




THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
10.02.03
Item #7

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 11, 2003 ~~September 25, 2003~~
TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: Michael Ma, Supervisor
Joseph R. Davis, Division Chief *JRD*
Development Review Division
FROM: Mary Beth O'Quinn
Planning Department Staff
(301) 495-1322

REVIEW TYPE: Site Plan Review
CASE #: 8-0338
PROJECT NAME: Greencastle Towns
APPLYING FOR: Approval of 27 Townhouses
Article 59-D of the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance
ZONE: RT-8
LOCATION: Greencastle Road, 1,500 feet south of Robey Road
MASTER PLAN: Fairland Master Plan, 1997
APPLICANT: TC Greencastle, LLC (Robert LoPinto)
FILING DATE: June 5, 2003
HEARING DATE: ~~September 18, 2003~~ **weather postponement to October 2, 2003**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval of 27 new townhouses, subject to the following conditions:

1. Stormwater Management
Conditions of MCDPS stormwater management concept approval dated May 29, 2003.
2. Transportation
 - a. Limit the development to 27 one-family attached housing units, to be developed in one phase;
 - b. Satisfy the PATR component of the APF test by entering into a Traffic Mitigation Agreement (TMA) area; with the MCPB and the DPWT, to sponsor and implement a trip reduction program for 12 years **that requires a one-time lump sum payment to support increased transit use within the policy**
 - c. Dedicate additional right-of-way along Greencastle Road to provide 40 feet of right-of-way from the centerline, consistent with the 1997 Approved and Adopted Fairland Master Plan;
 - d. **Provide roadway improvements, subject to review and approval by the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), Department of Permitting Services (DPS), and MNCPPC staff, as follows:** 1.) Coordinate with DPWT CIP Project No. 500100, Greencastle Road with regard to improvements along the entire property frontage; and 2.) extend the proposed Class I bikeway along site frontage (to the west side of Greencastle Road) off-site, to the north to Wildlife Lane; provide paving details with dimensions as part of the Signature Set plans;
 - e. Coordinate with DPWT on design requirements for the proposed site access driveway.

- f. Provide painted crosswalks for the driveways within the development.
3. Environmental
- a. Clearly identify the Limits of Disturbance (LOD) and label the distance(s) from the stream buffer;
 - b. Provide a survey for all trees **equal to or greater than 24 inches in diameter** within a distance of 50 feet on either side of the of the proposed LOD and delineation of the critical root zones;
 - c. Submit for review and approval the final forest conservation plan prior to approval of record plats, including the following:
 - i. A sediment and erosion control plan that shows the proposed limits of disturbance;
 - ii. Sewer lines and outfalls for stormwater management facilities to serve the subject project and the adjoining approved, but unbuilt Colesville subdivision (Preliminary Plan no. 4-93028) **I-98106** to be designed and located to minimize forest clearing. The locations of the sewer lines and SWM facility outfalls for the two projects should be closely coordinated and should be limited to one cleared corridor within the environmental buffer area, if possible. Final locations of these sewer lines and SWM facility outfalls to be reviewed and approved by M-NCPPC Environmental Planning staff.
 - d. Show on the plan the Environmental buffer and forest conservation areas to be placed with in a Category I conservation easement. Easement to be shown on record plats.
4. Park Planning
Provide a crosswalk to the MNCPPC Fairland Park east of Greencastle Road; location of crosswalk subject to approval by DPWT, to be determined at Signature Set
5. Signature Set
Prior to signature approval of the site/landscape plans the following revisions shall be made and/or information provided, subject to staff review and approval:
- a. Site Plan
 - i. Provide details of play equipment, furnishings, signage, walls/fencing, including materials; retaining walls to be constructed of masonry materials;
 - ii. Provide **final architectural elevations for Unit 1 and Unit 27 facing Greencastle Road; the subject facades must** windows and brick facing materials for fences and walls facing the public roadway;
 - iii. Provide documentation from appropriate agencies on utility feed access requirements to all lots on the site; allow for rear utility access to units by providing 8-foot clear path across all lot rears (no fencing); show transformers, A/C units, utility lines and feeds on site plan;
 - iv. Extend the lead sidewalk from Greencastle northward by 30-40 feet to serve Units 1-2;
 - v. Provide the development program inspection schedule;
 - vi. Provide street trees 40-50 feet on center along all public streets; coordinate street tree species with Master Plan recommendations;
 - b. Landscape Plan
 - i. Provide methods and locations of tree protection;
 - ii. Provide note stating the M-NCPPC staff must inspect tree-save areas and protection devices prior to clearing and grading;
 - iii. Provide additional foundation planting for Unit 1 and Unit 27 facing Greencastle Road;
 - c. Summary Area Plan
Update the Area Plan to show the provision of the road improvements, including the bike path and the crosswalk connection to Fairland Regional Park;
 - d. Supplemental Signature Set
Provide final architectural elevations for Unit 1 and Unit 27 facing Greencastle Road prior to building permit.

