



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 31, 2005

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Rose Krasnow, Chief *RK*
Development Review Division

FROM: Catherine Conlon, Acting Supervisor (301-495-4542) *CAC*
Development Review Division

REVIEW TYPE: Preliminary Plan of Subdivision

APPLYING FOR: Preliminary Plan Approval for 180 multi-family dwelling units, including a minimum of 30 percent Affordable Housing, and 4,000 square feet of commercial retail use

PROJECT NAME: Wheaton Forest

CASE NO. 1-05021

REVIEW BASIS: Pursuant to Chapter 50, the Subdivision Regulations and Chapter 59, the Zoning Ordinance

ZONE: CBD-R1 and CBD-3

LOCATION: In the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Georgia Avenue (MD 97) and Reedie Drive

MASTER PLAN: Kensington/Wheaton – Wheaton Central Business District Sector Plan

APPLICANT: Wheaton Metro Development Corp.(Housing Opportunities Commission)

DEVELOPER: Bozzutto Development Co.

ATTORNEY: Lerch Early & Brewer

ENGINEER: VIKA, Inc.

HEARING DATE: April 7, 2005

Staff Recommendation: Approval, including a waiver of §50-26(a) of the Subdivision Regulations pursuant to §50-38 to permit a reduced right-of-way width for Reddie Drive; and subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Approval under this preliminary plan is limited to 180 dwelling units, including a minimum of 30% Affordable Housing, and 4,000 square feet of commercial retail use.
- 2) Applicant shall provide an urban open space plaza on the southeast corner of Reddie Drive and Georgia Avenue as shown in Exhibit A of the preliminary plan (Attachment A).
- 3) Compliance with the conditions of approval for the preliminary forest conservation plan. The applicant must satisfy all conditions prior to recording of plat(s) or MCDPS issuance of sediment and erosion control permits.
- 4) Acoustical noise treatment shall be provided per the following:
 - a. Certification from an acoustical engineer that the building shell for residential dwelling units to be constructed within the projected 65 dBA Ldn noise contour is designed to attenuate projected exterior noise levels to an interior level not to exceed 45 dBA Ldn. The certification shall be provided to M-NCPPC Environmental Planning staff for concurrence prior to issuance of building permits.
 - b. The builder shall provide a signed commitment to construct the impacted units in accord with the acoustical design specifications. Any changes to the building shell construction that may affect acoustical performance after issuance of building permit shall be approved by an acoustical engineer and M-NCPPC Environmental Planning staff prior to their implementation.
- 5) Approval of this preliminary plan is conditioned upon Montgomery County Council approval of Alley Abandonment, DPWT Docket No. AB 666.
- 6) Record 20-foot wide alley abandonment simultaneously with the recordation of plat for this preliminary plan.
- 7) Compliance with the conditions of the MCDPS approval of the stormwater management plan dated February 4, 2005.
- 8) Prior to issuance of building permits, applicant to submit an engineered sediment and erosion control plan to MCDPS for review and approval.
- 9) Applicant shall dedicate 72 feet of right-of-way from the centerline of Georgia Avenue.
- 10) Applicant shall dedicate 37 feet of right-of-way from the centerline of Reddie Drive and provide a five-foot-wide Public Improvement Easement along the new right-of-way, as required by MCDPS.
- 11) Applicant shall dedicate 30 feet of right-of-way from the centerline of Amherst Avenue.
- 12) Applicant shall provide the following improvements:
 - a. Widen the existing pavement on Reddie Drive by seven feet, between Georgia Avenue and Fern Street.
 - b. Install a two-foot-wide median to restrict movements to right-in, right-out at the proposed garage driveway, and preclude U-turns.
 - c. Provide 10-foot-wide inside travel lanes and a 14-foot-wide curb lane along the proposed site to accommodate the signed, shared-road bikeway. Lane configurations shall be marked and transitions provided as required by MCDPS.
 - d. Provide a continuous sidewalk, up to 25 feet wide, between the curb and property line and provide Wheaton CBD standard streetscape.

