

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 16, 2005

TO: Roland Dreist, Director
Office of the Surveyor

From: Ellen McCarthy, Director

SUBJECT: LTR 2002-02, Fort Totten East Apartments - **Modification**

SUMMARY

The applicant, Clark Realty Capital, LLC (Clark), on behalf of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) the owner of the subject property (collectively, the “Applicant”), has submitted a modification to the previously approved Large Tract Review application in accordance with 10DCMR §2300.1, which requires review of subdivisions and developments of more than three acres for the following purposes:

- 1) To minimize adverse environmental, traffic and neighborhood impacts;
- 2) To avoid unnecessary public costs in terms of new services or facilities required of city agencies; and
- 3) To carry out the policies of the District Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital,

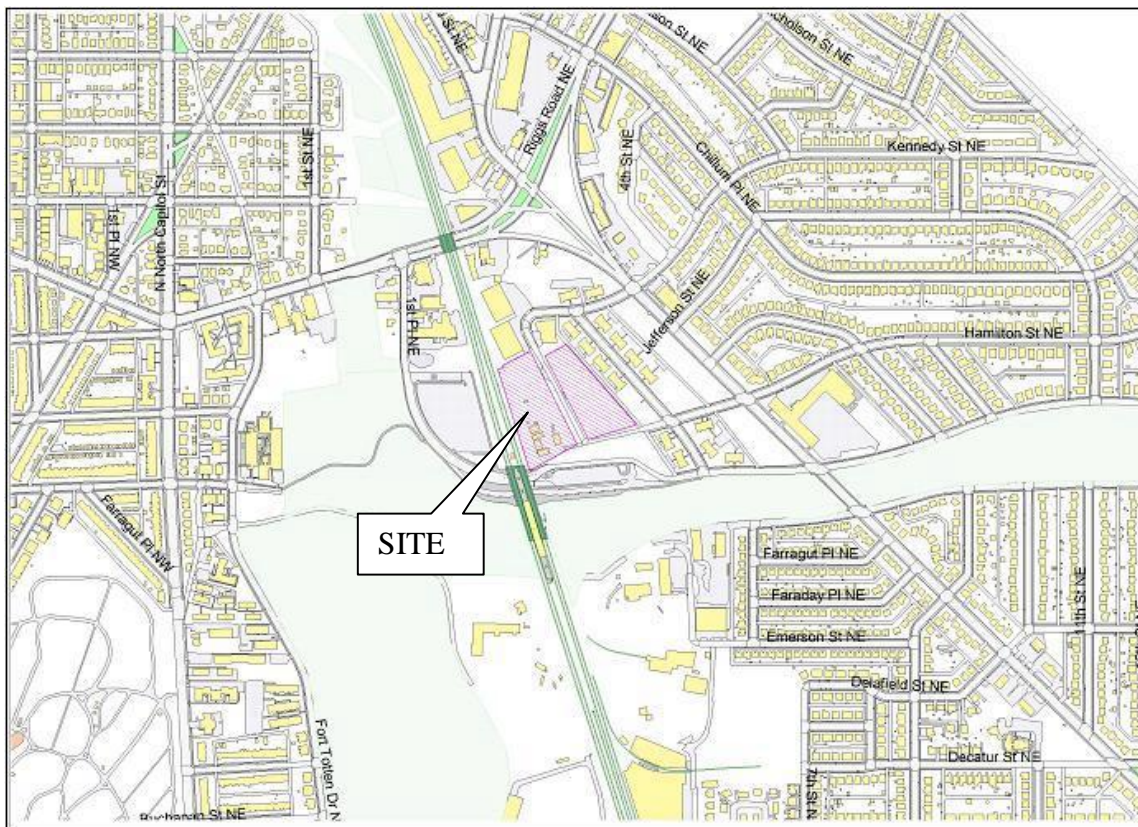
This report reflects agency comments and ANC comments on the project as well as changes in the circulation plan of the previously approved design.

