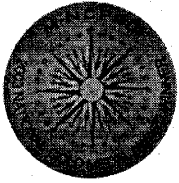


# ITEM #21 ATTACHMENT 1



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning

June 8, 2006

## MEMORANDUM

TO: John Carter, Chief  
Community-Based Planning

VIA: Richard C. Hawthorne, Chief *XCW for RCH*  
Transportation Planning

Shahriar Etemadi, Supervisor  
Transportation Planning

FROM: Scott A. James, Planner/Coordinator *Saj*  
Transportation Planning  
Countywide Planning Division

SUBJECT: Lot 31/31A mixed-use redevelopment (G-850)  
Proposal for change in zoning from R-60 to TS-M  
Bethesda CBD

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This memorandum is Transportation Planning staff's review of the proposed zoning change from R-60 to TS-M to facilitate the construction of a mixed-use development, including up to 245 residential units and 40,000 square feet of retail space on the public parking lots 31 and 31A in downtown Bethesda.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Transportation Planning staff recommends approval of the above referenced zoning amendment with the following conditions as part of the APF test for transportation requirements related to Local Area Transportation Review (LATR):

1. Limit the development to 250 residential units, and 40,000 square feet of retail space.
2. Dedicate and show on the record plat eighty (80) feet of right-of-way for the construction of Woodmont Avenue between Bethesda Avenue and Leland Street.

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3. Revise and submit an LATR study with detailed information regarding garage access point(s) location, new data on pedestrian and bicycle use, capacity, design and operation for review by the M-NCPPC concurrently with the preliminary plan application for the joint public-private development.
4. Provide detailed information regarding the ultimate location, operation and alignment of the relocated Woodmont Avenue between Bethesda Avenue and Leland Street.
5. Provide documentation of negotiated agreement between the applicant and DPWT to allow for private access beneath the relocated Woodmont Avenue right-of-way.
6. Document all communications with all concerned private parties, including adjacent property owners, residents, and recreational users of the Capital Crescent Trail regarding the future design and operation of Woodmont Avenue and its intersection with Bethesda Avenue.

## DISCUSSION

### Site Location, Access, Circulation, and Parking

The subject property is located in downtown Bethesda, currently used as surface public parking lots 31 and 31A at the intersection of Bethesda Avenue and Woodmont Avenue. The property is bounded by Bethesda Avenue to the north, the Capital Crescent Trail to the west and traversed by Woodmont Avenue on the eastern portion of the site. Vehicular access to the parking lots is via driveways located on Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue. Directly south of the site is Leland Street, a residential development of single-family homes.

Woodmont Avenue was dedicated as a public street with connection to Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355) at two points, north and south of the Bethesda CBD. Woodmont Avenue operates as an alternative route for southbound traffic through Bethesda. Northbound traffic along Woodmont Avenue is redirected east and west at the intersection of Hampden Lane in downtown Bethesda. South of the project site, limited turning movements from southbound Woodmont onto Leland Street are in place to reduce the volume of peak-hour traffic through the residential neighborhood. According to current traffic volume counts, the majority of the traffic along Woodmont Avenue is from the north, with a considerable amount (nearly 40% of the daily approach volume) turning right onto westbound Bethesda Avenue

The current surface parking lots are heavily used for long-term and peak afternoon to early evening hours parking. Local restaurant and service retail draw high numbers of clientele on late evenings and weekends, when parking and roadway circulation is congested. There is also substantial demand for weekend recreational use of

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the surface parking lot as a loading/unloading area for users of the Capital Crescent Trail to access downtown DC and the Georgetown Branch trail into Silver Spring.

Parking needs are currently met by 279 surface spaces, with an additional 922 spaces provided in Garage 57, located west of Lot 31 along Bethesda Avenue. Metered on-street parking spaces are available along both approaches of Bethesda Avenue and along Woodmont Avenue north of the site. Additional surface parking lots are located east of Wisconsin Avenue (Lots #10 and #24) as well as several privately managed parking lots and garages.

