

Long Branch Sector Plan, Worksession 5

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Completed: 4. 4.13

Description

Following the March 21st work session a number of issues were left unresolved. This is an edited version of the March 21st Staff Report and will address the following issues:

- Approve language revisions
- Approve the Plan strategy to address the impacts of the Purple Line along Arliss Street (Site # 7)
- Approve land use and zoning recommendations for the development of the Long Branch Town Center and the Piney Branch Neighborhood Village

Scheduled Work Sessions

May 9th

- Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Environment

May 16th

- Finalize Sector Plan and Request Approval to Transmit

May 23rd

- Urban Design Guidelines

June 6th

- Urban Design Guidelines

Arliss Street

Staff presented the Plan strategy, which addressed the physical impacts of the Purple Line on Arliss Street and nearby properties. The Plan offered the following land use, zoning and mobility recommendations:

- Rezone the Arliss Street townhome site to allow higher density, mixed land uses that better address significant right-of-way changes and that also provide an appropriate transition between the adjacent single family homes and the proposed Long Branch Town Center.
- Introduce a private street network that interconnects the Super Block and adjacent properties and addresses the loss of left turns along Arliss Street.
- Provide an attractive pedestrian-friendly street cross section that includes street furniture, wider sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Reduce the visual impact of the tunnel portal, which will be addressed in greater detail in the urban design guidelines.

Potential impacts or rezoning/redevelopment of the Arliss Street Townhomes

The Plan recommends the following for the Arliss Street Town Homes – Site #7 (page 76):

- CRT 2.5, C .25, R 2.5, H 60
- Provide appropriate transitions
- Limit development to less intensive commercial uses
- Consider live/work units
- Provide for a vegetated buffer

The Board received the following testimony:

Testimony:

“Proposed commercial apartment building proposed for the north side of Arliss is especially egregious...how can 50 foot buildings immediately adjacent to the backyards of single family homes be a transition?” – Page 31 (Public Hearing Record: Long Branch Sector Plan)

Staff Response:

The average depth of Site #7 parcels is 100 feet, which allows for an adequate transition. There is also an existing vegetated buffer that further reduces visual impacts. The noticeable difference in topography will need to be addressed as a part of the design guidelines. Staff proposes the following additions to the Plan recommendations to address the community’s concerns:

- *Maintain the existing vegetated buffer on Site #7, which may need to be supplemented, to provide an appropriate transition between new development and existing single family homes along Plymouth Avenue.*

- *Maintain a maximum 40 foot building height along the rear property line of site #7 to allow an appropriate transition to adjacent single family homes.*

Design guidelines will also provide language supporting adequate, compatible transitions with the existing single family development on Plymouth Avenue. Staff believes these recommendations will help mitigate the impacts of new development on the existing single family community.

Board Response:

While the Board did take a favorable view toward the increased density they also expressed concerns about the potential impacts to the single family residential community along Plymouth Street. The Board requested that Staff provide a 3-D model of the site showing the proposed recommendations illustrating the proposed transitions. Staff will prepare a model of the site for the April 11th work session.

The Board also wanted Staff to expand/clarify the term “less intrusive commercial uses” in the Plan.

Staff Response:

Staff is proposing the following language:

Less intrusive commercial uses are defined as small, neighborhood serving retailing and offices with limited trip generation. Special Exceptions and limited uses are also not encouraged in these areas.

At the March 21st worksession, the Board also discussed the potential of this site being used for staging and construction of the Purple Line. MTA stated that they have no desire or intention to purchase these properties. Testimony was also received from area residents discussing the potential of this site as a neighborhood park. This was also discussed by the Planning Board at the worksession.

Staff has since taken another visit to the site and its’ feasibility as a park is being reviewed by the Parks department. The Parks department will provide greater detail on the potential of this site at the May 9th work session.

Long Branch Town Center and Town Center Area

The Long Branch Town Center area includes all of the commercially zoned properties and identified residential properties east of the Long Branch Stream Valley Park. The Super Block (Long Branch Town Center) represents one of the largest developable sites within the Town Center area and serves as the focal point for Long Branch. The Town Center (aka Super Block) is comprised of six individually owned parcels and acts as the economic engine and the primary destination within the Plan area. It has a strong regional reputation due to its concentration of small businesses including a large number of culturally diverse shops and eateries, which also provide a considerable number of local jobs.

Equally important is the site’s proximity to a number of public facilities (i.e. Long Branch Library, Community Center and Swimming Pool), densely populated garden apartment complexes and a planned

Purple Line station. The Sector Plan seeks to enhance the capacity of the Town Center by increasing density, introducing mixed use development, and defining its focus as the center of the Long Branch Community.