The applicant has modified submitted plans, which reflect a different circulation pattern to that previously approved. Based on the Office of planning’s recommendation to retain pedestrian and vehicular access of Hamilton and 3rd Streets, the applicant has agreed to reopen those streets to vehicular access. Therefore, based on these changes, OP **recommends approval** of the modification of the previously approved Large Tract Review for Fort Totten East Apartments.

BACKGROUND

The property is located adjacent to the Fort Totten Metrorail Station. The site encompasses approximately 6.8 acres and is bounded on the west by elevated tracks, to the north by warehouses on Kennedy Street, which currently dead ends at the site, to the east by an alley behind a row of 3-story multi-family dwellings fronting 4th Street and to the south by the WMATA Kiss-and-Ride facility and an arm of Fort Totten Park. The property is fenced and contains gravel drives that serve the existing uses, including a WMATA office trailer, a police K-9 training area and kennel, and a dome containing de-icing materials used by WMATA to treat snow and ice on its property.

Significant uses in the area include the Riggs Plaza Shopping Center to the northeast, Bertie Backus Junior High School to the east, and Fort Totten Park to the south and west.



The Fort Totten Metro station serves both the red and green lines. Primary access to the station is located on the south side of Galloway Street, NE as it passes under the tracks. The station not only serves the neighboring communities but it is also a major hub for bus routes, for a broader area within the District and beyond. In addition, an average of 1076 park-and-ride cars and 798 kiss-and-ride cars, use the parking lot daily to access the Metro. Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue are major arterial streets providing vehicular connections to other areas of the city.

WMATA has leased the property to Clark as part of its joint development program, which seeks to promote projects that achieve the following goals:

- Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) by giving priority to Joint Development proposals which contain the following smart growth development principles; reduce automobile dependency; increase pedestrian/bicycle originated transit trips; foster safe station areas; enhance surrounding area connections to transit stations, including bus access; provide mixed use development, including housing in compliance with local regulations; and the opportunity to obtain goods and services near transit stations and offer active public spaces;
- Attract new riders to the transit system by fostering commercial and residential development projects on WMATA owned or controlled land and on private properties adjacent to Metro stations;
- Create a source of revenue for the Authority to operate and maintain the transit system by expediently negotiating joint development agreements between WMATA and public or private development entities; and
- Assist the WMATA local jurisdictions to recapture a portion of their past financial contributions and to continue making subsidy payments by expanding the local property tax base and adding value to available local revenue.¹

In the future, WMATA will make the Kiss-and-Ride area and the parking area to the west of the tracks available for additional joint development.

Except for Riggs Plaza Apartments to the east of the subject site, the land in close proximity to the station is generally underutilized. The low level of activity around the station area impacts pedestrian safety and security, especially after dark.

