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## PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

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REPORT DATE: November 12, 2021

RESPONSIBLE STAFF: Sam Copelan,  
Planner I

PUBLIC MEETING DATE

November 17, 2021

APPLICATION NUMBER

SDP-9003-2021

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

14 Firstfield Holdings LLC ("Applicant") has submitted Schematic Development Plan (SDP) application, SDP-9003-2021 (Exhibit #1). This plan is in accordance with Sketch Plan SK-8813-2021, known as 14 Firstfield Road, approved by Resolution R-26-21 (Exhibit #22 and #23). Application SDP-9003-2021 proposes 604,929 gross square feet in multiple buildings, a structured parking garage, and open space for the Lab/Office, Research & Development, and Integrated Light Manufacturing uses. The proposed SDP application includes an infrastructure plan to accommodate future development in accordance with the approved Sketch Plan.

APPLICANT

Matthew Hariegel  
14 Firstfield Holdings, LLC c/o Novavax, Inc.  
21 Firstfield Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

SUBJECT PROPERTY ADDRESS

14 Firstfield Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

ZONE

MXD Zone

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION, BASED ON THE EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY SUBMITTED INTO THE RECORD AND THE FINDINGS IN THE STAFF ANALYSIS, RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF SCHEMATIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN SDP-9003-2021 TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL, WITH THREE (3) CONDITIONS.

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Approve

Approve With Conditions

Deny

Defer

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Enclosures:

Staff Analysis

Index of Memoranda (Exhibits in BOLD)

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**MEMORANDUM TO:** Mayor and City Council  
Planning Commission

**FROM:** Samuel Copelan, Planner I

**DATE:** November 12, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Final Staff Analysis  
Application SDP-9003-2021: 14 Firstfield Road

**APPLICANT/OWNER**

Matthew Hariegel  
14 Firstfield Holdings, LLC c/o Novavax, Inc.  
21 Firstfield Road  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878

**ATTORNEY**

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VIKA Maryland, LLC  
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**ARCHITECT**

Manoj Dalaya  
Kishimoto Gordon Dalaya  
Architecture  
1101 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite #200  
Washington DC 20005

**TAX MAP REFERENCE:**

Tax Assessment Map # FT21

**TAX ACCOUNT NUMBERS:**

ID # 09-03353020  
ID # 09-03353031

**REQUEST**

14 Firstfield Holdings LLC (“Applicant”) has submitted Schematic Development Plan (SDP) application, SDP-9003-2021 (Exhibit #1). This plan is in accordance with Sketch Plan SK-8813-2021, known as 14 Firstfield Road, approved by Resolution R-26-21 (Exhibit #22 and #23). Application SDP-9003-2021 proposes 604,929 gross square feet in multiple buildings, a structured parking garage, and open space for the Lab/Office, Research & Development, and Integrated Light Manufacturing uses. The proposed SDP application includes an infrastructure plan to accommodate future development in accordance with the approved Sketch Plan.

## LOCATION

The subject area of the application ("Subject Properties") is located at 14 Firstfield Road, which contains two lots (Tax account numbers 09-03353020 and 09-03353031) currently improved with an existing parking lot. The property is bounded by Firstfield Road to the west, Bank Street to the north, and the property located at 700 Quince Orchard Road to the east.



Location Map

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

This analysis provides a broad overview of the SDP-9003-2021 application and focuses on those issues raised during the public hearing or changes made to the application following the public hearing. Plan elements that remain unchanged are fully discussed in the Preliminary Background Report (Exhibit #59), including a discussion on the full site plan history.

The Applicant, Matthew Hariegel of 14 Firstfield Holdings, LLC c/o Novavax, Inc., submitted Schematic Development Plan application SDP-9003-2021 for the construction of 604,929 gross square feet in multiple buildings, a structured parking garage, and open space for the Lab/Office, Research & Development, and Integrated Light Manufacturing uses. A consolidated joint public hearing for SDP-9003-2021 was held on October 18, 2021. During the course of the public hearing, the campus layout and the architecture were discussed.

Three people from the public spoke during the joint public hearing. The speakers inquired about the following:

- Native plants for pollinators for landscaped areas;
- project timeline; and
- Potential of a shuttle bus service from the campus to nearby transit centers.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the Planning Commission announced, by motion, the closing of the record on November 10, 2021 at 5:00pm, with recommendation scheduled for November 17, 2021. Subsequently, the Mayor and City Council announced by motion, the closing of their record 5pm, November 24, 2021 with policy discussion anticipated for December 6, 2021.

