

SITE PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

SP #430 4318 N. Carlin Springs Rd. "The Springs"

SPRC MEETING #3

October 24, 2013

Planning Commissioners in Attendance: Karen Morris, Jane Siegel, Steve Cole, Erik Gutshall

MEETING AGENDA

This was the third SPRC meeting for a proposed site plan for a five-story 104-unit apartment building, located at 4318 North Carlin Springs Road. The Chair, introduced herself and those in attendance introduced themselves. The applicant briefly presented responses to questions and suggestions from SPRC #2: An exhibit on setbacks on existing buildings on North Thomas Street compared to the proposed street setback for the proposed building; dooryards on the Thomas Street façade; an exhibit showing the percentage of landscaped open space as required by the "R-C" ordinance, and revised building elevations, including the usage of a lighter gray than previously at the top floors, and some reduction in the use of the phenolic panels.

The applicant then made on presentation on the evening's topics, Architecture (continued from SPRC #2), Open Space compliance, Community Benefits (The applicant will be using Earthcraft), and Construction Issues.

SPRC DISCUSSION

Architecture (continued from October 17)

- A few comments that the revised designs shown were more subtle and blended in better. That the architecture was improving, but maybe not all the way there yet.
- A question what the phenolic panel will do when struck by the sun?
 - Applicants stated it will look coppery, but will not shine or reflect the sun because it is not metal. The applicants passed around a sample of weathered phenolic panel.
- Discussion if it was deliberate to make the office side look different.
 - Applicant responded that the intent was a two-building look to break up the massing, achieve an office character along Carlin Springs and a residential character along N. Thomas.
- Other SPRC members stated that the architecture should not stand out from the neighborhood and look more traditional, and concern about the future weathering/maintenance of some of the applicant's materials. Other members stated

that a more modern look was fine, that many existing garden apartments looked “value engineered” and shouldn’t be emulated.

- Questions about the ground-floor elevation on the office side. Is it as orange as the color elevation shows?
 - Applicant responded that what you are seeing is the inside of the office areas through the glass. The office windows will have neutral colored designs, similar to the conference rooms in the county building, for privacy of the office workers. The garage intake along Carlin Springs will have both a decorative treatment and will be the location for APAH’s sign.
- A request for more detail on the balconies?
 - Applicant responded that they will be punched aluminum panels with aluminum frames, coated/colored to match window frames. The openings in the balconies will be similar, but change slightly based on the position in the building.
- Question about the loading bays, will they be the right size and be attractive?
 - The applicant will have a trash and loading space bay large enough for almost all trucks, but not tractor trailers, as move-ins are likely to be local and their past experience is that affordable housing residents will not need trucks larger than box trucks. The loading bays will have the standard county-required height. The doors to the loading docks will be “quiet doors.” In addition, a pedestrian door next to the loading dock door will eliminate the need, seen in some buildings, for the loading dock doors to be open often for maintenance people.
- A question about lighting of the property.
 - Lighting will be ground floor, and since there are no activities on the roof, no lighting will be necessary on the roof except if Building Code requires an emergency light at the roof stair.
- A question about if the North Quincy Street Plan Addendum provided architectural guidance.
 - Staff responded the NQSP only provided building form guidance, and no guidance on specific architectural styles or techniques.

Community Benefits

- Comment that Buckingham has large amounts of affordable housing already in the neighborhood, and that in this case affordable housing is not a community benefit.
- The applicant agrees to negotiate with the county, if in the future, about placing a public access path on their property to the “town Square” in the Interior of the block. There was a comment from the SPRC that staff should work hard to ensure that the trail is located on the adjoining single-family property as the North Quincy Street Plan envisions, since the location on the APAH property would be suboptimal.
- Question if the possible public access path was the reason to establish the building setback along N. Thomas Street.
- Discussion about tree preservation, (not actually a community benefit but SPRC members brought up this concern). Concern that the tot lot will impact the oak tree.

Request for applicant to look again at the proposed paving detail and surface treatment to minimize impact to the tree root zone.

Construction Issues

- Comments that covered temporary pedestrian walkways frequently have lighting problems, and that a better design or attention to the problem at the start would prevent lighting problems further down the road.
 - Applicant agreed that they would make sure that whatever contractor they had would be responsible for that, and offered the community liaison would be available to deal with lighting problems.

Wrap-Up

- Wayne Eddins of Ballston Crest stated they were generally supportive of the proposed site plan.
- Suzanne Sundberg, the Bluemont CA representative stated that there was still concern about the size and setbacks of the building, and that there may be too much hardscaping of the property.
- Larry Wingard, the owner of the neighboring apartment building thought the property was too large and too close to his property. Concerned about the undergrounding of utilities and how it would affect his property,
- Commissioner Siegel felt the applicant had come some way to incorporate concerns, and because this is a transitional site there may be facets of the project that are unresolved with the community. Likes the revised façade presented at this meeting.
- SPRC Member Johnson thought that was a block in transition, and while the building may not be an exact match to what is there now, the ASC and Harris Teeter sites will be very soon to redevelop in conformance with the North Quincy Street Plan Addendum. Thinks the design of the proposed building is getting better, Encourages more refinements of the architecture. Stated that she supported affordable housing in this location, so close to Ballston and the Metro.
- Buckingham CA President Berne reiterated his belief that the building is out of scale in size, architecturally not in character with the neighborhood. CA also did not support the inclusion of the site in the Quincy Street Addendum and believed redevelopment should be concentrated on Glebe Road, not further in the neighborhood. Encouraged the developer to not have hardscaping or a tot lot near the large oak tree, feels that current plans will cause the death of the tree. There are too many hardscaped, and not enough landscaped areas. Thinks that the proposed plazas serve little purpose and should have more landscaping.
- Transportation Commission Representative Gearhart stated that the building is a tight fit on the site, wished that it could be one story taller in order to increase the open space. Also had concerns about the survivability of the oak tree and felt that the architecture should be more traditional red brick, similar to the rest of the block.

- SPRC Member Mayer encouraged the applicant to look at installing the new fiber-optic emergency communications equipment.
- Commissioner Gutshall praised the predominance of family-sized affordable units in the project. Stated that permeable pavers, if done right, can help preserve the oak tree by preventing compaction of the soil. Generally liked the architecture, feels that more glass creates a friendlier façade to the passer-by. Encouraged the applicant to make the proposed Juliet balconies transparent as possible.