Summary

- Staff recommends approval of the Site Plan Amendment and an associated Forest Conservation Plan.
- The proposed changes meet all development standards and do not modify the original findings of the approval.
- Staff has received a letter from one resident concerned about the proposed work.
- A Sketch Plan Application for a redevelopment of this Property is being reviewed concurrently with this Application and is recommended for approval in a subsequent staff report.
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

Staff recommends approval of Site Plan Amendment No. 81973005C, Washington Science Center - 6000 Executive Boulevard, subject to conditions listed below. All site development elements shown on the latest electronic version of the Site Plan Amendment No. 81973005C submitted via ePlans as of the date of this Staff Report are required. All previously approved plans (819730050, 81973005A and 81973005B), findings, and conditions of approvals remain in full force and effect, except as modified herein by the following conditions:

1. All previously approved conditions for Site Plan 819730050 and subsequent Site Plan Amendments remain in full force and effect, except as modified by this Amendment.
2. The Applicant must record a certificate of compliance for the purchase of off-site mitigation credit from an approved forest mitigation bank in the land records prior to any clearing and grading occurring on site.
3. The Sediment and Erosion Control Plan and Storm Water Management Plan must be consistent with the limits of disturbance and the associated tree/forest preservation measures of the Final Forest Conservation Plan (FFCP).
4. The Applicant must comply with all tree protection and tree save measures shown on the approved FFCP. Additional tree save measures not specified on the FFCP may be required by the M-NCPPC forest conservation inspector at the pre-construction meeting.
5. Per the White Flint 2 Sector Plan, the trees in the forested area between the trail and the southern property boundary shall be preserved to the maximum extent possible, and the preserved trees shall be shown on the landscape plan of any future Site Plan or Site Plan Amendment.
SITE DESCRIPTION

Vicinity
The Subject Property (“Subject Property” or “Property”) is described as Parcel N606, Part of Parcel D, Washington Science Center and located at 6000 Executive Boulevard in North Bethesda, at the southwest corner of the intersection of Executive Boulevard and Old Georgetown Road (MD 187). The Subject Property is part of the gateway to the White Flint district, and less than a half-mile walk to the White Flint Metro Station.

To the north, across the 120-foot right-of-way of Executive Boulevard, the Subject Property confronts property owned by Willco Companies that is currently developed with three office buildings. To the northeast, diagonally across the intersection of Executive Boulevard and Old Georgetown Road, is the high-density mixed-use Pike & Rose development, which has a variety of building types and land uses, including multi-family residential, office, restaurant, retail, and a hotel. To the east, across the 150-foot right-of-way of Old Georgetown Road, the Gables White Flint project has been approved for a multi-family building with 476 dwelling units and an adjacent parking garage that will also serve the Kennedy Shriver Aquatic Center. To the south, the Property abuts detached homes in the R-200 zone. To the west, the Subject Property abuts property developed with a single office building.

Figure 1: Vicinity Map (Subject Property outlined in red)
**Site Analysis**

The 6.78-acre Property is zoned CR 2.5, C-1.5, R-2.0, H-200 and has a tract area of 8.52 acres. It is currently developed with a seven-story office building containing the Applicant’s corporate offices as well as medical and other offices with a total of 128,571 square feet, and 374 surface parking spaces. The Subject Property currently has two vehicular access points on Executive Boulevard. In the northwest corner of the site is a full-movement, signalized access drive directly opposite the entrance to the Willco property across the street. Closer to Old Georgetown Road is a right-out access point.

The southern end of the Property includes trees, a grassy area currently occupied by a utility easement, stormwater facilities, and a culvert that holds the headwaters of Old Farm-Neilwood Creek. The creek emerges from the culvert in the southwest corner of the Subject Property and runs west, behind the office buildings on the south side of Executive Boulevard. The Subject Property also contains a grassy lawn area between the existing office building and Old Georgetown Road to the east. A County Ride On bus stop is located along the Subject Property’s Executive Boulevard frontage.

*Figure 2: Subject Property (outlined in red)*
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Previous Approvals
The Planning Board has approved the following site plans and amendments on the Site:

- Parcel C was created by the 1969 Record Plat No. 9201 within the overall Washington Science Center site.
- Site Plan 819730050 was approved in 1973 to permit the construction of the existing building on the Subject Property.
- Site Plan Amendment 81973005A was approved administratively in 2008 to permit minor amendments to parking and access and the construction of an ADA-compliant parking booth.
- Site Plan Amendment 81973005B was approved by the Planning Board in 2015 to permit enclosure of the seventh floor of the existing building, adding 12,857 square feet space (for a total of 141,429 square feet) of general office. The construction permitted by this amendment has not been started. Instead, the Applicant has chosen to include the addition as part of this Sketch Plan. The approval for the Adequate Public Facilities (APF) validity associated with the amendment expires on July 2, 2024.