In response to the comments received during the Joint Public Hearing, the Applicant has submitted a response letter and exhibit which is labeled as Exhibit #63. Staff has reviewed the Applicant's response letter and is of the opinion it adequately addresses the comments received during the joint public hearing.

Staff has received outside correspondence from the public which is labeled as Exhibit #61 and Exhibit #86 in the record. Information presented at the October 18, 2021 meeting, including zoning and site plan history, public facilities and the application reviewed can be found in the Preliminary Background Report in Exhibit #59.

## **SCHEMATIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSAL**

As mentioned above, the Applicant is requesting approval to construct a new biotechnology campus with 604,920 square feet in two buildings. The application is proposed to accommodate Novavax's Global Headquarters Campus. The buildings are oriented to provide a strong street frontage along Firstfield Road and Bank Street, while providing an internal campus environment to accommodate Novavax's needs. The maximum height

of the building will be seven stories. The proposed building layout, density, building orientation, and building heights are consistent with the approved Sketch Plan, SK-8813-2021.

The internal streets will be private and include extensions of the existing street and sidewalk networks. Street B will extend from Quince Orchard Road to Firstfield Road and Street A will connect the internal campus to Bank Street via a new right-in/right-out. A new private street C will bisect the site connecting the internal campus to Firstfield Road. While the streets will remain private, at this time, the Applicant expects the streets to remain open for public use. The Applicant does note within their response letter that if necessary, the owner may close the private streets from time to time to protect public safety.

The site includes a mixed-use path running parallel to Street B that will connect active transit users with Firstfield Road and Quince Orchard Road. Pedestrians have a variety of options to access the campus buildings, surrounding streets, and the Quad via sidewalks and pedestrian pathways. The grid system for the streets will provide several access points for cars to access the parking garage. A sidewalk was intentionally not placed between Street A and the parking garage to avoid any conflicts with cars and pedestrians at either of the two entrances.

### CIRCULATION PATTERNS



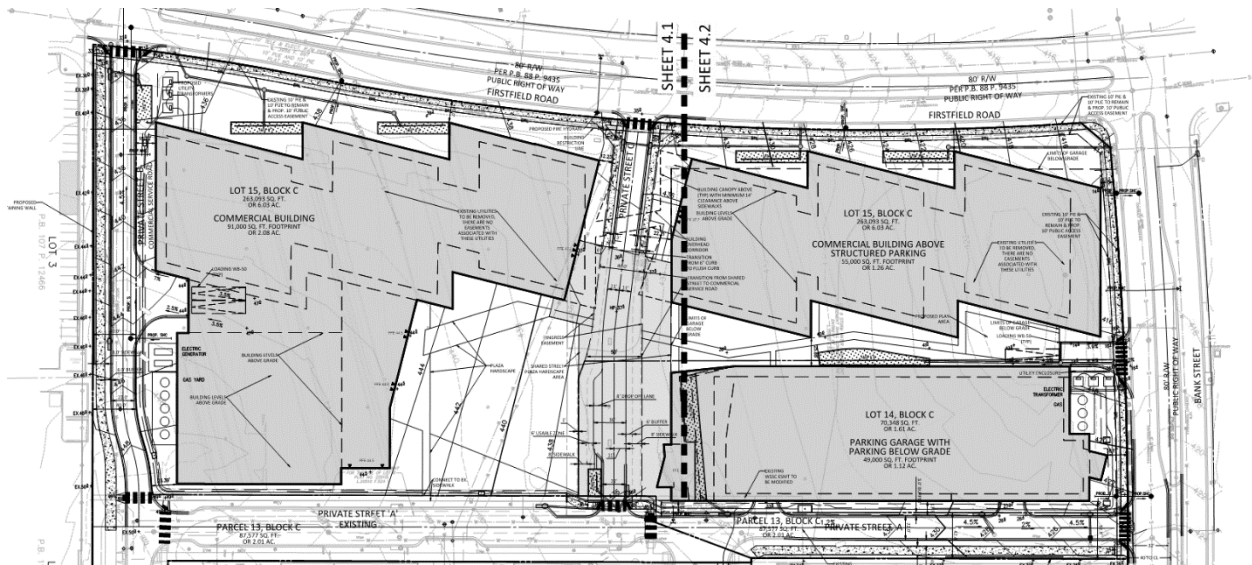
The backbone of the campus vehicular circulation will be a grid of private streets. Street A will function as the central street connecting the adjacent sketch plan blocks 1 & 3 with the Novavax Campus on Block 2. Together with Street B, the district will be connected for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles to Quince Orchard, Firstfield Road and Bank Street which connect to the broader reaching transportation corridors in all directions.

