



CITY OF COLLEGE PARK ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
7401 BALTIMORE AVENUE, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND 20740
TELEPHONE: (240) 487-3538

ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
Approved Minutes of Meeting
June 2, 2022

<u>Members</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Stephanie Stulich, Chair	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Santosh Chelliah, Vice-Chair	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Daejauna Donahue	<u> </u>	<u> x </u>
Vernae Martin	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Kiersten Johnson	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Malaika Nji-Kerber	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>
Michael Meadow	<u> x </u>	<u> </u>

Also Present: Planning Staff – Terry Schum, Miriam Bader and Theresheia Williams;
Presentation team: Tony Akaras and Bob Greenberg;

Public attendees – Councilmember Stuart Adams, Jason Azevedo, Madeline Zilfi, Jennifer Cibor, James Sauer, Michelle LaRocca, Michael Lukens, John Horowitz, Kurt Gibbons, Renee Domogauer, Bonnie Korr, Mark King, Anne, Bonnie McClellan, Lepson/Green, Doug, Marion

- I. **Call to Order and Amendments to Agenda:** Stephanie Stulich called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.
- II. **Approval of the Agenda:** Vernae Martin moved to approve the agenda as posted. Santosh Chelliah. Motion carried 6-0-0.
- III. **Approval of Minutes:** Kirsten Johnson moved to approve the minutes of May 5, 2022. Malaika Nji-Kerber seconded. Motion carried 6-0-0.
- IV. **Public Remarks on Non-Agenda Items:** There were no Public Remarks on Non-Agenda Items.
- V. **Presentation:** **Tony Akaras and Bob Greenberg**
Proposed Plan for the Redevelopment of
7131 Baltimore Avenue
(Formerly known as the District 3 Social House)

Terry Schum gave a brief description of the proposed development project that will be presented by the owner, Tony Akaras, and his architect, Bob Greenberg. Tony Akaras lives in Calvert Hills and previously owned Platos Diner and other businesses in College Park. He has been a part of the community for many years. Mr. Akaras purchased the Auto Parts store that was previously on the site, which was zoned mixed-use. The ground floor was the auto parts store, and the second floor was an apartment.

Mr. Akaras originally planned to renovate the building for a café. Because of a series of events in the renovation process, this concept could not be realized and a new project is being proposed. He is here tonight with his architect to present his new concept. No application has been filed yet with Park and Planning for review.

Tony Akaras introduced himself and stated that he has lived in College Park since 1994 and is not planning on moving. He stated that the project was envisioned differently originally and an unfortunate series of events and things that transpired brought the project to a standstill. A concept plan was approved at the County level but with the uncertainty around COVID and the change in food service establishments he decided to revise the plans. Mr. Akaras stated that he was introduced to Bob Greenberg, who helped with the early planning for the site. The new Zoning Ordinance created different opportunities for the property. Working with Mr. Greenberg and the engineers, Mr. Akaras decided on a design to keep the retail and restaurant components on the first floor, but also add some housing on the second and third floors. Mr. Akaras stated that there are a lot of opportunities for students who want to live in the area but can't afford the current housing. He stated that there will be an alternative means of transportation with the metro being right down the street.

Bob Greenberg, the Architect, explained the Powerpoint presentation and the development concept. He stated that he has worked on The Hotel UMD and Cambria and other projects in the City. He has been working with Tony to try to come up with something that would be most pleasing for the site. The proposal consists of a three-story building with 6,500 sf of retail on the first floor and living units on the two upper floors. There will be glass on all three floors, except the back of the building. They worked with the civil engineer on the setbacks to make sure proportions were done to conform to the current zoning guidelines. There will be 8 cohab units on the upper two floors. The cohab units are 4 per floor, with 4 to 5 living pods. These pods have a studio-like set up with a bathroom and closet. When you come outside of the room, there is a kitchen, washer and dryer, and amenities space. The studio units are 10 feet wide by 14 feet long. Residents would enter from the back and the front entrance would be used for retail.

Stephanie Stullich, Chair, thanked Tony Akaras and Bob Greenberg for their presentations and asked APC Members and the audience in attendance if there were any questions. The questions, answers and comments are summarized below:

- 1. Question from Michael Meadow:** With the bedrooms being connected to the common area, is the kitchen in the bedroom or the common area?

Answer by Bob Greenberg: The kitchen is in the common area for all the residents to use.

- 2. Question from Michael Meadow:** Would you consider this to be a micro-apartment style?

Answer by Bob Greenberg: Yes, there are several variations on the market, some are called pods, some are transient some are not. They are tenant-oriented, where they lease by the month or year. This will probably have a higher turnover rate than regular apartments. I think it is for a youthful market or people who are visiting College Park for a period then leave.

3. **Question from Michael Meadow:** What type of transportation accommodations do you think you would have in terms of vehicle parking, bicycle parking, and ED charging area?

Answer by Tony Akaras: There will be no onsite parking. Residents will probably have alternate means of transportation because most may not have cars, and the metro is not that far away.