## Proposed Mixed-Use Development

The project site is to be developed as a mixed-use site, with both residential and retail land uses, atop a public parking garage. Up to 250 residential high-rise condominiums and 40,000 square feet of ground and second floor retail services are proposed on this site. Beneath the buildings, the applicant proposes to construct a multi-story underground parking garage of approximately 1500 spaces, 340 of which will be reserved for private use by tenants of the residential units within the mixed-use development. The garage will be located entirely below ground on five levels of structured parking. The applicant proposes to include features within the garage to allow for simplified access<sup>1</sup> for patrons and to encourage the use of the garage by cyclists and other recreational users of the nearby Capital Crescent Trail. The design includes provision of a bicycle loading/unloading zone on Woodmont Avenue towards the southern portion of the site, with access to the Capital Crescent Trail via a connecting walkway.

Access to the proposed garage is from two points: one along Woodmont Avenue and one along Bethesda Avenue. Both entrances would be located towards the eastern portion of the site, with full movements at both locations. The Woodmont Avenue garage entrance would be located approximately 300 feet south of Bethesda Avenue and approximately 50 feet north of Miller Avenue on the eastern side. The applicant proposes to extend the raised centerline median along Woodmont Avenue to limit Miller Avenue and Leland Avenue to right-in/right-out only turning movements. The garage entrance along Bethesda Avenue would be located approximately 160 feet east of Woodmont Avenue. No restrictions on turning movements along Bethesda Avenue are proposed.

Woodmont Avenue is to be relocated to the west as a part of this development and new underground garage proposals. The current alignment would be abandoned (concurrently proposed as DPWT Docket No. AB-684) and a new alignment would be dedicated as a part of the redevelopment proposal. The westward alignment would match

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<sup>1</sup> The garage entry and exit points include four inbound and three outbound gates, designed to accommodate an estimated 1,150 vehicles during the busiest hour of the day. The traffic flow is distributed evenly between the two garage access points and between entering and exiting traffic. For comparison purposes, Garage 60 (Wayne-Ellsworth) in Silver Spring, opened in autumn 2004, has a total of 1,690 spaces and two points of access.

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the current 80-foot right-of-way for Woodmont Avenue and perform the same function of vehicular and pedestrian access to Leland Street and Bethesda Avenue across the property. The structured parking garage would pass beneath the relocated Woodmont Avenue alignment to allow for continuous circulation through all levels of the garage. DPWT and the applicant will enact an agreement to allow for private access beneath the public right-of-way.

## Local Area Transportation Review

According to the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) Guidelines, the applicant is required to submit an LATR study detailing the estimated number of peak-hour trips generated by the proposed development. As this is a mixed-use development, the number of trips accorded includes both those trips assigned to the residential and commercial elements as well as anticipated patrons of the public parking garage<sup>2</sup>. Staff devised the scope of study to address the entirety of the development proposal as one project, reflective of the nature of its design. Given that both proposed driveways will serve all aspects of the development (residents, employees and patrons of the retail space and recreational users of the trail), staff elected to consolidate the estimated traffic volumes into one study.

To date, the applicant has not yet satisfactorily addressed staff questions and comments regarding the estimated traffic impact and analysis of the public garage components of the LATR study. Staff will continue to work with the applicant as the review of the submitted study continues.

Transportation Planning Staff has specific outstanding concerns relating to:

- Precise number of peak-hour trips associated with the public parking component of the garage
- Geometric configuration and vehicular access patterns for the proposed garage entrances on Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues respectively
- Ultimate geometric and operational design for the intersection of Woodmont Avenue at Bethesda Avenue, in particular with respect to pedestrian access
- Proposed access and operation for patrons of the recreational trail, especially with respect to turning movements along Woodmont Avenue
- Provision/elimination of on-street parking in the vicinity of the site, with its related impact upon roadway access and operations.

