



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

July 16, 2004

MEMORANDUM – MANDATORY REFERRAL

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division *JAC*

FROM: Kristin O'Connor, Senior Planner *KO*
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SUBJECT 1: Forest Conservation Plan: White Flint Metro Parking Garage – Phase 1 of North Bethesda Town Center, Marinelli Road and Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, TS-M Zone, North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan

SUBJECT 2: Mandatory Referral No. 04202-WMATA-1: White Flint Metro Parking Garage - Phase I of North Bethesda Town Center, Marinelli Road and Rockville Pike, North Bethesda, TS-M Zone, North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan

This combined staff report provides recommendations on the Forest Conservation Plan and the Mandatory Referral for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Metro parking garage at White Flint.

SUBJECT 1: STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Forest Conservation Plan

The staff recommends APPROVAL of the Forest Conservation Plan with the following conditions:

1. Minimize limits of disturbance within the critical root zone of tree #38 and #43.
2. Begin pre-construction measures as soon as possible.
3. Prune tree #38 during winter dormancy.

SUBJECT 2: STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Mandatory Referral No. 04202-WMATA-1

The staff recommends APPROVAL of the Mandatory Referral, and the following comments should be transmitted to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA):

1. Coordinate the structure's design elements, streetscape, and utilities with the site plan for the North Bethesda Town Center (LCOR).

2. Plant Willow Oak trees 30' on center along Marinelli Road, adjacent to the curb. Alternate the planting of tall evergreens (Fosters Hollies), Quercus Phellos, and Leyland Cypress along the garage on Marinelli Road to screen the garage from adjacent residents and community areas. Plant Quercus Alba along the eastern and western sides of the garage. Landscape the understory using lirioppe (Big Blue or Monroe White).
3. Locate a new pedestrian entry and sidewalk connection along the southwest corner of the parking garage at Chapman Avenue to improve the access to Metro.
4. Provide an interior crosswalk system within the garage to allow for better pedestrian circulation patterns. Each stair tower should connect directly to the interior crosswalk system.
5. Place a second pedestrian sidewalk along the northeast side of the vehicular entrance into the parking garage to improve circulation from the North Bethesda Town Center site.
6. Achieve a minimum of 0.1 of light spillover, measured at the sides of the building. Relocate rooftop poles closer together. The rooftop light poles should be shorter, no more than 20' maximum in height, (including the mount/building column). Poles should emit no more than 150 watts each.
7. Provide five percent of green space on the rooftop.
8. Include a screen or baffle for the sides of the garage to provide better screening to adjacent housing.
9. Provide 52 bike racks and 40 bike lockers for bicycle parking inside or adjacent to the proposed parking garage given the proximity of the North Bethesda Trail along Rockville Pike (MD 355).
10. Reduce the limits of disturbance of the garage by ten feet to mitigate significant root loss to the two trees closest to the proposed construction. Locate the garage a minimum of 30 feet from the curb.
11. Comply with the conditions of the approval of the Final Forest Conservation Plan prior to the release of the Sediment Control Permit by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE).
12. Charge WMATA fees during the hours of operation (24 hours, 7 days a week) for parking in the garage.
13. Consider using locally sourced sustainable or renewable materials, recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council standards for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), in the construction the garage.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) has submitted site development plans for a parking garage at White Flint. This project is the first phase of the North Bethesda Town Center mixed-use development at the White Flint Metro Station. The project proposes to relocate existing Metro surface parking into a six-level garage on the WMATA-owned parcel on the east side of Rockville Pike. The current parking area is located on the north side of Marinelli Road between Rockville Pike (MD 355) and Nebel Street and has 1,185 parking spaces for transit riders plus WMATA employees. The temporary surface parking area was built and open to the public before the start of construction for the Montgomery County Conference Center.

The proposed garage is a new six-level (five elevated) parking structure with centrally located stair towers and elevators along Chapman Avenue and Citadel Avenue. Due to Life Safety regulations and topography, the stair towers and elevators have been repositioned to the center of the eastern and western walls of the garage. The hours of operation would be 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. During construction, WMATA intends to stay within the allowable tolerances of 75 dba during the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Montgomery County Code, Chapter 31B).