- e. Improvements along Reedie Drive and at the intersection of Reedie Drive and Georgia Avenue will be reviewed by MCDPS and/or the State Highway Administration (SHA) at the time of building permit application.
 - f. Provide a 24-foot-wide driveway with an inbound lane width of 14 feet and a 10-foot-wide outbound lane along Reedie Drive. Provide a minimum fifty-foot tangent adjacent to driveway before encountering cross traffic along Reedie Drive.
- 13) Simultaneously with the recordation of the record plat for this preliminary plan, abandon the related 20-foot-wide right-of-way for the alleyway that runs southward from Reedie Drive to the southern property edge.
 - 14) Traffic signal at the intersection of Fern Street and Reedie Drive shall be retained, if required by the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT). Otherwise, the applicant shall remove the traffic signal and restore the affected right-of-way amenities to pre-signal conditions.
 - 15) Applicant to provide improvements and traffic signal pole relocations along Georgia Avenue and Reedie Drive, as required by SHA and DPWT.
 - 16) Applicant to furnish bicycle-parking facilities as required by Section 59 E-2.3 of the Montgomery County Code. The applicant should provide either bike lockers or "U"-type bike racks.
 - 17) Compliance with conditions of MCDPWT letter dated, February 15, 2005 unless otherwise amended.
 - 18) Access and improvements as required to be approved by MCDPWT prior to recordation of plat(s).
 - 19) Access and improvements as required to be approved by MDSHA prior to issuance of access permits.
 - 20) Private common driveways shall have a minimum pavement width of at least twenty four (24) feet to allow vehicles to enter and exit the site without encroaching on the opposing lanes. Inbound lane width of fourteen (14) feet and an exit lane width of ten (10) feet.
 - 21) Prior to release of building permits, the applicant shall submit a truck circulation plan meeting the DPWT "Off-Street Loading Space" policy requirements and a delivery schedule for review by MNCPPC and MCDPWT staff.
 - 22) Applicant to provide an 18-foot-wide minimum private street to the loading area. Provide common ingress, egress easement to access the loading area. The composite, typical-section, and drainage shall be approved at the time of building permit. Submit a recorded covenant for operation and maintenance of private streets to DPS and provide deed reference on the recorded plat.
 - 23) Record 20-foot wide alley abandonment simultaneously with the recordation of the plat for this preliminary plan.
 - 24) Provide the following at the loading dock area, unless amended by DPS:
 - a. Provide a four-foot wide white-hatched pavement marking adjacent to Office Building for pedestrian safety. Provide bollards 3.5' from the building and to either side of the door swing. Provide bollards 1.5' from building and offset from either corner of the building.
 - b. Provide signage prohibiting parking and the blockage of intersection at parking lot exit and loading access road. Provide wide yellow-hatched pavement markings through intersection. Provide "Stop" pavement markings at parking lot exit.

- c. Prohibit trucks larger than SU-30 (semi-trailer trucks) on weekdays between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM.
 - d. Schedule move-in/move-outs and limit to one at a time.
 - e. Incorporate and enforce the terms of conditions a-d above into rental agreements.
- 25) 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.
- 26) Other necessary easements.

SITE DESCRIPTION and SURROUNDING AREA:

The subject property is a 3.5-acre property located at the corner of Georgia Avenue (MD 97) and Reddie Drive within the Wheaton Central Business District (see Attachment B). The site is bounded by Georgia Avenue to the west, Reddie Drive to the north, Amherst Avenue to the east, and an existing development to the south. Surrounding land uses include commercial and office to the west and north, office and residential to the south, and residential development to the east. The property is split-zoned CBD-3 on the west and CBD-R1 on the east. The site contains the eastern entrance to the Wheaton Metro Station on the Red Line. A metro Kiss and Ride parking lot is currently located at grade level on the property. The eastern edge of the property contains an existing earth berm and associated landscaping which currently provides screening between the parking lot and residential dwellings on the east side of Amherst Avenue.