The preliminary conclusions of the submitted LATR study indicate that, for total future traffic conditions that included several design alternatives, all studied intersections will operate within the congestion standard of 1800 Critical Lane Volumes (CLV) for the Bethesda CBD Policy Area. It is likely that upon resolution of the outstanding staff

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<sup>2</sup> The applicant has presented the new public parking garage as a means to meet existing parking demand within the Bethesda CBD. Therefore, all of the trips assigned to the public parking garage were 'redirected' from adjacent and surrounding developments with identified on-site parking shortages. No 'new' trips were assigned to the public parking garage.

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concerns noted above, the calculated CLV for the studied intersections will not exceed the 1800 CLV threshold. This is staff's anticipation due to the variation in the trip generation estimates being too low to mathematically cause the CLV volumes at any of the studied intersections to exceed the standard. Furthermore, the final plans for the ultimate roadway geometry at this location remain under the purview of the APF Ordinance to be applied at the time of preliminary plan review and approval.

Transportation Planning staff anticipates that upon receipt of the revised and approved traffic study, all of the studied intersections will operate within the established Bethesda CBD Critical Lane Volume (CLV) threshold of 1800 vehicles and therefore, the application for zoning change from R-60 to TS-M will satisfy LATR requirements:

## Traffic Operations Analysis of the Project Area

In order to respond to stated concerns from residents, DPWT and other parties about the operational conditions surrounding the site, staff chose to include an analysis of the current and future traffic operations in the vicinity of the project site. The operational analysis was to feature a micro-simulation of the current and proposed traffic conditions, including any future proposed geometric changes (such as reduced lane widths, lengths or turning restrictions). In coordination with DPWT and the applicant's traffic engineering consultant, staff has reviewed several iterations of future estimates of traffic operation and congestion.

The proposed roadway improvements at the intersection of Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues shown include both:

- Reconfiguration of the northwest corner of the intersection to remove the separate southbound to westbound right-turn lane
- Narrowing of Bethesda Avenue to a single travel lane for each approach to Woodmont

The preliminary findings of the micro-simulation analysis indicate that the composite result of the proposed roadway improvements, the increased number of public parking spaces and the private residential and commercial development will increase congestion at all of the simulated intersections.

What is evident is the need to choose between the advantages of better pedestrian access and amenities and the ability to process a larger number of vehicles efficiently through the intersection. Initial results indicate that substantial queues may result along both Bethesda and Woodmont Avenues during the evening peak period. These queues would negatively affect adjacent parallel facilities, such as Arlington and Wisconsin Avenues. Substantial queuing would also impede access to existing adjacent properties and driveways.

As one example, the reconstruction (by DPWT) of the northwest corner of the Bethesda/Woodmont intersection to remove the southbound to westbound right-turn lane reduces the intersection capacity. By removing the "free right" turning movement, which

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conflicted with pedestrians crossing Bethesda Avenue northbound as well as those seeking to cross Woodmont Avenue eastbound, the overall distance required for pedestrians to cross is reduced. However, by requiring right turning vehicles to stop at the intersection, a corresponding reduction in the capacity of the intersection to process vehicles has also occurred. All southbound vehicles must now queue behind the STOP line at the intersection where a previously free flowing movement existed.

Several possible mitigation measures are under study to address the concerns about substantial queues along Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues. Among them are proposals for restricted turning movements, additional turning lanes, changes in traffic signal timing plans, and consideration of revising the proposed intersection 'neck down' designs for pedestrian access. Staff from Transportation Planning will continue to work with the applicant and DPWT as they develop and review the proposed traffic operations for this section of downtown Bethesda.

## Master Plan Guidance

The Bethesda CBD Sector Plan discusses a need for additional parking, with specific mention of structured parking on the Lot 31 site. The proposed redevelopment of Lot 31 is suggested to include ground floor retail along Bethesda Avenue and a portion of Woodmont Avenue, with adequate separation from the adjacent residential neighborhood to the south.