6. Site Plan Enforcement Agreement

Submit a Site Plan Enforcement Agreement, Development Review Program and Homeowner Association Documents for review and approval prior to approval of the signature set as follows:

- a. Development Program to include a phasing schedule as follows:
 - i. Street tree planting must progress as street construction is completed, but no later than six months after completion of the units adjacent to those streets;
 - ii. Landscaping associated with each parking lot and building must be completed as construction of each facility is completed;
 - iii. Pedestrian pathways and seating area(s) associated with each facility shall be completed as construction of each facility is completed;
 - iv. Clearing and grading to correspond to the construction phasing, to minimize soil erosion;
 - v. Coordination of each section of the development and roads;
 - v. Phasing of dedications, stormwater management, sediment/erosion control, recreation, forestation, community paths, or other features;
- b. Forest Conservation Plan shall satisfy all conditions of approval prior to recording of plat and DPS issuance of sediment and erosion control permit;
- c. No clearing or grading prior to M-NCPPC approval of signature set of plans.

SITE PLAN REVIEW ISSUES:

1. Grading and Retaining Walls and Stormwater Management

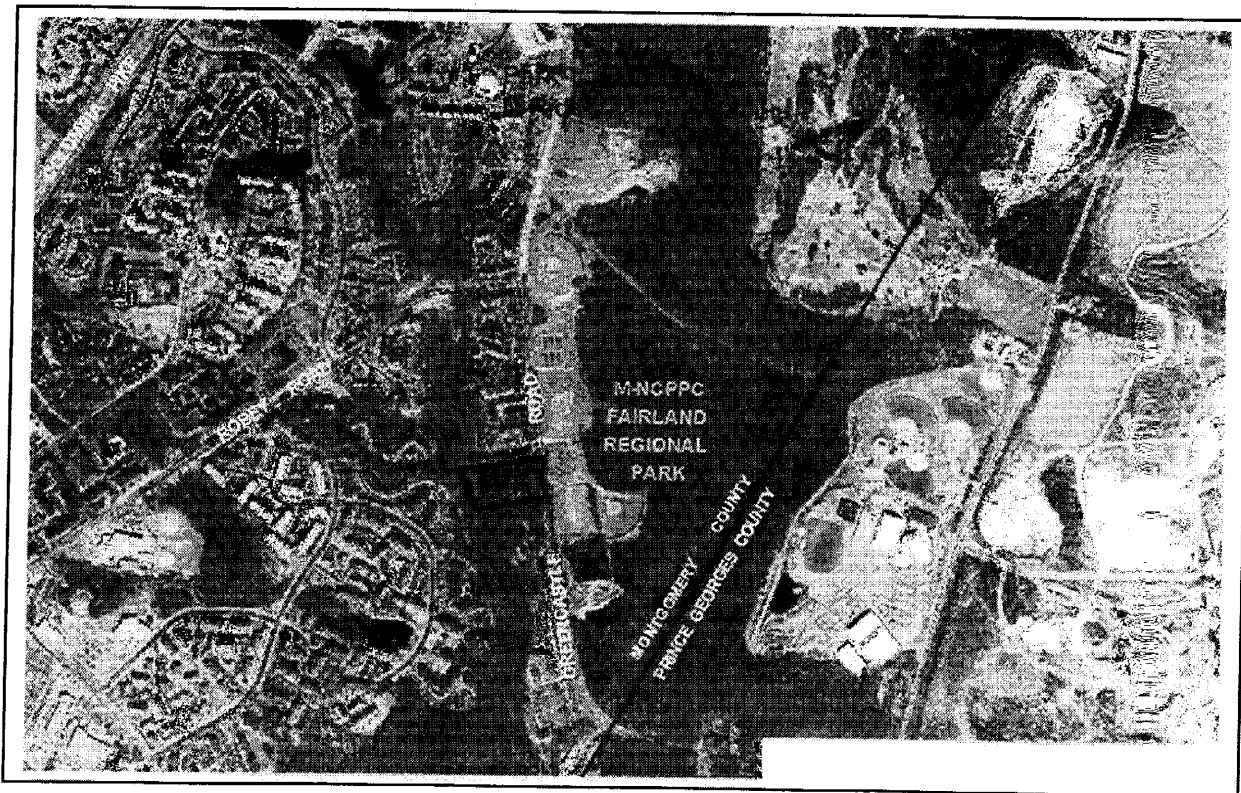
The shape and natural topography of this site along with the existing constraints of the Greencastle Road ROW on the east and the stream buffer on the west create what is essentially an “infill” site that demands careful consideration of building locations, parking and adequate companion open space. Providing adequate parking for residents and visitors on this “tight” site presents additional challenges. The applicant’s original proposal featured surface stormwater management (SWM) treatment at the site’s center along with recreational amenities at or within the stream buffer area. The locations of the rear line of townhouse lots, consequently, rested within 30 feet of selected points of the stream buffer, a condition requiring extensive construction of retaining walls.

Applicant Position: The applicant’s revised design addresses the SWM facility design by providing underground water quality and quantity control. The retaining walls have been reduced significantly in length and height. Formal recreational amenities have been relocated out of the stream buffer areas.

