



FREDERICK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

January 9, 2013

TITLE: **Worthington Square (Geisbert Property)**

FILE NUMBER: **AP-13049**

REQUEST: **Concept Site Plan Approval**

The Applicant is requesting Concept Site Plan approval for 72 residential townhouse dwellings and 1 commercial lot on a 7.3-acre site

PROJECT INFORMATION:

ADDRESS/LOCATION: Located along Urbana Pike and Urbana Church Road, Northwest of the MD80 and Sugarloaf Parkway traffic circle in Urbana

TAX MAP/PARCEL: TM 96; Parcels 34, p/o 48, 173, 174, 175, & 257

COMP. PLAN: VC/MX

ZONING: VC/MX

PLANNING REGION: Urbana

WATER/SEWER: W-3/5; S-3/5

APPLICANT/REPRESENTATIVES:

APPLICANT: Natelli Holdings Three, LLC

OWNER: - same -

ENGINEER: Rodgers Consulting, Inc

ARCHITECT: N/A

ATTORNEY: N/A

STAFF: Denis Superczynski

RECOMMENDATION: Approval

ATTACHMENTS:

EXHIBIT 1- Concept Site Plan

EXHIBIT 2- Architecture and Existing Structures

STAFF REPORT

ISSUE

Development Request

The Applicant is requesting Concept Site Plan approval for 72 residential townhouse dwellings and one commercial lot (5,000 sf commercial building footprint illustrated) on a 7.3 acre land area located at the MD 80/Sugarloaf Parkway traffic circle in Urbana. The primary proposed use is being reviewed as a townhouse use under the heading of *Residential Uses* per §1-19-5.310 Use Table in the Zoning Ordinance and is a principal permitted use in the MX and VC Zoning Districts subject to site development plan approval. The secondary proposed use is being reviewed as a portion of the overall site. However, a specific user has not been identified; therefore, several headings in the Use Table may apply. Uses listed under the 'Commercial Retail', 'Commercial Business', and 'Personal Services' headings are all subject to site development plan approval in the VC and MX Zoning Districts. The commercial portion of the project has been included in this Concept Plan only to illustrate the framework and overall context of the development. Further details regarding the commercial use will be addressed in the future under a separate application for Site Development Plan approval.

As required by Zoning Ordinance (Sections 1-19-7.500(D) and 1-19-7.520(I)), Site Plan proposals in the MX and VC Zoning Districts are required to submit plans to the Planning Commission (or its representative) for Concept Plan Approval. This Concept Site Plan must demonstrate how the proposed activity will meet development standards listed in §1-19-7.500 (for the VC portion of the site) and §1-19-7.520 (for the MX portion of the site).