The Bethesda CBD Sector Plan also calls for several improvements to be made at the intersection of Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues, oriented towards improved access and safety for pedestrian and recreational cyclists. The Sector Plan suggests that all improvements to the operations and geometry of Bethesda Avenue and Woodmont Avenue be done to reduce pavement widths and provide for pedestrian phases with adequate crossing times for all approaches.

## Master Plan Roadways and Bikeways

Woodmont Avenue is a master-planned arterial roadway with a recommended 80-foot right-of-way width in the Bethesda CBD Sector Plan. Bethesda Avenue is classified as a Business Street with a recommended 60-foot right-of-way width in the Bethesda CBD Sector Plan. Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355) is classified as a major highway with a recommended 114-foot right-of-way width in the vicinity of the site. Bradley Boulevard is classified as a major highway with a recommended 120-foot right-of-way width. According to the Bethesda CBD Sector Plan, Arlington Road and Leland Street are classified arterial roadways with a recommended 80-foot right-of-way width. Wellington Drive and Strathmore Street are classified as Residential Streets with a recommended 60-foot right-of-way. All other streets (Elm Street, Hampden Lane, Montgomery Lane) within the area studied for the proposed mixed-use development are classified as Business District Streets.

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The Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) borders the western edge of the project site. The CCT is one of the most popular and extensive recreational and commuter trails in the DC Metropolitan region. The CCT provides off-road trail access to downtown DC and Bethesda. Continuing north of the project site, the Georgetown Branch Trail offers connection across Montgomery County to Stewart Avenue in the Lyttonsville Industrial Area. Future plans to continue the Georgetown Branch Trail into and across downtown Silver Spring are under discussion as a part of the Bi-County Transitway.

According to the Countywide Bikeway Function Master Plan, Bethesda Avenue is signed for a shared used roadway (SR – 9) with bicycles. Woodmont Avenue is proposed to have bicycle lanes from Battery Lane south to Bethesda Avenue (BL–6). Bradley Boulevard is proposed for dual use as a shared use path and signed shared roadway from Persimmon Tree Road to Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355).

The Bethesda CBD Sector Plan recommends a network of safe and efficient bicycle routes and pathways within the CBD. The applicant proposes to provide an auxiliary access to the CCT from a loading/unloading area for cyclists along southbound Woodmont Avenue. This area would serve recreational users who arrive in private vehicles, but are unwilling or unable to park inside the parking garage with their bicycles mounted on their vehicles. In theory, cyclists would unload the bicycles at the staging area and then park in the parking garage. Alternatively, recreational users parking in the garage will have access to oversize elevators to allow for easy transport of their equipment (bicycles, strollers, etc.).

## Pedestrian Access

The intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Bethesda Avenue experiences a high number of pedestrian crossings and movements. The current location of the surface parking lots in relation to the existing retail and commercial developments require pedestrians to cross at this location. The current configuration of this intersection requires long distances for crosswalks. As a result, many pedestrians choose to cross against the traffic signal and away from striped crosswalks (“jaywalking”). The resultant pattern and movements tend to complicate the drivers’ actions when progressing through this intersection. Compounding the situation are the occasional cyclists and runners/joggers continuing through the intersection along the CCT/Georgetown Branch alignment.

## Coordination with Adjacent Developments and Roadway Improvement Projects

The proposed development is coordinating their design with adjacent developments across the intersection (currently called “Woodmont East”) and DPWT initiated improvements to the intersection for better pedestrian access and shorter crossing lengths. Some of these improvements include enlarging the curbside landing areas for pedestrians as well as modifying the alignment of Woodmont Avenue for shorter crosswalk lengths. As these proposed improvements would likely result in reduced intersection capacity for vehicles, the process by which a final design is to be determined will follow several iterations.

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In addition, the proposed Bi-county Transitway is considering this location for placement of its transit line terminus. While the proposed terminus for the BCT will occupy the property across from Lot 31, its successful design will include provision for continued access through the site for the CCT/Georgetown Branch Trail connection and public open space. Staff from Transportation Planning will continue to work with the applicant and DPWT to insure the traffic study accurately reflects the final geometric configuration. Staff will also work to include the recommended pedestrian and streetscape amenities of the Bethesda CBD Sector Plan in the final design.

