

September 18 , 2001

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Prince George's County Planning Board  
**VIA:** Steve Adams, Urban Design Supervisor  
**FROM:** Henry Zhang, Urban Design Section, Development Review Division  
**SUBJECT:** Residential Revitalization Detailed Site Plan, DSP-01042, Quebec Arms

The Urban Design staff has reviewed the Residential Revitalization Detailed Site Plan for the subject property and presents the following findings leading to a recommendation of APPROVAL with conditions as described in the ■Recommendation• section of this report.

**RESIDENTIAL REVITALIZATION LEGISLATION**

Many jurisdictions have in recent years introduced various innovative land use and zoning tools to make urban renewal more efficient. The residential revitalization legislation in CB-58-2001 is such an alternative zoning tool designated to encourage and assist the efficient rehabilitation of older apartment buildings and other residential development in designated revitalization areas of Prince George's County. CB-58-2001 provides a consolidated process employing Detailed Site Plan review for a residential revitalization project that may not comply with the conventional regulations of the *Zoning Ordinance* such as number of parking spaces, lot coverage, setbacks, etc. As the result of this legislation, Section 27-445.09, Residential Revitalization, has been added to the *Zoning Ordinance*. Compared with the traditional zoning requirements, this residential revitalization legislation provides more flexibility in the design review for eligible residential rehabilitation projects.

CB-52-2001 was approved by the District Council on September 11, 2001, and became effective on the day of its enactment.

**EVALUATION**

This Detailed Site Plan was reviewed and evaluated for compliance with the following criteria:

- a. CB-58-2001, Residential Revitalization Legislation
- b. The requirements of the *Zoning Ordinance*
- c. The requirements of the *Landscape Manual*.

- d. The requirements of the *Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance*
- e. Referral comments

## FINDINGS

Based upon the evaluation and analysis of the subject Detailed Site Plan, the Urban Design Review staff recommends the following findings:

1. Request: The subject application is for the approval of a Residential Revitalization Detailed Site Plan, DSP- 01042, for 332 multifamily dwellings in the R-18 Zone.
2. Location: The site is located in Planning Area 65, Council District 2. More specifically, it is situated in a subdivision known as Langley Park, north of Merrimac Drive on the east and west sides of 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue.
3. Surroundings and Use: The subject application consists of two lots, Parcel A and Parcel B. To its south is Merrimac Drive and Parcel C; to its north are Block B and H; to its east is Block H and to its west is Block B of the Langley Park Subdivision.
4. Previous Approvals: The subject site has been developed since the 1940s as a residential district. The 1989 *Approved Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt Master Plan* recommended that the subject property be developed for multifamily residential uses at an ■Urban• density with a maximum of 12 dwelling units per acre. The 1990 *Adopted Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt Sectional Map Amendment* (Planning Areas 65, 66 and 67) retained the existing R-18 Zone for the subject property. The master plan recommends placing a high priority on continuous rehabilitation of existing old living areas through both public and private actions.
5. Development Data:

<i>Site Plan Data</i>	
<b>Zone</b>	<b>R-18</b>
<b>Existing Use</b>	<b>Multifamily Housing</b>
<b>Proposed Use</b>	<b>Multifamily Housing</b>
<b>Lot Area</b>	<b>14.479 acres</b>
<b>Proposed Asphalt Pavement</b>	<b>4,480 square feet</b>
<b>Existing Parking</b>	<b>282 spaces</b>
<b>Parking Provided</b>	<b>334 spaces</b>
Standard	206 spaces
Compact	111 spaces
Handicapped Parking	17 spaces

<b>Unit Mix</b>		
<b>Type of Unit</b>	<b>Original Unit Number</b>	<b>New Unit Number</b>
Efficiency	1	0
1 BR	171	142
1 BR for the Handicapped	N/A	3
2 BR	174	160
2 BR for the Handicapped	N/A	14
3 BR	1	12
3 BR for the Handicapped	N/A	1
Total	347	332

<b>Comparison of R-18 Zone Requirements and the Existing and the Post-Rehabilitation Conditions</b>			
<b>Zoning Regulation</b>	<b>R-18 Zone Requirements</b>	<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>Conditions after Rehabilitation</b>
Minimum Lot Size (Sq. Ft.)	16,000	263,365 (Lot B)	
Maximum Lot Coverage (%)	30	31 (A & B)	31.7 (A & B)
Green Space (%)	70	69 (A & B)	68.3 (A & B)
Lot Width/Frontage (Ft.)	85/125 (Corner)	715 (Lot B)	N/A
Front Yard (Ft.)	30	25 Min	N/A
Side Yard (Ft.)	30/10	20 Min.	N/A
Rear Yard (Ft.)	30	20 Min.	N/A
Building Height (Ft.)	40	36 Max. (3-Story)	N/A
Distance Between Buildings (Ft.)	50 Plus 2 above 36 Ft.	28 Min.	N/A
Density (Du/Ac)	12	24 (Lot A & B)	23.6
Parking Spaces	389	282	334 (HC and Compact)