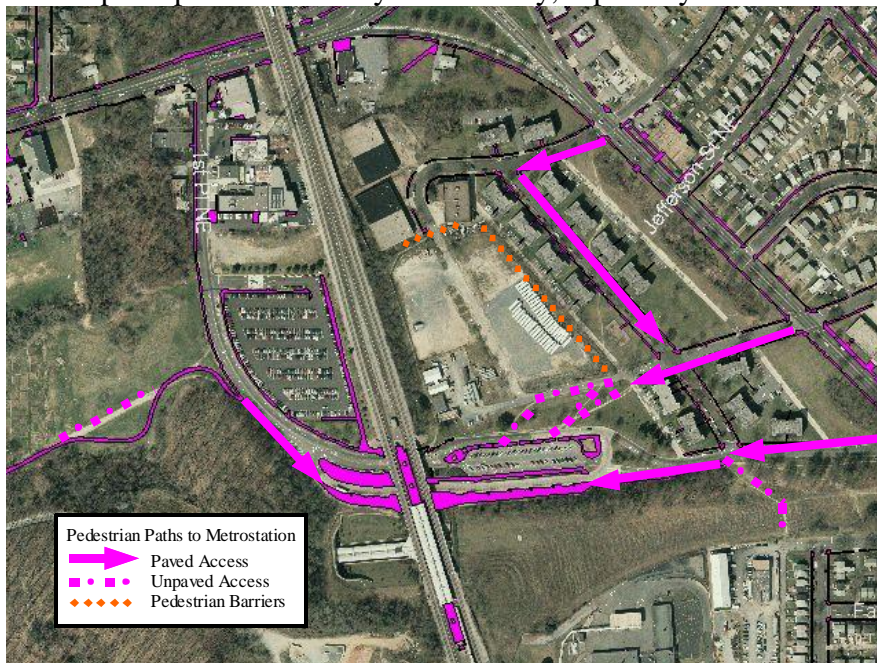


Figure 1 Pedestrian Pathways

¹ <http://www.wmata.com/bus2bus/jd/jointdev.cfm>

Pedestrian access to the station is currently inadequate. The site presents an opportunity for the beginnings of a new transit-oriented community around the Metro station.

The existing site slopes gently down from the tracks toward the 4th Street alley and the Kiss-and-Ride. The southern and eastern edges of the site drop abruptly to the abutting travelway and alley. The site is lightly vegetated with trees along the edges and a denser narrow wooded area along the tracks. The geotechnical report indicates that there is a greater than 70-foot depth to bedrock and that groundwater is generally encountered at depths ranging from 17 to 30 feet below grade. Existing sanitary sewer, potable water and storm drainage lines serving the site.

Project Description

Previous Submission

The Applicant's previously approved proposal reflected construction of:

- 320-360 multi-family dwelling units in two structures on approximately 5.6 acres.
- A 4-story structured parking garage, a swimming pool, a community room, and a tot-lot.

Submitted plans showed 4 to 5 story buildings which front a reconstructed 3rd Street and an extension of Hamilton Street. The proposal provided approximately 245 parking spaces in the garage structure and approximately 90 spaces in a surface parking lot hidden behind the main structures. The Hamilton Street side of the structures showed ground floor retail space.

Modification

The applicant's reconfigured plans show:

- The project to be built in two phases consisting of 5 separate buildings;
- 370 residential apartments
- 5,000 square feet of retail and
- 560 parking spaces

Environmental, Traffic and Neighborhood Impacts

Environmental Impacts

Due to the infill nature of this development, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated. The site does not contain any steep slopes, ravines or natural watercourses. The change of most impact is the increase in impervious area provided in the development. The applicant plans to mitigate this impact by providing underground detention and pollutant removal in a set of sand filters. The proposed landscaping will also contribute to mitigation measures. Additional foundation plantings should be provided to soften the base of the building, filling in current gaps in the landscaping.

Traffic Impacts

The traffic impacts of the proposed development are evaluated by the District Department of Transportation in its report of August 5th (attached). The report concurs with the applicant's traffic analysis indicating that the signalized intersections adjacent to the site

will function at an overall level of service of C or better during peak hours, which is acceptable. The development will increase pedestrian and vehicular connections to the existing neighboring street network and provide sufficient parking. It is recommended that the long block between Hamilton and Kennedy be split by a pedestrian or vehicular connection to provide alternate paths to the Metrostation from the east.

Neighborhood Impacts

The development lies in the Fort Totten Overlay Mixed-Use District (FT/CR). The purpose of the Mixed Use (CR) zone district shall be to encourage a diversity of compatible land uses, which may include a mixture of residential, office, retail, recreational, light industrial, and other miscellaneous uses. The Fort Totten Overlay District (FT) is established to allow existing industrial businesses to remain and expand and to propose land use control policies to further implement the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. These zoning classifications support the development of the parcels with a transit-oriented development.