Long Branch Town Center

8701, 8800, 8805-8809 Flower Avenue

8528 and 8550 Piney Branch Road

8750 Arliss Street

Size: 431, 010 square feet

Existing Zoning: C-1 and CROZ Existing Height: varied 18-45 feet

The Sector Plan recommends the following:

Zoning: CRT – 2.5, C .5, R 2.0, H 60

Additional recommendations include the conveyance of up to one-half acre of land to the Parks Department for the creation of a Civic Green. This would provide much needed urban open space within the Long Branch Town Center area.

Testimony:

Public Hearing testimony addressed the use of the CRT Zones, rather than the less intensive CRN Zones. While residents primarily raised issues of compatibility and appropriate transitions Flower Theater and Shopping Center owners and Washington Real Estate Investment Trust (WRIT) representatives expressed concerns, suggesting that proposed densities and building heights were insufficient for many sites to reach full development potential. They testified that this was due in part to the Plan’s proposed recommendations and proposed public benefits and amenities.

Staff Response:

Staff believes that the proposed CRT Zones are appropriate for the Long Branch Town Center as the majority of the properties are currently zoned C-1, with a CROZ overlay allowing a mix of uses. Additionally, a Purple Line station is planned for the area, which benefits from and supports the Plan’s mixed use development recommendations. Development of the Super Block and other properties located in the area is best suited for the CRT Zones since they accommodate buffers and transitions to protect existing single-family neighborhoods from potential impacts. These transitions and buffers will be described further in the urban design guidelines.

Staff is also proposing the following changes to the Site 1 recommendations:

Remove

- Designate the Flower Theater and Shopping Center and its environmental setting as a historic resource in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and incorporate them as part of any proposed redevelopment
- Achieve minimum LEED Gold or equivalent building certification and efforts to improve tree canopy to cover between 25 and 30 percent or greater
- Establish a new urban park as Long Branch’s central civic gathering space that is:
 - at least ½ acre

- owned, operated, and maintained by the Parks Department
- with its exact location and design determined during the development review

Add

- Staff is proposing the following language for the Civic Green:
 - *“A central civic green, urban park with a minimum size of .5 acre, to be located on an Interim Development (Phase One) site within an area of highest density. The park should be located near the planned Arliss Street Station and have a visible connection to nearby activating uses and contain a mixture of hard and soft surfaces, including an event space.”*
- Designate the Flower Theater façade on the Locational Atlas and incorporate it into any proposed redevelopment.

Revisions

- Identify sites and design solutions to increase the parking supply, ~~including the construction of a public parking facility~~ and applying shared parking programs.
- A private street that connects Flower Avenue with Garland Avenue at a signalized location.

Public Benefits and Amenities

There was also general discussion and testimony regarding recommended public benefits and amenities and the resulting impacts on the potential redevelopment of the Super Block.

Staff Response:

Staff believes the mix of uses as proposed are adequate and reflect the vision of creating a neighborhood-serving town center with local retail and commercial uses. Additionally, Staff believes the remaining recommended Public Benefits and Amenities (i.e. affordable housing, support for small businesses and parking strategies) are comprehensive in nature and are necessary to provide the community with much needed physical and quality of life improvements.

Staff also proposes the following changes to the CR Zone incentive density category recommendation:

- Major Public Facilities
 - Public Parking (remove)
 - Police Sub-Station (added)
- Quality of Building and Site Design
 - ~~Historic resource protection (Flower Theater at 8701 Flower Avenue)~~
- ~~Retained buildings (Flower Theater)~~

WRIT

The largest property owner on the Super Block is the *Washington Real Estate Investment Trust (WRIT)* and it owns the 5.4 acre site located close to the planned Purple Line Station. This property is home to the Giant grocery and a number locally-serving retail and commercial services.

WRIT representatives testified that the Sector Plan's recommended 2.5 FAR is not achievable due to the following limiting factors:

- Maximum 60 foot height
- Loss of land along Arliss Road due to an expanded Purple Line and ROW
- proposed public benefits and amenities (including structured parking and the Civic Green)

WRIT has proposed a maximum height of 150 feet, with a transition to 60 feet along Arliss Road. Additionally, they would like to relocate the proposed private street so it does not bifurcate their property. According to WRIT, the street as currently proposed, further reduces developable area.

Staff Response:

Due to time constraints Staff was unable to finish discussing this issue at the February 21st worksession. Staff acknowledges that recent increases to the width of Arliss Street have reduced the developable area of the Super Block. However, there have been additional conversations with property owners, including several meetings where Staff presented and discussed revised plan concepts. Staff continues to refine the land use and zoning recommendations to attempt to offset the encroachment of the Purple Line and encourage redevelopment of this site. Based on recent property reductions, Staff believes additional height and an increased FAR will be required to accommodate full development potential of this 5.4 acre parcel.