Street C transitions to a Shared Street along the Quad open space opposite of the garage and Visitor Center. Street C is the nucleus for pedestrian movement throughout the Campus and Sketch Plan blocks.

The Applicant has provided a response to comments related to the distance between Street A and the current curb cut for 1 Bank Street. According to the Applicant, Street A is approximately 50 feet from centerline to centerline from the 1 Bank Street curb cut. While the Applicant is of the opinion the design is adequate at this stage, the design will be further reviewed/refined as part of the final site plan and appropriate pavement marking and signage will be included to provide safety for all vehicles. As the Applicant mentions, this is a temporary condition and pursuant to the approved Sketch Plan, the final condition will re-align Street A with the existing curb cut/intersection into the adjacent

shopping center. Staff does note that the time of the re-alignment is contingent on the future redevelopment of the Bank Street property, which is currently unknown.

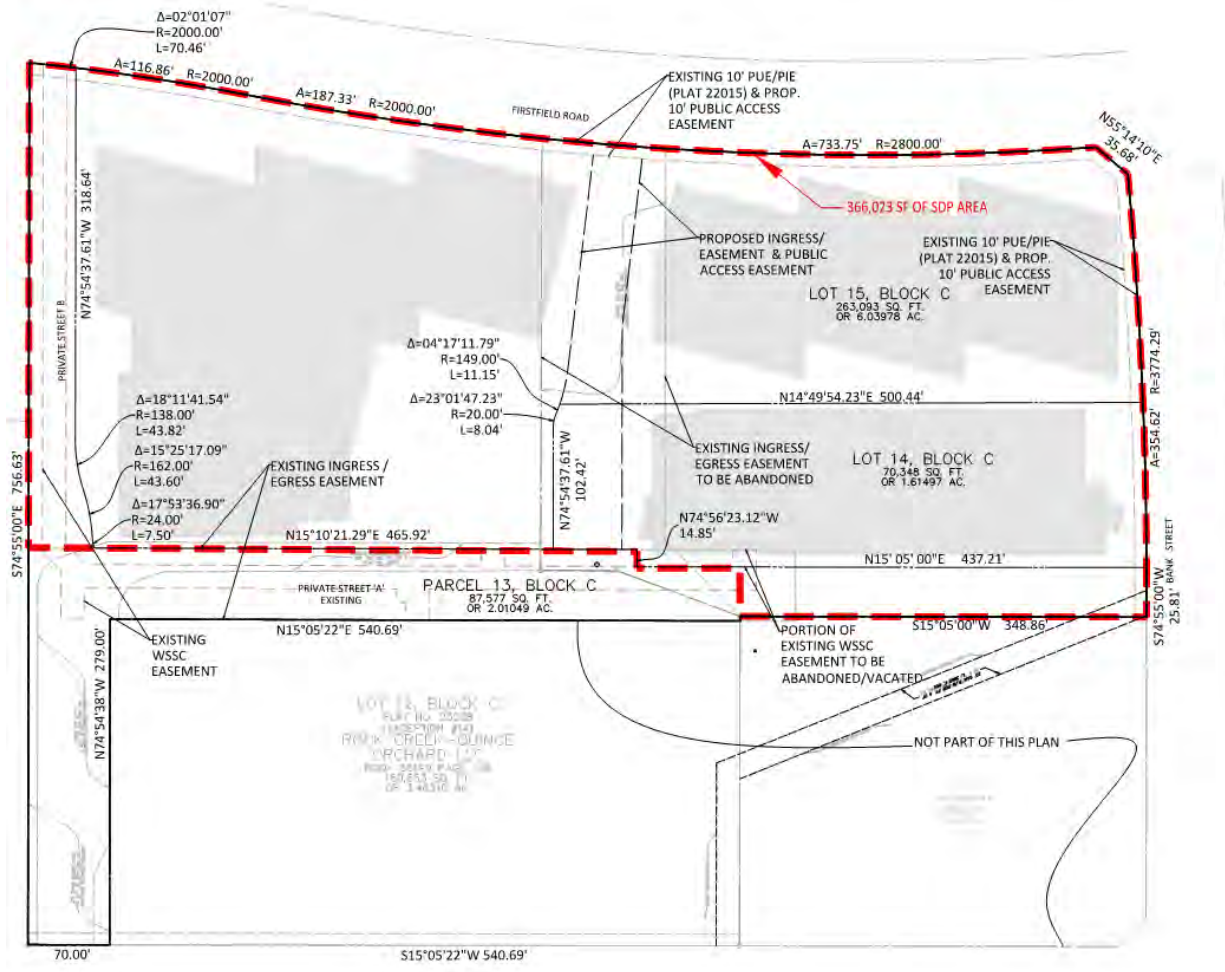
Truck deliveries will be accommodated via two loading areas located along street A and Bank Street. According to the Applicant, the locations of the loading docks were designed to keep loading off of Firstfield Road and Street C. The Applicant plans to implement a loading dock management plan to limit truck movement impacts on Bank Street and will be provided at Final Site Plan.



