

MANDATORY REFERRAL NO. MR2025020

OLNEY COMMUNITY BUILDING

Description

Mandatory Referral for the public acquisition of a property at 17831 Georgia Avenue for a future community building.

COMPLETED: 6/5/2025

PLANNING BOARD HEARING DATE: 6/12/2025

MCPB ITEM NO.

Planning Staff



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LOCATION

17831 Georgia Avenue, Olney

MASTER PLAN, ZONE

2005 Olney Master Plan

CRT 2.0 C1.0 R1.0 H-70T

PROPERTY SIZE

15,801 square feet

APPLICATION

Mandatory Referral

ACCEPTANCE DATE

April 23, 2025

REVIEW BASIS

Md. Land Use Article, Section 20-301, et seq.

Summary:

- Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral for acquisition of a property at 17831 Georgia Avenue and transmittal of comments to the Department of General Services.
- The Planning Board review of a Mandatory Referral is pursuant to the Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, Sections 20-301 et seq.

SECTION 1 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends Approval of the Mandatory Referral and transmittal of the following comments to the Department of General Services (DGS):

1. Consistent with the Subtitle 3 of the Land Use Article, DGS should coordinate with the Planning Department when full funding for the building interior renovation is determined.
2. Any future redevelopment of the property will be subject to the applicable master and functional plans, zoning requirements and policies in effect at the time of redevelopment, such as the Growth and Infrastructure Policy and/or Local Area Transportation Review.

SECTION 2 – PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Montgomery County Department of General Services (DGS) is acquiring a former bank property at 17831 Georgia Avenue to create the Olney Community Building. The FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP), Olney Community Building-P362506, indicates that \$5M has been allocated for the acquisition and renovation of this property for a future public use. A community meeting space was originally planned to be implemented with the Olney Police Substation project. However, due to site constraints associated with the Police Substation location, a significant community space was not feasible at that location. It is anticipated that interior renovations for the acquired building will occur during FY 26.

SECTION 3 – SITE DESCRIPTION

Site Description

The 17831 Georgia Avenue property is located at the southeast intersection of Spartan Road and Georgia Avenue (MD 97) (Figure 1). The property is approximately 15,801 square feet in size, and the building is approximately 4,493 square feet in size. The property is in the Commercial Residential Town (CRT 2.0 C1.0 R1.0 H-70T) Zone. The building, a former Capital One bank, features a unique architectural design, characterized by cylindrical and diagonal angles (Figure 2). The property has pedestrian and vehicular access from Georgia Avenue and Spartan Road. The site is located within the Olney Town Center area.

Surrounding Neighborhood

Commercial properties are primarily located north and west of the subject property, including a Safeway grocery store and single-use commercial uses. A range of detached and attached residential properties and single-use commercial properties are located further south.

The Olney Elementary School is located to the west and St. Peters Catholic Church is east of the subject property. The Camel Back Village Condominiums, a multifamily residential development, and Saint Peters Parish Church are also located to the east.

Most of the properties in the Town Center area are located in the Commercial Residential Town (CRT) Zone, with recommended building heights of up to 70 feet and densities at a 2.0 Floor Area Ratio (FAR).



Figure 1: Building location for the proposed acquisition and future community meeting space.



Figure 2: Existing building photo.

SECTION 3 – MANDATORY REFERRAL ANALYSIS

Mandatory Referral review is guided by the Montgomery Planning Mandatory Referral Review Uniform Standards (December 2022), and the authority granted through the Maryland Land Use Article, Section 20-301, et.seq. As set forth in Sections 20-301 and -302, the Montgomery County Planning Board has jurisdiction over mandatory referral projects presented by Montgomery County government, municipal corporation or special taxing district, and Montgomery County Board of Education/Montgomery County Public Schools, for (i) acquiring or selling land; (ii) locating, constructing or authorizing a road, park, public way or ground, public building or structure, or publicly owned or privately owned public utility; or (iii) changing the use of or widening, narrowing, extending, relocating, vacating or abandoning any of the previously mentioned facilities. Pursuant to the adopted Uniform Guidelines, the Planning Board, or its Staff, must review such projects and transmit comments on the proposed location, character, grade and extent of the activity.