BACKGROUND

Development History

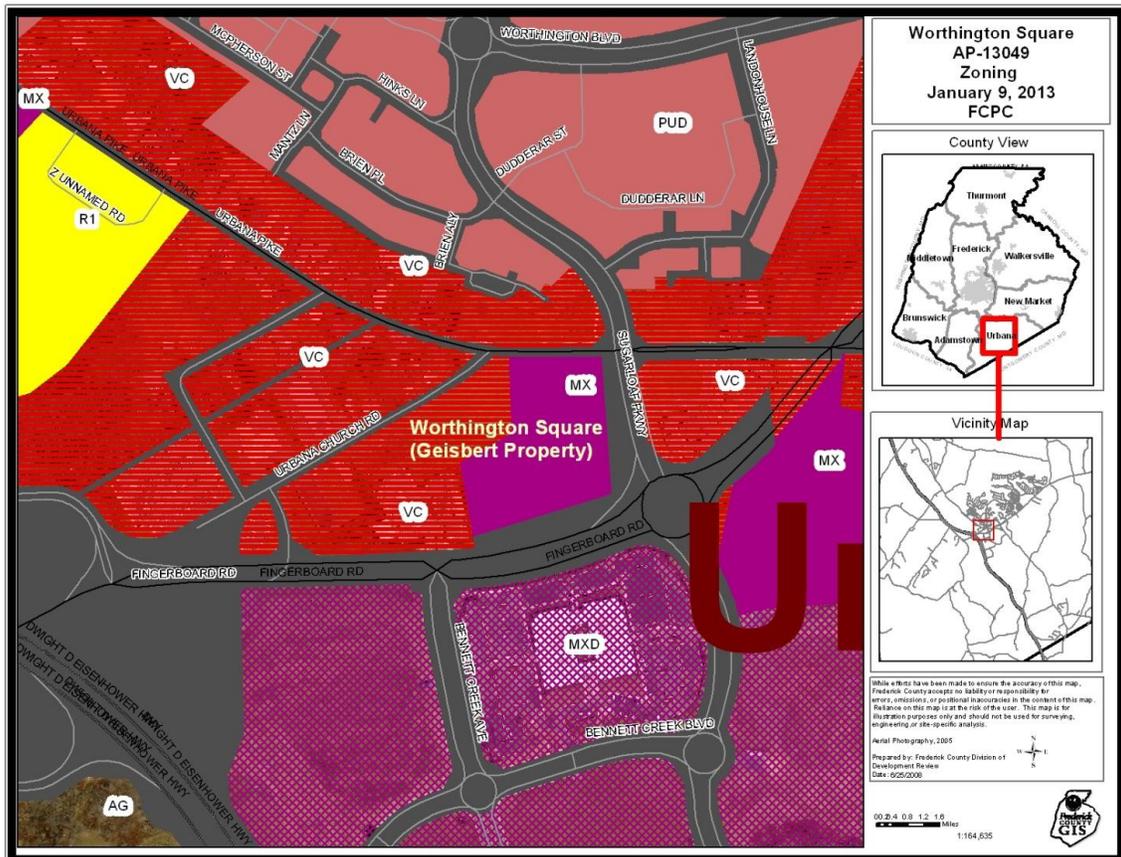
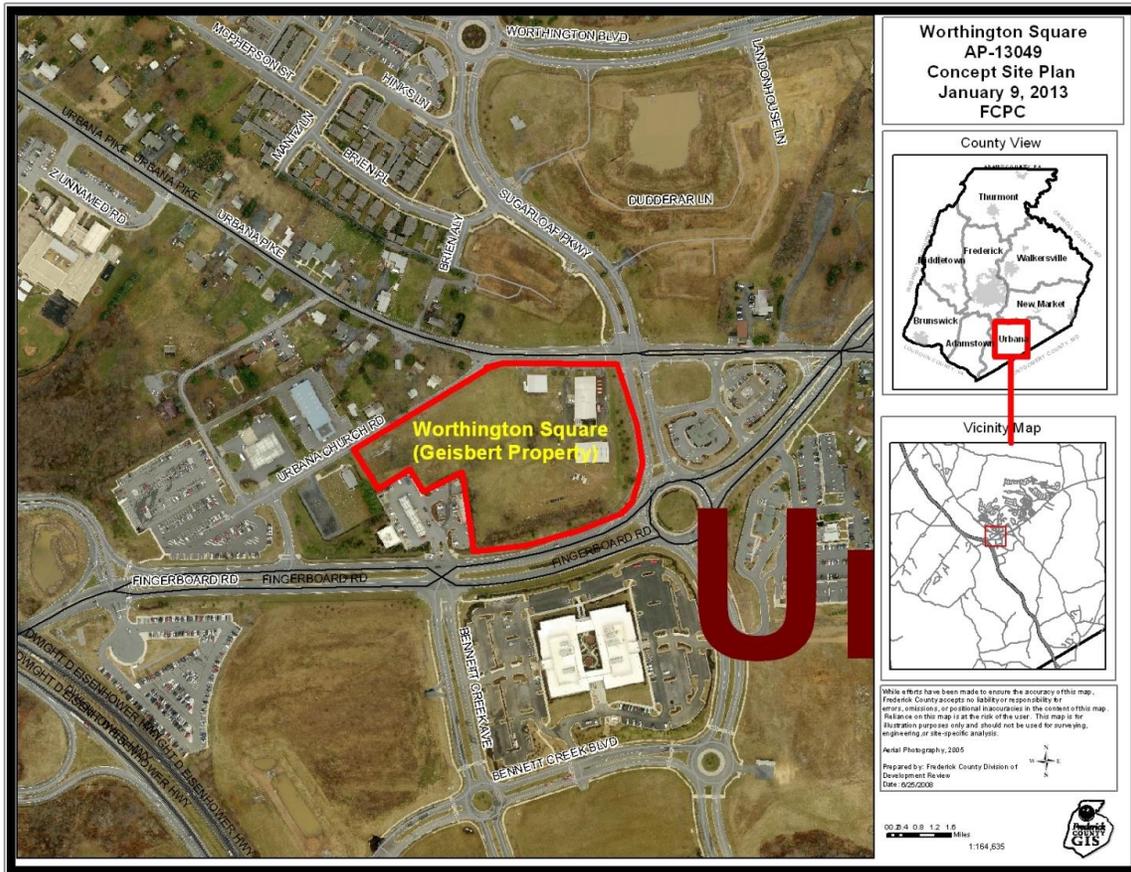
The eastern portion of the site (Parcels 174 & 34) was rezoned to MX as part of the County's Comprehensive Rezoning process in 2011 and 2012. These two parcels had previously carried VC zoning. As part of that Comprehensive Rezoning process, several other properties in the Urbana community were successfully rezoned from VC to MX.

