

**9801 GEORGIA AVENUE
SKETCH PLAN NO. 320230020**



Description

The Sketch Plan proposes to redevelop an existing medical office into a mixed-use development with up to 455,000 square feet of residential development (up to 415 residential units) and up to 5,000 square feet of commercial development. The project is located at 9801 Georgia Avenue, zoned CRT-2.5 C-2.5 R-2.5 H-120' on 3.97 acres within the 2020 *Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan* area.

No. 320230020

Completed: 3-20-2023

MCPB

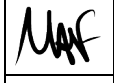
Item No. 9
3-30-2023

Montgomery County
Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, Floor 14
Wheaton, MD 20902

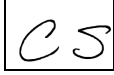
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LOCATION/ADDRESS

9801 Georgia Avenue

MASTER PLAN

2020 Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan

ZONE

CRT-2.5, C-2.5, R-2.5, H-120'

PROPERTY SIZE

3.97 acres

APPLICANT

JLB Realty, LLC

ACCEPTANCE DATE

November 16, 2022

REVIEW BASIS

Chapter 59



Summary:

- Staff recommends approval of the Sketch Plan application with conditions.
- The Applicant proposes to construct a mixed-use building with a maximum height of 78-feet. The proposed building is comprised of up to 460,000 square feet, with up to 455,000 square feet allocated to residential uses, including 15% MPDUs, and up to 5,000 square feet allocated to commercial uses, using the Optional Method of development.
- The Sketch Plan includes a sector plan recommended plaza that serves as a gathering space for the community and accommodates a new tunnel entrance to the Forest Glen Metro Station.
- The Application received one regulatory extension from the Planning Board, on February 16, 2023, to extend the 120-day regulatory review period until March 30, 2023.
- Staff has received approximately 150 pieces of correspondence from the community.
- An Executive Summary highlights the issues to be resolved during subsequent reviews.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2020 *Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan* identified opportunities for redevelopment at strategic locations to provide walkable, neighborhood-serving development. Some of the main goals of the Sector Plan are pedestrian and bicycle access, connectivity, and safety while providing for increased development close to the Forest Glen Metro Station. However, the Plan also acknowledged the need to improve the compatibility between the land uses adjacent to and along Georgia Avenue and the Forest Glen Metro Station property. This Project, 9801 Georgia Avenue is the first market-rate development project in this area since adoption of the Sector Plan.

Sketch Plan No. 320230020 proposes to redevelop 9801 Georgia Avenue (Forest Glen Medical Center) into a mixed-use building with a maximum height of 78 feet. The proposed building is a maximum of 460,000 square feet of development, with up to 455,000 square feet allocated to residential uses and up to 5,000 square feet allocated to commercial uses.

The Subject Property has a number of constraints and requirements which both shape and limit development. There is approximately 20 feet of slope across the Property, from west to east, as well as easements for a stormdrain and a sewer line. The Property has three frontages (Georgia Avenue, Forest Glen Road, and Woodland Drive) and sits at the difficult and busy Georgia Avenue/Forest Glen Road intersection. Additionally, the proposed development must incorporate stormwater management for the State Highway Administration's Georgia Avenue project, as well as the new entrance to the Forest Glen Metro Station. The Sector Plan requirements for a ½ to one acre "civic green" open space, a drop-off location for Metro users, environmental features to off-set the loss of forest, and 35% green area are additional requirements that the development must accommodate.

While Sketch Plan No. 320230020 meets a number of the Sector Plan goals, including the major goal of locating residences at transit stations, there are several issues that will need to be resolved through subsequent reviews. The first issue that will require coordination is the balance between the amount of parking needed for the proposed development and its proximity to the Metro station. While the Property is across the street from the Forest Glen Metro Station and will have a new future entrance to this station on the adjacent plaza, the Sketch Plan proposes 540 parking spaces for 415 units. This level of parking may not support the 48% Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goal for residents and a 25% NADMS goal for employees in the Forest Glen Metro Station Policy Area.

Another issue that will require further study is the Woodland Drive entrance. The intent of site access requirements is to ensure safe and convenient vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation and to reduce traffic congestion. Access is usually required from the street with the lower roadway classification. This is a complicated situation because using Georgia Avenue as a main access this close to the Forest Glen Road intersection will impact traffic congestion and safety and can only be a right in/right out access point. The Forest Glen Road frontage is too close to the intersection with Georgia Avenue to allow for safe ingress and egress to the Property. Woodland Drive is a secondary residential roadway with an entrance shown opposite of Sherwood Road. While Woodland Drive is

improved with 30 feet of paving and has a sidewalk on the Property frontage, Sherwood Road and Myrtle Road are only improved with 20 feet of paving, with parking on both sides, and have no pedestrian facilities. Additional traffic on these streets could impact pedestrian safety, which is one of the goals of the Sector Plan and the County's Vision Zero program. The Woodland Drive entrance should be evaluated to minimize impacts on the existing community.

Another issue has to do with the scale of the development. Sketch Plan No. 320230020 envisions developing the Property with one building. While the building has a variety of facades, as outlined in Section 3, it still occupies 600 feet of frontage along Woodland Drive, or approximately two football fields in length. Further refinement will be necessary at the time of Site Plan and staff has included a number of conditions related to this issue. The goal of these conditions is to minimize the impacts of the building mass and ensure compatibility with adjacent residential development.

The final issue that requires future coordination is the civic green urban park required by the Sector Plan. This open space must be between $\frac{1}{2}$ and one-acre at the Site and should accommodate cultural programs, community events, and neighborhood festivals. The civic green space is on the Forest Glen Road frontage, connecting the existing community to the Forest Glen Metro Station and providing a gathering space. However, the open space is approximately 0.38 acres in size, excluding sidewalk areas, as currently shown. This space should be enlarged to meet the Sector Plan requirements and provide a useable gathering space for the community.

SECTION 1: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

SKETCH PLAN NO. 320230020

Staff recommends approval of Sketch Plan No. 320230020, for up to 460,000 square feet of density on 3.96 acres, zoned CRT-2.5, C-2.5, R-2.5, H-120, in the 2020 *Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan*. The following site development elements shown on the latest electronic version of Sketch Plan No. 320230020, as of the date of this Staff Report submitted via ePlans to the M-NCPPC, are required except as modified by the conditions below.

1. Maximum density and height;
2. Approximate location of lots and public dedications;
3. General location and extent of public open space;
4. General location of vehicular access points; and
5. Public benefit schedule.

All other elements of the Sketch Plan are illustrative and subject to refinement at the time of Site Plan.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

Density

1. The Sketch Plan is limited to a maximum of 460,000 square feet of total development composed of 455,000 square feet of residential development (including bonus density for providing 15% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs)) and 5,000 square feet of commercial development.

Height

2. The development is limited to a maximum height of 80-feet, as measured from the building height measuring point to be illustrated on the Certified Site Plan.

Incentive Density

3. The development must be constructed with the public benefits listed below unless modifications are made under Section 59.7.3.3.I. Total points must equal at least 50 and be chosen from at least 3 categories as required by Section 59.4.5.4.A.2. The requirements of Division 59.4.7 and the *CR Zone Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines* must be fulfilled for each public benefit. Final points will be established at Site Plan approval.
 - a) Transit Proximity, achieved through level 1 transit proximity;
 - b) Connectivity and Mobility, achieved by providing a through-block connection;
 - c) Diversity of Uses and Activities, achieved by providing 15% Moderately Priced Dwelling Units;

- d) Quality of Building and Site Design, achieved through architectural elevations and structured parking; and
- e) Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment achieved through providing a cool roof, energy generation, and vegetated area.

Building Design/ Urban Design

4. Before submittal of the Site Plan, the Applicant must revise the Project's architectural design to mitigate the proposed building's bulk and massing along Woodland Drive and reduce the perceived length of the building along Georgia Avenue.
 - a) Woodland Drive. At a minimum, the proposed Woodland Drive building façade must be revised to ensure compatibility with the residential neighborhood. Design elements should consider the following (as shown in Figure 9 on page 22):
 - i. The mass of the Woodland Drive façade must be visually broken up to appear as three or more buildings at a townhouse scale with visible spaces between each of the building masses.
 - ii. Set back Facade 1 by a minimum of 30 feet to create an open space at the northeastern corner of the building.
 - iii. Provide residential-scale porches/stoops for units at the ground level to facilitate direct access from the abutting Woodland Drive sidewalk.
 - iv. Use architectural elements, such as a varied façade that uses articulation step backs, glazing, material changes and varied heights to mitigate the perceived mass of the building, as seen from the single-family homes across Woodland Drive.
 - v. Set back the building's mass above 35 feet of height by a minimum of 12 feet from the primary façade along Woodland Drive.
 - b) Georgia Avenue. At a minimum, the proposed Georgia Avenue building façade must be revised at the time of Site Plan to break down the building mass. Design elements should consider the following:
 - i. Utilize setbacks, varied materials, and articulation to differentiate façades 5, 6, 7 and 8 on sheet number 20-ARCH-320230020-003.
 - ii. Set back the building's mass a minimum of 10 feet above the fourth floor along façade 8 (on sheet number 20-ARCH-320230020-003).
 - iii. Provide residential-scale porches/stoops for all units at the ground level to facilitate direct access from the abutting Georgia Avenue sidewalk.
5. The Civic Green/ Urban Park located along Forest Glen Road must have a functional space of at least ½ acre, per the Sector Plan, as determined by the design shown on the Certified Site Plan.
6. The Applicant must underground existing utilities on Forest Glen Road and develop a plan to underground utilities on Woodland Drive along as much of the Property frontage as possible, while minimizing the impacts on adjacent properties. Final determination of the extent of undergrounding on Woodland Drive to be established at Site Plan.

Transportation and Access

7. The Applicant must provide a designated pick-up/drop-off area for the Forest Glen Metrorail Station along Woodland Drive.
8. Vehicular access on Forest Glen Road is prohibited.
9. The Project must accommodate the County CIP project, "Forest Glen Passageway" P501911.
10. Sidewalks shown on the Forest Glen Road frontage must be located within the public ROW.

Public Open Space

11. The Applicant must provide a minimum of 10% of the Site Area (172,886 square feet) as Public Open Space, totaling a minimum of 17,289 square feet.