Proposal
The Applicant requests approval to allow relocation of underground utilities and approve an associated forest conservation plan. Most of the proposed changes will take place below ground, with some changes to landscaping and configuration of open space in the southern portion of the site, where electric and telephone line relocation will require removal of forest. Other than these changes and temporary disturbances during construction, there will be no discernible effect on overall design, layout, quality or intent of the site plan. The proposed utility relocation will have no impact on height or density, will not change the uses on the site or decrease the amount of open space, will not deviate from any binding element or condition of approval, and will not conflict with any condition of approval or change any basic element of the plan. In addition, it will not affect the Subject Property's compliance with the Zoning Code, its consistency with the White Flint 2 Sector Plan, or its compatibility with the surrounding area.

The utility relocation would typically qualify as a minor site plan amendment under Section 59-3.4.J.2, but in this case a forest conservation plan (“FCP”) will be required, so this Application is being submitted as a limited major site plan amendment.

The timing of the Subject Amendment will allow the Applicant to coordinate utility relocation with the Gables Residential project (located across Old Georgetown Road) and the Western Workaround, a road project that includes significant changes to the intersection of Executive Boulevard and Old Georgetown Road.

Environment
Environmental Guidelines
A Natural Resources Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) was approved for this site on October 22, 2014. The site slopes from northeast to southwest to a stream that abuts the site at the western property boundary. There are 0.17 acres of stream buffer associated with the adjacent stream channel near the southwest corner of the Property. The stream drains to Cabin John Creek, which is a Maryland State Use Class I-P stream. The site contains approximately 0.75 acres of forest, and includes two specimen-size trees. This plan is in compliance with the Environmental Guidelines.
Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan
The Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan shows that 0.60 acres of forest are considered cleared from the site. Approximately .15 acres of forest were previously approved for removal for the installation of a sewer line extension to serve the Gables White Flint property to the east, and to accommodate the widening of Old Georgetown Road as part of the White Flint western road improvements. Based on the forest cleared, net tract area, and zoning, the total reforestation and afforestation requirement is 1.43 acres. The applicant proposes to fulfill the requirement using off-site forest banking.

The approved and adopted White Flint 2 Sector Plan includes a specific recommendation that “A minimum 50-foot wide landscape area must be retained on the southern portion of the Property. This landscape includes preserved and new trees, the pedestrian-bike path called for in this Plan, and required utility easements.” In fulfillment of this requirement, the Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan shows preservation of trees along the southern property line south of the proposed path and utility easement. The subsequent Sketch Plan will provide a 50-foot wide area for preservation of trees, a shared-use path, utilities and additional landscaping. Care must be taken to preserve as many of these trees as possible. Future Site Plans or Site Plan Amendments should show this area on the landscape plans.

Forest Conservation Variance
Section 22A-12(b) (3) of County code identifies certain individual trees as high priority for retention and protection. Any impact to these trees, including removal of the subject tree or disturbance within the tree’s critical root zone (CRZ) requires a variance. An applicant for a variance must provide certain written information in support of the required findings in accordance with Section 22A-21 of the County code. The code requires no impact to trees that: measure 30 inches or greater, dbh; are part of an historic site or designated with an historic structure; are designated as a national, State, or County champion tree; are at least 75 percent of the diameter of the current State champion tree of that species; or trees, shrubs, or plants that are designated as Federal or State rare, threatened, or endangered species.

Variance Request
The Applicant submitted a variance request on May 14, 2018 because the plan would create an impact to the CRZ of one tree that is considered high priority for retention under Section 22A-12(b) of the County code. This tree will be saved. A copy of the variance request letter, specifying the amount of critical root zone disturbance for the impacted tree, is appended to this letter (Attachment 2). One additional specimen tree at the southeast corner of the site was previously approved for removal as part of the White Flint Transportation Improvements (MR 2015029).

