



December 16, 2019

Ms. Megan Reiser, Acting Supervisor
Environmental Planning Section
Prince George's County
County Administration Building
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Re: Washington Gateway Project
5801 Columbia Park Road, Hyattsville
Preliminary Plan 4-19048
Variance to Section 25-122(b)(1)(G) Removal of specimen, champion or historic trees

Dear Ms. Reiser,

The subject property consists of 17.9 acres with an address of 5801 Columbia Park Road, Hyattsville, Maryland 20705, which is located at the intersection with Cabin Branch Drive. The project proposes redevelopment of the subject property as a warehousing/industrial use, with a single, one-story 172,200 square foot shell building and associated parking.

Uptil two years ago, the property was being used as a meat packing facility, with a 132,000± square foot building, and approximately 201,000 square feet of asphalt and gravel pavement used for parking, and loading. The building structure has since been demolished, but the flooring and foundation remains. A perennial stream (Cabin Branch) runs northerly along the western property edge. About half of the 100-foot stream buffer is currently wooded. Per new FEMA map number 24033C0141E, majority of the site (approximately 13.9 acres) is currently located within the 100-year floodplain. Prince George's County Master Plan shows a 70-foot right-of-way for a future 4-lane urban road crossing the property along its western portion. The project is in Anacostia River Watershed (02140205) which is part of Washington Metropolitan Watershed (021402) and not in Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Western Branch Watershed is designated Use IV. There are no wetlands, buffers, critical areas within the project area.

The area south of the old building is wooded, with two distinct forest stands identified during the forest stand delineation, which was completed in September of 2015. There were six (6) specimen trees identified during the field study, and the following table summarizes the size, condition, and status of the specimen trees.

SPECIMEN TREE TABLE					
Number	Species	Common Name	Size, DBH (in)	Condition	Notes
SP-1	<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Eastern Cottonwood	42.0	Poor	To be Saved
SP-2	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	Yellow-Poplar	30.0	Fair	To be Saved
SP-3	<i>Populus deltoides</i>	Eastern Cottonwood	37.0	Poor	To be Removed
SP-4	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver Maple	37.0	Fair	To be Removed
SP-5	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	American Sycamore	38.0	Good	To be Removed
SP-6	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	American Sycamore	32.0	Good	To be Removed

For the redevelopment of the site, four (4) specimen trees are proposed to be removed. These are SP-3 to SP-6, out of which, SP-3, an Eastern Cottonwood, is listed as ‘poor’ condition; SP-4 (a Silver Maple) is listed in ‘fair’ condition; and SP-5 and SP-6, both Sycamores, are listed to be in ‘good’ condition.

We submit the following justification in support of our Variance Application for the removal of the specimen trees addressing each of the required findings of Sec. 25-119(d) below:

(a) Special conditions peculiar to the property which would cause unwarranted hardship;

- Per new FEMA map number 24033C0141E, majority of the site (approximately 13.9 acres) is currently located within the 100-year floodplain.
- The proposed building and parking layout has been designed to minimize the effects of development on the existing stream, stream buffer, and existing 100-year floodplain. No disturbance is proposed within the 100-foot stream buffer along Cabin Branch.
- The parking areas for cars and trucks, and compensatory storage provided below the parking areas will provide quantity management for 100-year storm event as well as ensure that the changes to the 100-year floodplain do not negatively impact the downstream properties and infrastructure.
- As a condition of approval, DPIE has disallowed right-of-way access for the property from Columbia Park Road, even though the existing entrance to the site is from this road. DPIE requires dedication of the 80-foot wide right-of-way for a future Collector Road, as delineated in the Prince George’s County Master Plan. The proposed site entrance is proposed from the new Master Plan Collector Road, which will be dedicated and partially constructed for this project. Portion of a 46' wide paved close-section urban 4-lane collect road will be constructed on the west side of the site from Columbia Park Road to the upstream of the flood plain buffer per the agreement with the County.
- Dedication of public-right-of-way has resulted in the building to be pushed further east to allow for development of a 4-lane road along Cabin Branch stream. The provision of adequate parking and truck loading areas resulted in the building to be oriented N-S, thereby impacting the existing forest stands and also the specimen trees. The Master Plan road also results in isolating a portion of the property (approximately 61,400 square feet) from the majority of the site, thereby reducing the net usable area.

(b) Enforcement of these rules will deprive the landowner of rights commonly enjoyed by others in similar areas.

The footprint of the proposed building is sized to be consistent with current market standards for building with similar use. A smaller building footprint will not attract potential tenants, and therefore, be not economically viable for development of the property. The applicant has proposed a LEED certified building for this project, which will enhance the overall environmental quality of the site and the neighborhood.

(c) Granting the variance will not confer on the applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.

The owner/developer of the property has applied to the County to permit development on the property, and the proposed design and construction will comply with County Subdivision Ordinance and Zoning Ordinance. The applicant does not request any special privileges to be granted for this project.

(d) Variance is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of actions by the applicant.

The owner/developer (applicant) of the property purchased the land in its existing condition. No development activity has been initiated without proper permits. The Variance is not based on any conditions or due to actions by the applicant.



e) *Variance does not arise from a condition relating to land or building use, either permitted or nonconforming, on a neighboring property.*

The property is surrounded by Industrial-zoned use along the east and south. Properties along the west are zoned R-55, though they are owned by the Town of Cheverly and do not reflect residential use. Removal of specimen trees is not caused by building or land use on any of adjoining properties.

f) *State water quality standards will not be violated or that a measurable degradation in water quality will not occur as a result of the granting of the variance.*

Removal of the specimen trees will not negatively impact the State water quality standards. The stormwater management for the development will provide water quality treatment for the new building and pavement using multiple sand filters, which is an improvement over the existing conditions, where no stormwater management was provided. The existing impervious areas have been modeled as 'meadows in good condition' and quality treatment for 100% of existing impervious areas has been provided. In conclusion, water quality of the receiving stream will in fact improve after development.

Additionally, the following arguments are presented in support of the Variance Application:

- The property is a brownfield site and lies within the high priority industrial area, and has been earmarked by Prince George's County for redevelopment. The development of this site will introduce a job-creating business on the site, improve water quality, improve traffic circulation, and attenuate the 100-year flood events.
- As part of the site development, the existing 15' wide trail will be removed from within the stream buffer, and planted with native trees. Areas within the stream buffer which are currently not wooded, will also be planted with native trees to enhance the stream buffer.

We look forward to a positive response to the application to remove four specimen trees from the property. Please contact me at (410) 792-8086 if you have any concerns or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Mridula Gupta, PLA, LEED AP BD+C
Project Manager
Land Development Practice
CC: Liberty Property Trust

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