Citizen Position: One nearby homeowner inquired about the proposed building height.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends the applicant’s revised plan, which solves the problems inherent to the original submission. The placement of the stormwater underground provides clear open space that may accommodate adequate recreation at the site’s center. The houses located along the stream buffer have been shifted away from the steeper slopes of the stream buffer, which allows a reduction in the size and scale of the retaining walls, and their consequent impact on this environmental setting.

Example: The original submission features approximately 487 linear feet of retaining walls, up to 10 feet in height, while the revised submission proposes about 220 feet of retaining walls with a maximum height of 4.3 feet.



2. Traffic, Public Schools, and Environmental Buffers

Since the publication of the initial staff report dated September 11, 2003, a neighborhood community group has communicated their concern about the impact of the proposed residential development on traffic congestion, public school capacity, and the surrounding environmental buffer. [See letter from residents of Greencastle Woods, dated September 16, 2003, attached.] Traffic and public school issues will be reviewed as part of the Preliminary Plan application. The site plan review has addressed environmental issues with respect to site grading and stormwater management, above. See also discussion below on forest conservation.

Applicant Position: The applicant's revised design improves the protection of the stream valley buffer from intrusion by shifting the houses further away from the buffer line.

Citizen Position: Residents of the adjoining neighborhood to the north, Greencastle Woods, have expressed concern over stormwater runoff caused by the loss of trees and the reduction of environmental buffers that currently exist on the subject site. The residents also express concern about the loss of mature forest, as an issue of aesthetics, recreational space, and visual screening for privacy between subdivisions as well as the construction of other than one-family detached homes. The residents request that the buffer zone show a greater density of trees.