In response to comments received during the public hearing related to inclusions of a potential shuttle bus, the Applicant does note that at this time it is difficult to determine, as it does not know the location of employee’s homes, commuting patterns and transit needs. This will be further explored as the project continues to move through the entitlement process.

Since the joint public hearing, changes to the plan include the inclusion of retaining walls along Street A and B, revisions to the parking garage layout, and modifications to Street C to be in conformance with the City’s shard street typology.

A preliminary lotting plan was included as part of the Applicant’s submission. The Applicant proposes one lot for both Private Streets A and B; a separate lot for the two campus buildings; and a third lot will contain the parking garage.



**Staff Comments**

Staff concurs with the Applicant’s response to comments raised during the Public Hearing. Staff finds that the preliminary wall details and locations of the retaining walls are sufficient for an SDP application and final details will provided and reviewed by Staff as part of the final site plan. A recommended condition of approval has been included that requires the Applicant to receive DPW approval of the final wall details as part of the final site plan submission.

In Staff’s opinion, the revisions to the street plans is sufficient and that no road code waivers are required. Refinements to Street C with the bollard details and any additional changes will be reviewed during the time of final site plan.

Staff is of the opinion that the proposed lotting plan meets all applicable City Code standards. Section 20-73 of the City Code permits underground parking garages to extend beyond property lines provided a perpetual easement is recorded. Since the

underground parking garage is proposed to cross lots 14 and 15, Staff notes that a draft perpetual easement must be provided at the time of final site plan and subsequently recorded prior to the issuance of a permit. A recommended condition of approval addressing this has been included.

While Staff is supportive of the proposed application, Staff has noted minor drafting errors that needed to be cleaned up prior to certification of the approved plan set. Staff has included a recommended condition of approval that all clean ups be resolved prior to final certification of the Schematic Development Plan.

### Off-Street Parking

Parking for the campus will be accommodated within a new structured parking garage located adjacent to Bank Street. Access to the parking garage will be provided via two entrances along Street A.

As part of the proposed project, the Applicant seeks approval to adjust the parking ratio for the Subject Property. Instead of the typical 1 space per 300 square feet of gross floor area, the applicant is requesting approval to park the project at 1 space per 650 square feet of gross floor area. The Applicant has provided a response to questions related to the adjusted parking ratio, which states the ratio is based on a projected employee count of 1,000 employees. While this is subject to change, the letter addresses how one-third of the employees will work on-site full time, another third of employees will have a hybrid schedule that includes remote and on-site work, and the final third will primarily work remotely.

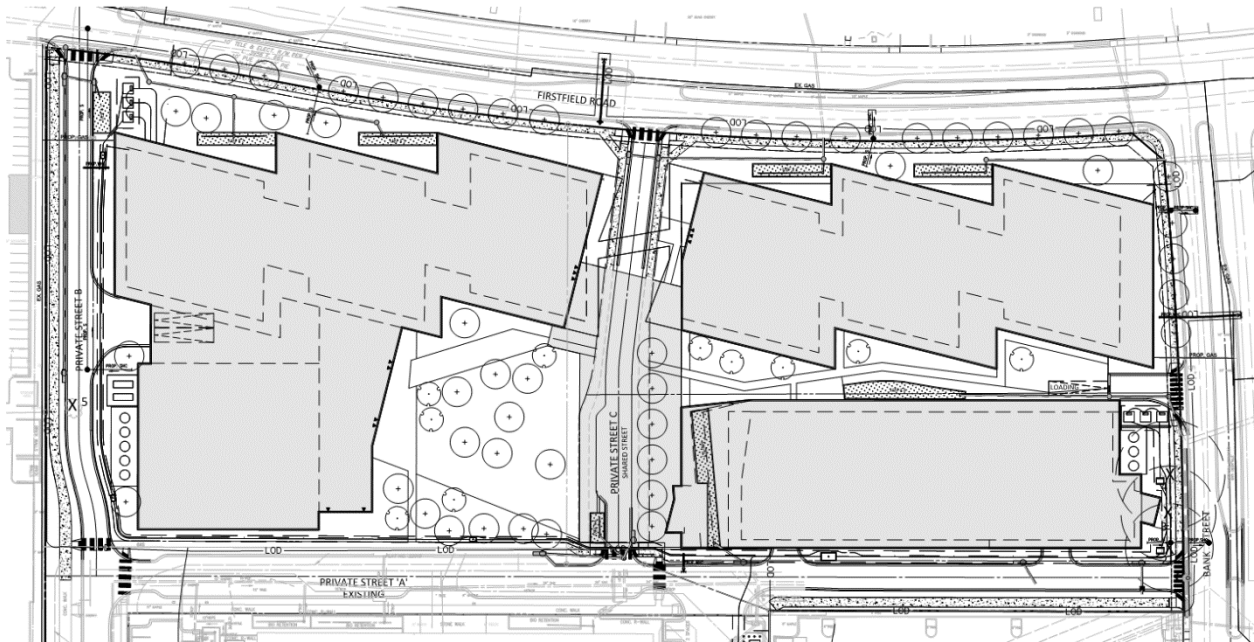
Under the amended parking ratio the 604,929 square foot campus will require a minimum of 931 parking spaces. The subject site is also required to provide 225 parking spaces for the building at 700 Quince Orchard employment and therefore the minimum parking requirement for the site is 1,156 parking spaces. The application currently includes a total of 1,156 parking spaces.

