
STAFF ANALYSIS FOR PLANNING COMMISSION

REPORT DATE: November 10, 2022

RESPONSIBLE STAFF: Jasmine Forbes,
Planner II

PUBLIC MEETING DATE

November 16, 2022

APPLICATION NUMBER

ASDP-9338-2022

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

The Applicant is requesting to reallocate 100,950 square feet of office density and 62,494 square feet of retail density between previously approved Buildings B1, B2, B3, C2, C3 and C5 in the Watkins Mill Town Center Urban Core.

APPLICANT

Bill Brewer, TC Mid-Atlantic Development
V. Inc.

SUBJECT PROPERTY ADDRESS

Watkins Mill Town Center Urban Core

ZONE

MXD (Mixed Use Development)

EXISTING LAND USE

Undeveloped

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION, BASED ON THE EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE RECORD AND THE FINDINGS IN THE FINAL STAFF ANALYSIS, APPROVE AMENDMENT TO SCHEMATIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN ASDP-9338-2022 AND ADOPT THE RESOLUTION, WITH ONE CONDITION.**

(See attached Staff Comments for all recommended conditions)

Approve

Approve With Conditions

Deny

Defer

Enclosures:

Staff Comments and Location Map

Exhibits

MEMORANDUM TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Jasmine Forbes, Planner

DATE: November 2, 2022

SUBJECT: Final Staff Analysis
ASDP-9338-2022: Watkins Mill Town Center Urban Core

APPLICANT/DEVELOPER:

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Inc.
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ARCHITECT:

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TAX MAP REFERENCE:

Parcel P132- ID #: 16-0903501352
Parcel P180- ID#: 16-0903501363
Parcel P238- ID#: 16-0903501374
Parcel P209- ID#: 16-0903501250

REQUEST:

Application ASDP-9338-2022 has been filed requesting an amendment to the Schematic Development Plan for the properties located within the Urban Core of the Watkins Mill Town Center.¹ The Applicant is requesting to reallocate 100,950 square feet of office density and 62,494 square feet of retail density between previously approved Buildings B1, B2, B3, C2, C3 and C5 in the Watkins Mill Town Center Urban Core.

¹ Exhibit #1

LOCATION

The Subject Properties are located within the Watkins Mill Town Center Urban Core.



Location Map

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Applicant, Bill Brewer of TC Mid-Atlantic Development V. Inc. submitted application ASDP-9338-2022 requesting to reallocate 100,950 square feet of office density and 62,494 square feet of retail density between previously approved Buildings B1, B2, B3, C2, C3 and C5. A public hearing for ASDP-9388-2022 was held on September 7, 2022. During the course of the hearing, the following aspects of the proposed plan were discussed:

- Explore ways to provide breaks in the two buildings to provide a pedestrian connection to the garage and the rest of the urban core; and
- Elevate the pedestrian realm along the first twenty feet of the building.

At the conclusion of the hearing the Planning Commission announced, by motion, the closing of their record on October 13, 2022 with final action scheduled for October 19, 2022. After a meeting with the Applicant and Stormwater Management Staff, it was determined that the associated preliminary stormwater management plan for ASDP-9388-2022 would not be approved by the Planning Commission's October 19, 2022 regular meeting. As such, at the Planning Commission's October 19, 2022 meeting, the Commission reopen the record until October 27, 2022, with anticipated final action on November 2, 2022. On November 2, 2022, the Application was deferred until November 16, 2022.

In response to comments received during the Public Hearing, the Applicant has submitted a response letter and exhibits, which are labeled as Exhibits 33-35 in the application packet. One outside correspondence was received from the public while the record remained open². Items unchanged from the September 7, 2022 public hearing, including annexation history, Site Plan History, APFO requirements, and the application reviewed can be found in the Preliminary Background Report³.

SCHEMATIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROPOSAL

Site Plan

As mentioned above, the Applicant is requesting to reallocate 100,950 square feet of office density and 62,494 square feet of retail density between previously approved Buildings B1, B2, B3, C2, C3 and C5. Initially, the Applicant planned to construct Buildings C2 and C3 for a life sciences and biopharmaceutical office campus with integrated ground floor retail. The increase of the building footprints for C2 and C3 will eliminate Buildings C1 and C4. Buildings C2 and C3 will contain 357,200 square feet of office and 5,000 square feet of ground floor retail. To provide flexibility, the Applicant submitted revised plans which include an option to construct Buildings C1 and C4⁴. The revised plans include a building restriction line and note height restrictions for each building in compliance with Sketch Plan Z-297. The final building footprint will be determined at final site plan in conformance with either proposed option. This revision does not change the reallocation of office and retail density as proposed. The ground floor retail previously located within the new parking garage (C5) will be relocated within Buildings B1, B2 and B3. The amendment only proposes shifting density between the various blocks and buildings, and the overall total square footage approved for Watkins Mill Urban Core will remain constant.

² Exhibit #32

³ Exhibit #30

⁴ Exhibit #36

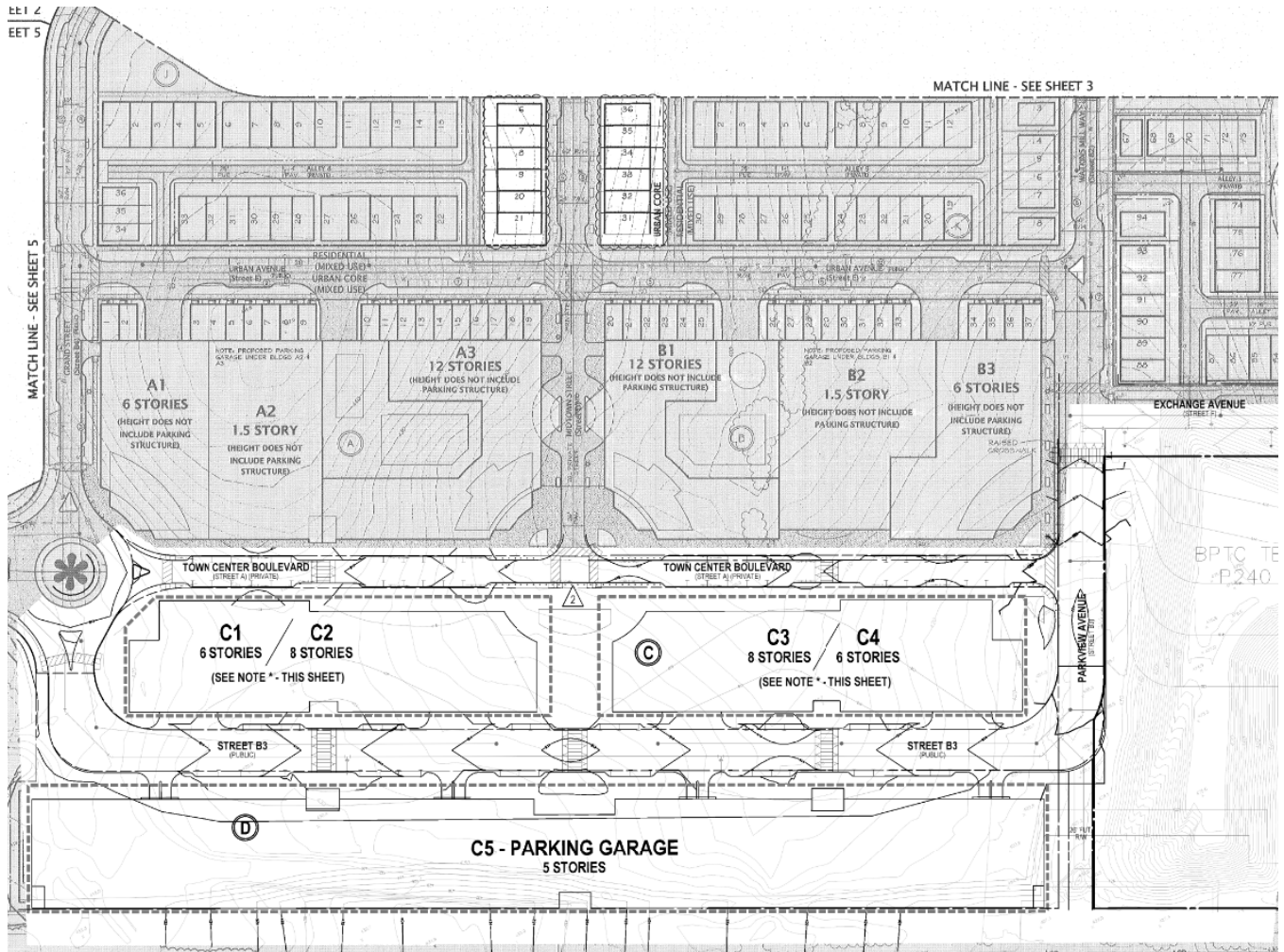
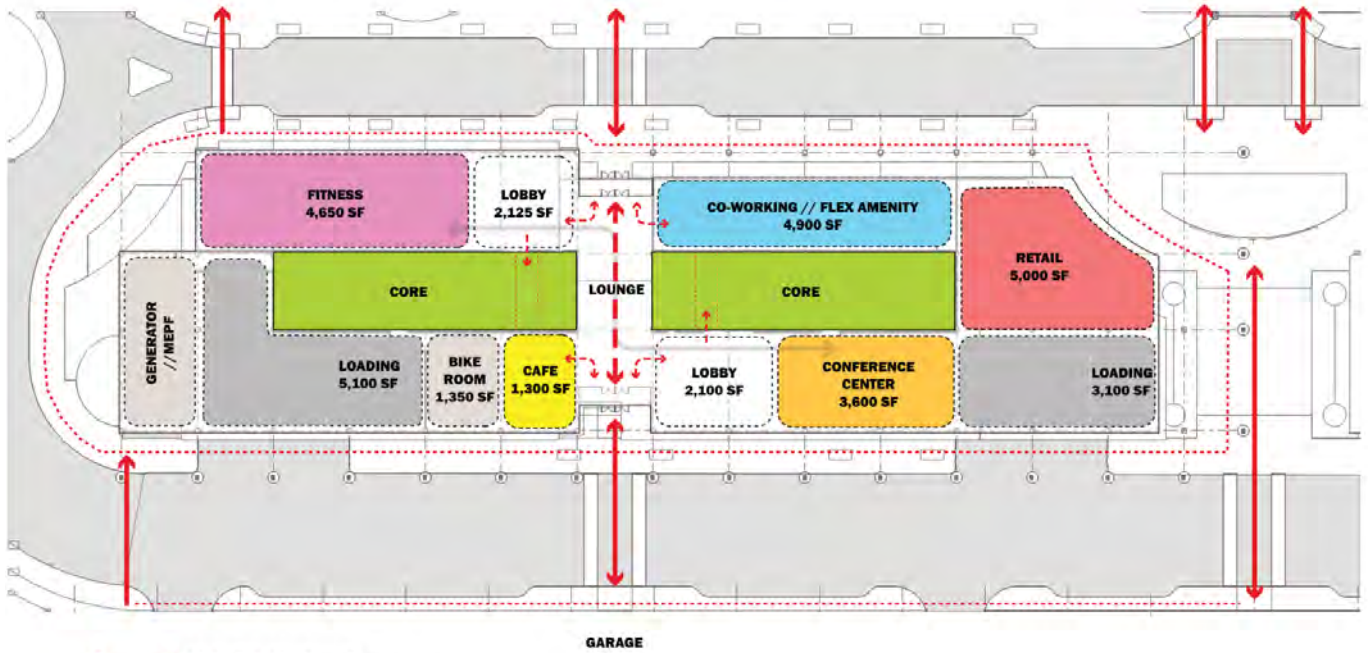