The garage proposes a variety of landscape features (including Bethesda streetscape), pedestrian access points, and 1,277 parking spaces for Metrorail and Metrobus patrons and WMATA employees. The vehicular access from the proposed WMATA garage site is from Citadel Avenue approximately 240 feet north of Marinelli Road. The pedestrian access points for the proposed WMATA garage are from centrally-located stairwells along Chapman Avenue and Citadel Avenue.

Site

The site is located on a 32-acre WMATA-owned parcel on the east side of Rockville Pike, located in the White Flint Sector Plan Area. The site is zoned TS-M and is known as part of "Area 14" in the *North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan*. The proposed garage site is located on the north side of Marinelli Road between Citadel Avenue and Chapman Avenue. The topography slopes downward from Rockville Pike to Nebel Street, leaving the third floor of the garage as the first fully exposed floor.

Across Marinelli Road from the subject property is an existing office high-rise and vehicle inspection area for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). In addition, Strathmore Court Apartments, a residential high-rise, is located directly across from the proposed garage. To the west of the apartment building, the WMATA bus parking garage and surface bus lot, and various commercial uses such as auto repair, paint store, cleaning supply outlet, and health club are located.

The most prominent feature of this site is the stand of trees adjacent to its northern property line. Several of these large mature trees have significant root zones that will be impacted by the garage.

Previous Regulatory Action

The prior regulatory actions are as follows:

1. The Planning Board held a public hearing on November 7, 2002, and made a recommendation to the Hearing Examiner for Zoning Application No. G-801, LCOR's White Flint. The Hearing Examiner transmitted his report and recommendations to the District Council on January 24, 2003. The District Council approved Zoning Application No. G-801 on April 29, 2003.
2. The Planning Board approved Pre-Preliminary Plan No. 7-04001 at its public hearing on October 16, 2003. At that hearing, the Planning Board approved the Adequate Public (transportation) Facilities test under the FY 04 AGP's Alternative Review Procedure (ARP) for Metro Station Policy Areas.

ANALYSIS

Master Plan

The proposed development conforms to the master plan for this area. The *North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan*, approved and adopted in 1992, recommends that the large WMATA-owned block that contains the White Flint Metro Station parking garage be developed at "... urban scale, with tamed vehicular movement, enhanced streetscape, a fine-grained street grid, urban parks and high-intensity mixed uses..." to improve the area for pedestrians and strongly support Metro (page 127). This project provides for the redevelopment of the existing Metro parking lot by converting the surface lot into garage parking.

The approved and adopted Master Plan recommends that the White Flint Area "develop policies to ensure a lively pedestrian environment" (p. 51). This project provides for the pedestrian movements along the public sidewalks along Marinelli Road, Chapman Avenue and Citadel Avenue. A sidewalk connection will also be provided into the garage in the entrance, from the sidewalk along Marinelli Road, and at the stair tower location along Chapman Avenue.

In accordance with the approved and adopted *North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan*, the proposed project provides for the recommended roadways and bikeways as follows:

1. Rockville Pike (MD 355) is a major highway, M-6, with a 134-foot right-of-way with a Class I bikeway on the east side. MD 355 (known by different names) is a north-south roadway extending from the District of Columbia to Frederick County. On the west side of the site, Rockville Pike (MD 355) has six-to-seven through travel lanes with separate turning lanes at intersections.
2. Marinelli Road is an east-west, two-to-four-lane, 50-foot business district street, B-6, with an 80-foot right-of-way with a Class I/II bikeway.
3. Chapman (also Citadel) Avenue is a north-south roadway business district street, B-4, with an 80-foot right-of-way.

Transportation

Transportation Planning confirms that the number of parking spaces in the proposed garage would be equivalent to the previous 1,277 spaces identified as designated parking spaces in the WMATA White Flint Metro Station's surface parking area previously located in the northwest quadrant of Rockville Pike (MD 355) and Marinelli Road. This number of spaces proposed in the subject garage also includes parking for WMATA employees while excluding the 40 short-term metered spaces in the kiss-and-ride section of the previous parking area located on the west side of Rockville Pike (MD 355) (i.e., to be located elsewhere within the North Bethesda Town Center).

The traffic study prepared for North Bethesda Town Center included the analysis of redistributed peak-hour vehicular trips from the prior parking area located on the west side of Rockville Pike (MD 355) to the current surface parking area and proposed

garage located on their east side location. Using traffic counts collected when the prior parking area was in operation, the 1,277-space parking facility generated 435 peak-hour trips during the weekday morning peak period (6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.) and 145 peak-hour trips during the weekday evening peak period (4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.). These peak-hour trips were redistributed from the prior to the current and proposed access point(s) through the analyzed intersections.

The Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) is satisfied because the number of parking spaces would be equivalent to the number that existed on the prior parking area on the west side of Rockville Pike (MD 355). The traffic study for the North Bethesda Town Center has already documented the traffic impact of redistributing the site-generated trips.

Staff supports the construction of the sidewalks along Chapman Avenue and Citadel Avenue around the garage site. Staff also proposes the addition of 20 bike lockers to the proposed 20 bike lockers (for a total of 40 lockers) and 20 more bike racks than the amount the applicant proposed (32) for bicycle parking in or next to the proposed parking garage given the proximity of the North Bethesda Trail along Rockville Pike (MD 355).

Forest Conservation

A Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) was submitted as a part of the entire North Bethesda Town Center development. An isolated 1-acre upland hardwood forest, dominated by Tulip Tree, White Oak, Southern Red Oak and Hickory, was identified. This stand has been identified as a high priority save-area as part of the entire LCOR development. There are two individual large trees that will be particularly affected by the development of this parking garage. Because of their size these trees compose a large percent of the total forest canopy and their individual loss would be significant to the forest stand. The applicant has proposed a number of protective measures for these trees including root pruning, substantial tree protection fencing and signs and root protection matting where limited traffic across roots is necessary. In addition, they have proposed a pre-construction plan for enhancing the health of these trees including soil amendments, watering and mulching. However, the measures that preserve the adjacent forest may not be adequate to address the significant root loss to the two trees closest to the proposed construction. Staff has asked that the limits of disturbance for this part of the building be moved another ten feet away from these trees. The applicant is currently reviewing the feasibility of this measure. Staff also suggests that pre-construction measures to improve the health of the trees and remaining root systems take place as soon as possible.

Finally, one of the large trees has several long branches that are high in the canopy and will over-hang this building. Staff recognizes the need to prune these limbs. This work should be done during winter dormancy rather than immediately as proposed in their plan.

Stormwater Management

This site is located entirely within the Randolph Branch subwatershed of Lower Rock Creek. The water quality is fair and the subwatershed is designated a watershed restoration area. Stormwater management for this site is to be addressed primarily as part of the development of the larger LCOR site. Runoff will be directed to a large underground facility to the east of the property. The applicant is providing pre-treatment for water quality by constructing an underground sand filter.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards can be achieved in this application. Staff recommends using locally or regional sourced building materials in the construction of the garage.

Relationship to the Site Plan for the Remaining Project (LCOR)

This garage project is the first phase of a larger site plan, the LCOR/North Bethesda Town Center project. Staff understand that the applicant will not submit the site plan for the LCOR project until late fall or early winter. WMATA has a tight construction schedule for the garage (grading to begin this fall), so the Mandatory Referral was submitted in advance of the site plan. The Development Review Committee reviewed the WMATA garage plan as a discussion item at its June 28 meeting to provide coordination with the future site plan for the remaining site area.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Staff at the M-NCPPC recognize the community is most concerned with lighting, noise, and walkability. At the public hearing held on November 4, 2003, a community member requested that the garage continually charge for parking during the hours of operation to provide a disincentive for people to drive to the site and add more traffic to Rockville Pike (MD 355). Staff encourages WMATA to work with Strathmore Court, the future residents of the North Bethesda Town Center, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC)—especially during times of high alert when the federal security may inconvenience area residents, visitors, and Metrorail and Metrobus commuters.

CONCLUSION

With the pedestrian connections, landscape plan, improved sidewalks, tree preserve area, and the open movements along Marinelli Road for pedestrians, staff recommends approval of the mandatory referral with the comments listed at the beginning of this report.

Attachments

- Attachment A: Vicinity Map
- Attachment B: Site Plan
- Attachment C: Utility and Right of Way Map
- Attachment D: Landscape Plan
- Attachment E: Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation Plan
- Attachment F: Lighting Calculations
- Attachment G: Electrical Details
- Attachment H: North and West Elevations
- Attachment I: South and East Elevations
- Attachment J: Environmental Planning Memo
- Attachment K: Transportation Planning Memo
- Attachment L: Housing Opportunities Commission Letter
- Attachment M: Garrett Park Estates – White Flint Park Citizens' Association Letter