All relevant land use and planning aspects of the proposal must be considered including, but not limited to, the following:

whether the proposal is consistent with the County’s General Plan, functional plans such as the master plan of highways, environmental guidelines, the approved and adopted area master plan or sector plan, and other public plans, guidance documents, or programs for the area;

This property is in the 2005 *Olney Master Plan* area. The Master Plan states that the “Town Center lacks a major open space, a place for the community to gather and to celebrate its festivals and events” (p.46). The Master Plan also states that the Town Center needs “a civic center that would house the various public services currently located in and around the Town Center” (p.52). The Master Plan also envisioned a combined civic building with a town commons, which could be implemented via future

redevelopment of other Town Center properties. The proposed property acquisition is consistent with the Master Plan's recommendations since it will advance the implementation of a community meeting space in Olney.

whether the proposal is consistent with the intent and the requirements of the zone in which it is located;

The property is zoned Commercial Residential Town, C 2.0 C1.0 R1.0 H-70 T, which allows residential and non-residential development with varying densities and building heights, as per the applicable Master or Sector Plans.

whether the nature of the proposed site and development, including but not limited to its size, shape, scale, height, arrangement, design of structure(s), massing, setback(s), site layout, and location(s) of parking is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and properties;

The existing building, which is approximately 4, 493 square feet, will be retained and the interior will be renovated to accommodate the community meeting space. Therefore, it will remain compatible with surrounding commercial properties.

whether the locations of buildings and structures, open spaces, landscaping, recreation facilities, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems are adequate, safe, and efficient;

Both Georgia Avenue and Spartan Road provide pedestrian and vehicular access to the Property. There is an existing WMATA and Ride On bus stop located along Georgia Avenue that provides public transportation to the site. Existing landscaping is located in various areas of the property and will be retained.

whether the proposal has an approved NRI/FSD and a preliminary SWM Concept Plan, and meets the requirements of the Forest Conservation Law (Chapter 22A of the County Code). Forest Conservation Plan, if applicable, must be approved by the Planning Board, either before or at the time of the Board's mandatory referral review and action on the project. Unlike the mandatory referral review by the Board, the conditions of the Forest Conservation Plan are binding on all county projects and require a Resolution of Approval.

The site contains no streams or stream buffers, wetlands or wetland buffers, 100-year floodplains, known occurrences of rare, threatened or endangered species, or significant or specimen trees. The property is also located in the Hawlings River Watershed, which is classified as a Use IV-P watershed. Any future redevelopment of the property would address Forest Conservation and other environmental requirements.

whether a Preliminary or a Final Water Quality Plan has been reviewed by the Planning Board if the project is located in a Special Protection Area. In addition,

for a Water Quality Plan for a project on public property, the Board must determine if the plan meets any additional applicable standards for Special Protection areas, including the standards of Article V. WATER QUALITY REVIEW IN SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS, of the County Code (pursuant to Section 19-65(d)(4));

This section is not applicable because the Property is not in a Special Protection Area.

whether or not the site would be needed for park use if the proposal is for disposition of a surplus school or other publicly-owned property.

This site is not a surplus school or other public property; therefore, this section is not applicable.

whether alternatives or mitigation measures have been considered for the project if the proposal is inconsistent with the General Plan or other plans and policies for the area, or has discernible negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, the transportation network, the environment, historic resources (including burial sites) or other resources.

An alternative location to accommodate the future community meeting space, in collaboration with a police substation, was considered prior to the acquisition of this property. However, that property cannot accommodate the proposed community meeting space. Acquisition of this property is consistent with Thrive Montgomery 2050 (General Plan) and the Olney Master Plan. It has no discernible negative impacts on the surrounding neighborhood, the transportation network, the environment, historic resources (including burial sites) or other resources. Additional analysis is needed of these potential impacts if the site is redeveloped.

SECTION 4 - COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Planning staff notified local civic and homeowners' associations and other interested parties of this proposal. The Olney Chamber of Commerce, Olney Town Center Committee and other stakeholders have advocated for a new civic building in the town center area. As of the date of this report, no public correspondence has been submitted. The

SECTION 5 - CONCLUSION

Staff recommends the approval of the submitted Mandatory Referral and the transmittal of comments to the Montgomery County Department of General Services (DGS).