4. **Question from Michael Meadow:** Do you think a good accommodation for bicycle parking could be under the overhang enclosure? Is there any type of sustainable roof design or green roof park that is only accessible to the residents? This would go further with the idea of sustainability and eliminating vehicles.

Answer by Tony Akaras: I think that is a good idea and a roof is a place where people can congregate. This is a smart urban design, and we need non-student residents in College Park not just students.

5. **Question from Stephanie Stulich:** The design of the pods seems like the same design of the student housing that was built in previous years. How does this differ from the student housing previously built?

Answer from Tony Akaras: That is true, that's what is being done to maximize the space and there are other amenities to attract students. Since this is smaller in scale and closer to the metro, there is no way to control and say for a fact that there will be no students living on the property. There may be graduate students who are having a problem getting housing and people who want to live in College Park, and don't want to live in the student housing. This is a growing segment in the marketplace regardless of if there is a university. Also, people need short-term housing.

6. **Question from Stephanie Stulich:** Is this design structurally different or just fewer units?

Answer from Tony Akaras: The idea is not to make it a student housing project. I would like to market it to be for professionals that are coming in from different places that want to stay in College Park for a short period.

7. **Question from Malika Nji-Kerber:** Where would kitchen supplies be stored? Will each of the bedrooms have shelves and cabinets for things like pots & pans and personal items?

Answer from Bob Greenberg: We would design the kitchen so that certain cabinets, lower and upper would be restricted to the people that would use them from their particular unit. They would have their own food storage area. There may be two refrigerators instead of one. There may be locks on the refrigerator or cabinet doors that benefits the residents. There will be sufficient shelving and storage space and everyone can use the common cooking area.

8. Question from Malika Nji-Kerber:

There is a lack of outside space, will there be balconies or rooftop decks in the plans?

Answer from Bob Greenberg: I like the idea of possibly using the roof. There is some additional outside space around the building. In the back, there are some outside covered areas. There is also a 12' buffer which has to be designed and landscaped. We may have to study this a little more, but it makes sense.

9. Question from Malika Nji-Kerber: Did you consider other uses for this site and the building in terms of the interior design? You indicated that you were looking to attract young professionals in the transitioning stage of their careers. Micro-communities are usually in high-density areas like San Francisco and New York because they are high-density areas and are extremely expensive. Do you think there is a market for this type of housing in College Park that is not as expensive as in these other areas?

Answer by Tony Akaras: I think there is because there is a void where people can live in College Park. If you look at the housing stock, College Park doesn't have a lot of apartments. People live differently, what I like and what someone else likes may be different. College Park is a transient town; people come and go, and you have professional people that come and go and they have a problem getting accommodations. These are the people that will eat at the restaurants and spend money in the community and if they enjoy it, will possibly find permanent housing in College Park. I can see this being temporary housing for researchers or someone coming to College Park for temporary work. There are no other options in College Park for them to stay.

10. Question from Malika Nji-Kerber: Have you considered loft efficiencies where you would fit in the same number of units, but each one would have its own mini kitchen and be fully enclosed like a tiny apartment? It would be more affordable and maximize the space while giving the potential resident more privacy.

Answer from Tony Akaras: We have not discussed a lot of different designs or options. With the new zoning, we still have the option to apply under the old zoning. With the new zoning, the density was reduced per square foot for apartments. By code, we can put 8 apartments on this property. The cost of construction is extremely high, so you try to maximize the space. I am not sure what other options we can come up with, but we will consider that. This is just a preliminary discussion.

11. Question from Kiersten Johnson: What kind of retail are you envisioning for the ground floor? Aesthetically speaking, I am not sure how the façade fits in with the community, which is close to a historic neighborhood. I prefer a softer look with greener landscaping and more visual interest. I think there may be a security concern having strangers moving into a small living unit.

Answer from Tony Akaras: The type of retail I envision is the restaurant type of use, food service. We all worry about security elements, but this is not going to be an inexpensive type of housing where anyone can just come in and rent a room. Each application will require a security deposit, and credit check, and are not going to be just rented to anyone. I think it would be safer than some of the single-family or group homes throughout College Park.

12. Question from Santosh Chelliah: Given the proximity of Metro and plans for housing right around the metro, how do you envision competing with the housing you are proposing? What would be the attraction to coming to live at your property, would it be the length of the lease or the price? Is there a minimum rental lease that you would consider?

Answer from Tony Akaras: I think this is a much nicer location than on the other side of the metro. I think people want amenities and the urban lifestyle surpasses the other properties at the metro. Location is also a strong point, with Whole Foods and the other shops within walking distance. If you are working at the University, you can walk to work or if you need to use the metro, it is close by. As far as the rental lease, the longer the better.

13. Question from Mike Meadows: Where would the loading and trash area be located and what type of interference do you envision.?

Answer from Tony Akaras: The design is set up for the trash to be in the back of the building. The sidewalk will be designed to connect the residential component to Route 1. The sidewalk is set back on Guilford Road, so when you turn around it would allow delivery trucks to pull into this section and unload. Also, a lot of food services provide a “key drop” so that deliveries can be received early in the morning to not disrupt traffic or business operations.