### Staff Comments

Staff supports the proposed parking ratio and is of the opinion that the justification for the parking ratio is adequately supported by the information provided by the Applicant. The Applicant anticipates that one third of the projected 1,000 employees, which is approximately 333 employees, will work remotely while another 333 employees will be on a hybrid schedule. Assuming that every employee who worked on-site full time and those who were on a hybrid schedule had to show up to the Novavax Campus on the same day, then there would be a parking surplus.

## Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan

A Preliminary Forest Conservation Plan was submitted along with SDP-9003-2021 in compliance with Chapter 22, Trees and Forest Conservation, of the City Code. As there is no existing forest on site the preliminary Forest Conservation plan must afforest the site a minimum of 15% or 1.26 acres. The preliminary Forest Conservation plan accomplishes 1.26 acres of afforestation through the planting of canopy cover trees for afforestation credit. The canopy coverage credit will be reached by planting large shade trees and ornamental trees throughout the property. Street trees are shown to be planted along Firstfield Road and Bank Street.



## Staff Comments

Staff supports the proposed preliminary forest conservation plan and finds that the Applicant will achieve the forest conservation requirements through canopy coverage credit. As part of the final site plan process, the Applicant will establish the final forest conservation plan.

## Landscape Plan

The preliminary landscaping plan shows that the areas surrounding the buildings will be planted with flowers, shrubs, and trees. The included Design Guidelines provide a list of flora to be included with the final landscaping plan. The Applicant has acknowledged that plants included within the Design Guidelines are native to Montgomery County and will assist with local pollinators.

## PLANT PALETTE

Note: Plant species selections identified are shown to illustrate design intent only. Refinements to the planting design and final selection of all plant materials consistent with the species shown shall be developed during detailed design phases of work and are subject to review and approval by Owner and City of Gaithersburg.

### SHRUBS

- Summersweet
- Dwarf Fothergilla
- Azalea
- Viburnum
- Red Twig Dogwood
- Hydrangea
- Inkberry



### GROUND COVERS

- Sweet Fern
- Creeping Phlox
- Bearberry
- Fragrant Sumac
- Creeping Thyme
- Wild Ginger



### PERENNIALS & GRASSES

- Pink Muhly Grass
- Switchgrass
- Little Bluestem
- Blackeyed Susans
- Blazing Star
- Arkansas Bluestar



### ANNUALS & BULBS

- Daffodils
- Crocus
- Alliums
- Poker plant
- Gerbera Daisy
- Impatiens



## Staff Comments

Staff finds that the submitted materials for the landscaping plans is sufficient for the schematic development plan and address all comments received during the Public Hearing. The applicant's Design Guidelines provide a list of native plants to support the local pollinators and all of the planting details and planting locations will be provided during the final site plan.

## Design Guidelines

The Applicant has created Design Guidelines (Exhibit #81) to ensure that all subsequent development applications are consistent with the standards established with this application. The architecture guidelines provide direction for the final architecture related to scale, colors, and materials. Permitted building materials included will colored glass, brick, architectural concrete, and metal panels to enhance the architectural elevations. Prohibited materials include EFIS, exposed CMU block, and vinyl.