Future Coordination for the Preliminary and Site Plan

12. In addition to any other requirements for Site Plans under Chapter 59, the following must be addressed in future applications:
 - a) The Applicant must conduct a Transportation Study in accordance with the Local Area Transportation Review Guidelines.
 - b) The Applicant should unbundle residential parking and reduce parking accordingly to encourage transit use.
 - c) The Applicant should evaluate potential traffic calming measures on Woodland Drive, in coordination with MCDOT.
 - d) The Applicant must work to remove or fully screen the transformers along the sidewalks of Woodland Drive and Forest Glen Road.
 - e) The Applicant must submit and receive approval of a Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan.
 - f) Plantings should use a variety of native plants that provide habitat and food sources for wildlife.
 - g) The Applicant should revisit the unit mix provided with the development in order to meet the Sector Plan recommendation (Section 3.1.7) for 3-bedroom units.
 - h) Include the on-street parking spaces in all parking calculations.
 - i) The North Open Space must be designed to be safe, comfortable, and well-lit.

Validity

13. A site plan must be submitted within 36 months after the date the resolution for this Sketch Plan is sent.

SECTION 2: SITE DESCRIPTION

VICINITY

The Subject Property (or “Property” (outlined below) is located at the intersection of Forest Glen Road and Georgia Avenue in the Forest Glen area. The Property is located approximately 800 feet north of the Georgia Avenue interchange of I-495, Capital Beltway, approximately 500 feet east of the Forest Glen Metro Station, and approximately 1500 feet to the west of Holy Cross Hospital.

Surrounding and confronting properties to the north and east are single family detached residences. Confronting the Property to the west is high density multifamily housing. Confronting the Property to the south includes Montgomery Hills Baptist Church and single family detached residences.



Figure 1 – Vicinity Map

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Subject Property is 3.97 acres and is composed of six (6) separate properties under the same ownership

- Lots 1-3, Block 1 of Forest Glen Section 1, as shown on Plat 737;
- Parcel A, Block 1 of Forest Glen Section 1, as shown on Plat 8215;
- Parcel P400, as shown on Tax Map JP12; and
- Parcel P402, as shown on Tax Map JP12.

The Property has public road frontage on three sides.

- Woodland Drive, to the east, is a secondary residential roadway;
- Forest Glen Road, to the south, is a Town Center Street; and
- Georgia Avenue, to the west, is a Town Center Boulevard.

The Property is currently developed with a medical office building and associated surface parking lot. The existing building is two-stories tall as it fronts on Georgia Avenue, with a third story exposed on the Woodland Drive frontage. The Property is currently accessed from Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road.

The Subject Property slopes east from Georgia Avenue to Woodland Drive with a grade change of approximately 20 feet over approximately 270 feet. There is also a north-south slope, with a decrease of 8 feet from the northern extent of Woodland Drive frontage to the southern extent. The parking lot has internal retaining walls to separate the rows of parking and mitigate the grade.

There is 0.43 acres of forest on the Property, with evidence of prior clearing and dumping. While patches of forest are important for habitat and sources of food for wildlife, the existing forest has poor structure and many invasive species.

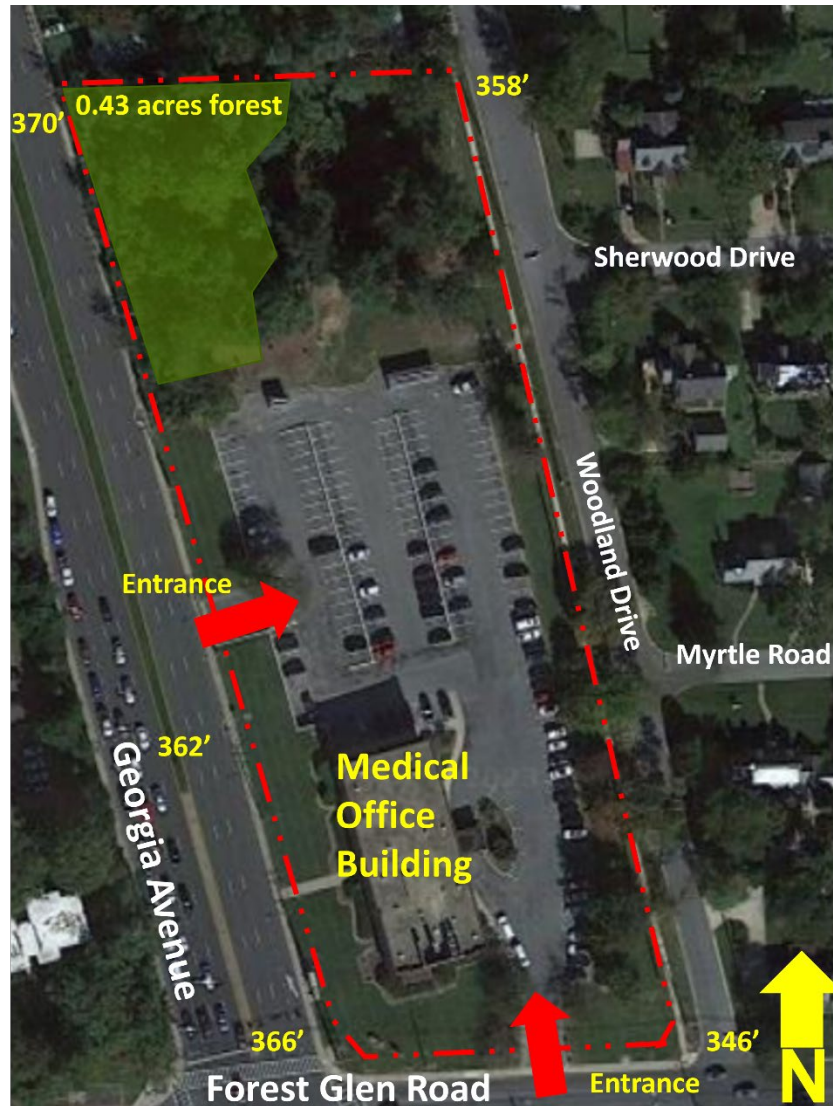


Figure 2 – Subject Property

SECTION 3: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PREVIOUS APPROVALS

The Subject Property was subject to special exception approvals BA-21354, BA-1849, BA-1836, and CBA-1838 to allow the existing medical office building within the R-60 zone. These approvals will be abandoned as part of the redevelopment of the Property.

PROPOSAL

The proposed development is a mixed-use project of up to 460,000 square feet, with 455,000 square feet of residential development (up to 415 units¹), including 15% MPDUs, and 5,000 square feet of commercial development. The development includes above ground structured parking incorporated into the proposed building, with an interior courtyard. A through-block connection, linking the existing neighborhood to Georgia Avenue, is proposed to be built over utility lines. Additional public open space is located on the Forest Glen Road frontage, including a plaza accommodating a planned entrance to the Forest Glen Metro Station. Vehicular access to the structured parking is from Woodland Drive and Georgia Avenue. The commercial space is located at the corner of the building adjacent to the corner of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road, near the future location of the Forest Glen Metro Station entrance. The main lobby entrance is on the Georgia Avenue frontage. The development includes frontage improvements on Woodland Drive, Forest Glen Road, and Georgia Avenue, as well as stormwater management facilities for Georgia Avenue.

¹ The unit count and parking calculations will be determined at Site Plan but will not exceed the maximums set forth in the Sketch Plan approval, unless amended.

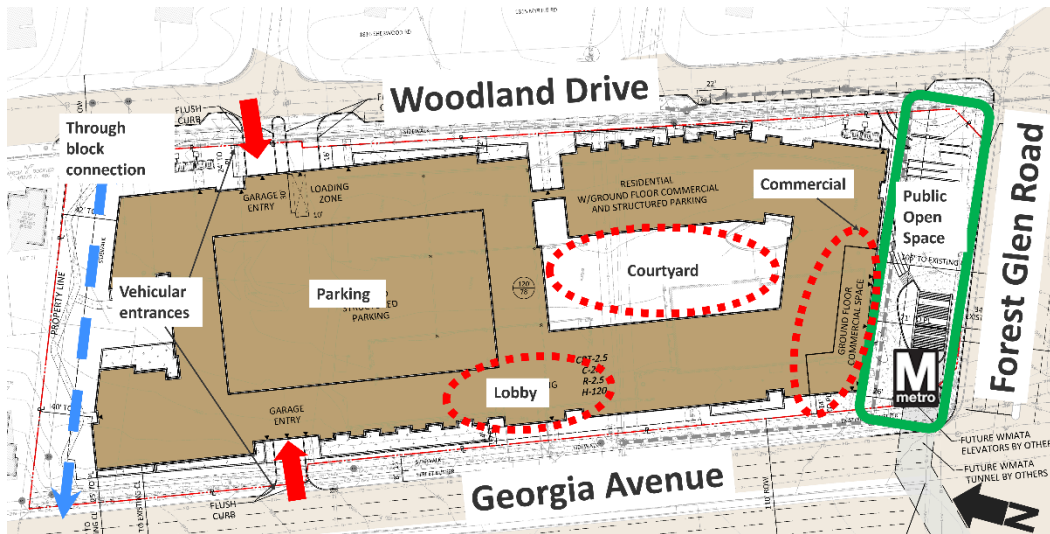


Figure 3 - Proposed Development

BUILDING ARCHITECTURE

As proposed by the Applicant, the proposed development will consist of a single building, measuring approximately 600 feet along Woodland Drive and Georgia Avenue.

