



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

ITEM # 14

7/29/04



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 23, 2004

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Richard Hawthorne, *RH* Acting Chief, Development Review Division

FROM: Richard. A. Weaver, Coordinator, Development Review Division, *RAW*

REVIEW TYPE: Preliminary Plan of Subdivision

APPLYING FOR: 54,235 square feet (42,000 leaseable) commercial retail grocery store and ancillary uses

PROJECT NAME: Kensington Safeway

CASE NO. 1-03075

REVIEW BASIS: Chapter 50, Montgomery County Subdivision Regulations

ZONE: C-2

LOCATION: Southeast quadrant of the intersection of Howard Avenue and Connecticut Avenue (MD 185)

MASTER PLAN: Kensington-Wheaton

APPLICANT: Safeway, Inc.

SUBMITTED: March 28, 2003

HEARING DATE: July 29, 2004

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, Subject to the Following Conditions:

- 1) Limit the development to 42,000 square feet of gross leaseable area (GLA) for a grocery store replacing an existing 22,704 square feet (GLA) of grocery store.
- 2) Dedicate sufficient right-of-way across the property frontage on Knowles Avenue between Connecticut Avenue and Armory Avenue to provide 80 feet from the opposite property line..
- 3) As a condition of site access, reconstruct Knowles Avenue between Armory Avenue and Connecticut Avenue to provide a three-lane cross section (two lanes westbound and one lane eastbound) approaching Connecticut Avenue, tapering to two lanes at Armory Avenue.
- 4) To satisfy Local Area Transportation Review, reconstruct the westbound approach of Plyers Mill Road at Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) by relocating the median to the south to provide for two left turn lanes, one through lane, and one right turn lane within the existing curbs and right of way.
- 5) Restrict large truck deliveries to the site to the hours between 3:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., daily.
- 6) Compliance with the conditions of approval for the preliminary forest conservation plan. The applicant must satisfy all conditions prior to recording of plat(s) or MCDPS issuance of sediment and erosion control permits
- 7) All road rights-of-way shown on the approved preliminary plan shall be dedicated, by the applicant, to the full width shown in the Master Plan unless otherwise designated on the preliminary plan.
- 8) All road right-of ways shown on the approved preliminary plan shall be constructed, by the applicant, to the full width mandated by the Master Plan, and to the design standards imposed by all applicable road codes. Only those roads (or portions thereof) expressly designated on the preliminary plan, "To Be Constructed By _____" are excluded from this condition.
- 9) Streetscaping treatment to comply with Department of Housing and Community Affairs letter dated, February 13, 2004.
- 10) Review and approval of the final landscape/streetscape and lighting plan by MNCPPC staff in conjunction with Town of Kensington prior to recordation of plats.
- 11) Compliance with conditions of approval of the MCDPS stormwater management letter dated, January 22, 2003.
- 12) The Adequate Public Facility (APF) review for the Preliminary Plan will remain valid for sixty one (61) months from the date of mailing of the Planning Board Opinion.
- 13) Other necessary easements shall be shown on the record plats.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The gross tract area of the Subject Property is 2.40 acres and is zoned C-2. The site is bound on the west by Connecticut Avenue, the north by Howard Avenue, the east by Armory Avenue and to the south by Knowles Avenue. The existing 22,700 square foot Safeway building and the associated parking lot currently occupy the site. A single-family structure is located on the property fronting on Armory Avenue. The grade on the site drops approximately 26 feet from the highest elevation at the intersection of Connecticut and Howard Avenues to the lowest elevation at the intersection of Armory and Knowles Avenue. No significant environmental features exist on the site.

The Subject Property abuts the Kensington Historic District. The western edge of the Historic District is defined by Armory Avenue, which is located to the rear of the proposed Safeway building.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

This application is a request to replace the existing 22,700 square foot Safeway Kensington store with a new store totaling 54,235 square feet of which 42,000 square feet is leaseable area. The new store will be located on the easternmost portion of the Subject Property with the rear of the store adjacent to Armory Avenue and the front of the store facing Connecticut Avenue. Parking for the building is accommodated by two parking areas: one in the front of the store with access from Connecticut Avenue, Howard Avenue and Knowles Avenue; the second parking area will be located beneath the building and accessed from Armory Avenue. The plan shows 259 parking spaces, of which 167 are in the lower level and 96 are on the surface lot.