6. **Design Features:** The proposed residential revitalization Detailed Site Plan, DSP-01042, is a renovation of existing multifamily dwellings. The renovation design illustrates the ■Defensible Space■ concept, which was first proposed by Oscar Newman in 1972 based on his study of the public housing in New York. The design scheme features well-defined, inward-looking and limited-access cul-de-sacs/courtyards, which can be accessed directly from 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The proposed improvements to the buildings focus on the entrance, roof, windows and exterior walls by adding decorative porticos, cross-gabled half-round vents on some roofs, window trims and stucco-finished panels, etc. Landscape improvements include the addition of one tot lot, pedestrian path, lighting fixtures, parking and handicapped parking spaces and ramps, as well as various trees and shrubs. A gateway-style monument sign design is proposed for this project. New masonry pilasters with lamp poles are also proposed at the entrance to each existing building cluster, which is oriented toward a common courtyard. The design of monument sign and pilasters is attractive and acceptable.

#### COMPLIANCE WITH EVALUATION CRITERIA:

7. **CB-58-2001, Residential Revitalization Legislation and Zoning Ordinance:** The subject application has been reviewed for compliance with the requirements in CB-58-2001 and the

site plan design guidelines of the *Zoning Ordinance*.

- a. The subject application is in conformance with the requirements of Section 27- 441, Uses Permitted, which governs permitted uses in residential zones. The proposed multifamily revitalization project as shown on the Detailed Site Plan, DSP-01042, is a permitted use in the R-18 Zone.
- b. The proposal is in conformance with the requirements of Section 27-445.09(b) (1) to (6), Requirements, regarding the type of development, development density, parking, parking reduction and other development criteria such as lot size and coverage, setback, etc.
- c. Per Section 27-445.09, Residential Revitalization, (c) Findings, in approving a Residential Revitalization project, the Planning Board shall find that the project:

- (1) **Improves a deteriorated or obsolete multifamily or attached one-family dwelling unit development by replacing or rehabilitating dwellings, improving structures, or renovating and improving other facilities;•**

Comment: The proposed development is to renovate an existing old development. The Detailed Site Plan proposes to repair and improve the existing buildings, extend the pedestrian path network, add more parking spaces, redefine the entrance point to each building cluster and provide handicapped access and other facilities such as a tot lot in order to improve its outdoor neighborhood environment. The physical quality of this old neighborhood will be greatly improved upon the completion of the revitalization project.

- (2) **Maintains or improves the architectural character of the buildings so that they are compatible with surrounding properties;•**

Comment: The proposed major architectural improvements include the addition of pedimented entrance porticos, window trims, aluminum-wrapped friezes, half-round vents, ridge vents and stucco panels. These architectural elements greatly enrich the existing facade design. The proposed architectural features will improve the architectural character of the existing buildings in a piecemeal way so that they are compatible with the long established neighborhood character.

- (3) **Serves a need for housing in the neighborhood or community;•**

Comment: The subject application is a renovation of the existing multifamily dwellings. It will not involve any change of the gross floor area of the existing apartment buildings. The rehabilitated neighborhood will, as it did before, continue to serve the housing needs of the community but in a much better way.

- (4) **Benefits project residents and property owners in the neighborhood;•**

Comment: According to the development statistics provided by the applicant, the proposed development will preserve some 96 percent of the existing units and add more handicapped-friendly units. Approximately 85 percent of the current tenants will remain in the neighborhood. As the direct outcome of this project, the majority of the existing residents will be the beneficiaries of this revitalization.

**■(5) Conforms with the housing goals and priorities as described in the current •Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan,• for Prince George•s County; and•**

Comment: Community building and revitalization are key to housing and community development activities in Prince George•s County. The proposed revitalization project conforms with the housing goals and priorities of the current *Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan FY 2001-2005* for Prince George•s County. Among six goals and priorities of the Consolidated Plan, the proposed project meets specifically four of them that are applicable to this Detailed Site Plan. The revitalization will be a special housing reinvestment in inner-Beltway communities. It will develop a range of housing for all residents including but not limited to families and persons with disabilities. It will build and restore vibrant communities by creating safe neighborhoods where people want to live, and improve the quality of life for all residents by reducing concentration of inferior, low-value housing units in the communities.

**■(6) Conforms to either specific land use recommendations or principles and guidelines for residential development within the applicable Master Plan.•**

Comment: Both the 1989 *Approved Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt Master Plan* and the 1990 *Adopted Langley Park-College Park-Greenbelt Sectional Map Amendment* (Planning Areas 65, 66 and 67) recommend that the subject property be developed for multifamily residential uses. The master plan also recommends placing a high priority on continual rehabilitation of existing old living areas through both public and private actions. The subject application conforms to the master plan recommendations.

8. Landscape Manual: The proposed residential revitalization is exempt from the requirements of the applicable sections of the *Landscape Manual*, because the proposed development is a rehabilitation of existing buildings which does not involve any change of use or increase of more than ten percent of the gross floor area of the buildings.

The existing residential district had been established well before the *Landscape Manual* came into effect on January 1, 1990. It is surrounded on its northern, eastern and western sides by single-family detached housing. The two uses are deemed somewhat incompatible by Section 4.7 of the *Landscape Manual*.