Staff Recommendation: The Environmental Planning Division has carefully reviewed the subject plan for conformance to the MNCPPC Planning Board's *Environmental Guidelines* and the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law. The law provides for retention of forest in environmental buffers as a priority. The amount and location of forest and tree save areas are dependent on such factors as the land use, zoning, and infrastructure requirements. The plan conforms to both the *Guidelines* and the Forest Conservation Law.

Staff has included conditions of approval that address the critical areas of the site with respect to tree save, including requirements for a Category I Conservation Easement, a tree survey for significant trees within 50 feet of the limits of disturbance, and stormwater and sewer facilities field-located by staff. The plan will provide landscaping and screening between the subject site and the adjacent tracts. The landscaping proposed between the new homes and the existing townhouse development to the north (Site Plan 8-87005, approved in 1987) will feature a varied screen of evergreens, ornamentals, and oak trees.

The forest conservation area comprises 1.3 acres of the site, almost 35% of the net tract area. Total green area surpasses the requirements of the zone by more than 50%.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Surrounding Vicinity



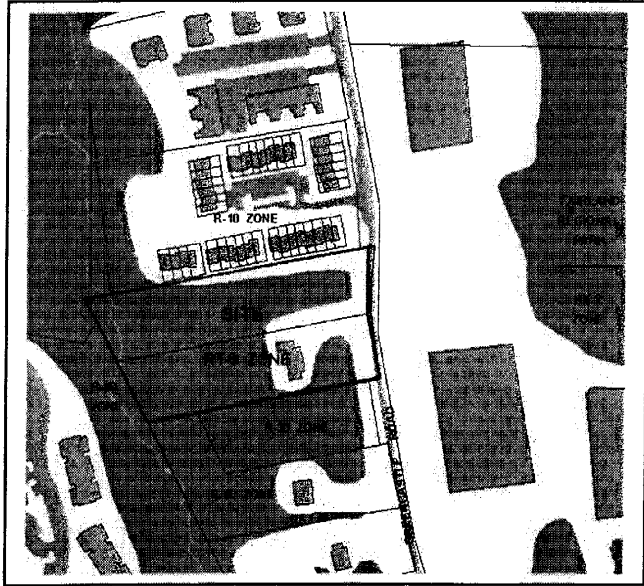
Fairland Regional Recreational Park

The park is the only bi-county park owned by M-NCPPC. Of the 322 acres on the Montgomery County side, only 39 acres are developed because the area is environmentally sensitive. The Montgomery County side features a playground, 2 softball fields, lighted baseball fields, and tennis courts. Picnic shelters are available for reservation.

The site is located within ¼ mile of the Montgomery-Prince Georges County line, south of the intersection of Robey Road and Greencastle Road, and a little over a mile east of Columbia Pike (US 29). This location offers convenient access to the Fairland Regional Park directly opposite the site on Greencastle Road. Major shopping areas, including the Montgomery Auto Park are located within one mile of the site at Briggs Chaney Road and Columbia Pike. A Park-and-Ride facility is provided on Greencastle Road, at the midpoint of the distance between the site and Columbia Pike, providing useful transportation links to the playing fields within the Fairland Park.

Significant natural features of the area include the Little Paint Branch Stream and its tributaries, one of which crosses the subject site.

Surrounding residential neighborhoods include Greencastle Woods to the north, Castlegate, further north, Briggs Chaney Woods, to the south along the MC-PG boundary line, and Knightsbridge, to the west where Greencastle Elementary School is located.



The site proposed for development is comprised of two existing parcels with frontage on Greencastle Road. The combined land area, zoned RT-8, measures 4.14 acres in gross tract area. The new parcel for subdivision provides approximately 300 feet of frontage on Greencastle Road; the property extends back from the road a length of almost 650 feet along the north property line.