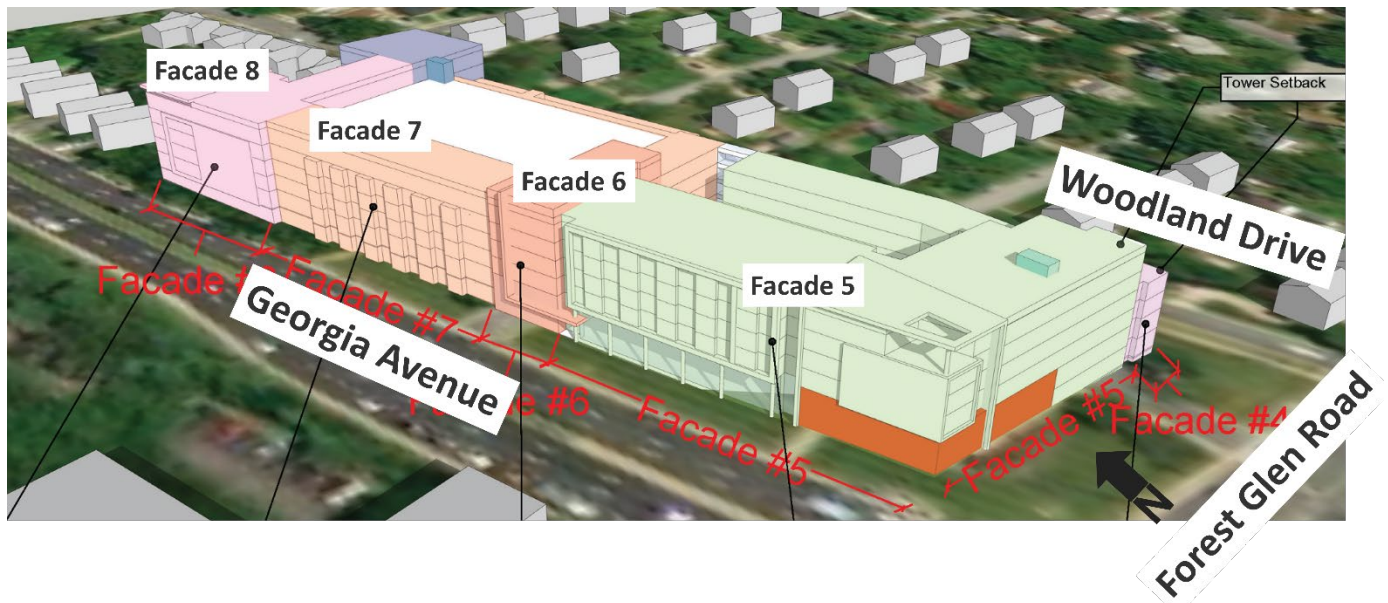


Figure 4 - Georgia Avenue Facades

The Georgia Avenue façade is broken into 4 connected segments.

- Facade 5, at the Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road intersection, incorporates the commercial part of the development and includes a high degree of transparency at the ground

level and a terrace on the roof. The upper levels facing Georgia Avenue are articulated into a series of bays.

- Facade 6 to the north includes the lobby and leasing area and is more vertical in expression.
- Facade 7 is articulated in a series of bays, to add interest at the ground level and reduce the scale of the building.
- Facade 8 includes an emphasized corner element and is set forward from Facade 7. The architecture of Facade 8 wraps the corner to provide interest in and continuity with the mid-block pedestrian connection.



Figure 5 - Woodland Drive Facades

The Woodland Drive façade focuses on meeting compatibility requirements with the existing residential community. The buildings follow the setback requirements and extension of a 45-degree angular plane from the height allowed in the R-60 zoned single family homes across the street.

- Facade 4 provides a more formal transition to the public space fronting Forest Glen Road.
- Facade 3 includes articulation that echoes the rhythm of a townhouse development and reduces the scale of the building as it fronts Woodland Drive. Direct access to these units will be explored through the Site Plan.
- A glass connector provides a gap in the horizontal plane that is set back from Woodland Drive. This segment breaks up the massing while maintaining connectivity.
- Facade 2 has a horizontal emphasis but still includes some articulation.
- Facade 1 makes a stronger vertical statement while providing for interaction with the through-block connection.

OPEN SPACE

The project is required to provide 10% of the site area as Public Open Space. The open space is divided into a north space and a south space. The northern open space is primarily composed of the

through-block connection and associated landscaping. It provides a buffer to adjacent single-family houses while providing a connection from the existing neighborhood to Georgia Avenue and makes use of the area over a WSSC easement that cannot be built upon.

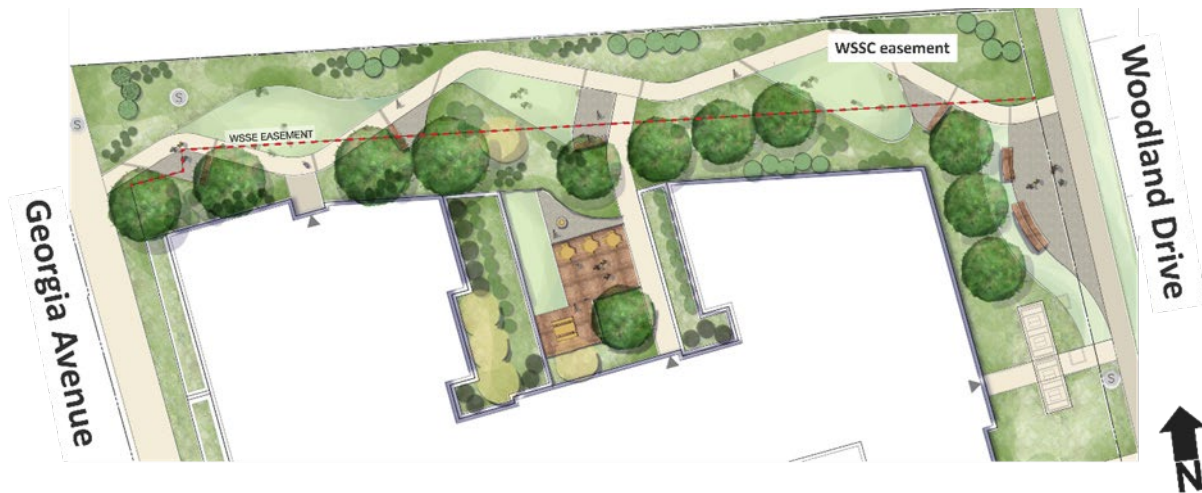


Figure 6 - Northern Open Space

The southern open space occupies the Forest Glen Road frontage and includes two distinct areas – a civic green and a plaza. The civic green relates to the existing residential neighborhood and includes a green area with seat walls. The design is informal with a curving walkway and naturalistic planting areas framing the space. The plaza area is more formal and connects the proposed building and the civic green to the proposed new Forest Glen Metro Station entrance. It also provides outdoor seating areas for residents, neighbors, and any commercial uses in the building. As conditioned, the southern open space should be a minimum of $\frac{1}{2}$ acre within the Property, as shown at the time of Certified Site Plan, to meet the Sector Plan requirement for a civic green.

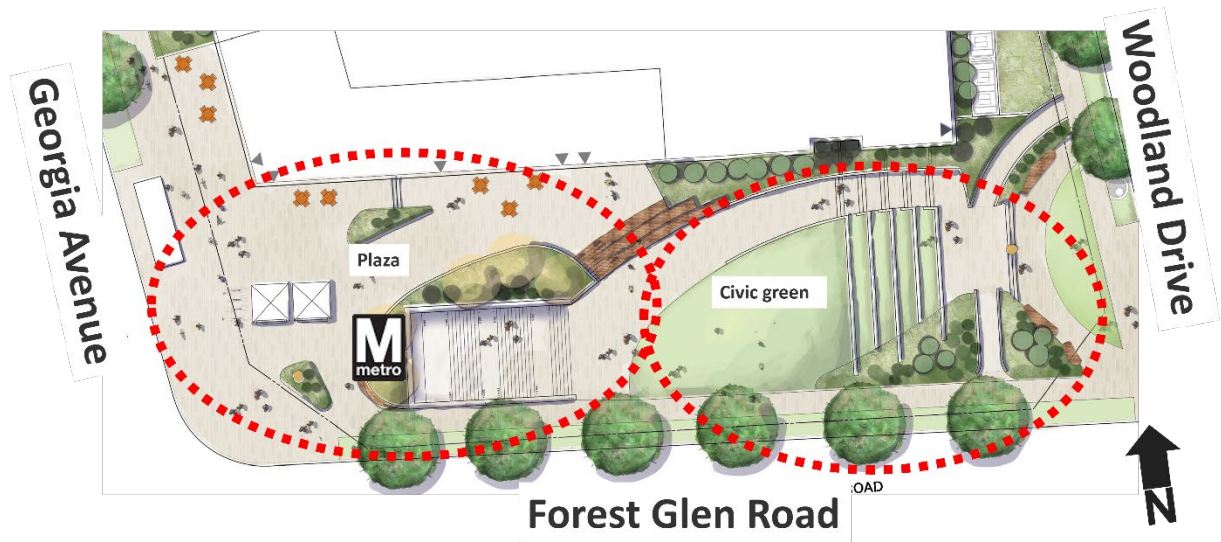


Figure 7 - Southern Open Space

TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular Circulation

Vehicular access to the Property is proposed via Georgia Avenue and Woodland Drive. Access from Woodland Drive is located on the northeastern side of the Site and across from the existing intersection of Woodland Drive and Sherwood Road. The access from Woodland Drive includes access to the parking garage via a northern driveway and access to the Property's loading zone via a separate driveway immediately to the south. Both of these driveways are shown as full movement but as conditioned, will be re-evaluated at time of Site Plan. Access to the parking garage is also proposed from Georgia Avenue. Due to the presence of an existing center concrete median on Georgia Avenue, this access point will operate as a right-in right-out maneuver from the northbound lanes of Georgia Avenue.

Nonmotorized Circulation

Pedestrian access to the Property is proposed directly from the existing sidewalks along Georgia Avenue, Forest Glen Road, and Woodland Drive. Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road are both currently improved with center medians adjacent to the Property's southwest corner, which provide some pedestrian refuge from vehicular traffic when crossing at the intersection of Forest Glen Road and Georgia Avenue. The Applicant will also be providing pedestrian improvements along all three frontages by providing tree-lined buffers between the sidewalks and the adjacent streets.

Bicyclists access the Property via Georgia Avenue, Forest Glen Road, and Woodland Drive. A sidepath is envisioned in the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* and the 2020 *Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills Sector Plan* on the south side of Forest Glen Road, and Woodland Drive is envisioned as a neighborhood

greenway with a shared road that will be comfortable for bicyclists and pedestrians. The 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* includes recommendations for greenways for traffic calming, diversion, and crossing treatments, which will be fully designed in future applications.

A thru-block pedestrian connection is proposed for the northern edge of the Subject Property. This connection will provide increased connectivity between Georgia Avenue and the neighborhood east of the Subject Property.

Transit Connectivity

The immediate area is well served by transit, primarily the Red Line Forest Glen Metrorail Station, which is 500 feet west of the Subject Property and will be served by a new Metro sub-grade pedestrian and bicycle access tunnel that will be constructed as part of the Subject Application. The entrance to the new Metro tunnel will be at the southwest corner of the Subject Property and will run underneath Georgia Avenue and connect to the Forest Glen Metrorail Station west of Georgia Avenue.