The site contains three vacant structures that were occupied with local businesses well into the previous decade. A school house was once situated on the location of the proposed commercial lot. Until the development of the Villages of Urbana PUD and surrounding commercial and employment uses - as well as their associated road improvements - the backs of the subject parcels formed the southern boundary of the Urbana community.

Existing Site Characteristics

The site is currently zoned VC and MX, and is predominantly vacant. The three existing structures located along Urbana Pike are not considered for redevelopment in this Concept Site Plan and will be demolished. The Applicant's site is relatively flat and sparsely vegetated. Current vehicular access to the site is confined to the existing driveway entrances established when the commercial properties were active.

The property to the north of the site – across Urbana Pike - is zoned VC and is currently vacant, but has been approved for single family homes. The area on the western edge of the site is occupied by new commercial structures (Waffle House, 7-Eleven). On the south side of the site, across MD 80, sits the Banner Life building and the project known as the Urbana Office Research Center MXD. Two single-family homes sit directly across from the Applicant's site on the northern side of Urbana Church Road. The eastern edge of the Applicant's site faces the partially developed three-lot commercial island located between Urbana Pike, Sugarloaf Parkway, and MD 80. This three-lot commercial site is currently occupied by a McDonald's restaurant and a branch office of PNC Bank. A site plan application seeking approval to construct a Starbucks café on the remaining pad site was submitted in December 2012.



ANALYSIS

Summary of Development Standards Findings and Conclusions

Form and Layout

In its conceptual form, the proposed Worthington Square development is comprised of seventy-two townhouse residences and one commercial lot on the western edge of the site that is oriented toward Urbana Church Road. The townhouse structures are broken down into two-, three-, and four-unit blocks centered around a common plaza and green space. Vehicular access to the development is accomplished by the construction of two internal loop roadways one of which (northern loop) terminates at both Urbana Pike and, further west, at Urbana Church Road. This northern loop also provides the opportunity for access to the future commercial lot as well as the existing commercial uses on the adjacent property. All of the dwellings have garages which are fed by an internal alleyway system shown on the plan. This design allows the majority of the homes to face public streets and, in some cases, vegetated common areas and landscaped buffer areas.

Zoning and Land Use

On the zoning map, the project site is split into two zoning districts. The VC-zoned area (Parcels 257 and 175) is 2.4 acres in size while the MX-zoned area (Parcels 34, 174, 173, and p/o 48) is 4.9 acres in size. The Concept Plan demonstrates compliance with the appropriate part of the zoning code for each section of the project. As illustrated, eight of the twenty blocks of townhouses are located in the VC District (22 DUs) with the remaining 50 DUs occurring in the MX District.

Development Density

Development density and MPDU standards have been determined based on the overall project (i.e. including both the MX and VC portions of the site as one project with split zoning). The MX has no set development density and is more a function of the site characteristics, required parking, landscaping and other bulk standards. To that end, the Density and requisite MPDU requirements are as follows:

Base Density (Residential) Permitted –	62 DUs (50 in MX and 12 in VC)
Density Proposed in Concept Plan -	72 DUs
Achieved Density Bonus (MPDU Ord.) -	16%
MPDUs Required (per §1-6A-5) -	10 DUs

Parking and Access

Staff has worked with the applicant to provide ample on-site parking for each dwelling (180 spaces required to meet the code and 208 are proposed). Staff has found that the neo-traditional neighborhoods generally require an additional 10-15% increase in parking above the target number to provide ample overflow parking. This is particularly true in an area that is not completely gridded out with urban streets where users tend to find on street parking just around the corner, or on an adjacent street. To that end, staff is comfortable with the amount of parking provided, as it balances the design, is not overcome with expansive parking lots yet it does provide opportunities to park throughout the neighborhood. Construction of additional on-street parking (or agreement to build at a future date) along Urbana Pike and Urbana Church Road may be conditioned through the Site Plan review process in order to provide additional convenience parking for visitors to this neighborhood.

