph under PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT on page 3 of the Montgomery County Planning Board Opinion of May 11, 2005 (8-03032A) states that there is to be a single entrance to the lower floor level. This change from the initial site plan is also reflected in the DPS approved S1-1 document dated October 25, 2005, which shows the single entrance.

2. One additional parking space waiver and three compact spaces.

Original design: eight parking spaces/six parking space waivers

Current design: seven parking spaces/seven parking space waivers – three compact space allowance.

Rationale: This design is needed to accommodate a full sixteen foot handicapped parking area and a walkway to Orchard Avenue. The parking waiver would increase from six to seven parking spaces (50%) and allow three compact spaces. The parking requirement of 2.4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of office floor space requires 14 parking spaces, while the Enterprise Zone allows a waiver of up to 50%. Total floor space for the building remains at 5,595 square feet. Available parking area shrank from 80 to 68 linear feet when the bio-retention pond moved off the public right of way, and the Maryland state van-accessible handicapped space requirement (16 feet) can be met by allowing three compact (7'6") spaces.

3. Sidewalk revision.

Original design: A walkway eighteen feet from the alley connecting the sidewalk on Orchard Avenue to the upper levels and the second basement entrance.

Current design: A walkway along the alley connecting the sidewalk on Orchard Avenue to the upper levels. The second basement entrance has been consolidated. (see 1. above)

Rationale: The relocated stormwater bio-retention facility required that the sidewalk to the main entrance from Orchard Avenue be moved next to the alley. A benefit is that steps are eliminated.

4. Asphalt instead of “geo-block” pavement.

Original design: Geo-block paving and associated trench drain for the parking area.

Current design: Standard asphalt paving and swale for the parking area.

Rationale: This change is caused by maintenance issues, elimination of dirt runoff into the bio-retention pond and cost factors. The existing concrete/gravel base of the alley makes asphalt a better choice for the alley and parking spaces from Orchard Avenue to the end of the property. In addition, the asphalt surface allows better striping.

5. Removal of the canopy over walkway to the basement.

Original design: a canopy over the walkway to protect a stairway to the basement.

Current design: no canopy. There is no upper level stairway to the basement.

Rationale: The re-aligned walkway, consolidated basement entrance, and structural integrity issues created by the proximity of the building to the parking area make a canopy unnecessary.

6. Replace CMU pedestrian barrier/screening with 42” black metal fence.

Original design: a CMU pedestrian barrier/screening at the top of the bio-retention pond.

Current design: a 42” black metal pedestrian barrier at the top of the bio-retention pond.

Rationale: The state-mandated height requirement of 42” was achieved by installing a metal fence. Security is afforded by this fence vs. a solid wall, and screening is combined with a predictable and easy hand-hold as the fence aligns with the walkway toward the Orchard Avenue sidewalk.

7. Eliminate 6” curb abutting parking area.

Original design: a 6” curb abutting parking area.

Current design: No 6” curb abutting parking area.

Rationale: There is a curb along the alley and along the walkway, and cement parking stops installed in the parking area. An additional curb was not necessary, and eliminating it added marginal additional parking space in this tight configuration.

8. Fourth tree planted across street in M-NCPPC park.

Original design: Four trees planted along Orchard Avenue frontage.

Current design: Three trees planted along Orchard Avenue frontage, one tree planted across street.

Rationale: As a result of the consolidation of the two basement entrances and the re-positioned stormwater bio-retention facility, there was insufficient room for a healthy planting of four trees along Orchard Avenue. Trees on each end were moved closer together. For this reason, the fourth tree was planted nearby, across the street, in the M-MCPPC Sligo Mill Overlook Park.

Orchard Avenue Offices, LLC – 120 Grant Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912 – 301-908-3504

With the exception of these changes, the revised plans match the approved Site Plan and Landscape Plan. I am hopeful that these requests can be put on the September schedule for the Commission. If you have any questions regarding this revision, please to not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Robinson', written in a cursive style.

Dan Robinson
Orchard Avenue Offices, LLC
301-908-3504
120 Grant Avenue
Takoma Park, Maryland, 20912



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB No. 08-73
Site Plan No. 82003032B
Project Name: Orchard Avenue Offices
Hearing Date: June 19, 2008

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, pursuant to Montgomery County Code Division 59-D-3, the Montgomery County Planning Board ("Planning Board") is required to review amendments to approved site plans; and

WHEREAS, on September 11, 2007, Orchard Avenue Offices, LLC ("Applicant"), filed a site plan amendment application designated Site Plan No. 82003032B ("Amendment") for approval of the following modifications:

1. Consolidate two, lower level walkways into one walkway.
2. Request an additional parking space waiver and change, three regular parking spaces into three compact spaces.
3. Revise the design of the sidewalk which connects Orchard Avenue to the parking lot.
4. Change material of parking lot from "Geo-block" to standard asphalt paving.
5. Remove canopy to be installed over stairway entrance door on second level.
6. Replace CMU pedestrian barrier with 42" black metal fence on top of bio-retention pond.
7. Remove 6" curb abutting parking lot.
8. Alter on-site landscaping plan and install the last of the four trees required off-site on M-NCPPC Parkland.
9. Reconfigure Handicap parking layout to conform to site conditions/building access.
10. Relocate trees on approved landscape plan within site boundaries.

WHEREAS, following review and analysis of the Amendment by Planning Board staff ("Staff") and the staffs of other applicable governmental agencies, Staff issued a memorandum to the Planning Board dated June 2, 2008, setting forth its analysis and recommendation for approval of the Amendment ("Staff Report"); and

Approved as to
Legal Sufficiency:

DK 6/5/08
M-NCPPC Legal Department

WHEREAS, on June 19, 2008, Staff presented the Amendment to the Planning Board as a consent item for its review and action (the "Hearing"); and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board finds that the Amendment does not alter the overall design character of the development in relation to the original approval. And further, these modifications do not affect the compatibility of the development to its surrounding neighborhood; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, pursuant to the relevant provisions of Montgomery County Code Chapter 59, the Planning Board hereby adopts the Staff's recommendation and analysis set forth in the Staff Report and hereby approves Site Plan No. 82003032B; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution incorporates by reference all evidence of record, including maps, drawings, memoranda, correspondence, and other information; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this site plan shall remain valid as provided in Montgomery County Code § 59-D-3.8; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the date of this written resolution is _____ (which is the date that this opinion is mailed to all parties of record); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that any party authorized by law to take an administrative appeal must initiate such an appeal within thirty days of the date of this written opinion, consistent with the procedural rules for the judicial review of administrative agency decisions in Circuit Court (Rule 7-203, Maryland Rules).

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