Justification:
The impacted tree, a 34-inch diameter cottonwood (Populus deltoides) designated Tree 1 on the plans, is located near the southwest corner of the site near the low point of the drainage. This is where the existing storm drain and sewer pipes run across the site, and consequently this is where the connections to the existing utilities must occur. The construction necessary to access the existing utilities will slightly impact the critical root zone of the variance tree. Preserving the forest outside the stream buffer would preclude reasonable access to the existing utilities needed to serve the development; therefore, Staff believes that denial of the variance would constitute a hardship to the applicant. This finding must be met when determining whether or not to consider a variance for the project. Based on this finding, Staff finds that a variance can be considered.
Section 22A-21 of the County code sets forth the findings that must be made by the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, in order for a variance to be granted. Staff has made the following determinations, as the Director’s designee, that granting the requested variance:

1. **Will not confer on the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.**
   
   Impacts to specimen trees are a result of the requirements to connect to the utility infrastructure needed to support the development, and the development is consistent with the zoning. Staff has determined that the impacts to the tree subject to the variance requirement cannot be avoided. Therefore, Staff finds that the granting of this variance is not a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.

2. **Is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of the actions by the applicant.**
   
   The requested variance is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of actions by the Applicant, but on engineering and site constraints.

3. **Is not based on a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or non-conforming, on a neighboring property.**
   
   The requested variance is not a result of land or building use on a neighboring property.

4. **Will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.**
   
   The specimen tree being impacted will be saved, and therefore will continue to serve its water quality protection functions as before. Therefore, the project will not violate State water quality standards or cause a measurable degradation in water quality.

**County Arborist’s Recommendation on the Variance**

In accordance with Montgomery County Code Section 22A-21(c), on May 15, 2018 the Planning Department referred a copy of the variance request to the County Arborist in the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection for a recommendation prior to acting on the request. Staff recommends approval of the Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan, including the variance.

**Community Outreach**

The Applicant sent a notice regarding the subject amendment to all parties of record. Staff received one letter from a neighbor who lives in a house on a lot abutting the Property and is concerned about privacy during the construction period. However, any disturbance to neighbors will be temporary, and the utilities on the Property will ultimately be underground. The applicant must follow applicable construction notification and management procedures to limit disruption as required by the Department of Permitting Services prior to release of construction permits.

**Analysis and Findings**

Staff has reviewed the proposed modifications and found that they do not alter the intent of the original Site Plan approved by the Planning Board. Further, the proposed modifications will not affect the compatibility of the development with respect to the surrounding neighborhood.
CONCLUSION

The proposed amendment does not alter the intent, objectives, or requirements expressed or imposed by the Planning Board in its review of the originally approved site plan. The terms and conditions of all applicable prior regulatory approvals and agreements, including the originally approved site plan and subsequent amendments, remain in full force and effect. Staff recommends approval of the Site Plan Amendment No. 81973005C.

ATTACHMENTS
1. Site plan
2. Variance request
3. Letter from neighbor
4. Letter regarding stormwater management
OLD GEORGETOWN ROAD
RIGHT OF WAY VARIES
MASTER PLAN MINIMUM = 10'

EXISTING LIGHT
EXISTING LIGHT
EXISTING LIGHT
EXISTING LIGHT
EXISTING LIGHT

LONG-TERM BICYCLE PARKING - DETAIL
1" = 20'

GENERAL NOTES
1. THE HORIZONTAL DATA IS BASED ON NAD 83 MARYLAND COORDINATE SYSTEM. THE VERTICAL DATUM IS BASED ON NGVD29 DATUM.
2. TOPOGRAPHIC AND BOUNDARY INFORMATION SHOWN IS BASED ON AN AERIAL SURVEY BY SOLTESZ JULY, 2014 WITH BOUNDARY VERIFICATION AND TOPOGRAPHIC CHECK BY VIKA MARYLAND, LLC NOVEMBER, 2015.
3. THE PROPERTY SHOWN HEREON IS LOCATED ON TAX MAP GQ 562 AS PT. PARCEL D N606 IN THE TAX RECORDS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND.

AMENDMENT 81973005C:
FOR UTILITY RELOCATION ONLY. THERE IS NO CHANGE TO SITE AREA, BUILDING AREA, PARKING OR OTHER SITE PLAN ELEMENTS.
February 28, 2018
May 11, 2018

Steve Findley
Environmental Planner Coordinator, Area 2
M-NCPPC
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: Forest Conservation Tree Variance Request
Washington Science Center
6000 Executive Boulevard
Final Forest Conservation Plan 81973005C
VIKA # VM1946D

Dear Mr. Findley:

On behalf of the applicant, CPH 6000, LLC, we are submitting this Tree Variance Request to comply with the Natural Resources, Title 5, Section 5-1607 of the Maryland Code that requires the Applicant to file for a variance to remove or impact any tree greater than 30” in diameter-at-breast-height (dbh), any tree with a dbh equal to or greater than 75% of the current state champion, trees that are part of an historic site or associated with an historic structure, any tree designated as the county champion tree, any tree, shrub or plant identified on the rare, threatened or endangered list of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, if a project did not receive Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan Approval prior to October 1, 2009.