SJ:kcw

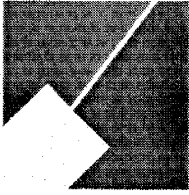
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## ATTACHMENT 2

M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING


THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION


8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760  
301-495-4500, www.mncppc.org

### MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 1, 2006

TO: John Carter, Community Based Planning Division

VIA: Mary Dolan, Countywide Planning Division, Environmental 

FROM: Marion Clark, Countywide Planning Division, Environmental 

SUBJECT: Zoning Application No. G-850  
Lot 31 – Two Bethesda Metro Center

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### Recommendation: Approval

#### Discussion

The subject site is located in the highly urbanized area of the Bethesda Central Business District. The existing site is used as a parking lot and entirely paved with the exception of a small strip on the south side of the site ranging in width from five feet on the east to 10 feet on the west. Within this strip, and immediately off site, stands a group of trees including a 36" Butternut.

Staff believes the trees are valuable additions to an area that is increasingly developed with greater amounts of imperviousness. A Tree Save Plan must be submitted at the time of Preliminary Plan approval.

#### Zoning Ordinance

Development Plans must meet specific findings of Section 59-D-1.61 of the Zoning Ordinance. The required finding for environmental issues states,

*"That by its design, by minimizing grading and by other means, the proposed development would tend to prevent erosion of the soil and to preserve natural vegetation and other natural features of the site. Any applicable requirements for forest conservation under Chapter 22A and for water resource protection under Chapter 19 must also be satisfied. The District Council may require more detailed findings on these matters by the Planning Board at the time of site plan approval as provided in division 59-D-3."*

This site was previously cleared and there is no natural vegetation except one specimen and several significant sized trees remaining along the southern edge of the site. Loss of

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other natural features such as sunlight and ventilation will result from the proposal. Single-family residences on the south side of the site will be impacted by shadows from the proposed buildings during the early morning and late afternoon during the summer.

## **Green Building**

Green building techniques should be fully explored during the site plan approval process. County policy requires county buildings over 10,000 square feet to meet Energy Design Standards. This includes a life-cycle-cost analysis of alternative systems and components and written certification of compliance to energy standards.

## **Forest Conservation – Chapter 22A**

One-half (0.50) acre of afforestation is required to meet the Forest Conservation law. This can be accomplished off site or part of this can be met on-site through tree cover. To fulfill this, staff recommends planting as many trees on site as possible. In urban areas with high percentages of imperviousness, trees serve to reduce temperatures with shade, thereby decreasing the urban "heat-island" effect created when automobile emissions mix with heat from sunlight. Also, a healthy tree stores about 13 pounds of carbon annually-or 2.6 tons per acre per year helping to mitigate global warming. Trees are also valuable for creating a comfortable and visually appealing place in which to live.

## **Stormwater management- Chapter 19**

The Department of Permitting Services (DPS) has not approved a Stormwater Management Concept Plan for this project. An approved Stormwater Management Concept Plan is required at the time of Preliminary Plan approval. The applicant has indicated that part of the stormwater management requirements will be fulfilled through the provision of a green roof.

## **Environmental Guidelines**

This site is located in a highly urban area that was developed before the Environmental Guidelines were adopted. It is not located within a Special Protection Area or Primary Management Area. This site has no steep slopes, or erodible soils. There are no wetlands or stream buffers on site.

## **Water Quality**

The subject is located in the Willett Branch subwatershed of the Little Falls watershed. The *Countywide Stream Protection Strategy* (CSPS) assesses this tributary as having poor overall conditions. The subwatershed is designated an Urban Watershed Management Area where the CSPS recommends supporting cost-effective stormwater quality controls on redevelopment sites, such as the subject site.