An additional meeting is scheduled for March 15th to discuss the impacts of an expanded Arliss Street and Purple Line on the property. Staff will meet with the WRIT, MTA, Kay Properties and SHA to conclude recommendations for a cross section and subsequent land use and zoning changes. The final recommendations will be described in a 3-D model that will be presented at the April 11th work session.

Encroachment into Town Center (Site 1)

MTA's proposed alignment of the Purple Line along Arliss Street goes from a tunnel, to a portal, and then to an at-grade transit way. This requires a significant expansion of the Arliss Street right-of-way. Most of this right-of-way is acquired from the Town Center (Site 1) side of the road, ranging from an estimated 25 to 50 feet.

Testimony:

WRIT submitted testimony that the Purple Line Concept Plan encroachments hinder redevelopment of the Town Center block. WRIT is concerned that the proposed alignment impacts 17% of their property (0.9 acres) and results in a loss of 22,400 square feet of commercial space and 90 residential units. In general, the proposed alignment unfairly burdens landowners on the Town Center site. According to WRIT, the MTA alignment, combined with other Plan recommendations, creates a scenario where the recommended 2.5 FAR is unachievable.

Staff Response:

There has been general discussion about these issues at the first two worksessions, along with a detailed discussion on March 21st. This followed a series of meetings to discuss issues and potential options for reducing impacts to Town Center. MTA presented several draft options for reducing encroachments, while the typical Arliss Street cross section had been discussed with MCDOT in depth, particularly on-street parking.

Staff and the various stakeholders - MTA, MCDOT, WRIT, and Kay Management (owners of the Flower Branch Apartments) met and provided the Board with an update at March 21st worksession.

Staff agreed that the Purple Line Plan for this area, as currently proposed, does not provide an equitable distribution of impacts to both sides of Arliss Street. Also acknowledged are the existing apartments on the north/east side of the street and the large parking lot on the Town Center side and the reasonable approach of restraining costs by shifting impacts to the parking lot. Ultimately, there was a decision made and approved by the Board to support a side alignment without on-street parking for the Purple Line along Arliss Street. This provided for equitable distribution of physical impacts to properties along Arliss Street.

Staff will illustrate these new recommendations and incorporate any subsequent changes to height and density into the presentation at the April 11th worksession.

Flower Theater and Shopping Center

The owners of the Flower Avenue Theater and Shopping Center (*Flower Avenue Shopping Center Limited Partnership*) testified that while they support the Plan's goal of reinvestment they disagree with the Historic Preservation Commission recommendation to designate the Flower Theater and Shopping Center as a historic resource. Additionally, the owners testified that the recommended 2.5 FAR is not achievable due to other Sector Plan recommendations (i.e. structured parking, LEED Gold certification, and increased MPDU requirements) and requested that the zoning recommendation be revised to the following: CRT 3.0, C 1.5, R 3.0, H 85).

Their representative (Shalom Baranes and Associates) stated

- "Allow development of up to 3.0 FAR and allow maximum building height of 85 feet, with design guidelines suggesting heights stepping down towards Flower Avenue. Allow an FAR of 3.0 with a maximum height of 85 feet, which is required to support desired community benefits."
- "Allow commercial density up to 1.5 FAR to provide more flexibility to accommodate mixed use development".

Staff Response:

At the March 7th work session the Board decided to only designate the façade of the Flower Theater and its flanking wings on the Locational Atlas, leaving the remainder of the parcel available for full development. As such, Staff believes that the recommended 2.5 FAR is adequate and can be achieved with an increase in the height to a maximum of 70 feet. Staff supported an increase in the FAR in order

to achieve the Plan vision of a shared public parking structure, however, this approach has been rejected by the property owner.

The Board also requested that Staff prepare and include language in the Sector Plan illustrating the intent of the Locational Atlas designation of the Flower Theater. Staff will provide language in the design guidelines to address place-making and potential redevelopment of the site.

Proposed Language

“While the Flower Theater and Shopping Center meet the criteria of the Preservation Ordinance, the public interest of increased density outweigh the benefits. As such, the Flower Theater along with three flanking stores is to be placed on the Locational Atlas. Redevelopment will be guided by urban design guidelines to assure compatibility of redevelopment with the historic resource.”

Staff anticipates meeting again with property owners to continue the design guidelines discussion.

8750 Arliss Street - Flower Theater and Shopping Center Limited Partnership

The property owner accepts Staff’s suggested density and heights; however, asks for a mix of uses which provide greater flexibility to meet market demand. Pursuant to Site Plan No. 820060080, approved by the Planning Board on September 28, 2006, up to 55,800 square feet of commercial gross floor area has already been approved for this site – an approximately 1.4 FAR.

Staff Response:

Staff is proposing a change in the recommended building heights to better achieve the recommended 2.5 FAR. While Site Plan No. 820060080 was conditionally approved and is valid until 10-26-2013, Staff believes that the Plan’s recommendation is in line with the current vision for Long Branch. Additionally, the owner is not prohibited from developing under the approved Site Plan.