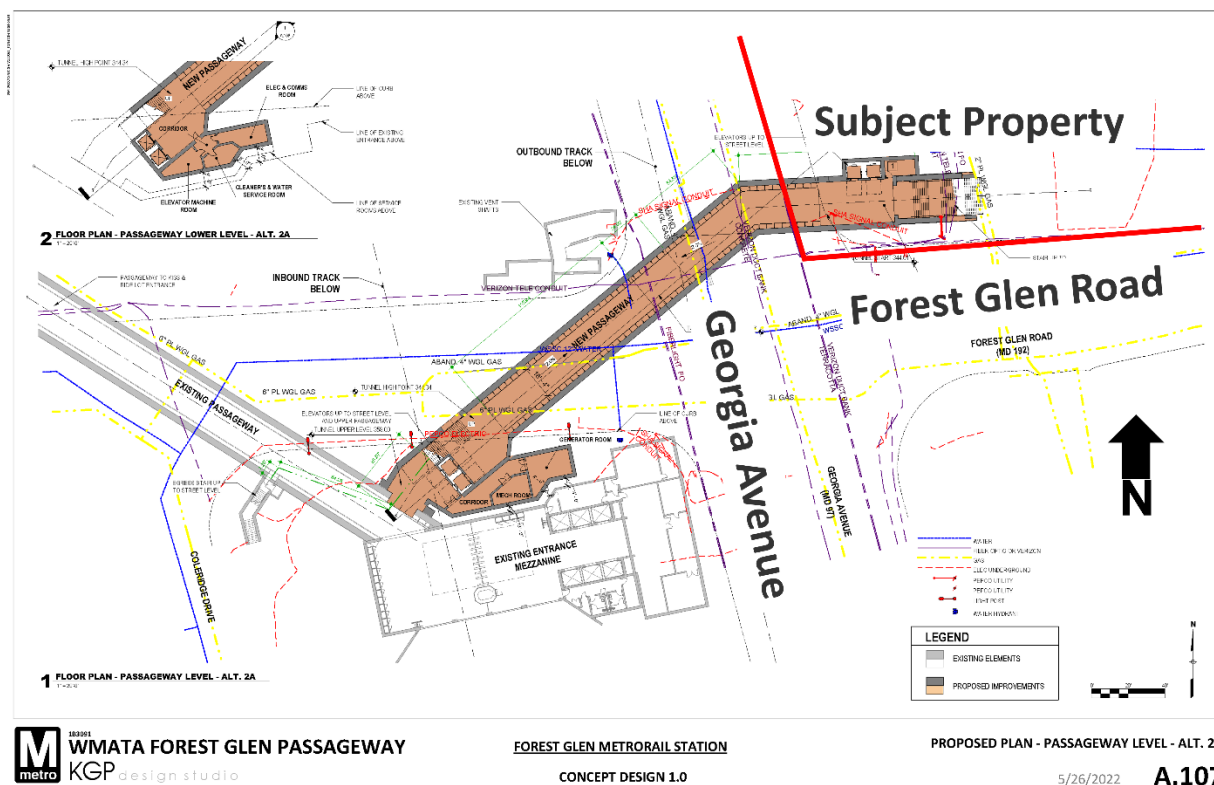


Figure 8 – Planned Tunnel Under Georgia Avenue

The Site is also served by Metrobus and Ride On, including:

1. WMATA Metrobus Routes Q1, Q2, Q4, Y2, Y7, Y8 along Georgia Avenue

2. Ride On Bus Routes 7 and 8 along Forest Glen Road

Master Plan Roadways and Pedestrian/Bikeway Facilities

The 2020 *Forest Glen Master Plan* and the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* recommend the following master plan facilities along property frontage:

1. Forest Glen Road, along south site frontage, as a Town Center Street, with a minimum right-of-way width of 80' (40' from center line).
2. Georgia Avenue, along west site frontage, as a Town Center Boulevard with a minimum right-of-way width of 110' (55' from center line).
3. Woodland Drive, along east site frontage, as a secondary residential roadway with a minimum right-of-way width of 60' (30' from center line).

Adequate Public Facilities

Adequate Public Facilities (APF) review will be conducted at the time of Preliminary Plan. Although the Application does not require a formal APF transportation review at Sketch Plan, Staff is including the following illustrative summary of transportation impacts (Table 1), provided by the Applicant and modified by Planning Staff to reflect maximum densities requested in the Sketch Plan Application. As a potential Low-Rise Residential² development with 415 multi-family apartments and up to 5,000 square feet of retail³, the Project is estimated to generate 278 morning peak hour person trips and 226 evening peak hour person trips. After accounting for peak hour person trips currently associated with the existing 31,590 square feet of medical office use on the Site, 106 morning peak hour person trips and 156 evening peak hour person trips, the Project is estimated to generate 172 net new morning peak hour person trips and 70 net new evening peak hour person trips. As a result of the estimated transportation impact, the Project must submit a Transportation Impact Study with the Preliminary Plan to satisfy the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR).

² Trip generation assumes a low-rise residential multifamily building, because the low-rise residential categorization has a higher trip generation rate than mid-rise residential, and the estimate is therefore more conservative and more reflective of the Subject Property's urban/suburban transitional land use context in the Forest Glen Area.

³ Section 59.7.3.3.B.3.h.iv. states that the Sketch Plan application must state the estimated range of peak-hour trips. The number of residential dwelling units included in this staff report is illustrative and intended to demonstrate a conservative transportation analysis (i.e. more impactful than the development program anticipated as part of the subsequent Preliminary Plan review).

Table 1: 9801 Georgia Avenue Person Trip Generation

	Land Use	Morning Peak Hour	Evening Peak Hour
Existing (Credit)	31,590 square feet of medical dental office	(106)	(156)
Proposed	415-Low-Rise Residential with Ground-Floor Commercial	278	226
	Net new peak hour person-trips	172	70

Travel Mode Adequacy Test

The 2020-2024 *Growth and Infrastructure Policy* considers all transportation modes, including: vehicular (auto-driver), transit, walking and biking. Mode-specific adequacy tests are required for any transportation mode estimated to have 50 or more net new peak hour trips associated with the new development.

While the 2020-2024 *Growth and Infrastructure Policy* includes a motor vehicle adequacy test based on the size of the project and the number of peak-hour vehicle trips generated by the project, this test is not applied in Red Policy Areas and these areas will not be subject to LATR motor vehicle mitigation requirements. Greater vehicular traffic congestion is permitted in policy areas with greater transit accessibility and usage. The Subject Property is located in the Forest Glen Metro Station Policy Area, which is designated a Red Policy Area, and is not subject to a motor vehicle adequacy test but is subject to transit, pedestrian, and bicycle system adequacy tests.

Transit system adequacy will be evaluated by analyzing the existing and programmed conditions of up to three bus shelters within 1,300 feet of the Site. Mitigation may be required for bus stops that lack key amenities such as shelters, trash cans, etc., subject to MCDOT approval.

Pedestrian system adequacy will be evaluated within 900 feet of the Property. Pedestrian system adequacy is defined as providing a “Somewhat Comfortable” (PLOC-2) or “Very Comfortable” (PLOC-1) score on streets and intersections for roads classified as Primary Residential or higher (excluding Controlled Major Highways and Freeways, and their ramps, or the equivalent classifications within the Complete Streets Design Guide). The Applicant must evaluate existing street lighting based on MCDOT standards along roadways or paths from the development to destinations within 900 feet of the Site. The Applicant will evaluate sidewalks for ADA compliance within 450 feet of the Site.

Bicycle system adequacy will be evaluated by analyzing the level of traffic stress for bicyclists on all rights-of-way within 900 feet of the Property. Mitigation may be required to achieve a Level of Traffic Stress 2 (LTS-2) or lower, consistent with the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*.

ENVIRONMENT

The proposed development includes the removal of the remnant forest located on the northern portion of the Property. To mitigate onsite for the loss of this forest, the Applicant is including solar panels on the roof of the proposed building and will plant numerous trees and shrubs. The details of the planting plans will be worked out through the Site Plan. There are no streams, wetlands, or associated buffers on-site. The Property is subject to Chapter 22A and will meet Forest Conservation requirements through the Preliminary and Site Plan processes.

SECTION 4: SKETCH PLAN NO. 320230020 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of a Sketch Plan is to identify general land uses, development intensity, and public benefits for the optional method of development in the CR, CRT, EOF or LSC zones. The Sketch Plan is intended to be conceptual in nature with an emphasis on building densities, massing, heights and anticipated uses, the locations of open and public use spaces, the general circulation patterns for all modes of transportation, an estimated range of peak hour trips and relationships between existing or proposed adjacent buildings and rights-of-way. Details of the proposed development are determined during Preliminary and Site Plan review. Section 59.7.3.3.E of the Zoning Ordinance states: “To approve a Sketch Plan the Planning Board must find that the following elements are appropriate in concept and appropriate for further detailed review at Site Plan.” The Sketch Plan must:

1. Meet the objectives, general requirements, and standards of this Chapter;

Table 2: 9801 Georgia Avenue Sketch Plan Data Table for CRT-2.5, C-2.5, R-2.5, H-120 Zone, Optional Method, Section 59.4.5.4

Development Standard	Permitted/ Required	Proposed
Tract Area	n/a	214,627 square feet
Prior Dedication	n/a	41,741 square feet
Proposed Dedication	n/a	none
Site Area	n/a	172,886 square feet
Mapped Density CRT-2.5, C-2.5, R-2.5, H-120 Residential (GFA/ FAR)	536,568 square feet/2.5 FAR	455,000 square feet/2.12 FAR
Commercial (GFA/FAR)	536,568 square feet/2.5 FAR	5,000 square feet/0.02 FAR
Total Mapped Density (GFA/FAR)	536,568 square feet/2.5 FAR	460,000 square feet/2.14 FAR
MPDU requirement	15.0 ⁴ %	15.0%
MPDU Bonus Density (GFA/FAR)	100,100 square feet/0.47 FAR	0 square feet/0 FAR
Total GFA/FAR	636,668 square feet/2.97 FAR	460,000 square feet/2.14 FAR
Building Height, max average	120 feet	78 feet
Public Open Space (min s.f.)	17,289 square feet (10%) ⁵	17,289 square feet (10%)
Parking	402 spaces (minimum) 540 spaces (maximum)	540 spaces

⁴ As required by the 2020 *Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Sector Plan*

⁵ As required by 4.5.4.B.1 (optional method) because of three master planned frontages.

a) Implement the recommendations of applicable master plans (59.4.5.1.A)

As described in Finding 2, the proposed development implements the recommendations of the 2020 *Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Sector Plan* as well as the Bicycle Master Plan.

b) Target opportunities for redevelopment of single-use commercial areas and surface parking lots with a mix of uses.