The following table summarizes the zoning requirements of the application:

For Lot 801 and part of Parcel 137/98 (137,578 SF or 3.16 acres)

	FT/CR	Provided	Comments
Max. Height	80'	61'	Restriction includes roof structures and >65' requires OP review
Max. FAR	5.0	1.72	
Max. Non-resid. FAR	3.0	0.04	
Min. Public Space	10%	11%	
Max. Lot Occupancy	75%	55%	
Min. Residential Recreation Space	15% (70%)	16% (86%)	% of Residential GFA (% open to sky)
Min. Rear Yard	14 ft.	14 ft.	
Min. Side Yards	8 ft.	8 ft.	Min. 8' req. if provided
Min. Open Court Width	15 ft.	40 ft.	
Min. Closed Court Width	20 ft.	93 ft.	
Min. Parking	57	245	
Min. Loading Space	1	1	55' deep min.
Min. Loading platform	1	1	200 SF min.
Min. Service/Delivery	1	1	20' deep min.

For Lot 808 (104,579 SF or 2.40 acres)

	FT/CR	Provided	Comments
Max. Height	80'	51'	Restriction includes roof structures and >65' requires OP review
Max. FAR	5.0	1.56	
Max. Non-resid. FAR	3.0	0.01	
Min. Public Space	10%	12%	
Max. Lot Occupancy	75%%	34%	
Min. Residential Recreation Space	15% (70%)	16% (100%)	% of Residential GFA (% open to sky)
Min. Rear Yard	14 ft.	35 ft.	
Min. Side Yards	8 ft.	15 ft.	Min. 8' req. if provided
Min. Open Court Width	13 ft.	N/A	
Min. Closed Court Width	17 ft.	N/A	
Min. Parking	44	90	

Min. Loading Space	1	1	55' deep min.
Min. Loading platform	1	1	200 SF min.
Min. Service/Delivery	1	1	20' deep min.

As can be seen above, the development is within the limits of matter-of-right requirements. The main impacts on the neighborhood are defined by how well the design meets the goals of a transit-oriented development and general design goals for the area.

Public Costs

The proposed development will be using existing utilities and services in place for the area and will be increasing the quality and quantity of pedestrian and vehicular connections to the Metro station. The DC Water and Sewer Authority (WASA) reviewed the plans and did not indicate any capacity problems for potable water and sanitary sewer service (report attached). However, WASA did not have adequate fire flow information to determine if the water service was adequate for fire protection system. The applicant should work with WASA to provide any upgrades to the water system necessary to ensure capacity.

The Fire and EMS Service and Metropolitan Police Department indicated in their reports (attached) that the proposed project would not affect service delivery for these agencies, provided an automatic fire sprinkler system is installed. The Department of Housing and Community Development report (attached) highlights the positive elements of the design and is supportive of the proposed development. These positive elements and the new public infrastructure proposed by the development avoid unnecessary public cost in terms of new services or facilities required of city agencies.

Comprehensive Plan

In evaluating the Fort Totten Apartments development for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, the Office of Planning considers compliance with major themes of the Comprehensive Plan, compliance with the objectives and policies of the major elements of the Comprehensive Plan, and consistency with the Generalized Land Use Map. Major themes within the Comprehensive Plan relevant to this development are:

- 1) Stabilizing and improving the District's neighborhoods, and;
- 2) Respecting and improving the physical character of the district;

Specific goals within some of the major elements of the Comprehensive Plan further support these themes.

- The Housing Element outlines a general objective to stimulate production of new and rehabilitated housing to meet all levels of need and demand and to provide incentives for the types of housing needed at desired locations (§302.1). A policy outlined to further this objective is to encourage multi-unit housing development near selected Metrorail stations (§302.2(d)). Also, the Housing Element directs that suitably located publicly owned properties that are vacant, surplus or unused be made available for housing (§302.2(e)). The development is consistent with these goals in providing multi-family housing on underutilized land near the Metro station.
- The Transportation Element establishes policies to support land use arrangements

that simplify and economize transportation services, including mixed-use zones that permit the co-development of residential and nonresidential uses to promote higher density residential development at strategic locations, particularly near appropriate Metrorail stations. The development is consistent with this policy in its proximity to the Metrorail and mix of uses.