Exhibit #36- Revised Site Plan

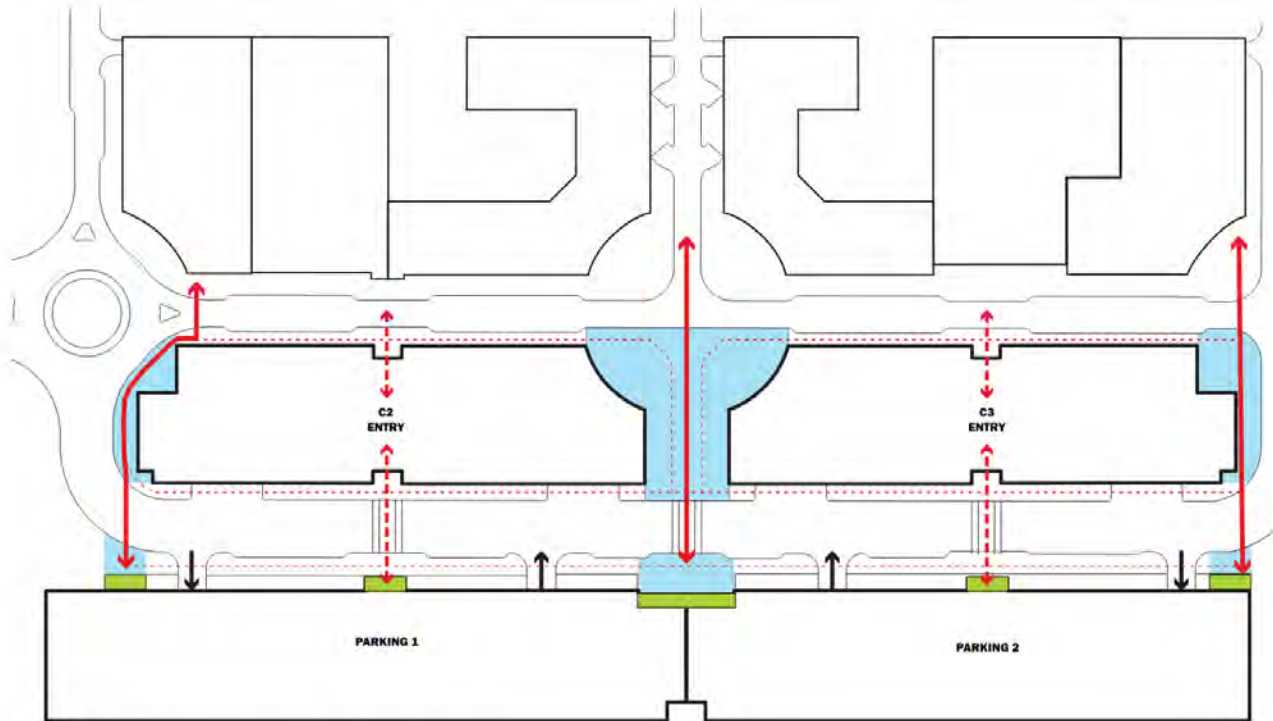
Pedestrian Connection

To address comments raised about the pedestrian connections, the Applicant has provided an exhibit that shows a proposed pedestrian connection from the parking garage to the Urban Core⁵ (the pedestrian paths are shown in red). In the response letter, the Applicant notes one potential solution which includes a “pass through” lobby in both Buildings C2 and C3. At the center points of the buildings, pedestrians can enter through an interior connection passing through a public portion of the building lobby to access the remainder of the Urban Core. To emphasize the “pass through” locations and draw in pedestrian foot traffic, the buildings will be programmed with an exterior canopy at the pass through locations. In this scheme, a total of five access points will be programmed from the garage to the Urban Core. The number of connections will be consistent with previously approve Schematic Development Plan SDP-05-002.