The Property is currently a medical office building with surface parking. The proposed development will replace the current development with mixed use development with structured parking.

c) Encourage development that integrates a combination of housing types, mobility options, commercial services, and public facilities and amenities, where parking is prohibited between the building and the street.

The proposed development will provide a mix of unit sizes with 15% MPDUs, with structured parking. The entrance to the Forest Glen Metro station will be located adjacent to the commercial element and will help energize the open space. The Southern Open Space will connect the existing community to the Forest Glen Metro Station and the western side of Georgia Avenue in a safe manner. The Northern Open Space will provide a through lot connection to Georgia Avenue and access to transit options.

d) Allows a flexible mix of uses, densities, and building heights appropriate to various settings to ensure compatible relationships with adjoining neighborhoods.

The proposed building is nearly 600 feet long on the Georgia Avenue and Woodland Drive sides, and the development encompasses 2 ½ blocks of land. While the Applicant has proposed some articulation, building design conditions of approval will require a meaningful transition and step-down to the single-family neighborhood to the east. The intended result of these conditions is shown illustratively, in the Staff drawing below, to demonstrate the effect of building massing on Woodland Drive.

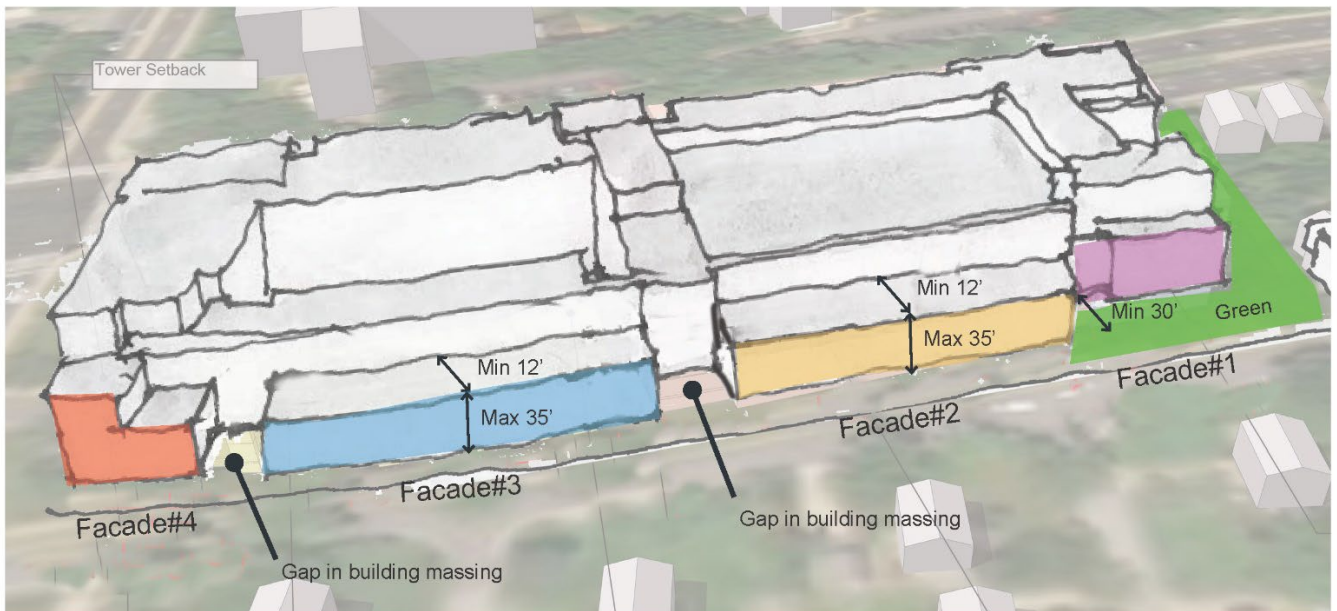


Figure 9 - Recommended Woodland Drive Building Massing

Staff recommends that the building façade along Woodland Drive include more substantial building step-backs and articulation to respond to the lower-scale residential neighborhood across Woodland Drive. These design changes will help the building respond to the surrounding context and provide a more compatible building transition.

e) Integrate an appropriate balance of employment and housing opportunities.

While the proposed development is primarily residential, with a small amount of convenience commercial uses, the proximity to the Forest Glen Metro station connects the housing to employment opportunities. The Property is also located on a number of bus lines and the future Georgia Avenue BRT line.

f) Standardize optional method development by establishing minimum requirements for the provision of public benefits that will support and accommodate density above the standard method limit.

The Project will provide the required 50 public benefit points from a minimum of 3 categories to achieve the desired incentive density above the standard method limit. Final determination of public benefit points will be determined at the time of Site Plan.

2. Substantially conforms to the recommendations of the applicable master plan:

Land Use and Zoning

The Sector Plan rezoned the Site from R-60 to CRT-2.5, C-2.5, R-2.5, H-120 to achieve a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development at the Forest Glen Metrorail station. The Applicant proposes a mixed-use development with 5,000 square feet of ground-floor retail and 415 residential units, a floor area ratio of 2.14. The proposed building transitions in height from 78 feet along Georgia Avenue to 35 feet along Woodland Drive to achieve compatibility with the single-family community west of the Site. While additional height is permitted pursuant to existing zoning, the Applicant proposes wood construction over a concrete podium due to construction costs and market forces, thereby limiting the height to 78 feet.

Urban Design

The Sector Plan includes several urban design recommendations to guide future redevelopment of the Site. These recommendations provide guidance on the building height, density, scale, and character, as well as recommendations related to parking and curb cuts. The Sketch Plan application substantially conforms with the Sector Plan's urban design recommendations, as discussed in detail below.

The Sector Plan recommends that the building height and density be concentrated at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road with transitions in size and scale to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The proposal includes a single building that transitions in height from six stories along Georgia Avenue to four stories along the Woodland Drive frontage. In addition to locating greater height along the Georgia Avenue frontage, the Applicant also proposes to locate the ground-floor retail and building amenities at the southwest corner of the Site, both to embrace this prominent location as well as activate the plaza proposed along Forest Glen Road. To ensure compatibility along Woodland Drive, the Applicant proposes both transitions in building height as well as the introduction of building breaks in the façade to create the sense of multiple buildings. Staff has included additional direction to further mitigate the proposed building's bulk and massing.

The Sector Plan also recommends a minimum setback of 25 feet from the building face to the curb along both Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road to accommodate generous sidewalks at this Metro-adjacent site. The Applicant proposes approximately 33 feet between the building face and the curb along Georgia Avenue, and over 70 feet between the building face and the curb along Forest Glen Road to accommodate the plaza and future Forest Glen Metrorail Station tunnel. Within the setback along Georgia Avenue, the Applicant proposes an eight-foot landscaped buffer adjacent to the curb and an 11-foot sidewalk.

The Sector Plan also "recommends a designated pick-up/drop-off area completely contained on the Forest Glen Medical Center site" to provide a safe and efficient pick-up and drop-off area that will deter use of Georgia Avenue and Woodland Drive. The Applicant proposes to accommodate a pick-up and drop-off area along the Woodland Drive frontage of the Subject Property in reserved, on-street parking spaces, rather than on-site. The Applicant suggests that the combination of the on-site facility

and associated circulation would result in inefficiencies and displace other activating ground floor uses and maintains that the pick-up and drop-off on Woodland Drive creates a more direct pedestrian route to the future pedestrian tunnel planned for the southwest corner of the Site. Additionally, having a drop-off within the garage would draw non-local traffic while an on-street drop-off will be convenient for the local neighborhood.

The Sector Plan also recommends reducing parking to the greatest extent possible, including providing shared parking and/or un-coupled parking. According to the Zoning Ordinance, the maximum number of parking spaces permitted for the residential units and retail is 540 spaces, and the Applicant proposes to provide 540 parking spaces in a structured garage lined by the proposed building. The Applicant suggests that the area remains car-dependent due to the lack of commercial services in close proximity to the Site and must provide parking to ensure the feasibility of the project. However, the Applicant has agreed to uncouple the parking from the rent to discourage tenants from having unnecessary cars at this Metro-proximate location.

Parks

The Sector Plan recommends a civic green urban park ranging in size between ½ and one-acre at the Site. A civic gathering space is defined by the Sector Plan as a contiguous space of ½ acre or more that can accommodate cultural programs, community events and neighborhood festivals. The Applicant proposes a plaza and open space of approximately 0.38 acres along the southern portion of the Site. The proposed plaza includes a series of stepped terraces, with a combination of hardscape, lawns, landscaped plant beds, and outdoor seating. The combination of terraces provides opportunities for gathering spaces and performances, as well as informal outdoor seating to serve patrons of the adjacent retail as well as the Forest Glen Metrorail Station. The civic green should be enlarged to a minimum size of ½ acre of usable space.

Public Benefits

The Sector Plan prioritizes affordable housing and habitat preservation and restoration as the top public benefits for optional method development on the 9801 Georgia Avenue site. The Sector Plan further states: *“Any optional method project that includes residential dwelling units should provide a minimum of 15 percent MPDUs. In addition, with redevelopment, a minimum of 25 percent of the units should be two-bedroom units and five percent of the units should be three-bedroom units. Additionally, given the substantial investment by the County in the Metro access tunnel construction, the Plan recommends 10 percent of the units also be provided as affordable to households earning at or below 100 percent of Area Median Income (AMI).”* (Page 74.)

The Applicant proposes to provide a minimum of 15 percent Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs), and at least 25 percent of the units as two-bedroom units. However, the proposal does not include the recommended five percent of three-bedroom units, or a commitment to provide 10-percent of the units as affordable to households earning at or below 100 percent of the Area Median Income. Staff recommends that the Applicant commit to providing five percent of the units as three-

bedroom units at the time of Site Plan approval, as well as explore opportunities to provide additional units as affordable to households earning at or below 100 percent of AMI.

In addition to the top public benefits for optional method development, the Sector Plan also recommends childcare facilities at or near public transit and specifically identifies 9801 Georgia Avenue as a location recommended for childcare. The Applicant suggests that a childcare facility on the Site cannot be accommodated due to operational challenges, including those related to accommodation of pick-up and drop-off, circulation, and adequate space for children's play areas.