- The Urban Design Element establishes policies to guide development so that it provides visual orientation, enhances the District's aesthetic qualities, emphasizes neighborhood identities, and is functionally efficient. Specific, relevant objectives include:
 - Design buildings to include the use of appropriate arrangements of building materials, height, scale, massing, and buffering to complement the immediate region; (§708.2(b))
 - Develop a unifying system of well-designed streets, sidewalks, parks, and pedestrian ways; (§709.2(a))
 - Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic in order to increase pedestrian safety and comfort; (§709.2(b))
 - Create an environment in the public space that attracts people and stimulates redevelopment and commerce; (§709.2(d))
 - Promote design features such as storefront windows, multiple entrances to retail, and unenclosed sidewalk cafes to encourage pedestrian activity along the streets; (§709.2(i))
 - Encourage the planting and maintenance of street trees as the single most important streetscape element along commercial and residential streets to provide shade, design continuity, spatial relief, and a juxtaposition of the natural and built environments. (§709.2(j))
 - Orient major new development toward the street in order to emphasize the public space as a setting for active use; (§713.2(e))
 - Encourage special design quality around Metrorail stations to create aesthetically pleasing physical concentrations of activity and development; (§713.2(g))
 - Encourage the design of future development to be compatible with the established characters of the surrounding areas; (§713.2(j))

The development has been reviewed with these goals in mind and specific urban design and architectural recommendations to further these goals are provided below.

- The Land Use Element designates Fort Totten as a “Special Treatment Area” and establishes the following policies for the area (§1122):
 - (a) Maximize metrorail access and leveraging;
 - (b) Consider the WMATA site for a joint development project;
 - (c) Develop surplus WMATA and unused industrial land for medium density residential and commercial mixed uses;
 - (d) Protect and preserve existing low scale residences in the vicinity;
 - (e) Increase the residential component to strengthen local commercial establishments on Riggs Road, N.E.;
 - (f) Identify suitable industrial relocation sites for industrial uses, such as the New York Avenue, N.E. corridor. For large industrial uses that

cannot be relocated, identify zoning and other appropriate measures to ensure their continued ability to function, modernize, and expand, and to be contributors to the District economy, with sufficient buffers to protect and preserve adjacent residential communities, provided that no expansion of the Fort Totten Transfer Station shall occur until after the Mayor conducts a public hearing on this issue; and

- (g) Create a “mini-in-town” community.

The proposed development is consistent with these goals.

- The Ward 5 Element designates the Fort Totten Metro station area as a Housing Opportunity Area. Housing Opportunity Areas designated in the Comprehensive Plan should provide expanded opportunities for the production of affordable housing and its rental or purchase by low and moderate-income families and persons. The developer plans to provide some affordable housing units in the development consistent with this goal.
- The Ward 5 Element also provides a policy to further transportation goals to improve the movement and management of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to ensure public safety and mitigate adverse effects of traffic and parking on residential streets around the Fort Totten Metrorail station (1615.1(a)). The development is providing additional vehicular and pedestrian connections to the station and providing additional on-street parking as well as many extra off-street parking spaces above the zoning requirement.

The Ward 5 Element specifically identifies the following actions to further the Land Use goals of the Comprehensive Plan (1630.1(b)(2)):

- (A) Prepare an updated small area study of the area to determine the appropriate mix of residential, commercial and industrial uses and the scale, density and design of future development;
- (B) Provide assistance to private developers, as resources permit, that will facilitate commercial and retail development intended to support the residential population in the surrounding areas;
- (C) Provide for the improvement of the land-use mix and urban design qualities of new development in the area through regulatory processes;
- (D) Ensure that development of WMATA property proposed for joint development review contributes to and is compatible with the existing character of the surrounding neighborhood;
- (E) Explore the feasibility of including cultural facilities as a part of the mixed-use projects around the Metrorail station;
- (F) Consider proposing an amendment to the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan to include cultural facilities (theaters, museums, galleries, etc.) under §1104 of the “Policies in Support of the Residential Neighborhoods Objectives”;
- (G) Provide for citizen participation to include the Advisory Neighborhood Commission in the development review process to assist the District and WMATA in responding to community concerns; and

- (H) Required Environmental Impact Statements are to be prepared and distributed, in a simplified, understandable form, to appropriate ANCs and to all property owners within five hundred feet (500 ft.) of the proposed development prior to approval of the development plans;

The developer has shown consistent efforts in coordinating plans with the Advisory Neighborhood Commission and has begun participation in an area planning effort initiated by the Office of Planning.