The subject property is in North Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland on Executive Boulevard Road at the intersection with Old Georgetown Road and is developed with a seven-story office building and surface parking. The 6.78 acre site comprises Lot N606. Prior approvals include NRI 420150370, approved in 2014, FCP SC2017004, approved in 2017 for installation of a new sewer line by Gables Residential, and Site Plan 81973005B, approved in 2015 to permit enclosure of the seventh floor of the existing building, adding 12,857 square feet of general office. The Applicant intends to carry out infill development on the Subject Property that will fulfill the vision of the recently approved White Flint 2 Sector Plan for mixed-use development at this location and Sketch Plan 320180140 for that proposed redevelopment will be submitted for review in the coming weeks. The construction permitted by Site Plan Amendment B has not been carried out and will be included as part of the Sketch Plan.

This Tree Variance Request is accompanying the submission of Final Forest Conservation Plan 81973005C which is being submitted with Site Plan Amendment 81973005C. The proposed infill development will require the Applicant to relocate substantially all of the utilities currently in place on the Subject Property. The Applicant is seeking approval for the current Amendment C to permit utility relocation to begin in the next six to eight months, at the same time as the sewer installation by Gables Residential rather than waiting for approval of a sketch plan, preliminary plan, and initial site plan. This Tree Variance request proposes allowing impact to one (1) specimen tree to be preserved.

VIKA Maryland, LLC
20251 Century Boulevard, Suite 400 Germantown, Maryland 20874 301.916.4100 Fax 301.916.2262
Tysons, VA Germantown, MD Washington, DC
www.vika.com
Table 1, below, lists the Variance specimen tree as identified on the Final Forest Conservation Plan and provides the respective proposed impact.

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TREE NO.</th>
<th>BOTANICAL NAME</th>
<th>COMMON NAME</th>
<th>D.B.H. (in.)</th>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>CRZ (SF)</th>
<th>CRZ IMPACT (SF)</th>
<th>CRZ IMPACT %</th>
<th>DISPOSITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Populus deltoides</td>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>8,171</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>13.83</td>
<td>Preserve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assessment of the tree condition was performed by Soltesz at the time of the field work for the NRI as a visual, and at-grade-level inspection with no invasive, below grade, or aerial inspections performed at the time. Decay or weakness may be hidden out of sight for large trees. Impact assessments have been determined by VIKA Maryland, LLC staff with the preparation of the FCP.

1. **Tree # 1**

34" **Cottonwood (Populus deltoides):** Tree 1 is located in existing forest within an existing utility easement in the stream valley buffer in the southwest corner of the property near the outfall for the Old Creek Farm stream.

- **Field Condition:** Good
- **Proposed CRZ Impact:** Moderate at 13.83 %. This tree is impacted by the proposed relocation of storm drain which ties into the existing storm drain within the critical root zone of this tree.
- **Disposition:** Tree 1 is specified to be preserved.

**Justification Narrative for Tree Disturbance**

We submit the following rationale in support of the request for a Forest Conservation Tree Variance:

As previously stated, the Applicant intends to carry out infill development on the Subject Property that will fulfill the vision of the recently approved White Flint 2 Sector Plan for mixed-use development at this location and will require the Applicant to relocate substantially all of the utilities currently in place on the Subject Property. The Applicant is seeking approval for Amendment C to permit utility relocation to begin in the next six to eight months, rather than waiting for approval of a sketch plan, preliminary plan, and initial site plan. The principal reasons the Applicant wishes to proceed with the utility relocation on an accelerated schedule are as follows:

1. Gables Residential is scheduled to install a new sewer line in a 45-foot easement that will cross through Guardian’s property in two directions and wrap around two sides of the existing building. Guardian would like to be able to start relocating the existing utilities as soon as possible, in hopes of doing the work at the same time that Gables is already digging up some of the same easement areas.

2. Montgomery County has construction underway on the Western Workaround, a series of roadway improvements called for in the 2010 White Flint Sector Plan that include significant changes to the intersection of Executive Boulevard and Old Georgetown Road and widening Old Georgetown Road along the Subject Property’s frontage. Doing the utility work while the Western Workaround is
under construction will make the work much easier and avoid an interim condition that might not be optimally functional.

3. Starting the utility relocation work in 2018 will position Guardian to begin construction of Phase 1 of its development program as soon as all approvals have been obtained, avoiding a potentially long delay between approval and construction.