⁵ Exhibit #34



- ↔ Interior Pedestrian Connections
- ↔ Exterior Pedestrian Connections
- ⋯ Exterior Public Walkways

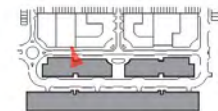


- Upgraded Pedestrian Connections/Experiences
- ↔ Interior Pedestrian Connections
- ↔ Exterior Pedestrian Connections
- ⋯ Exterior Public Walkways

Exhibit #34: Pedestrian Connection Exhibits



THE LABS AT WEST WATKINS



Tranmull-Cross Company Gensler

Exhibit #35: Building Renderings

Architecture

In response to comments about the building architecture, the Applicant intends to place the premier retail and social programmed elements adjacent to the pedestrian connections to activate the ground level experience. Amenities such as a fitness center, co-working lounge, and retail will be programmed at the ground level. Additionally, the architectural design calls for glass storefront and expanded sidewalks. All of these plans are intended to create a pedestrian focused experience with the Watkins Mill development. It should be noted that the proposed building elevations are preliminary and the final design of the building architecture will be reviewed as part of the final site plan.

Stormwater Management Plan

In accordance with the requirements for the submission of a Schematic Development Plan, Section 24-160D.9(b)(1), the Applicant has submitted a preliminary stormwater management plan SWM-9340-2022. Final action by the Planning Commission cannot be taken until the preliminary stormwater management plan has been approved by the City's Department of Public Works, Stormwater Division. After discussions with Staff, it was determined that the preliminary stormwater management approval needs only include the scope of this amendment which is buildings and parking garage and that the streets (which are unchanged from SDP-05-002) are not required to be approved at this stage. The Applicant has acknowledged that ASDP application can proceed to Planning

Commission, but that final site plan approval of the West Watkins Life Sciences Development will be contingent on receiving an approved final stormwater management plan for all streets providing access to the improvements⁶. As such, a condition has been included.

Staff Comments

Staff has reviewed the Applicant's response and is of the opinion that they have adequately addressed the comments raised by the Planning Commission. The plan is consistent with approved Sketch Plan application Z-297. Sketch Plan Z-297 allowed for the greater Parklands development (which includes the urban core) and allows single-family attached and detached residential units, 2-over-2 condominium units, high rise condominium units, commercial, offices and hotel uses, each with mixed commercial/retail use on the first floor and cinema. The application furthers the recommendations of the 2003 Master Plan, which recommended a Mixed Use Office-Residential with a Commercial Component. The plan will be the first development within the Urban Core, which was envisioned to contain office and commercial uses. The plan advances the overall visions of the Parklands development by providing a vibrant and walkable mixed use community. Lastly, the plan will not have any adverse impacts to existing development and adjacent properties

STAFF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

FINDINGS:

Approval of ASDP-9338-2022, by the Planning Commission 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 Planning Commission approval of application ASDP-9338-2022.

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

The plan is consistent with Sketch Plan application Z-297. Sketch Plan Z-297 was approved to permit the development of the urban core and the larger Parklands development and permitted single-family attached and detached residential units, 2-over-2 condominium units, high rise condominium units, commercial, offices and hotel uses, each with mixed commercial/retail use on the first floor and cinema.

⁶ Exhibit #39

(2) The plan meets or accomplished the purposes, objectives and minimum standards and requirements of the zone:

- (a) Application ASDP-9338-2022 will be developed with office and retail uses, which are in conformance with approved Sketch Plan Z-297.
- (b) Application ASDP-9338-2022 will reallocate office and retail density that was approved as part of Schematic Development Plan application SDP-05-002. The total square footage allowed for the urban core will remain changed from SDP-05-002.
- (c) Application ASDP-9338-2022 will continue development of the existing mixed-use community and will be the first development within the Urban Core.
- (d) Application ASDP-9338-2022 will be developed in two phases and there will be adequate public facilities to support the overall development.
- (e) Application ASDP-9338-2022 will provide office and retail buildings which will be compatible and harmonious with the surrounding neighborhoods.