Agency Referrals

This application was referred to the following District government agencies for review and comment:

1. District Department of Transportation;
2. Metropolitan Police Department;
3. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department;
4. Environmental Health Administration
5. D.C. Board of Education
6. Department of Housing and Community Development; and
7. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA).

Community Comments

The Applicant has met with ANC 4B and 5A. In response to concerns expressed the Applicant is planning to provide at least 20% of the units as affordable housing. The Applicant is also considering community input on appropriate retail uses, exploring options for “adopting a local school, and making space available in the project for community meetings”.

Recommendations

The Mayor appointed a task force to look at transit-oriented development (TOD) in the District and out of the effort came six urban design strategies that should guide transit-oriented development. They are connectivity, a quality public realm, a pedestrian-friendly environment, appropriate architecture and design, a mix of uses, and traffic management. The developer is providing new connectivity with the extension of Hamilton Street to the station and construction of 3rd Street. Hamilton Street has the potential to become a pedestrian friendly retail street with future WMATA development. The streetscape design along Hamilton is important in developing a quality public realm. The proposed design establishes an extension of Hamilton Street as the principal street for the new development, intersected by 3rd Street. The proposal locates parking hidden in lots or garages to the interior of blocks. In concept, the plan seems to be consistent with the overall desire by the city to encourage higher density development at Metro stations and introduce a system of streets and blocks that can be joined by future development at the site.

In the light of these policies and the goals of the Comprehensive Plan discussed above the Office of Planning hired an Urban Design consultant to take a broader look at the Ft. Totten Metrostation area in terms of design. The consultant, EEK, made the following

recommendations:

- The Fort Totten Metro neighborhood should have a center, which supports a mixture of uses, visible on South Dakota Avenue and walkable from the Metrostation. The neighborhood is made up of streets and blocks.
- South Dakota and Hamilton Street should be developed as the ‘main streets’ with a pedestrian quality. Parallel parking should be made available on all streets, including South Dakota. Hamilton Street should be developed as a spine connecting a series of places and activities to the Metro station.
- The spine is anchored at South Dakota and the Metro station a future station square.
- Galloway Street should be developed as a ‘park drive’ that accommodates bus routes and connections to Fort Totten Park. It should be walk-able with a bike trail
- Open spaces and parks should be sized to the neighborhood and connected to one another via tree-lined streets
- Medium to high-density housing should be built close to the metro and should define street walls with some street parking available. The majority of parking should be located in the interior of blocks in structures or surface lots
- Fort Totten Park should be enhanced to serve the residents for passive and active recreation uses
- The Riggs Road and South Dakota Avenue intersection should be redeveloped as a T-intersection to slow down traffic that now travels at unsafe speeds south-bound from Riggs onto South Dakota. This will provide a more pedestrian friendly access from the new transit-oriented development to Riggs Plaza Shopping Center.

These recommendations are consistent with District TOD policies and the Comprehensive Plan, particularly the Urban Design and Transportation elements of the Plan. From this guidance, the Office of Planning and its consultant EEK provide the following recommendations:

Urban design:

- Extend the building along Hamilton to provide more street frontage along Hamilton Street and close the gap between the Clark project and the Riggs Plaza site.
- Relocate and/ or screen the dumpster at the easternmost side of the plan. It is not well sited so close to Hamilton Street, which is to be the main street of the development.

The applicant has revised the plans in response to these comments as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Extending the Street Wall along Hamilton Street

- Provide additional foundation plantings for all buildings.
- Between Hamilton and the public alley to the east, the planting strip should be about six feet wide with a six-foot wide sidewalk. Third Street can have a five-foot wide sidewalk with a six foot planting strip. The applicant has agreed to this design.
- Sidewalk material along Hamilton should be decorative (e.g., brick). The large expanse of concrete closest to the metro station in front of the retail spaces should also be decorative as well as the plaza areas at the corner of 3rd Street and Hamilton Street. In response, the applicant redesigned the intersection of 3rd and Hamilton to pull the retail up closer to the Metro station, keeping the existing travelway bounding the north side of the kiss-and-ride and terminating Hamilton at a plaza as shown in Figure 3.