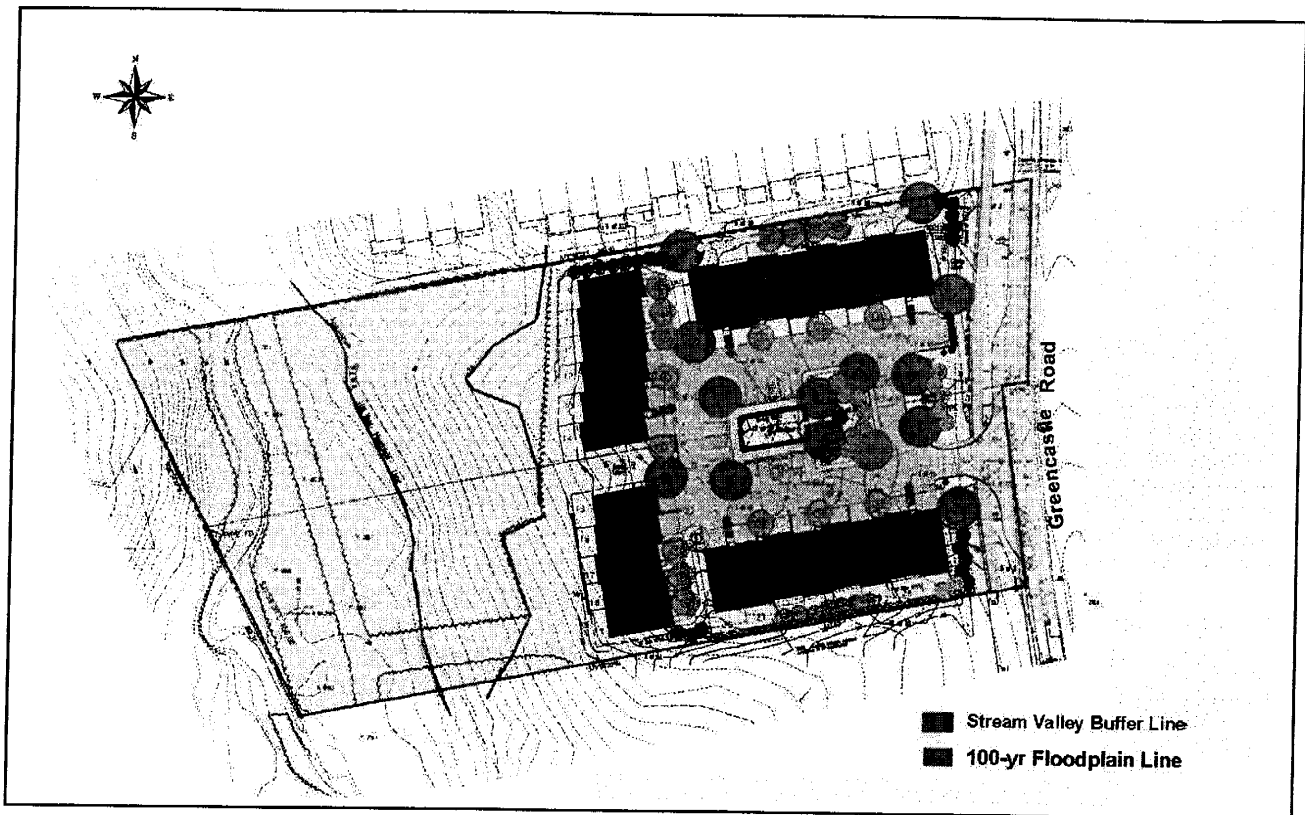
The site features an existing one-family house setback about 15 feet from the street. The site is gently graded with lawn areas of 5% slopes dropping toward the stream buffer. At the midpoint of the site, the topography of the stream buffer features steep slopes of 16% that drop sharply to the perennial stream tributary of the Little Paint Branch Stream that crosses the rear point of the property.

An aerial photograph of the site in 2002.

The Fairland Park play fields for soccer and softball may be seen at the right.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Proposal



The housing proposed is comprised of four groups of townhouses oriented as a U-shape to face a central courtyard. This “green” provides the primary visual focus to the development while defining the vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns around the central space.