The property lies within the Sligo Creek watershed which is designated as Use Class I. There are no environmentally sensitive areas or significant trees located on the site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

With this application, the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) proposes to create a multi-family residential rental community consisting of up to 180 dwelling units, with a structured garage that includes replacement facilities for the Metro Kiss and Ride parking lot as well as parking for the residential housing (see Attachment C). The project has been in the planning stage for six years, due to the difficulty of negotiations with WMATA. A full 30 percent of the project will be affordable, with 20 percent reserved for families earning less than 50 percent of the area median income and 10 percent reserved for families earning less than 30 percent of the area median. Several of these units will be fully handicapped accessible, which is significant because handicapped individuals are often at the lowest end of the income scale. The housing will contain a mix of efficiencies, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and three-bedroom units. HOC plans to distribute all affordable units evenly throughout the building and among the varying unit types.

The development would contain four connected buildings ranging from 3 stories along Amherst Avenue up to 4½ stories along Georgia Avenue. The main entrance to the buildings and lobby are located at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive. In addition to the residential dwellings, the plan proposes up to 3,700 square feet of commercial retail space located between the building and Metro station entrances on Reddie Drive, and along part of the Georgia Avenue frontage. A six-level parking garage will provide four, upper levels of parking

for residents, and two, lower levels of Metro public parking, which replaces the existing Kiss and Ride lot. The entrances to the Metro and parking garage are located on Reddie Drive west of its intersection with Fern Street. Both stairs and an elevator to access Metro will be provided from an entrance located within the structure itself. Site plan review pursuant to §59-D-3 is not required for this standard method development.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE 1990 WHEATON CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT SECTOR PLAN

The subject property is identified as part of the Metro Center parcel in the Wheaton Central Business District (CBD). The Sector Plan envisioned that a major mixed-use high-rise project would be developed in this area. It recommends the CBD-R and CBD-3 zones for the property and states that the parcel “should be developed as a unified optional method project”. Because of existing smaller scale development (no more than three stories) to the east of the property, the Plan recommends that the new development provide for transition in heights, with the tallest structures toward Georgia Avenue and around the Metro station. The Plan further recommends that street trees be provided along Georgia Avenue, that buildings be configured to help define the boulevard, and that retail and service uses be provided at the ground level.

The Sector Plan also recommends an open urban plaza on the southeast corner of Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive to function as a major node for activities generated by the central location, Metro entrance, and envisioned retail (see Attachments D and E). Finally, the Plan recommends that an attractive, open space be developed within the parcel. The Plan envisions this open space providing an additional pedestrian linkage to Metro and serving the passive recreation needs of the community.

The applicant, the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) proposes a building that will be developed, by right, under the standard method of development in the CBD-3 and CBD-R1 zones. As such, the maximum building height allowed is only 72 feet in the CBD-3 zone and 60 feet in the CBD-R1 zone (not to exceed 35 feet in the first 75 feet measured along the Amherst Avenue property line per the Sector Plan). Since the optional method development standards are not being employed on this site, the plan does not provide the density envisioned by the Sector Plan on the west side of the site. HOC states that the objectives of the Sector Plan must be balanced against the need for affordable housing (see letter received from the HOC dated March 29 2005 – Attachment F). They argue that the number of affordable units that will be provided under this preliminary plan, the depth of the subsidy involved, the services that will be available to residents, and the number of accessible units that are included suggest that the Planning Board should be flexible with respect to the greater density desired.

The preliminary plan does include an open space urban plaza and the pedestrian linkage to Metro, via open space, which are recommended by the Sector Plan. The urban plaza is located primarily in front of planned retail uses on Georgia Avenue, and wraps around to additional retail use on Reddie Drive (see Attachment A). Sidewalk paving, building shape and building façade treatments link the more active portion of the plaza on Georgia Avenue to the additional retail and Metro entrance on Reddie Drive. The pedestrian linkage includes a wide pathway with attractive landscaping and seating for neighborhood residents accessing the Metro.

TRANSPORTATION:

Site Access, Circulation, and Pedestrian Facilities

The proposed site is located between Georgia Avenue and Amherst Avenue along the south side of Reddie Drive. Vehicular access will be provided to the Kiss-and-Ride lot and garage for the residential development through a consolidated driveway located 150 feet west of the centerline of Fern Street. The existing access to the Kiss-and-Ride lot will be removed. No direct vehicular access is proposed on Georgia or Amherst Avenues.

