

May 15, 2019

Tineya Walker
Principal Planning Technician
Development Review Division
M-NCPPC, Prince George's Planning
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-952-3215

Re: Branch Avenue Preliminary Plan #4-18028
Pre-Acceptance Submittal
Justification for Sticks of Townhouses over 8

Dear Ms. Walker

The following is a letter summarizing the justification for proposing sticks of townhouses containing more than eight units in response to the pre-acceptance comments received on March 7, 2019 for Preliminary Plan #4-18028 for Branch Avenue MXT.

SUPERVISOR COMMENT

Provide an SOJ and exhibit delineating those townhouse sticks which contain more than 8 units, the percentage of townhouse sticks containing more than 8 units, and justification as to how more than 8 units creates a more attractive living environment or is more environmentally sensitive, pursuant to Section 27-548(h).

The pertinent part, Section 27-548(h) reads:

(h) ... there shall be no more than eight (8) townhouses per building group, except where the applicant demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Planning Board or District Council, as applicable, that more than eight (8) dwelling units (but not more than ten (10) dwelling units) would create a more attractive living environment or would be more environmentally sensitive. In no event shall the number of building groups containing more than eight (8) dwelling units exceed twenty percent (20%) of the total number of building groups in the total development. ... In no event shall there be more than ten (10) dwelling units in a building group and no more than two (2) building groups containing ten (10) dwelling units....

As shown on the attached exhibit, the proposed Preliminary Plan contains 70 total sticks of townhouses, 5 of which contain 9 units, equaling 7.1% of the total. Section 27-548(h) allows for up to 20%, or in this case 14 sticks to contain more than 8 units. No sticks contain 10 dwellings. The five sticks of nine units are:

Block "A," Lots 31-39
Block "A," Lots 46-54
Block "C," Lots 1-9
Block "C," Lots 30-38
Block "D," Lots 14-22

Several constraints exist on the Property.

1. The Property is severely encumbered by A-65, which runs east-west across the northern half of the Property.
2. There is a 50+ foot forested buffer between existing single-family detached neighborhood to the north and the A-65 right-of-way.
3. Much of the east-central portion of the Property is encumbered by an unnamed tributary to Piscataway Creek.
4. A large wetland is located right in the center of the proposed development.

In addition to environmental constraints, in 2009, the State revised its *Stormwater Design Manual*, with special attention paid to Chapter 5: Environmental Site Design (ESD). ESD is defined as:

“...using small scale stormwater management practices, nonstructural techniques, and better site planning to mimic natural hydrologic runoff characteristics and minimize the impact of land development on water resources.” Under this definition, ESD includes:

- **Optimizing conservation of natural features (e.g., drainage patterns, soil, vegetation).**
- **Minimizing impervious surfaces (e.g., pavement, concrete channels, roofs).**
- **Slowing down runoff to maintain discharge timing and to increase infiltration and evapotranspiration.**
- **Using other nonstructural practices or innovative technologies approved by MDE.** (Page 5.2)

The Applicant contends allowing five sticks of nine units in a development of 70 total sticks will create a more attractive living environment and be more environmentally sensitive than restricting all sticks to an eight dwelling unit maximum.

The site has been designed with the ESD principles in mind. Micro Bioretention Facilities are provided throughout the site. This nonstructural practices allow greater preservation of the natural features onsite, but also limit the developability of lots around them. The two proposed sticks of nine in Block “C” front these bioretention areas, minimizing lot design options. Block “A,” Lots 31-39 share a block surrounded by streets with the large wetland. This wetland limits the lot layout in this block.

A natural break occurs between Lots 13 and 14 of Block “D,” where the roads curve and the rows back to the right-of-way for A-65. This natural break makes two sticks: Lots 8-13 and Lots 14-22. This break allows open space, but leaves Lots 14-22 in a stick of nine.

Block “A,” Lots 46-54 is a stick that is completely surrounded by streets and alleys. Putting a break in the middle of this stick would push the units farther to the south. As designed, the side of the stick along Street “D” is setback equidistant from the street as the fronts of Lots 55-60. This is a better design than would be achieved if the sides stuck out farther than the fronts of Lots 55-60.

Allowing these few sticks to have nine units ultimately creates a better design and a more attractive living environment. Lots near the wetland a bioretention areas will have great views; and the whole of the neighborhood will benefit because variation in stick sizes will create visual interest by reducing monotony throughout the community.

CONCLUSION

Branch Avenue MXT
Preliminary Plan #4-18028
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I hope you find this information helpful and can accept this submittal for Preliminary Plan #4-18028 for review. Please contact me at 240-912-2182 if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,
Rodgers Consulting, Inc.



Nat Ballard
Senior Associate

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