Environment

The Sector Plan includes environmental recommendations for the Plan area, as well as site-specific recommendations. In combination, these recommendations seek to sequester carbon, improve air and water quality, reduce surface temperatures, provide habitat, and decrease greenhouse gases. To achieve these environmental outcomes, the Sector Plan recommends that all properties 2.5 acres or larger strive to achieve a minimum of 35 percent green cover, defined as intensively planted green roof, tree canopy cover, lawn with at least 30 inches of soil, or a combination thereof. The Sector Plan also indicates that the 35 percent requirement can be altered or decreased with the provision of on-site energy generation. The Applicant proposes a combination of elements to achieve the 35 percent recommendation, including tree canopy cover, lawn areas, biofiltration areas, and solar panels for on-site energy generation.

In addition to the green cover recommendation, the Sector Plan also includes recommendations related to energy conservation and generation, building orientation to reduce heating and cooling loads, and incorporation of sustainable design principles and initiatives. With this Sketch Plan Application, the Applicant proposes 18,750 square feet of solar panels on the roof surface for energy generation and has committed to orient the building to reduce heating and cooling loads to the extent possible given site constraints. The Applicant also commits to utilizing design techniques to further energy efficiency and conservation at the time of Site Plan, including strategies that evaluate the ratio of window to wall, and efficiency of HVAC systems.

The Sector Plan also includes a specific environmental recommendation for the site, which states:

"The 3.9 acre property contains approximately 1.25 acres of remnant forest dominated by native black locust trees. With respect to the remnant forest, at the time of redevelopment, maximum flexibility on the site should be given for providing an area of equal environmental benefit that also provides for improved community benefit and access. Equal environmental benefits may include improved water and air quality, strategies that provide for reduced greenhouse gas emissions and increased biodiversity and habitat protections, including improved tree canopy. Development should also, as a part of its open space requirement, preserve healthy indigenous trees and replant stratified vegetation where possible." (Pg. 75)

According to the Sketch Plan Application, approximately 0.4 acres of the remnant forest exist on the Site, which is proposed for removal. To achieve equivalent environmental benefit, the Applicant proposes stratified vegetation throughout the site, as well as micro-bioretenion planters along the perimeter of the building, some of which are proposed to accommodate the stormwater needs associated with the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration's Montgomery Hills / MD 97 project. In addition, the Applicant proposes two consolidated open spaces, on the northern and southern portions of the Site, with landscaped areas, terraces, and outdoor seating, both of which are accessible for the benefit of the surrounding community.

Transportation

The Sector Plan embraces Vision Zero, a proven approach to eliminate roadway-related severe and fatal crashes and identifies several strategies to further this countywide goal. These strategies include reducing vehicular speeds, eliminating conflicts between users, and providing designated space for each mode of transportation. One strategy that the Sector Plan recommends is to consolidate driveways to minimize interruptions for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as to minimize conflicts between cars turning and those walking, biking, and rolling. While the Sector Plan states that "redevelopment opportunities along Georgia Avenue should eliminate or consolidate driveways to reduce conflicts among travel modes," (Pg 16) 9801 Georgia Avenue is not identified in the Plan as a location where the elimination or consolidation of driveways is necessary. Rather, the Sector Plan recommends the following for the Subject Property: "Maintain existing curb cuts on Georgia Avenue at the present location or farther north from the intersection." (Pg 75.) The Applicant proposes to move the curb cut for the garage entrance farther north from the intersection, consistent with the Plan recommendation.

3. Satisfy any development plan or schematic development plan in effect on October 29, 2014;

The Sketch Plan is not subject to a development plan or schematic development plan.

4. under Section 7.7.1.B.5, for a property where the zoning classification on October 29, 2014 was the result of a Local Map Amendment, satisfy any green area requirement in effect on October 29, 2014; any green area under this provision includes and is not in addition to any open space requirement of the property's zoning on October 30, 2014;

The Property's zoning classification on October 29, 2014 was not a result of a Local Map Amendment.

5. Achieve compatible internal and external relationships between existing and pending nearby development;

The proposed development strengthens relationships with the existing neighborhood by adding useable open space and safe pedestrian connections. As conditioned, the Application meets the compatibility requirements for development adjacent to single-family houses and creates an articulated façade that reduces the impacts of the massing.

At a minimum, the proposed Woodland Drive building façade must be revised to ensure compatibility with the residential neighborhood. Examples of design elements that should be considered include the following:

1. The mass of the Woodland Drive façade must be visually broken up to appear as three or more buildings at a townhouse scale with visible spaces between each of the building masses.
2. Set back Facade 1 by a minimum of 30 feet to create an open space at the northeastern corner of the building.
3. Provide residential-scale porches/stoops for units at the ground level to facilitate direct access from the abutting Woodland Drive sidewalk.
4. Use architectural elements, such as a varied façade that uses articulation step backs, glazing, material changes and varied heights to mitigate the perceived mass of the building, as seen from the single-family homes across Woodland Drive.
5. Set back the building's mass above 35 feet of height by a minimum of 12 feet from the primary façade along Woodland Drive.

6. *Provides satisfactory general vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist access, circulation, parking, and loading;*

The Sketch Plan will add a through-block connection, connecting neighborhoods east of Woodland Drive to Georgia Avenue. It also proposes to increase the safety of pedestrians using the site, by adding tree-lined green buffers between all sidewalks and the busy streets of Georgia Avenue, Forest Glen Road, and Woodland Drive. Vehicular access points on Woodland Drive and Georgia Avenue provide safe and appropriate access to the proposed building. Access on Woodland Drive should be studied further to minimize impacts on the community and surrounding transportation network.

The Sketch Plan includes 540 parking spaces, which is the maximum allowable under Section 6.2.3. Parking should be unbundled from the residential units and the Applicant should consider reducing parking spaces to incentivize transit usage. As conditioned, the Subject Application will provide satisfactory general vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle access, circulation, parking, and loading.

7. *Propose an outline of public benefits that supports the requested incentive density and is appropriate for the specific community;*

Taking into account the considerations in Section 59.4.7.1.B, including the recommendations and objectives of the Sector Plan and any applicable design guidelines, the Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines, the size and configuration of the site and its relationship to adjacent properties, similar public benefits nearby, and additional enhancements related to the individual public benefits, the following outline of public benefits supports the Applicant's request for incentive density and is appropriate for the community surrounding the site, as described below.

For the proposed development, the Zoning Ordinance requires 50 points in 3 categories. The Applicant proposes to exceed the 50-point requirement utilizing 5 categories. Although at the time of Sketch Plan review only an outline of public benefits needs to be approved, the following table shows both the categories and points for the public benefits requested at Sketch Plan to demonstrate the project's ability to meet the requirement to provide sufficient benefit points. Further information will be required at time of Site Plan, demonstrating how these benefits will be fulfilled.

Table 3: Public Benefit Calculations- Division 59-4.7

Public Benefit	Maximum Points Allowed	Proposed
Transit Proximity	50	25
Connectivity and Mobility		
Through-Block Connections	20	20
Diversity of Uses and Activities		
Moderately Price Dwelling Units	N/A	30
Quality Building and Site Design		
Architectural Elevations	20	10
Structured Parking	20	10
Tower Step-Back	10	5
Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment		
Cool Roof	10	5
Energy Conservation and Generation	15	10
Vegetated Area	10	10
Total Points		125

TRANSIT PROXIMITY

Transit Proximity

The Applicant requests 25 points for abutting or confronting an existing or master-planned Metrorail station. The Property will provide space for a new entrance to the Forest Glen Metro station, as well as a drop-off location on Woodland Drive. Staff supports the category at this time.

CONNECTIVITY AND MOBILITY

Through-Block Connections

The Applicant requests 20 points for providing a through-block connection. The development will provide a through-block connection, connecting Georgia Avenue and Woodland Drive at the northern end of the Property. Staff supports the category at this time.

DIVERSITY OF USES AND ACTIVITIES

Affordable Housing

The Applicant requests 30 points for providing 15% MPDUs. The development will provide 15% MPDUs, 2.5% above the minimum required. Staff supports the category at this time.

QUALITY BUILDING AND SITE DESIGN

Architectural Elevations

The Applicant requests 10 points for providing architectural facades. Particular elements of design, such as minimum amount of transparency, maximum separation between doors, awning provisions, sign restrictions or lighting parameters that affect the perception of mass or pedestrian comfort, or enhance neighborhood compatibility, will be required and approved through the Site Plan process. Staff supports the category at this time.

Structured Parking

The Applicant requests 20 points for providing structured parking. The development will provide an above grade parking structure for the proposed development. Staff supports the category at this time.

Tower Step Back

The Applicant requests 20 points for providing a tower step back. The development will set back the building's upper floors by a minimum of 6 feet behind the first-floor facade. Staff supports the category at this time.

PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Cool Roof

The Applicant requests 5 points for providing a cool roof. The development will construct a roof area that is not covered by a vegetated roof with a minimum solar reflectance index (SRI) of 75 for roofs with a slope at or below a ratio of 2:12, and a minimum SRI of 25 for slopes above 2:12. Staff supports the category at this time.

Energy Generation

The Applicant requests 10 points for providing on-site energy generation. The development will provide solar panels, producing a minimum of 1.25% of the energy requirements for the development. Staff supports the category at this time.

Vegetated Area

The Applicant requests 10 points for providing a vegetated area on-site. The development will provide a vegetated area in addition to the required Public Open Space. Staff supports the category at this time.

- 8. *Establish a feasible and appropriate provisional phasing plan for all structures, uses, rights-of-way, sidewalks, dedications, public benefits, and future preliminary and site plan applications.***

The proposed development will be built in one phase.

SECTION 5: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Applicant held a pre-submittal public meeting on September 22, 2022, related to the Sketch Plan. The meeting was conducted virtually per COVID-19 Guidelines and has complied with all submittal and noticing requirements. In addition to the required public meeting, the Applicant has conducted additional outreach.

Staff met with community members on several occasions. On February 28, 2023, staff met with the Forest Grove Citizens Association in person at the Sligo Middle School. While many people in the community was not opposed to the Property being developed, they were concerned about the scale of development, as well as negative impacts on the character of the community, pedestrian safety, and increased traffic in the neighborhood.

On March 15, 2023, staff met with members of the Forest Estates Community Association virtually. Community members had questions about process and how the Sketch Plan implements recommendations from the Sector Plan. The citizens were also concerned about how this development has been coordinated with other transportation studies and improvements, whether 3D massing studies have been done, and the impact on cell service.

Staff also had many meetings and phone calls with individuals throughout the review process.

Staff received many letters of correspondence throughout the review of the Project (Attachment D). While some of these letters were in support of the proposed development, many of the letters were opposed to the Sketch Plan as currently configured and expressed concerns with traffic in the neighborhood. These concerns are summarized below.