Deliveries to the site will be accommodated at the rear access point on Armory Avenue. The majority of truck traffic is anticipated to approach the site from Connecticut Avenue and either use Howard Avenue or Knowles Avenue. Trucks leaving the site will turn right out of the building onto Armory and make another right on to Knowles for access back to Connecticut Avenue. Hours of truck delivery are limited to 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m.

On the Armory Avenue building frontage, special attention will be given to provide a pedestrian friendly streetscape with the edge of the Kensington Historic District. Along this boundary, the rear of the building will receive detailed attention to streetscaping and façade treatment. The sidewalk will be improved with pavers to a minimum width of eight feet. Planting boxes and three benches will be incorporated into the streetscape to improve the pedestrian experience. The rear façade of the building will use multiple colored brick and stone to break down the scale of the overall building height and length. Lighted show windows will simulate storefronts and also help to minimize the visual expanse of building length and height. On the northern and southern

boundaries of the Subject Property the applicant will construct a five foot sidewalk, separated from the curb to accommodate a landscape strip. The landscape strip will be planted with street trees consistent with programs elsewhere in Kensington and as reviewed by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. (see attachment A)

MASTER PLAN (see attachment B)

The proposed development conforms to the Sector Plan for the Town of Kensington. The *Approved and Adopted Sector Plan for the Town of Kensington (1978)*, provides little guidance for the specific site. The site is zoned C-2. Knowles Avenue has a proposed right-of-way of 80 feet. Since the Sector Plan was approved in 1978, there have been a number of changes in the Sector Plan area. The changes included a recommendation for a Historic District. The District was created that encompasses all the commercial buildings on Armory Avenue opposite the Safeway property.

Within the last few years, The Town of Kensington has improved Howard Avenue and Armory Avenue. Street furniture, such as lighting fixtures, benches, brick pavers and street trees have been placed on these streets and throughout the commercial area. Safeway has acquired all but two properties on the block formed by the four streets, Armory Avenue, Howard Avenue, Knowles Avenue and Connecticut Avenue, in order to facilitate expansion. The proposed plan shows a continuation of the streetscaping program initiated elsewhere in Kensington.

TOWN OF KENSINGTON

The Town Council will take a formal vote on the latest proposal prior to the Planning Board hearing. The Mayor of Kensington has indicated that she will attend the public hearing.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Historic Preservation Section acknowledges that the project abuts the Kensington Historic District. Staff has asked that the sidewalk and building along Armory Avenue provide a positive streetscape with respect to the relationship of the proposed development to the adjacent Historic District.

NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES: Traffic and impact to Armory Avenue

Traffic

Staff has received numerous letters and phone calls expressing concerns about the generation of unwanted traffic and traffic circulation created by this proposal. Proposed conditions #4, regarding improvements to Knowles Avenue is essential to address local circulation in the immediate Safeway area. Staff and the applicant have evaluated the

traffic generation figures and circulation patterns and determined that the proposal adequately addresses these concerns.

Impacts to Armory Avenue

Considerable neighborhood opposition has been expressed regarding the impact that the building will have on the edge of the Historic District along Armory Avenue. At its highest point on Armory Avenue the building reaches 42 feet, the maximum allowed in the C-2 Zone under the standard method of development. The treatment of the rear façade of the building has been coordinated with the Town of Kensington and attempts to provide a compatible pedestrian experience with the confronting Historic District.

The treatment of the rear wall uses multiple colors and masonry treatment to break down the scale of the overall length and height of the structure. At the rear entrance along Armory Avenue, the plan shows architectural treatment of the garage opening to draw the customers to the entrance. The opening is covered with a metal canopy to again, break down the scale of the building. The remainder of the rear façade will include a mixture of masonry treatment and fenestration. At the pedestrian level, the plan anticipates a number of lighted show windows that will be made available to the public to post items of interest. The upper levels of the wall will include lighted murals; the design of which has yet to be determined. The sidewalk treatment includes brick pavers for an expanded sidewalk, street trees, planter boxes, and benches. The overall goal of the treatment along Armory Avenue was to enliven the pedestrian usage of this corridor.