The townhouses serve to define the edges of the property, with the longer rows extending back along the two sides; meanwhile, the two shorter lines of houses at the rear facing the street, create a substantial medial break, that offers views of the stream buffer, and encourages residential recreational access to the natural areas of the site’s stream buffer.

The orientation of the houses responds to the existing development of townhouses to the north. The property to the south, zoned R-30, is currently undeveloped.

The stormwater management for both quality and quantity control will be accommodated by an underground facility with runoff conveyance below the paved surfaces. This allows the central green area to provide recreational amenities with attractive landscaping as a visual focal point. The front portion of the open space will feature substantial landscape design framing a gazebo. The green’s form transitions to a secondary area that will support a tot lot with child play equipment.

The sidewall facades facing Greencastle Road will be attractively finished sidewalls with foundation landscaping. The street frontage will be finished with a Class One bikeway and street trees. The road improvements associated with the development will include a pedestrian crossing across Greencastle Road to provide safer access to Fairland Park.

Prior Approvals

Preliminary Plan 1-03103 is under review concurrently with the Site Plan.

ANALYSIS: Conformance to Development Standards

PROJECT DATA TABLE			
Greencastle Townhomes Development Standard	Site Plan 8-03038 Total Areas	RT-8 Permitted/Reqd	RT-8 Proposed
Gross Site Area			
Total Gross Tract Area	4.14 acres (180,210 sf)		
Area of Public Dedication	0.24 acres (10,719 sf)		
Total Net Tract	3.90 acres (169,491 sf)		
Proposed Use	One-family attached housing		
<u>Development Standards RT-8</u>			
Lot Area (minimum)		20,000 sf	180,210 sf
Density (maximum)		8 du/acre	6.5 du/acre (27 units)
Building Setbacks			
From 1-family detached dwelling zone		20 feet minimum	20 feet
From public street		25 feet minimum	25 feet
From adjoining lot - side		10 feet minimum	10 feet
From adjoining lot - rear		20 feet minimum	20 feet
Building Height		35 feet maximum	35 feet maximum
<u>Building Coverage</u>			
Footprint Coverage		35% maximum	13%
Green Area		50% minimum	75%
<u>Parking</u>			
Standard	2 spaces/unit	54 spaces	101 spaces