## ENCOURAGED MATERIALS

WHITE BRICK



EXTERIOR GLAZING



ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE



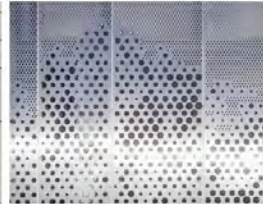
COLORLED GLASS



PANEL SYSTEM



PERFORATED METAL PANELS



## PROHIBITED MATERIALS

- EFIS
- Exposed CMU Blocks
- Vinyl Panels
- Long facades without vertical and/or horizontal articulation.
- Base elements or long expanses that offer little relief to passersby.
- Exposed concrete prohibited on Office, R&D, and Light MFG buildings

The Design Guidelines establish a sign package for the Novavax Campus. In the event that a proposed sign is not shown in the Design Guidelines, then the sign will be regulated by the City's Sign Ordinance. Internally illuminated box signs are not allowed in any circumstance for the Subject Property. Potential locations of all onsite signage is included within the Design Guidelines. Signage includes primary and secondary building signs, monuments, banner signs on the parking garage, and project identification signage.



## Staff Comments

Staff supports the Design Guidelines and believes that the presented details will allow the Novavax Campus to develop harmoniously with the existing neighborhood. Commercial signage is included in the Design Guidelines even though the current SDP application

does not intend to utilize the Sketch Plan approval of commercial/retail uses. The Design Guidelines will not need to be updated at a future time for commercial signs if the Applicant chooses to amend the Schematic Development Plan to include retail uses. Banner signs on the parking garage will cross the lot lines and be located within the private street A. Staff is supportive as this is similar to what is currently permitted within Olde Towne.

## Architectural Elevations

No changes to the architecture have been made since the joint public hearing. Both the north and the south campus buildings contain a façade primarily made of colored glass and perforated metal panels. The base of the building will utilize white brick to tie the proposed architecture with the existing Novavax building at 700 Quince Orchard Road. A pedestrian bridge with a large concentration of glazing connects the two campus buildings. All of the materials shown on the elevations are allowed in the Applicant's Design Guidelines. Exhibit #80 contains the most revised set of elevations.



A part of the South Building will contain a façade predominately composed of panels, glass, and white brick.



The parking garage will be primarily built with patterned concrete and will include white brick and glazing to tie the proposal with the rest of the new campus buildings and the existing Novavax building at 700 Quince Orchard Road. The applicant plans to further explore the utilization of solar panels in the final building design.



### Staff Comments

Staff is very satisfied with the presented elevations and finds that the materials are consistent with the Applicant imposed Design Guidelines. The predominately glass façade with the perforated metal panels adds a modern approach to the campus. Colored glass on the primary campus buildings coupled with the organic curvature of the metal panels mimic the shapes and colors of the proposed adjacent street trees. Utilizing white brick in the newer buildings ties the architecture with the existing brick building at 700 Quince Orchard Road so that all buildings, new and old, belong in the Novavax Campus. Staff is of the opinion that the imprinted pattern of genetic sequencing on the parking garage is symbolic of the work being done inside the adjacent campus buildings. While Staff notes that a part of the building contains more brick and panels than glass, Staff believes that the articulation on the building still creates a unique elevation that is essential in placemaking. The varied building articulation makes the development feel different from the typical office building construction from previous decades. A condition of approval has been added for remaining plan clean ups.

## **STAFF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **FINDINGS:**

Approval of SDP-9003-2021, by the City Council is dependent upon the findings required under § 24-160D.10(b) of the City Code. The following outlines the required findings and justifications for a City Council approval of application SDP-9003-2021.

(1) The plan is substantially in accord with the approved sketch plan; and

The subject SDP-9003-2021 application is consistent with the approved Sketch Plan SK-8813-2021. The proposed uses are consistent with the approved sketch plan which include Lab/Office, Research and Development, Integrated Light Manufacturing, and Retail. The sketch plan approved the Subject Property for up to seven stories and up to 604,929 square feet in multiple buildings, which is exactly what is proposed with the current SDP application. The sketch plan approval indicates the same traffic and circulation pattern as what is shown in the current SDP proposal and a FAR of 1.5 which the SDP is showing an FAR of 1.44.