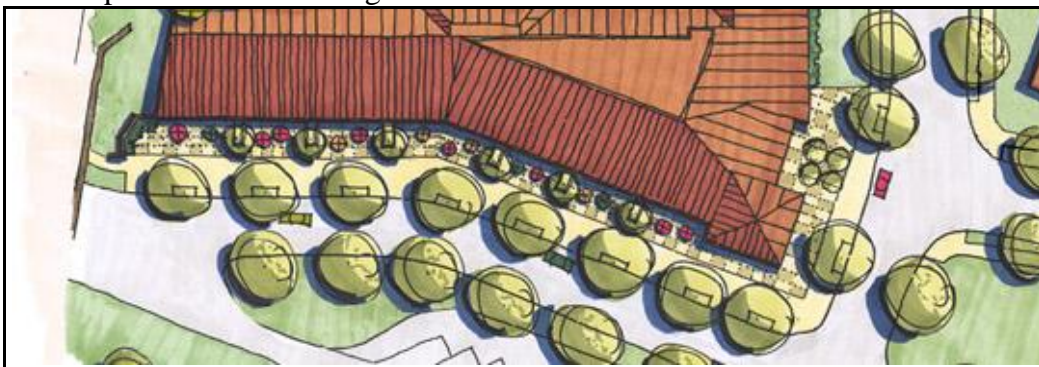


Figure 3 Retail Plaza

- There needs to be a continuous pedestrian connection between the two long blocks of Building Two through the property to the alley. The original site plan shows a sidewalk that dead ends into a parking lot. Given the excessive length of

the block for Building Two, at a minimum a pedestrian connection should be provided to provide pedestrian access from the parking off the alley. The applicant addressed this comment as shown below:



- The plan is not clear in the definition of the required public space. Tot-lots & open space should be available to their residents and general public respectively. If the spaces between multi-family units are to be used as tot-lots, the applicant should submit a detailed plan that expounds on the program and design of these spaces and demonstrates how these spaces are defined as part of the overall site plan. Additional screening should be provided for the courtyard and garage entry. The open space areas have been enlarged and additional landscaping provided as shown below.



Architecture

The architecture lacks some key elements and can be improved with the following changes:

- Vinyl siding should not be used. We suggest Hardie- plank as a low cost alternative that weathers well and, when painted, is visually equal to wood siding.
- The developer should submit a sample of the vinyl windows for review as there is

a great range in quality of vinyl windows.

- The brackets on the facades do not seem substantial enough to (visually) support the roof above. A detail should be provided to adequately describe the materials and dimensions of the brackets and canopy type structures. Also, some of the facades do not show brackets at all. These elements help the building to meet the sky and should be a part of all facades.



- The base of Building One, closest to the metro, appears to be a residential unit with the only significant change being the inclusion of larger windows. It does not look like a retail environment. Concepts of materials, percentages of openings, and signage should be submitted for review. A minimum of 15 feet floor to ceiling should be provided for the retail spaces. The applicant is referred to the Office of Planning Storefront Design Guidelines.
- The buildings, especially at the retail locations, should have a datum or base defined by a material change, or otherwise, that establishes the ground floor as different from the upper floors. An example of such a material change would be brick at the base with a transition to the Hardie-plank siding for the upper floors. It is also recommended that the corners of the buildings seek to establish a stronger visual presence by use of a similar material change.
- Large expanses of a blank wall are shown along Hamilton Street at the base of both Building One and Two. The material for these locations should be brick. Blankness should be minimized.
- No material is specified for the retaining walls on the site. These also should have a brick veneer or acceptable split face type architectural block.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Agency Comments
2. Response to Agency Comments
3. List of Public Meetings