14. Question from Stephanie Stulich: What about the noise of the delivery trucks? Also, the building footprint is 7,200 sf and the overall lot is 12,000 sf, what is the other 5,000 sf?

Answer from Tony Akaras: I don’t foresee a lot of noise because there won’t be a lot of deliveries and they won’t be parking on Rt. 1. The delivery trucks are smaller boxed trucks, not tracker trailers. As for the building footprint, the first floor is 7,200, the second floor is about 1,000 sf, and the other area is for landscaping and sidewalk seating. We haven’t gone that far in the design process.

15. Question from Madeline Zilfi: What is the zoning height for this property?

Answer from Tony Akaras: The zoning height is 50' and 4 stories. With the zoning, you also have to consider the amount of floor area.

16. Question from Stuart Adams: Will the spaces be furnished and is there a separate bathroom in each bedroom? Can you comment about parking along Guilford Road? Will you be requesting a liquor license for this establishment?

Answer from Tony Akaras: Yes, the spaces are furnished with separate baths. As for parking, there are spaces for 3 or 4 cars on Guilford Road. There are no plans for a liquor store, but possibly for beer and wine.

17. Question for Madeline Zilfi: What is the target rental rates?

Answer from Tony Akaras: It's preliminary at this time, but with the market rate close to this area, it will probably be around \$1,100 - \$1,200.

18. Question from Stephanie Stullich: How many parking spaces are required?

Answer from Toney Akaras: Twenty-eight or twenty-nine.

19. Question from Stuart Adams: What are the current plans for the property as it goes through redevelopment as far as screening the construction from the neighborhood and other developments that will be opening?

Answer from Tony Akaras: We can screen the property from the view of what is existing.

20. Question from Stephanie Stullich: What is the timeline you anticipate for this project completion?

Answer from Tony Akaras: We wanted to meet with this group to get a consensus before we started. We would like to start immediately. The site plan is pretty much completed, it's more architectural. Initially, the county issued the incorrect permit and the wrong instructions, which cost a lot of money and time.

Chat comments

Jason Azevedo: The target population is students, correct?

Kiersten Johnson: So "living pods" basically allow for 4-5 roommates in a single dwelling unit? How does the aesthetic of the building fit into the community? aesthetic on that side on Rte 1? Is there any more green scaping that could be done? Agree with the comments on a green roof, etc. Seems like Air BnB is responding to market demand for short-term housing.

Who would manage to rent out single bedrooms within a pod? It sounds like a nightmare for people's security within the pod to have a stranger move in. What kind of retail are you envisioning on the ground floor? I suppose that if the microunits were less successful than hoped, they could convert to a smaller number of units per pod. +1 bioswale to reduce impermeable surfaces.

Lepson/Green: This is geared towards students, right? It just looks like a dorm. I worry about liability issues with "partying" students on a rooftop. This is giving me flashbacks of my Army barracks days.

Jason Azevedo: What is the total anticipated/target occupancy? What is the target rental rate for each of these pod units?

Madeline C. Zilfi: They are all over Route One already. Where's the parking?

Jennifer Cibor: Yes, where is the parking?

Lepson/Green: Wouldn't there be far more parking required for this compared to the restaurant? Was there any thought about how to prevent Guilford Road from being blocked by vehicular traffic? Will these be furnished? It's currently a major safety hazard too. I saw children playing in the hole the other day.

John Horowitz: Sorry to say it but that is one very ugly building. I know it's early in the process so hopefully, they can do better.

Stuart Adams: Gilbane suggested co-living for graduate student housing for the now paused Western Gateway Project. That was one of their big selling points. I think the design showed that each bedroom had a bathroom "within" the personal bedroom space. Please correct me if I'm wrong. I couldn't tell with the smaller font/size.

VI. Update on Development Activity – Terry Schum reported on the following:

Redevelopment of 3 motels – This redevelopment consists of three motels, Red Roof Inn, Days Inn, and Howard Johnson's, located at 9113 and 9137 Baltimore Avenue. The project is being proposed for multi-family affordable housing, approximately 330 units and 4,000 sf of commercial. The Preliminary Plan of Subdivision will be coming before staff on referral from Park and Planning followed by the Detailed Site Plan.

Stanley Martin Homes – This developer is proposing a land assemblage in the North Autoville area for property south of Cherry Hill Road, west of Rt. 1, behind Mazza GrandMarc Apartments. The proposal is for townhouses and two over two's. The project would create a new network of streets in the area. This would be an ownership project. Plans are preliminary.

Campus Village Shopping Center – This center is under contract for sale and redevelopment. The proposal is for student housing and retail. It would be a mixed-use project. This shopping center is part of the Lakeland community. The approach to the redevelopment needs to take into consideration the adjoining neighborhood and the restorative justice process underway. Plans are preliminary.

VII. Other Business: There was no other business.

VIII. Adjourn: There being no further business, Malaika Nji-Kerber moved to adjourn the meeting. Michael Meadow seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Theresheia Williams