Pedestrian access to the residential units is proposed through the lobby at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Reddie Street as well as at street level along Reddie Street, Amherst Avenue, and a walkway along the southeast portion of the property. A proposed staircase and elevator, located 145 feet east of Georgia Avenue, will provide permanent pedestrian access to the proposed Kiss-and-Ride lot and the existing Metro access tunnel.

The off-street loading area is located on the southern portion of the property and will be accessible through use of a common egress, ingress easement with the adjacent property. The access is limited to an 18-foot-wide private alley because an easement to a 34-foot-long by 10-foot-wide portion of property that was previously abandoned may not be attainable.

The parking tabulation indicates that the site requires 195 spaces for the private development and that 226 parking spaces are provided in the garage for the residential component. Sixty-three parking spaces are provided for the Kiss-and-Ride lot. The parking lot layout will be reviewed by DPS before site plan approval.

Local Area Transportation Review

A traffic study was submitted to determine the impact of this application on the local transportation network, and was reviewed under the *Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) Guidelines*, adopted and approved July 1, 2004.

The proposed development is expected to generate a total of 60 and 70 additional peak-hour trips during the morning and evening weekday peak periods, respectively. These site-generated trips were added to the existing and background traffic (from approved but unbuilt developments) to form the total future traffic. All traffic was distributed and assigned to the seven intersections in the study area according to the guidelines, and compared to the applicable congestion standards of 1,800 for the Wheaton CBD Policy Area. The results of the traffic analysis for the existing, background, and total future traffic are shown in Table 1.

Based on the results of the LATR Guidelines test, Transportation Planning staff concluded that the applicant's site-generated traffic does not exceed the congestion standards of 1,800 for the Wheaton CBD Policy Area for any of the intersections analyzed.

Pedestrian volumes surrounding this site include Metro patrons as well as walkers to retail uses along Georgia Avenue and west toward Westfield Mall. The Safeway in the northeast corner of the intersection of Reddie Drive and Georgia Avenue generates pedestrian traffic between the store and the residential area east of the store. With the additional dwelling units being constructed in the area and those on the proposed site, pedestrian volumes are anticipated to increase along Reddie Drive.

A traffic signal warrant study was performed at the existing intersection of Reddie Drive and Fern Street, based on pedestrian volumes once the Kiss-and-Ride lot driveway volumes are relocated to the new driveway. The study concluded, and staff concurs, that a pedestrian traffic signal warrant remains satisfied after the site driveway is relocated, assuming the pedestrian traffic is channeled to cross at the intersection of Reddie Drive and Fern Street. However, DPWT has the sole authority to approve the retention of a traffic signal at this location, and they have not yet made the final determination. If the traffic signal is removed, the applicant should restore the affected right-of-way amenities to pre-signal conditions.

The applicant's transportation engineer determined the adequacy of the pedestrian crossing time at study intersections with pedestrian signals using the LATR crossing rate of 3.00 feet per second. The analysis included the following intersections:

1. University Boulevard and Georgia Avenue
2. Reddie Drive and Georgia Avenue
3. Reddie Drive and Fern Street
4. Veirs Mill Road, Grandview Avenue and the Mall Driveway

The consultant concluded, and planning staff concurs, that there is adequate existing signal timing for pedestrians to cross the study intersections at a rate of 3.00 feet per second.

Master Plan Roadways and Bikeways

In accordance with the approved and adopted *1990 Wheaton Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan* the public roadways adjacent to the proposed site consist of:

- Georgia Avenue, as a Major Highway (M-8) with a master-planned right-of-way width of 72 feet from the centerline of road.
- Reddie Drive, as a business district street with a master-planned right-of-way width of 84 feet (42 feet from centerline) and two lanes in each direction. The applicant has requested and planning staff in collaboration with DPS has agreed that the a 37-foot right-of-way width from the centerline and a five-foot Public Improvement Easement would provide the same effective street area as long as two eastbound lanes and signed, shared-road bikeway are accommodated on the south side.
- Amherst Avenue, as a residential roadway along the site frontage, already has an existing master-planned 60-foot-wide right-of-way.