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

The Watkins Mill Development was included in the 2003 Master Plan as a Special Study Area 6 (Casey-Metropolitan Grove) of the City's Land Use Element. The Special Study Area recommended three Land Use Options. The approval of Schematic Development Plan SDP-05-002 utilized Option C of the 2003 Master Plan which recommended a Mixed Use Office-Residential with a Commercial Component. The master plan further recommended the area remain as mixed use residential-office-commercial with a zoning classification of MXD (Mixed Use Development). The proposed plan reallocates previously approved office and retail density within previously approved buildings and lots within the Urban Core as part of Schematic Development Plan SDP-05-002. Therefore the plans remains consistent and in conformance with the 2003 Master Plan and accompanying special conditions as granted as part of SDP-05-002.

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

The application is compatible and harmonious with the existing and planned land uses in the MXD zone and adjacent areas. The proposed office/retail buildings will be located within a community that is approved as mixed use consisting of commercial, office and residential uses.

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

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

1. **Traffic Impacts-** The proposed application is reallocating approved office and retail density within the Urban Core. The proposed roads and building density will be in conformance with Schematic Development Plan SDP-05-002, therefore no additional traffic study is needed. Therefore, the application complies with the requirement for the Adequate Public Facilities requirement for traffic impacts.
2. **Adequacy of School Capacity-** The proposed application is for retail and office uses and will have no impact on the school system. Therefore, the proposed development is exempt from the school test of the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance.
3. **Water and Sewer Services and Public Utilities-** The Subject Properties are currently located in water and sewer categories W-3 and S-3 respectively. W-3 and S-3 WSSC categories are areas where improvements will be given immediate priority and service will generally be provided within two years or as development and request for community service are planned and scheduled. Therefore, the application complies with the requirement of the adequate public facilities requirements for water and sewer services.
4. **Fire and Emergency Services-** 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 development is located within a ten-minute response time of the following fire stations:
 - Station 8 (Gaithersburg/Washington Grove- Montgomery Village Avenue)
 - Station 22 (Germantown/Kingsview)
 - Station 31 (Rockville)

Therefore the site complies with the requirements for the Adequate Public Facilities requirements for Emergency Services

(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:

The previously approved Schematic Development Plan, SDP-05-002, outlined the phasing for the overall Watkins Mill development into three phases. The proposed plan is in conformance with phase two, which was allowed to

commence once construction of the Watkins Mill Road Interchange started. The proposed plan will be integrated within the existing road networks and utility infrastructures that was approved as part of SDP-05-002.

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

The plan will be the first development within the Urban Core, which was envisioned to contain office and commercial uses. The plan advances the overall Watkins Mill development vision by providing a vibrant and walkable mixed use community. Lastly, the plan will not have any adverse impacts to existing development and adjacent properties.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is supportive of the submitted Amendment to Schematic Development Plan, ASDP-9338-2022. The plan meets and accomplishes the purposes, objectives and minimal standards and requirements of the MXD Zone. The plan will reallocate previously approved office and retail density within the Urban Core, which is consistent with Sketch Plan Z-297 and Schematic Development Plan SDP-05-002. The proposed plan is a continuation of development within the Watkins Mill community, therefore will not adversely impact the character of Watkins Mill and the adjacent properties. Additionally, the proposed plan furthers the vision and goals of the Watkins Mill development by providing a vibrant and walkable mixed use community.

Staff recommends THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION, BASED ON THE EVIDENCE AND TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE RECORD AND THE FINDINGS IN THE FINAL STAFF ANALYSIS, APPROVE AMENDMENT TO SCHEMATIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN, ASDP-9338-2022, AND ADOPT THE RESOLUTION WITH ONE CONDITION:

1. Applicant must receive final stormwater management approval for all streets providing access to the subject properties proposed in the ASDP application, prior to final site plan approval.