TRAFFIC IMPACTS ON THE NEIGHBORHOOD

- “Traffic and safety is a current concern for our neighborhood and the addition of 555 cars to the neighborhood will impact traffic significantly.”
- “Cars will likely end up flowing through all neighborhood streets: Tilton, Forest Glen, Belvedere, Woodland, Forest Grove, Dameron, Imperial, Inwood, etc”
- “The reality (that has been downplayed by many) is that our neighborhood streets will be made speed thoroughfares to avoid the congested Georgia Ave. exit. Myrtle and Sherwood do not have sidewalks, and one must currently slow just to dodge cars and pedestrians. The proposed development includes too many cars for our neighborhood streets to manage safely. It feels—without a traffic study being done—that the county and developer do not care about the safety of our children and families, or the sustainability of our neighborhood.”
- “Most of our streets are not wide enough for two cars to safely pass each other traveling in different directions, but most of us know to pull over if we see a neighbor, or a bus or recycle/delivery truck coming. But we do experience some cut through traffic from outside the neighborhood, so mirrors and limbs get hit by passing trucks, and add snow or ice... then we’re that much worse off. Many homes have only street parking, some streets have no

sidewalks, and those who do have driveways like me are one car driveways so any guests or service/delivery trucks also use curbside for access.”

- “You should be aware that non-neighborhood traffic already uses (and often speeds through) our narrow streets and takes limited curbside spaces for off-site parking (e.g, hospital, metro). Just last week a moving truck barreled past my house, knocked branches off trees onto my car, and tugged on the electric service drop to my house. Thankfully it didn’t tear free. What should I expect when you add a massive complex at the end of my street with needs for commercial deliveries, and many hundreds of daily transits for garage and vehicle access to drop off and pick up metro riders facing Woodland Drive?”

Staff agrees that traffic impacts on the neighborhood need to be minimized for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle safety. The Transportation Study that will be submitted at time of Preliminary Plan will be focused on pedestrian and bicycle impacts. Additionally, Staff will be looking at recommendations from the February 2021 Complete Streets Design Guide, as well as other guidance, to minimize traffic impacts.

REQUIREMENT FOR TRAFFIC STUDY

- “A full transportation study should be conducted and alterations to the plan should be imposed to reduce the substantial negative impact that the Project will cause on local traffic.”
- “As part of your concern of this proposal, I’d like to request that a traffic study be conducted, with a specific focus on how to improve the intersection of Georgia and Forest Glen to reduce the redirection of traffic through residential neighborhoods.”
- “This intersection is already heavily traveled. To increase the density of this site without a traffic study is unconscionable.”
- “The developer has submitted a traffic study from consultants that estimates that the change to in/out traffic during AM/PM rush hours will be less than fifty and thus no analysis of traffic is necessary. We are not convinced that a comparison of car usage by patients and medical staff to car usage by residents for multiple purposes is a useful metric. The current entrance on Forest Glen is being removed and an entrance added on Woodland Drive — a street that currently backs up at the intersection with Forest Glen Road. Changing the entrance from Forest Glen Rd to Woodland Rd brings the traffic directly into the neighborhood increasing safety concerns. The in/out data does not seem to adequately describe the impact of these cars on the surrounding neighborhood”
- “Why isn’t the reviewer for the Planning Commission demanding a traffic study to be able to properly evaluate the developers plan? Georgia at Forest Glen road is one of the most dangerous intersection in the state. How can we allow a huge development there without a traffic study. It’s basically inviting people to be killed.”

The Applicant will be required to submit a Transportation Study with the Preliminary Plan application. The Subject Property is located in the Forest Glen Metro Station Policy Area, which is designated a Red Policy Area, and is not subject to a motor vehicle adequacy test but is subject to transit, pedestrian, and bicycle system adequacy tests.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

- “The traffic at this corner is very difficult currently for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. An influx of vehicles especially during rush hour will make it infinitely worse. How will this hazardous intersection be made safer with more cars? I encourage you to watch the traffic there. It’s nutty what people do here.”
- “Finally, many of the streets adjacent to the proposed development are quite narrow and this massive infusion of new traffic into the area will surely lead to a significant increase in accidents.”
- “The added traffic at the intersection of Forest Glen Road and Georgia Ave is just adding more congestion to an already overcrowded situation. Since the goal of the county is to reduce traffic accidents involving walkers, it seems counterproductive to add more congestion to an already severely and frustrating intersection. With emergency vehicles continually trying to reach Holy Cross Hospital adding more traffic to the area proposes more problems.”

Maryland State Highway Administration will be constructing major roadway improvements at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Forest Glen Road with the objective of reducing car crashes and improving pedestrian and bicycle safety.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE SAFETY

- “It should be noted that both Sherwood Road and Myrtle Drive are already too narrow to accommodate two-way traffic. Cars are parked in front of their owners' homes and there are no sidewalks. To ensure their safety, children walk through homeowners' yards to avoid walking in the streets which are already clogged with traffic. Sherwood Road is especially difficult to navigate because the oncoming traffic cannot always be seen by a pedestrian walking up the hilly terrain.”
- “We expect the redevelopment will bring many more cars to our neighborhood’s roads, and this worries us as parents of an 8-year-old who frequently rides his bike around these streets and walks to and from the school bus stop. We believe at a minimum, a traffic impact study should be conducted. In the long term, we’d also like to advocate that the county install sidewalks and adequate lighting on all the streets of this neighborhood currently without them.”
- “As a frequent driver in this area. I am concerned about the increase in traffic and lack of pedestrian and bicycle safety measures in this area.”
- “The entrance and exit of 400 cars will doubtless jeopardize pedestrian safety for many.”
- “This safety concern is particularly acute when combined with likely increase in bicycle traffic for the new WMATA entrance and the need for peak-hour school bus stop access for the dozens of children who will likely be living in the new 415-unit proposed building.”

Through the Preliminary and Site Plan processes, staff will be working with the Applicant to reduce pedestrian and bicycle conflicts with automobiles.

SCALE AND COMPATIBILITY WITH COMMUNITY

- “In principle, I would favor redevelopment of a reasonable scale and scope, and which is attentive to community concerns and preferences.”
- “This is not a residential building with size and scale compatible with the existing community there, as envisioned by the Sector Plan and zoning requirements.”
- “Further, the community did not want such a large-scale building, which does not match the surroundings.”
- Second, with regard to scale and compatibility, I can’t imagine a design that is more disproportional and incompatible with its surroundings.”
- “I believe that most of us who live here are not opposed to some development at 9801 Georgia Ave. if it is in reasonable scale with existing homes and manageable traffic. What we are opposed to is the grotesquely out of scale proposal of a 6 story, 415 unit building with predictable excessive traffic, both residential and commercial.”

The conditions of approval include specific direction on ways to reduce the bulk and break up the massing of the proposed building.

AMOUNT OF PARKING PROVIDED

- “It simply makes no sense to have 500+ parking spaces in an apartment complex that is 1000 feet from a Metro station. If the developers propose to maximize building volume on site because of proximity to the Forest Glen Metro Station, by that same logic it should have fewer parking spaces. If the Metro Station is a draw, it is an inherent contradiction to assert the need for 1.5 parking spots / unit.”
- “As an advocate for sustainable development, my next most significant concern is that the number of parking spaces planned (555 spaces vs 415 units) does not even meet the county’s guidelines for new developments directly adjacent to transit. This parking ratio is too high to attract tenants that will use public transportation, and there are few undeveloped sites in the county closer to a Metro station than this one. It is advantageous for the developer to offer more parking and make the units more attractive to people with cars, but it is the wrong use of this site if we really care about improving sustainability in Montgomery County.”
- “Importantly, if a major justification for the development is to provide housing near the Metro, there should not be a need for 1.25 parking spaces for each apartment unit.”
- “Simply put, when it comes to traffic estimates, the Applicant is simply not recognizing the reality shown in its own plan—the Project requires hundreds of parking spaces because the future residents need (and will regularly use) cars as a primary mode of transportation.”
- “There is a bit of a chicken-egg situation in this development. Will providing housing near transit decrease our need for cars? Are there enough people willing to make that trade-off or is the developer right that without 1+ parking spaces per unit the development won’t succeed financially?”

Staff agrees that the Applicant should unbundle residential parking and reduce parking to encourage transit use.

ENTRANCE ON WOODLAND DRIVE

- “Practically speaking, to enter the development, turning left from Forest Glen to Woodland is not safe during rush hour (requires crossing two lanes of traffic) and turning left from Georgia to Tilton to access Woodland is not either (requires crossing three lanes of traffic).”
- “The exit onto Woodland Dr. worries me as well. Putting more cars onto our already busy neighborhood streets seems unwise. I’m already nervous when my kids play outside as cars speed down the street as they cut through our neighborhood. Having no exit or entrance onto Woodland will reduce the cars cutting through the narrow neighborhood streets.”
- “With 415 apartments plus offices and commercial space having people exiting the parking lot via Woodland and Forest Glen Roads, so close to Georgia Avenue, traffic along Forest Glen will grind to a halt, blocking people from exiting the neighborhood and impacting access to Holy Cross Hospital, greatly lengthening commutes and drives to school.”
- “Adding an entrance/exit on Woodland in essence adds 550 cars to the neighborhood. To put that in perspective, it will nearly double the current number of cars in the neighborhood. This will create traffic issues not only on Woodland Dr but the network of small neighborhood roads including Sherwood, Myrtle, Sanford, Tilton and Belvedere through Forest Grove Dr. and Dameron Dr.”
- “A garage entrance on Woodland Drive is a terrible idea. The opening of an entrance on Woodland Drive to access the development (in direct contradiction to the decades-old prohibition on such a driveway) will create significant disruption to traffic patterns, would jeopardize pedestrian safety, and increase traffic in our neighborhood unnecessarily as we have outlined above. The proposed entrance / exit on Woodland Dr. essentially makes Woodland Dr. - a County owned and maintained road, serve as a “private” driveway for the development, enabling the developer to maximize every square inch of the site for building.”

Woodland Drive is a public road that serves all of the public but the goal is to minimize traffic impacts and conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists through shifting transportation use to transit and design changes to improve safety.

FOREST REMOVAL

- “The Planning Board should find that the application complies with this recommendation, principally because the current remnant forest provides little or no environmental benefit and provides no community benefit or access. Due to years of neglect, the remnant forest today consists of dead or dying trees, garbage, and several prominent “No Dumping” signs. Invasive plant species have overrun all of the trees on the site and are spreading their seeds to other trees in the neighborhood.”