ANALYSIS: Conformance to Development Standards

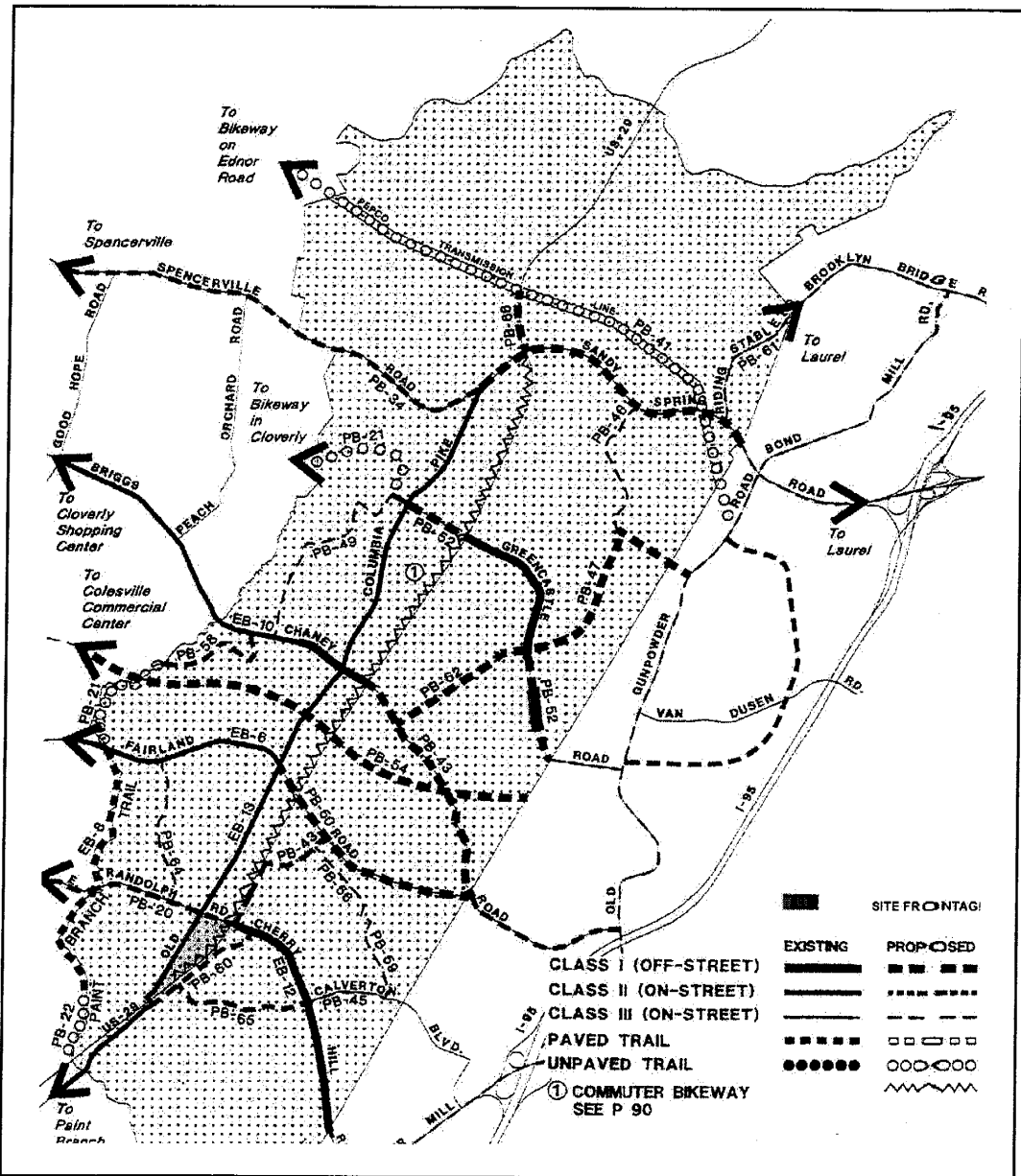
RECREATION GREENCASTLE TOWNS 8-03040						
DEMAND POINTS	Tots	Children	Teens	Adults	Seniors	TOTALS
<i>per 100 residential units</i>		17	22	18	129	7
PROJECT DEMAND						
27 Townhouses	0.27	4.59	5.94	4.86	34.83	1.89
SUPPLY POINTS - ON SITE	Tots	Children	Teens	Adults	Seniors	
Picnic - Sitting (2)	2.00	2.00	30.00	10.00	4.00	
Pedestrian System	0.46	1.19	0.97	15.67	0.85	
Tot Lot	9.00	2.00	0.00	4.00	1.00	
ON SITE TOTAL	11.46	5.19	30.97	29.67	5.85	98.14
SUPPLY POINTS - OFF SITE						
Fairland Regional Park						
Picnic & Sitting	1.00	1.00	15.00	5.00	2.00	
Pedestrian System	0.72	1.44	1.44	62.37	37.26	
Multiage Playground	9.00	11.00	3.00	7.00	1.00	
Tennis Court	0.00	1.50	10.50	24.00	1.00	
Softball Field (2)	4.00	30.00	30.00	60.00	4.00	
Baseball Field	2.00	15.00	15.00	30.00	2.00	
Off Site Total	16.72	59.94	73.44	188.37	47.26	158.23

SUPPLY/DEMAND RATIOS	Tots	Children	Teens	Adults	Seniors
On Site Ratio	249.67%	87.30%	637.24%	85.18%	309.52%
Off Site Ratio	364.27%	1009.09%	1511.11%	540.82%	807.86%