Remaining Properties

Neither testimony nor any comments have been received from the remaining Long Branch Town Center (Super Block) property owners.

Staff Response:

While these property owners have not requested additional density or height, Staff is proposing changes in order to comprehensively address zoning and land use issues within Town Center. These recommendations will be presented as part of the larger Town Center presentation on April 11th.

The Piney Branch Neighborhood Village is located east of the Long Branch Stream Valley and is home to a planned Purple Line station to be located within the median along University Boulevard at/near the Gilbert Street intersection. This area also has an existing commercial district, and contains a variety of uses including the New Hampshire Estates Public Park.

Piney Branch Neighborhood Village (Northeast) (page 55)

618,640 and 642 University Boulevard, East and ~~8818 Piney Branch Road~~

Size: 1.83 acres

Existing Zoning: C-1, CROZ and R-60

Existing Height: varied 18-45 feet

The Sector Plan recommends the following:

Zoning: CRT – 2.5, C .5, R 2.5, H 60

Additional recommendations included support for the development of a neighborhood service center that could provide social, educational and naturalization services and a publicly accessible green space of at least ¼ acre.

It includes one Interim Development site (Site #2) which is located at the northeast quadrant of Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard. Please note that testimony was received from the Clifton Park Baptist Church and presented to Board at the March 7th worksession. The church's representatives requested that the property maintain its existing R-60 zoning as there were no plans to provide for residential and/or commercial uses on site. Additionally, the Church expressed concern that any expansion of the church's existing facility would trigger the public benefits and amenities provisions of the proposed CRT zone. This requested was supported by Staff and presented to the Board.

Board Response:

The Board accepted the request but asked Staff to prepare language allowing for mixed-use development if the property is sold or acquired by another entity.

Staff Response:

8818 Piney Branch is owned and operated by the Clifton Park Baptist Church as a place of worship. While the owners currently do not plan to redevelop the site for residential and/or commercial uses the property is suitable for mixed use development. The Plan allows for the development of this site as mixed-use should the property is sold and acquired by another entity.

Site #13 - Glenville Road Extension

Glenville Road is currently a cul-de-sac lined with garden apartments and some single family homes. The Plan recommends (page 60) that Glenville Road be extended to Piney Branch Road and reclassified as a Minor Arterial, with a minimum right-of-way of 70 feet to facilitate Long Term redevelopment and improve local circulation. This street is also referenced in the Plan recommendations for Site #13, Piney Branch Road/University Boulevard (Northwest) (page 82).

These recommendations are as follows:

- Appropriately locate residential uses along Glenville Road and only allow limited, less intrusive commercial uses until an adequate vehicular connection between Glenville Road and Piney Branch Road is established

Additionally, the construction of the Glenville Road extension is recommended as a Major Public Facility under the CR Zone incentive density category.

Testimony:

Testimony was received from Brett Rouillier and the Montgomery Housing Partnership regarding the proposed extension and reclassification of Glenville Road. Mr. Rouillier testified to the impact of development on the already failing intersections (page 48 – Long Branch Sector Plan – Public Hearing Record Transcript). He stated that “...Piney Branch and University Boulevard is a failing intersection. They’re building like little ring roads to get around that intersection. One of them is Glenville Avenue...a very small street going through a neighborhood. How can you make this road an arterial street through a community?”

Greg Baker of the Montgomery Housing Partnership testified to the following at the public hearing (see page 86) “we have four properties at Glenville Road. We do not like the idea of connecting Glenville Road to Piney Branch Road”.

Staff Response:

This road was recommended to provide access for future development on Site #13, which includes the four properties owned by the Montgomery Housing Partnership. As a cul-de-sac Glenville Road would be unsuitable for any significant increase in development. This road is not primarily intended to reduce congestion. It was not tested for congestion relief because it is dependent upon redevelopment, though it may help alleviate some congestion at the intersection of Piney Branch Road and University Boulevard.

Staff continues to support the extension of Glenville Road as a Long Term enhancement to the Plan Area internal road network. The challenges are significant as there is a substantial grade between the cul-de-sac and Piney Branch Rd, and Glenville Road would need to be re-graded to tie into Piney Branch Road. As such, the extension could not likely be constructed without redevelopment of most or all of the residential buildings on Glenville Rd, and without the acquisition of the parcel where the Miles Glass Company is located. While this road is a Long Term recommendation, it could ultimately tie into a realigned driveway to the Long Branch Pool and Recreation Center driveway. A driveway recommended addressing the loss of access attributed to the construction of the Purple Line.

Attachments

1. Updated - Summary of written and verbal testimony received for the public record.
2. Long Branch Sector Plan – Development Site Map
3. Long Branch Sector Plan – Staff Report Worksession #1, #2 and #3