- “De-forestation of what actually used to be fairly characterized as “Forest” Estates — A sizable portion of the trees that once lined our streets have been removed by the county, making the small grove of trees on Woodland Drive a precious and ever rarer commodity.”
- “While I’d normally agree that preserving the existing wooded area should be prioritized, in this particular case I think the developer’s plan, with appropriate commitments, could actually be the better route. The main reasoning for this is that that wooded area is unfortunately filled with mostly invasive plants. While it does still provide cover, which is important, it doesn’t provide the vital ecosystem services that we’d ideally want, because it’s mostly invasives and lacks many natives.”
- “Third, the development will remove a large area of old growth trees currently located on the site. The trees have not been maintained, but I’m sure they are home to many bird, animal and insect species. How will these trees be replaced? Street trees on Woodland Drive? Once removed, there will be no natural buffer between the development and adjacent homes. “

While the proposed plan includes the removal of the existing forest, the Applicant will have to provide detailed landscape plans to include on-site plantings to replace the function of the forest, prioritizing native trees and plants.

OPEN SPACE

- “The intended green space is near the crowded intersection of Forest Glen and Georgia, while the building will be as close as possibly allowed to the green spaces of our community. Rather than keeping with the character of the neighborhood, the building will shove brick, metal, and steel walls where there are now trees and sidewalk, amplifying the summer heat and eliminating any hope of privacy or quiet as it looms over our home.”
- “The Sector Plan calls for a 0.5 - 1 acre Civic Green Urban Park. The developer’s Sketch Plan does not account for this. It only has a small area near the planned metro tunnel and the majority of the site (including internal courtyards) is reserved for site residents. We would love - LOVE - a usable public open space at this site.”
- “The sketch plan includes almost all unimproved areas as “public open space.” That doesn’t make sense. For example, an island between driveways is not public open space. The developer should provide actual public open space that is contiguous, well- lit, and usable (especially in accord with the Sector Plan’s requirement to improve community benefit and access to the site).”
- “A 0.5 - 1.0 acre public open space will benefit current and future residents. This part of the Sector Plan should be non-negotiable and an emphasis of the amended proposal. The currently proposed location, tucked in between a crevice at the north end of this development, surrounded by buildings is hardly open, safe, or public. We urge the developer to be more creative and neighborly by planning a more welcoming green, public space at a location that will be accessible to the community that they plan to build in.”

Staff will work with the Applicant through the Site Plan process to make sure the open space is designed with ½ acre minimum usable space that serves the community, while providing a connection to transit.

DAMAGE TO EXISTING UTILITIES

- “...further burden on aging infrastructure- gas leaks, water and sewage line repairs.”
- “Stress on utilities that have been increasingly failing — Gas leaks, for example, have become a regular occurrence based on the frequent appearance of gas company workers digging up street sections;”
- “We do recognize that developing this parcel is not straight-forward. Already existing infrastructure, roads and aging utilities must be considered.”
- “Yes, we need more density near metro stations, but that number will certainly strain the water, sewer and gas utilities that have already been failing over the years. The property will just tap into this 60+ year old system. Will the developer help pay for upgrading these along the lengths of Myrtle and Sherwood which will be most directly affected by the massive increased use? If they are it would help but not eliminate the pressure on the system.”

As the application moves forward and more detailed information is available, the Applicant should work to ensure that utilities are not damaged.

PROCESS CONCERNS

- “Learning of the change in zoning of the Property to CRT 2.5 in 2020 by adoption of the Sector Plan was a surprise to us and our members. Indeed, at our most recent all-hands meeting, over 90 percent of our members indicated that they never knew of any campaign, request, or public action (including proposed Sector Plans) to change the zoning of the Property from residential to commercial.”
- “It is thus of significant concern for that reason and also the following: the defect in notice for the September 22 meeting was expressly and publicly raised to the developer by a community attendee at that meeting, including an explanation of all of the details discussed above (improper size, posting height, etc.), along with a suggestion to conform by having a properly noticed pre-submittal meeting.”
- “The zoning change was made in the Sector Plan by its adoption. While that may be within official “due process” it is disingenuous to those directly impacted by the development which is now proposed based on that change. I walk through that area every day with my dog, having done so for the last decades. I don’t ever recall a posted sign, like those present now regarding the proposed development, being erected to notify residents of such an impactful change. Surely, I would have noticed. Additionally, I know that I never received any communication via mail. Why did this occur? How can a County that prides itself on being progressive not follow common sense and courtesy and post signs and mail letters/cards alerting residents? I am at a loss.”

- “We were first notified of this development plan when public notice was posted for a public meeting held at Sligo Middle School on September 22, 2022. I (Mike) attended this meeting. During this meeting, a neighbor publicly raised a concern that the signage for notice was too small and too close to the ground. The developer and their counsel heard this concern, yet they went on and certified to the Planning Board that this meeting was held properly.”
- “There has been information about the sector plan and this specific development widely broadcast to neighborhoods in this area for years. But now, at the eleventh hour, some of my neighbors are encouraging an email campaign against this development. While I would like to see neighborhood-friendly retail, like a coffee shop and corner store, and don't want to worsen traffic problems, stopping this development isn't the way. Make it a smart development adjacent to a Metro station.”

The Applicant replaced the initially under-sized signs and Staff has worked to make sure the process has been open and transparent.

SECTOR PLAN REQUIREMENTS

- “The Project will not fulfill that goal and violates several critical promises and targets of that Plan.”
- “More broadly, the Sector Plan's spirit supports healthy, pedestrian- friendly development at this site and along Georgia Avenue. A massive apartment complex catering to car-based commuters is not what the Sector Plan had in mind. We would love to see a proposal that includes some townhomes, a smaller number of apartments, less parking, and perhaps more community-minded retail.”
- “The other points I wanted make are that the developers 1) are not honoring the recommendations of the sector plan and 2) claim to have the support of community, which simply isn't true, quite the opposite in fact.”
- “The current plan does not live up to the Sector Plan for our area which requires consideration of traffic congestion and preservation of green space in all projects.”
- “One way the sector plan was sold to our neighborhood was (a) any residential development would, since it would be atop a new Metro opening, would have a low car to unit density (b) a new dedicated left turn lane would be added to SB Georgia (c) a circle kiss and ride would be incorporated on the medical center site itself (d) Woodland would be marked for traffic calming.”

Staff has added conditions to the Sketch Plan approval to ensure Sector Plan consistency and will continue to work with the Applicant to make sure the Preliminary and Site Plans achieve the vision of the Sector Plan.

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

- “I do not feel that there is enough retail space in the plan (there is 200k sq ft worth of residential space and only 5k sq ft for retail). As this is being developed, I would like to see the retail contain restaurants and supermarkets. Good retail brings true value to the community”
- “If anything, I would ask you to increase the amount of commercial space considered to more than 5k to accommodate a bigger or wider variety of services. That said, I would like the County Planning Committee to be careful about the types of businesses that it approves for the development - I'm not sure if this is in your purview, but high quality businesses that provide food and coffee are the most needed, as we lack any kind of coffee shop or similar social space (other than the park, which is of course weather dependent and closed after dark).”
- “As the Planning Board is no doubt aware, the Forest Glen Metro Station is the least utilized station in the entire Metro system. Therefore, the land above the Forest Glen Metro Station is not only one of the greatest opportunity sites for new housing and retail in Montgomery County, but possibly in the entire DC-MD-VA metro area.”
- “While I would like to see neighborhood-friendly retail, like a coffee shop and corner store, and don't want to worsen traffic problems, stopping this development isn't the way.”
- “I would like this development to include some retail establishments such as a coffee shop, a nail salon, a small grocery, etc. I believe these would be highly profitable businesses, located next to a neighborhood full of regular Metro users as well as the new residents of the building.”

The zone for this Property allows for commercial and residential development to allow the Applicant to determine the market viability of the application.

CRIME

- “I am also concerned about safety. There are a lot of young families in the neighborhood / elderly individuals. Bringing 415 one and two bedroom rental apartments will bring more people who have less roots in the neighborhood / most likely will be younger (in their 20s which has the highest crime rate) which can lead to higher crime.”
- “We now do not feel safe shopping here. The crime is out of control! Adding more congestion to the area will only exacerbate the crime. We now go to Columbia to shop as we feel more safe there than in Silver Spring, Wheaton or Rockville for that matter. It is a sad state of affairs when we are afraid to go to a local grocery store”
- “Building any apartment complex in Montgomery County requires the developer to allocate a certain number of units to ‘affordable housing’. The type of tenants that occupy these units tend to bring crime and drug problems. The proximity to the metro already creates issues with crime and drug dealing, and the proximity to Holy Cross Hospital

generates an enormous amount of litter. Adding a large apartment complex will amplify these problems.”

Through the Site Plan process, all spaces will be designed to minimize opportunities for criminal activity, using CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles.

SCHOOL IMPACTS

- “The Developer stated at the September 22 meeting that it did not have to be concerned with school overcrowding that might be caused by the Project because potential school overcrowding cannot legally stop redevelopment. The community does not accept that answer. Our children are already being educated in trailers. Adding hundreds of new households to the immediate area will affect bus routes (and attendant traffic from morning buses) and put more of our children into unideal educational conditions.”
- “I also think that an evaluation of the impact on local schools (several of which already have adjacent temporary structures) is needed.”
- “JBL has promoted (at the September meeting) this apartment complex for families; the elementary, junior high and high schools in this region are already overcrowded with trailers consistently in use. If 415 apartments are rented to families who have children attending these schools, that's a minimum of 400+ more students (taking into consideration ONLY one child per family.)”
- “It is specifically indicated that schools in this area will be overcrowded by 2023-2024 and beyond, and the schools will need construction to facilitate the overcrowding. This is a problem given the same plan provides for more density in these same districts during the same timeframe with NO CONSTRUCTION FUNDING OR PLAN FOR SCHOOLS.”

The impact to public schools will be studied through the Preliminary Plan process as part of the Adequate Public Facilities finding.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

As conditioned, the Sketch Plan application satisfies the findings under Sections 7.3.3 and the applicable standards of the Zoning Ordinance and substantially conforms to the recommendations of the 2020 *Montgomery Hills/Forest Glen Sector Plan*. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the Sketch Plan with the conditions specified at the beginning of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Sketch Plan

Attachment B: Prior Approvals

Attachment C: Agency Letters

Attachment D: Community Correspondence