(2) The plan meets or accomplishes the purposes, objectives and minimum standards and requirements of the zone, and other requirements of the City Code; and

- a) Application SDP-9003-2021 will improve the Subject Property with Lab/Office, Research and Development, and Integrated Light Manufacturing uses, which is consistent with the approved Sketch Plan and the 2003 Master Plan designation of Industrial-Research-Office.
- b) Application SDP-9003-2021 will be integrated within the existing area and provides Lab/Office, Research and Development, and Integrated Light Manufacturing uses, which are commonly found within the adjacent area.
- c) Application SDP-9003-2021 proposes 1.26 acres of afforestation, which meets the minimum 15% requirement.
- d) Application SDP-9003-2021 will contain approximately 39% green area, which exceeds the MXD Zone requirement of 25%.
- e) Application SDP-9003-2021 will contain building materials and design elements that will be compatible with the surrounding community. The building will be clad in brick, architectural concrete, perforated metal panels, and colored glass.
- f) Application SDP-9003-2021 encourages the efficient use of land by having access to: local and regional roadway networks; regional transit assets in the MARCH station, bus service, and proposed CCT station; regional highway assets in the I-270 and MD 355 systems; local existing and planned bikeways in the City Bikeway

plan; and a connected sidewalk system. The property is in close commuting distance via a local network from many housing communities and easy access from a regional employment base. The property is walkable to goods and services across Bank Street and is within a few minutes' drive to multiple area shopping centers and retail corridors.

(3) The plan is in accord with the area master plan and any accompanying special condition or requirements contained in said master plan for the area under consideration; and

Application SDP-9003-2021 reflects the following Maryland State Planning Visions:

a) *State Vision 3: Growth areas: growth is concentrated in existing population and business centers, growth areas adjacent to these centers, or strategically selected new centers*

Application SDP-9003-2021 is sited within the Firstfield Technology Corridor, a Targeted Growth and Revitalization area under PlanMD, comprised of existing employment, technology and government facilities and has access to the local and regional roadway network; regional transit assets in the MARC station and bus service, proposed CCT station; and regional highway assets at I-270.

b) *State Vision 5: Infrastructure: growth areas have the water resources and infrastructure to accommodate population and business expansion in an orderly, efficient, and environmentally sustainable manner.*

Application SDP-9003-2021 replaces antiquated stormwater management facilities with environmental site design practices and introduces green spaces into formally impervious paved surface areas.

c) *State Vision 4: Community design: compact, mixed-use, walkable design consistent with existing community character, located near available or planned transit options is encouraged to ensure efficient use of land and transportation resources and preservation and enhancement of natural systems, open spaces, recreational areas, and historical, cultural, and archeological resources*

Application SDP-9003-2021 is sited within the Firstfield Technology Corridor, a Targeted Growth and Revitalization area under PlanMD, comprised of existing employment, technology and government facilities and has access to the local and regional roadway network; regional transit assets in the MARC station and bus service, proposed CCT station; and regional highway assets at I-270.

*d) State Vision 12: Implementation: strategies, policies, programs, and funding for growth and development, resource conservation, infrastructure, and transportation are integrated across the local, regional, state, and interstate levels to achieve these visions*

Application SDP-9003-2021 is the result of the Federal Government's *Operation Warp Speed* developed to combat the Covid Pandemic and reflects joint State, County and City incentives to retain and expand a local business.

Application SDP-9003-2021 reflects the following City 2009 Land Use Element, adopted December 19, 2011:

- a) Application SDP-9003-2021, Block 2 of the Sketch Plan Property was in part identified as Map Designation #10 and specifically recommended for land use as "Industrial-Research-Office" and uniform rezoning to incentivize redevelopment. The plan's proposed uses conform to the designation.
- b) The adopted land use map defines Block 2 as "Industrial-Research-Office". Application SDP-9003-2021 proposed uses conform to the adopted land use.

(4) The plan will be internally and externally compatible and harmonious with existing and planned land uses in the MXD zoned area and adjacent areas; and

The Application SDP-9003-2021 density, scale and massing is consistent and similar to the immediately surrounding uses providing for physical compatibility. The subject property is completely surrounded by similarly scaled commercial developed properties in the E-1 and C-2 zones and the U.S. Government owned National Institutes of Standards and Technology facility. The surrounding Research and Development and Government uses create a strong core with the proposed Schematic Development Plan. The Schematic Development Plan Property is bounded by business connector streets and arterial highways connecting to strong transportation corridors leading throughout the region. The convenient proximity but physical separation of subject property uses from the closest residential neighborhoods provides compatibility between the residential and nonresidential uses. Application SDP-9003-2021 focuses on maximizing employment opportunities at the Property.