Public Safety

The Office of Life Safety (OLS) has identified some design considerations that typically arise when proposing dwelling units facing a green, common area, or open space, and not directly upon a public street. Townhouse blocks D, H, T, S, and R are noted specifically in this regard. Certain limitations (utility locations, other easements, etc) combined with the design requirements of the VC and MX zoning districts, encourage the layout that is proposed. Planning staff and the Applicant will continue to work with OLS through the development process to adequately address the concerns raised prior to final site development plan approval.

Parks and Green Space

In addition to the internal common/green, ample landscaped buffers are provided along the MD 80 and Sugarloaf Parkway frontages as well as within the proposed parking areas. A small pocket park or tot lot can be accommodated in a number of locations throughout the site. The Applicant illustrates a small park located on the common/green, internal to the site.

Public Facilities

Public water and sewer service will be made available to this site.

Detailed Analysis of Development Standards

Specific Site Development Plan Approval for MX projects shall be granted based upon the criteria found in §1-19-7.520 Mixed Use Site Plan Review Provisions of the Frederick County Zoning Ordinance.

Site Development §1-19-7.520 (I): *Development requiring site development plan review, as provided in §1-19-5.310 Use Table, shall receive concept plan approval from the Planning Commission or its authorized representative as the first step in the development review process. The concept plan, submitted in conformance with §1-19-3.301.2 (B) shall demonstrate:*

(a) The manner in which the standards within this section have been met by the proposed development; and,

(b) The manner in which the proposed development conforms to adopted county community or corridor plans for the area where the development is proposed.

Specific Site Development Plan Approval for VC projects shall be granted based upon the criteria found in §1-19-7.500(C) Design Standards of the Frederick County Zoning Ordinance.

Site Development §1-19-7.500 (C): *All new development within the Village Center Zoning District shall incorporate the following design standards in addition to all other applicable requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. New development will use existing development as a guide when determining site development, layout, bulk, and form of proposed structures within the Village Center District. New development should be designed and built to reflect existing neighborhood characteristics including shape, height, massing, roof shapes, and door and window placement and proportions.*

While each individual design standard may be not be applicable to both the MX and VC portions of the subject property respectively, the project as a whole should generally conform to the overall design standards for Concept Site Plan Approval. To that end, the following design standards are being reviewed for the entirety of the site, since it is being developed as a single project seeking Concept Plan approval:

- **Conformity with Community or Corridor Plan –**
 - No county community or corridor plan has been adopted for the Urbana area. Generally, the proposal demonstrates adherence to the general principles for compact development outlined in the County's Comprehensive Plan through seeking a mix and intensity of uses conducive to the continuing development of compact neighborhoods in areas served by public infrastructure and facilities.
- **Storage and Operations/Refuse and Recycling/Signage –**
 - Commercial activity proposed for the western edge of the site will demonstrate detailed compliance with this item at the time of Site Plan review. The Concept Plan as submitted

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does not preclude compliance with the code and generally meets expectations for approval at the time of Site Plan Review.

- **Site Development and Layout –**

- Every effort has been made by the Applicant to ensure that buildings face the public ways (roads, pedestrian network). The visibility of rear building facades is minimized through careful arrangement of the townhouse blocks on the site. Pedestrian facilities in this concept plan are illustrated as primary elements and organizing features in the laying out of townhouse blocks.
- As the commercial lot moves through the site plan review process in the future, staff will ensure that proper pedestrian access is provided. In addition, the commercial site, when developed, will need to accommodate appropriate building arrangement, location, and visual screening to avoid any undesired views of service facilities and activities.
- The proposed Concept Plan adequately differentiates between areas of pedestrian access and areas of vehicular movement. The proposed residential dwellings along Urbana Church Road and Urbana Pike have been designed with garages to the rear of the structure thus reducing the need for vehicular access to these roadways and facilitating pedestrian movement. The commercial structure has been designed to front on Urbana Church Road with parking to the side and rear. An effort has been made to reduce the number of direct access points onto public roadways by utilizing a common entrance serving both the commercial structure and the townhouses.
- Due to the nature and characteristics of the proposed land uses and surrounding neighborhood, the opportunity for joint- or shared parking is somewhat limited. The Applicant has proposed some on-street parking as well as shared spaces within the residential portion of the development which meet the intent of this standard. Most of the parking provided in the proposal is screened and internal to the site (alleys, garages). On-street parking is provided to ensure adequate and convenient access to parking space. The opportunity for on-street parking may also serve to avoid extended expanses of paved vehicle parking areas along street frontages.
- The proposed development has been designed around an internal street network that is interconnected and facilitates efficient movement through and within the site. A primary constraint for this project, with regard to the overall connectivity with the existing community, is the proximity to the traffic circle and signalized intersection located on the eastern edges of the site. The Applicant has proposed access points to and from the site, that support efficient traffic movement while not disrupting vehicle flow on public roadways.
- The layout does however, allow for both vehicular and pedestrian interconnections between the residential and commercial areas of the property as well as the surrounding neighborhood and adjoining commercial uses south of the project.
- This project sits in close proximity (less than 500 feet) to the SHA Park and Ride site at Urbana Church Road. Connections to MARC, Metro, and regional airports are currently available via the express bus system operating from this point.