ANALYSIS: Sector Plan Conformance

The proposed development is consistent with the land use and development goals of the Fairland Master Plan (1997) and with the recommendations for the Greencastle/Briggs Chaney area. The proposal as conditioned is compatible with the adjacent town house development and the surrounding area and provides for the conservation and recreational use of the stream valley buffer. The area is one of the most populous areas in Fairland, containing diverse land uses and a variety of housing types. Master Plan recommendations for the subject parcel, defined as Area 12, include the following:

- Provide a housing type suitable for a mix of detached and townhouse developments, and for RT-8 zoning;
- Provide connections to the open space on adjacent properties to expand the contiguous open space along the Little Paint Branch tributaries;
- Incorporate the stream buffer area within the open space;
- Require appropriate setbacks and noise mitigation along Greencastle Road.



Proposed Bikeway Plan for Fairland, 1997

FINDINGS for Site Plan Review:

1. *The site plan is consistent with an approved development plan or a project plan for the optional method of development, if required.*
2. *The site plan meets all of the requirements of the zone in which it is located.*
See Project Data Table above.
3. *The locations of the buildings and structures, the open spaces, the landscaping, recreation facilities, and the pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe and efficient.*

a. Location of Buildings

The location of the buildings, and the disposition of open spaces and pedestrian ways are adequate, safe, and efficient. The revised site design with underground stormwater management and the rear house lines shifted forward, solves both the problems of building near the stream buffer and the need for adequate centralized recreation.

b. Open Space

Attractive and functional open space is provided for this compact, urban townhouse community. The design proposed provides adequate and efficient open space that creates a well-focused site plan that clearly delineates its pattern of solid and void, that is, the relationship of the buildings to the open spaces and surrounding homes. The centralized open space, that mediates the transition in form and function from the entrance landscaping to the functional tot lot, fulfills four major roles: 1. the space works as a major organizing site element for visual interest and directional orientation; 2. the core defines the vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns; 3. the perimeter provides for visitor parking; and 4. this area offers attractive landscaping and functional recreational elements. This space is thoughtfully dimensioned for distance, recreational use, and screening. Attractive landscaping frames this open space in a compatible scale with appropriate plantings and shade trees.

c. Landscaping and Lighting

Formal landscaping and lighting provide consists of shade trees, Ash and Oak, defining the corners of the major centralized spaces. Smaller species of shade trees will be planted at alternating driveway islands.

The formal placement of the shade trees will be supplemented with a variety of ornamental trees, including crepe myrtle, lilac, and cherry, that will provide seasonal color and interest. An interesting landscape design establishes an attractive vista within the formal green space at the driveway entrance from Greencastle Road. Additionally, the north and south property boundaries will feature planted buffers that include coniferous, deciduous, and ornamental planting.

The stream buffer will be preserved through the placement of a Category I Conservation Easement.

d. Recreation

The proposal provides safe recreational amenities that are adequate and efficient with respect to location and access; the amenities include a tot lot, a gazebo, and a pedestrian path leading to the natural areas of the stream buffer. The applicant will provide an extension of the bike path recommended for Greencastle Road and a marked crosswalk connection to Fairland Park.

e. Vehicular and Pedestrian Circulation

The vehicular and pedestrian circulation proposed for the revised plan offers safe and efficient means of ingress and egress to the site. The traffic pattern around the central courtyard, with parking clustered around the rear perimeter effectively separates the vehicular movement from the pedestrian routes. Staff recommends the extension of the lead walk northward and painted crosswalks within the development.

4. Each structure and use is compatible with other uses and other site plans and with existing and proposed adjacent development.

The compact layout of these townhouses achieves an improved and compatible streetscape and allows the creation of a balanced pattern of structures and open spaces that relate well to the surrounding townhouses and one-family homes and sets a desirable mediating pattern that may be extended with future development south of the subject property.

5. *The site plan meets all applicable requirements of Chapter 22A regarding forest conservation.*

The proposal meets the requirements for forest conservation, subject to the recommended conditions.