(5) That existing or planned public facilities are adequate to service the proposed development contained in the plan; and

This application complies with the City's adequate public facilities requirements, as follows:

1. **Traffic Impacts** (§ 24-245) - The Applicant has submitted a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) in conformance with the City's regulations. The TIS application, TRF-9004-2021, was reviewed by DPW and found that it was in conformance with City regulations and was approved (Exhibit #21). Therefore, the application complies with the City's Adequate Public Facilities requirements for traffic impacts (§ 24-245).
2. **Schools** (§ 24-246) - The proposed development will be for new commercial buildings, therefore it will have no impact on the school system. The proposed application, SDP-9003-2021, is exempt for the schools test.
3. **Water and Sewer Services and Public Utilities** (§ 24-247) - The subject property is served by water category W-1 (public water available) and sewer category S-1 (public sewer available), and thus satisfies the requirements of § 24-247 for water and sewer.
4. **Fire and Emergency Services** (§ 24-248) - The City's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) requires that any development project be served by at least two fire stations within a ten-minute response time. The Site is located within a ten-minute response time of four fire stations: Station 8 (Gaithersburg), Station 22 (Germantown/Kingsview), Station 31 (Rockville/Darnestown), and Station 32 (Travilah). Therefore, adequate fire and emergency services are provided.

- (6) That the development staging or phasing program is adequate in relation to the provision of public facilities and private amenities to service the proposed development; and

The proposed development will occur in several phases. The parking garage and associated improvements will be the first phase as this will provide all of the parking for the adjacent campus buildings. The next phases will include the North and South campus buildings. Each project phase will include the public facilities and private amenities required for each portion of the project.

- (7) That the plan, if approved, would be in the public interest.

The proposed development will transform an existing underutilized parking lot into a new biotechnology campus for Novavax, which is an emerging biotechnology company. The proposed campus will promote economic growth by creating approximately 1,000 new jobs near existing infrastructure. Proposed streets and pedestrian enhancements will increase the neighborhood connectivity and the new native plantings will benefit local pollinators. The development will also provide a larger tax base for the City to generate additional revenue that helps support a wider array of public programs, services and improvements.

Additionally, Novavax is associated with the federal Operation Warp Speed Program, which is a federal initiative to expedite the research and development of COVID-19 vaccines and associated products. The approval of this Schematic Development Plan will assist current efforts with the ongoing pandemic.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff is supportive of the subject SDP-9003-2021 application. The ability to retain and grow a Gaithersburg company, Novavax, which is at the forefront in the battle against the current global pandemic reflects a concerted State, County and City effort. The proposed global biotech campus fulfills the true intent of the Master Plan for this area and addresses many more City policy priorities and growth sector projections. Staff is appreciative of the Novavax team; that while they could leverage the near term importance derived from Operation Warp Speed, they have instead proposed a sustainable, attractive, and well thought out development that will remain an asset for the City over the long term. Staff looks forward to assisting Novavax complete this vision.

**Staff recommends THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION, BASED ON THE EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE RECORD AND THE FINDINGS IN THE FINAL STAFF ANALYSIS, RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF SDP-9003-2021, TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WITH THE FOLLOWING THREE (3) CONDITIONS:**

1. Applicant to submit revised design guidelines, site plans, and elevations to address minor staff comments to be approved by the Planning Department prior to certification of the plans;
2. Applicant must submit final retaining walls plans, to DPW satisfaction, with any associated final site plan(s) and must be accepted by DPW prior to final approval by the Planning Commission;
3. Prior to final site plan approval, all easements must be provided and reviewed by Staff.

COMMUNICATION: PLANNING COMMISSION

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**MEMORANDUM TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Planning Commission

**DATE:** November 18, 2021

**SUBJECT:** SDP-9003-2021 - 604,929 square foot biotechnology campus at  
14 Firstfield Road

At its regular meeting on November 17, 2021, the Planning Commission made the following motion:

Lloyd Kaufman moved, seconded by Danny Winborne, to recommend to the Mayor and City Council APPROVAL of Schematic Development Plan SDP-9003-2021, based on the evidence and testimony submitted to the record and the findings in the Final Staff Analysis, to the Mayor and City Council with the following three (3) conditions:

1. Applicant to submit revised design guidelines, site plans, and elevations to address minor staff comments to be approved by the Planning Department prior to certification of the plans;
2. Applicant must submit final retaining walls plans, to DPW satisfaction, with any associated final site plan(s) and must be accepted by DPW prior to final approval by the Planning Commission;
3. Prior to final site plan approval, all easements must be provided and reviewed by Staff

The Planning Commission was supportive and complimentary of the project and architectural design of the buildings. The Commission did note that the truck loading and pedestrian experience along Street A should be further examined during final site plan.

Vote: 5-0