Bicycle facilities are planned through the use of signed, shared-road bikeways in the Wheaton Central Business District (CBD). The *Wheaton CBD Sector Plan*, adopted in September 1990, proposes a short connector route along Reedie Avenue from Wheaton Plaza to Amherst Avenue. This bicycle link, combined with bikeway on Georgia Avenue and Amherst Avenue, will connect three Metrorail stations in the Wheaton CBD together. A signed, shared-road bikeway is accommodated in the proposed design along the south side of Reedie Drive.

Table 1 – Results of Critical Lane Volumes (CLV)

Intersection	Congestion Standards	Time Period	Traffic Condition		
			Existing	Back-ground	Total
Georgia Avenue/ Veirs Mill Road/ Prichard Road	1,800	Morning	1,117	1,157	1,286
		Evening	887	993	1,085
Veirs Mill Rd/ Gransview Ave/ Westfield Mall Dr	1,800	Morning	851	964	969
		Evening	1,129	1,473	1,477
Georgia Ave/ University Blvd	1,800	Morning	1,280	1,324	1,331
		Evening	1,325	1,427	1,430
Reedie Dr/Amherst Ave	1,800	Morning	472	490	580
		Evening	545	590	606
Georgia Ave/Reedie Dr	1,800	Morning	930	979	981
		Evening	1,212	1,343	1,365
Reedie Dr/ Fern St/ Kiss-and-Ride Lot (old)	1,800	Morning	495	512	397
		Evening	602	644	649
Reedie Dr/ Consolidated Driveway (New)	1,800	Morning	N/A	N/A	423
		Evening	N/A	N/A	517

Right-of-way Width Waiver

As noted above, the Applicant has requested a waiver pursuant to §50-38 of the Subdivision Regulations to permit a right-of-way width along the Reedie Drive frontage which is five feet less than required per §50-26(a). Reedie Drive is a business district street with a master-planned right-of-way width of 84 feet (42 feet from centerline) and two lanes in each direction. The applicant has requested and planning staff in collaboration with DPS has agreed that the a 37-foot right-of-way width from the centerline and a five-foot Public Improvement Easement would provide the same effective street area as long as two eastbound lanes and signed, shared-road bikeway are accommodated on the south side.

Staff believes the waiver is the minimum necessary to provide relief from the section, is not inconsistent with the purposes and objectives of the General Plan, and is not adverse to the public interest.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

As previously noted, the subject site contains no environmentally sensitive areas, forest, or significant individual trees. Forest conservation requirements are proposed to be met by onsite landscape planting.

CITIZEN CORRESPONDENCE:

One citizen letter was received from the president of the Wheaton Forest Civic Association, Shirley Lynn, who expressed concerns regarding the location of parking for handicapped individuals, plans for providing interim access to the Metro station for handicapped individuals, and concern over the loss of an existing berm and landscaping along Amherst Avenue. Ms. Lynn expressed preference for an alternative development plan that located a higher building closer to Georgia Avenue and retained the existing berm. With regard to the proposed plan, she asked that the proposed handicapped parking for the relocated Metro Kiss and Ride lot be provided on the same level as cab parking and metro access. She also expressed her concern that temporary elevator access to the Metro is not being provided at this site during the construction period. The Metro access and parking issues fall under the jurisdiction of WMATA and retention of the berm is not possible with the proposed development. New landscape trees will be provided along Amherst Avenue which will replace the existing landscaped berm.

Ms. Lynn's letter and two additional letters from the Wheaton Urban District and the Wheaton Redevelopment Program are included in Attachment G.

CONCLUSION:

Staff finds the proposed preliminary plan to be in conformance with the requirements of Chapter 50, the Subdivision Regulations and Chapter 59, the Zoning Ordinance, and recommends approval of the plan with the specified conditions.

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Urban Plaza Open Space Exhibit
- Attachment B – Site Vicinity Map
- Attachment C – Preliminary Plan
- Attachment D – Sector Plan Public Open Space Exhibit
- Attachment E – Sector Plan Pedestrian Network Exhibit
- Attachment F – Letter from HOC
- Attachment G – Correspondence