In summary, approval of Amendment C will, set the stage for a smoother, more expeditious implementation of plans for infill development that will implement the vision of the White Flint 2 Sector Plan for this site.

For approval, the Variance Request must:

1. Describe the special conditions peculiar to the property which would cause the unwarranted hardship;
2. Describe how enforcement of these rules will deprive the landowner of rights commonly enjoyed by others in similar areas;
3. Verify that State water quality standards will not be violated or that a measurable degradation in water quality will not occur as a result of the granting of the variance; and
4. Provide any other information appropriate to support the request.

We submit the following rationale in support of the request for a Forest Conservation Tree Variance:

1. The requested tree variance is necessary for implementation of the relocation of utilities for the proposed infill development. As the variance tree is located within the existing storm drain easement, not granting the requested variance is an unwarranted hardship because of the need to tie the proposed storm drain into the existing storm drain.

2. The requested variance is based on plans being developed under the zoning approved through the County planning process not conditions or circumstances resulting from actions by the applicant. Site Plan Amendment C and this Final FCP have been submitted for approval and the Sketch Plan will be filed in the coming weeks. Strict protection of the variance tree would deprive the applicant from making any significant changes to the site due to the location and extent of the critical root zone within the existing utility easement. There are no conditions relating to land or building use, either permitted or non-conforming, on a neighboring property that have played a role in the need for this variance. The FCP complies with forest conservation law. Afforestation and reforestation requirements for the subject property total 1.43 acres which will be met with off-site forest banking.

3. The current site is improved with a seven-story office building and surface parking. The impacted specimen tree to be preserved is not within a special protection area (SPA) or watershed primary management area (PMA) but is located within the stream valley buffer. However, the tree is located within the existing utility easement for the storm drain and impacting a portion of the critical root zone to tie into the existing storm drain cannot be avoided. While no stormwater management facilities will be completed during this utility relocation phase of the project, sediment control measures will be taken to maintain water quality. These measures include silt fences, earth dams, and similar strategies to block and filter runoff during construction. Future phases – allowed by this infrastructure relocation phase –
will then provide stormwater management through environmental site design facilities for each area of redevelopment. Therefore, granting the variance to impact but preserve one variance tree will not result in any violation of State water quality standards or degradation of water quality.

Thank you for your consideration of this Tree Variance Request. We believe that the supporting information provided with this letter justifies the variance to impact one (1) specimen tree to be preserved. If you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact us so that we may discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

VIKA Maryland, LLC.

[Signature]
Rob Cohen, RLA
Project Landscape Architect
ATTACHMENT 3


March, 30, 2018

It has come to my attention that the has proposed a utility relocation on the Washington Science Center located on 6000 Executive Boulevard, North Bethesda, MD.

As a private residence owner on 6005 Neilwood Drive, North Bethesda, MD, I have a few concerns and suggestions I would like to emplace and forward to the M-NCPCC, as well as the DARC.

First and foremost I would like to propose a noticeable partition-- to avoid an obstructive view of constructions-- be it high tree arrangements, and appropriate fencing, to allow privacy for private residences in the vicinity.

Secondly, I would infer that a reasonable distance from the utility relocation should not exceed 200 yards from private residential property lines.

I appreciate your attention and consideration.

David Masica
6005 Neilwood Dr.
N.Bethesda, MD 20852
301-255-0000
April 4, 2018

Mark C. Etheridge, Manager  
Department of Permitting Services  
Water Resources Section  
255 Rockville Pike,  
Rockville, MD 20850-4166

Re: 6000 Executive Blvd  
VIKA# VM1946D  
Site Plan# 81973005C

Dear Mr. Etheridge:

On behalf of our client, CPH 6000 LLC, c/o Guardian Realty Management Inc, we understand that stormwater management will not be required for this Site Plan Amendment however an Engineered Sediment Control Plan will be required. The proposed Site Plan Amendment for this project is limited to utility relocations at the site. As such, the construction will be maintained to utility trenching for their installation, minor grading and then repairing the site back to its previous condition. This includes no net increase in impervious area. Sediment Control permit will be dependent on the approved Site Plan Amendment.

For your use, we have included the site plan amendment. If you agree that stormwater management will not be required for this site plan amendment, please indicate by signing below. If you have any questions, suggested changes, or require any additional information, please give us a call.

Sincerely,

Jason Evans, P.E.  
Associate

Approved by the Division of Permitting Services

Signed:  
Date: 4/6/2018

Title: [Signature]

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