Per Section 1.1, Applicability, of the *Landscape Manual*,

**■.. all building and grading permits shall be in compliance with this Manual to the extent that the requirements can be satisfied without demolition of any building, or parking or loading spaces.●**

Per Section 27-445.09, Residential Revitalization of the *Zoning Ordinance*, one of the requirements for the revitalization project is that:

**■The project shall comply with the requirements of the *Landscape Manual* to the extent that is practical.●**

Even though the project is technically exempt from the *Landscape Manual*, the applicant recognizes the desirability of a buffer between the two incompatible uses. The applicant has provided certain buffer plantings along the northern, eastern and western boundary lines because there is ample space between the subject site and the adjacent single-family detached housing. The plant units are provided at a rate equivalent to 56 per 100 linear feet of property line, which is more than a type ■A● bufferyard requires. New landscape schemes are also proposed at each gateway entrance leading to the existing building clusters.

9. Woodland Conservation Ordinance: The subject application is not subject to the provisions of the Prince George's County Woodland Conservation Ordinance. Even though the site is more than 40,000 square feet, it contains less than 10,000 square feet of woodland and the construction proposed is to renovate the existing multifamily buildings. A Tree Conservation Plan is not required.
10. Referral Comments: The subject application was referred to all concerned agencies and divisions. Major referral comments are summarized as follows:
  - a. The Department of Housing and Community Development, Prince George's County, has no objection to the approval of this residential revitalization Detailed Site Plan, DSP-01042 for Quebec Arms as stated in a memorandum dated September 10, 2001.
  - b. The Community Planning Division responded in a memorandum dated September 10, 2001 that:

**■This proposal is implementing the Master Plan's recommendation for renovating existing older living areas.●**
  - c. The subject application was referred to the Transportation Planning Section and in a memorandum dated September 4, 2001, transportation staff noted that:

**■The apartments exist. As plan changes appear to be limited to new pavement, and this pavement would be used for parking with virtually no change to circulation, the plan is acceptable.●**

In another memorandum on Detailed Site Plan Review for Master Plan

Trail Compliance dated September 12, 2001, the Trail Planner identified no major issue related with this application. The referral states that:

- There are no master plan trails issues. The internal sidewalk and path network appears to be adequate to accommodate internal pedestrian circulation. However, the provision of a bicycle rack in each cul-de-sac/parking area is encouraged.●
  - d. The Subdivision Section, in a memorandum dated September 11, 2001, indicated concern about the compliance of the subject application with Section 24-111(c), Resubdivision of land. Since the subject application is the renovation of existing multifamily dwellings, it is exempt from the requirement to file a new preliminary plan prior to the issuance of a building permit.
  - e. The Permit Review Section provided questions regarding the compliance with the *Landscape Manual* and the regulations of *Zoning Ordinance*. Most of the questions were answered during the review process. Some of the questions have been included in the recommendation section of this staff report as conditions.
  - f. In a memorandum dated September 12, 2001, the Department of Public Works and Transportation, noted that:
    - The subject property is located on the north of Merrimac Drive, on the east and west side of 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Merrimac Drive and 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue are county-maintained roadways. Frontage improvements along the frontage of 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Merrimac Drive in accordance with DPW&T's Specifications and Standards, is required.●
  - g. The City of Takoma Park had not responded to the referral request at the time the staff report was written.
  - h. The Redevelopment Authority had not responded to the referral request at the time the staff report was written.
11. The Detailed Site Plan, if revised in accordance with the proposed conditions, will represent a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines without requiring unreasonable costs and without detracting substantially from the utility of the proposed development from its intended uses.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the foregoing evaluation, analysis and findings of this report, the Urban Design staff recommends that the Planning Board adopt the findings of this report and APPROVE residential revitalization Detailed Site Plan, DSP-01042, Quebec Arms, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to certification of approval of residential revitalization Detailed Site Plan DSP-01042, the applicant shall make the following revisions to the Detailed Site Plan:
  - a. The buffer planting plan shall be clearly identified along the northern, eastern and western boundary lines adjacent to the single-family detached housing as to existing and proposed plant units and the width of the landscape area. At the eastern boundary line along the existing driveway leading to Merrimac Drive, a six (6)-foot-high board-on-board fence, in addition to the existing landscape strip, shall be provided.
  - b. A standard bicycle rack shall be provided at each cul-de-sac parking compound.
  - c. Revise the site plan notes to include:
    - (1) A note that indicates the date of construction of the existing buildings and that all the existing building will remain.
    - (2) A complete parking schedule which identifies the existing number and the number actually being provided as well as the breakdown by the type of parking space.
    - (3) A complete bedroom breakdown showing both the existing and the post-rehabilitation conditions.
  - d. The proposed monument sign shall not exceed six feet in height.
2. Prior to construction of the entrance monument sign, the applicant shall apply for a sign permit.
3. Prior to certification of approval, the applicant shall submit evidence from the Department of Environmental Resources of the final approval of a Stormwater Management Concept Plan or of exemption from the requirement. The Detailed Site Plan shall also be revised to reflect any change that may be required by the Stormwater Management Approval.