TRANSPORTATION:

Local Area Transportation Review

A traffic study was submitted to determine the impact of the proposed development on the local area roadway network. Eight intersections were evaluated in the study area. The trips generated from the site were added to existing and background traffic (trips from approved but unbuilt developments in the area) to estimate the total future traffic. The total future traffic was assigned to the local area roadway network and the affected intersections were analyzed for their level of performance. All intersections analyzed are projected to operate within the 1650 Critical Lane Volume (CLV) congestion standard for the Kensington/Wheaton policy area except the intersection of Connecticut Avenue (MD 185) and Plyers Mill Road. The total future evening peak hour CLV for this intersection is estimated to be 1746.

In order to mitigate the impact of site-generated traffic at this intersection, the applicant will reconstruct the westbound approach of Plyers Mill Road at MD 185 by relocating the median to the south to provide for two left turn lanes, one through lane, and one right turn lane within the existing curbs and right of way. This improvement will reduce the CLV for the evening peak hour from 1746 to 1644.

The following table shows the results of the CLV analysis for intersections in the project area.

INTERSECTIONS	Existing		Background		Total Future	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
MD 185 and MD 193	1,342	942	1,343	942	1,347	950
MD 185 and Plyers Mill Road With Improvements	1,560	1,735	1,560	1,737	1,565 1,536	1,746 1,644
Plyers Mill Road and Metropolitan Avenue/Concord Street	613	895	613	895	615	899
Knowles Avenue and Summit Avenue	1,262	899	1,263	901	1,274	927
MD 185 and Knowles Avenue	1,590	1,262	1,591	1262	1,606	1,302
Howard Avenue and Safeway Access	181	306	181	306	214	360
Armory Avenue and Safeway Access	181	215	181	215	188	370
Knowles Avenue and Safeway Access	-	-	-	-	132	212

Site Access and Circulation

The site will have four access points: full movement access from Howard Avenue, Knowles Avenue, and Armory Avenue, and right in and right out access onto Connecticut Avenue. The traffic study indicates that there will be balanced use of the four access points such that no one location will be overburdened. The accesses provide convenient ingress to and egress from the site for patrons coming to the site from all directions.

The accesses from Howard Avenue and Knowles Avenue will serve upper level surface parking at the front entrance to the store. In order to provide safe and efficient access from Knowles Avenue, the applicant will widen Knowles Avenue to three lanes (two westbound and one eastbound) from Connecticut Avenue across the property frontage, tapering to two lanes at Armory Avenue.

The access from Armory Avenue will serve lower level garage parking and loading/unloading operations for large trucks. This driveway is located a sufficient distance from Knowles Avenue to provide for safe and efficient pedestrian and vehicular operation. The applicant has demonstrated that the turning radii at the entrance on Armory Avenue are adequate for safe and efficient turning of trucks in and out of the

loading/unloading area. Further, the applicant has agreed to limit the hours during which large trucks will utilize this area to 3:00 p.m. to 8: a.m., daily.

Pedestrian Impact Analysis

The traffic study evaluated the pedestrian activities in the area. Sidewalks are located along the frontage of Safeway on Knowles Avenue, Howard Avenue and Armory Avenue. At the intersection of MD 185 and Knowles Avenue, there is a traffic signal for safe and efficient movement of pedestrians and vehicles. There are convenient bus routes/stops along the site frontage.

Pedestrian access from the rear of the building, along Armory Avenue, is accommodated by either entering the garage through the vehicle entrance or a side door located on the Knowles Avenue frontage. Once in the parking garage pedestrians are guided to the elevator locations by a striped pathway that provides safe access and avoids the truck loading area.

Policy Area Review/Staging Ceiling Analysis

The site is located within the Kensington/Wheaton Policy Area, which has a remaining capacity of 2,770 jobs and 2,524 housing units as of May 31, 2004. Therefore, no policy area improvements are required.

ENVIRONMENTAL

The applicant has filed a preliminary forest conservation plan. The plan proposes to meet the forest conservation requirement (0.36 acres), on site, through tree canopy coverage.

Attachments:

Attachment A– Department of Housing and Community Affairs letter
Attachment B – Community Based Planning memorandum

The Planning Board has been provided with a copy of all correspondence associated with this application