- **Building Massing and Bulk –**

- With no community or corridor plan in effect for the Urbana community, building bulk will be limited only by the underlying zoning regulations. As presented in this concept, the future commercial structure would meet the VC zoning district maximum footprint requirements for non-residential structures.
- Most of the buildings in this project are oriented to show their access/entry features to the public street. The concept plan illustrates the use of front stoops and other human-scaled architectural elements on proposed typical townhouses.
- Although specifics regarding materials and finishes will be determined at the time of Site Plan Review, the elevations submitted for the Concept Plan generally provides for building shape, height, massing and window and door placement that is representative of the

surrounding Village Center zoning district. Staff will work with the Applicant to ensure building design and finishes that are cohesive on-site and representative of surrounding development. Certain units (i.e. corner units) would be targeted for three-sided architecture to ensure design elements are wrapped around the entire public facing façade.

- The site is constrained by existing uses, adjacent roadways, and existing architecture. The mix of uses in the vicinity of the project adds an additional level of complexity that is addressed well by the Applicant. As an example, the three-stick townhouse blocks along Urbana Church Road are in conformance with the VC code. This particular design standard provides and opportunity to transition in higher densities in this neighborhood without overtaking the existing street frontage and traditional structures in the older part of Urbana along Urban Church Road.
- **Multiple Structures and Mixed Uses –**
 - Though technically there will be no mix of uses (or use of multiple structures) on a single lot in this proposed development, the framework for the development does not preclude this option in the future. The proposed uses include a mixture of commercial and residential integrated within the site and externally to the extent feasible. Clear and open access to surrounding sites, as well as a careful approach to building massing so as not to overwhelm nearby existing structures, demonstrates the extent to which the Applicant has pursued integration of uses in this project and in complementary efforts throughout the community.
 - Though not required of this project, the Applicant has designed a common/green plaza that may serve to function as an entry or gateway between the residential and adjacent commercial uses.
- **Modifications –**
 - Both the VC and MX district provide avenues for modification of dimensional standards as provided in the Zoning Ordinance. As the project moves forward the Applicant may need to seek simple modification of dimensional standards in order to accommodate this, or a similar, proposed layout of the project. A chart on the concept plan details the dimensional modifications that would be sought for this particular arrangement of structures in both the VC and MX zoning districts. Of particular note, will be a building height modification to increase to 40' from 30'

Findings/Conclusions

Based upon the review and analysis as provided above, Staff finds that the proposed application meets the intent of the Development Standards within the VC and MX zoning districts. Staff will continue to work with the Applicant as the project moves through the development process to address all outstanding items as discussed within the Staff Report. Staff anticipates that the application will meet the site plan review criteria as set forth in §1-19-3.300.4 including items related to site development, transportation, parking, public utilities, natural features, and common areas.

Other Applicable Regulations

Moderately Priced Dwelling Units – Chapter 1-6A:

The Applicant is seeking a density bonus under the MPDU ordinance and will provide built units or a Fee-In-Lieu payment as required.

APFO – Chapter 1-20:

A DRRA that incorporates multiple projects in the greater Urbana community is currently moving through the review process and will incorporate appropriate APFO requirements in a master APFO Letter of Understanding between the Applicant and the Board of County Commissioners.

Forest Resource – Chapter 1-21:

An NRI/FSD must be submitted to meet the FRO requirement as outlined in Section 1-21-31 of that ordinance.

Historic Preservation – Chapter 1-23:

No historically significant structures or other resources are present on this site.

Findings/Conclusions

The Applicant must address these other applicable regulations as part of the standard approval process moving forward after this Concept Plan has been approved or approved with conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of this Concept Site Plan by the Planning Commission. In addition, staff notes the potential lot size, and building height modifications are appropriate considering the proposed site development and layout, building massing and bulk in relation to existing and proposed development.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION

MOTION TO APPROVE

I move that the Planning Commission **APPROVE Concept** Site Plan AP-13049 for the proposed Worthington Square development, based on the findings and conclusions of the staff report and the testimony, exhibits, and documentary evidence produced at the public meeting.