

MEMORANDUM TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kirk Eby, Planner III

DATE: April 28, 2023

SUBJECT: Staff Analysis: Application SK-9497-2023: Nike Site
Redevelopment

APPLICANT

Ross Ostrander
Pleasants Development/Muddy Branch Investments LLC
24012 Frederick Road, Suite 200
Clarksburg, MD 20871

OWNER

Muddy Branch Investments, LLC
24012 Frederick Road, Suite 200
Clarksburg, MD 20871

PROPERTY ADDRESS:

770 Muddy Branch Road

TAX MAP REFERENCE:

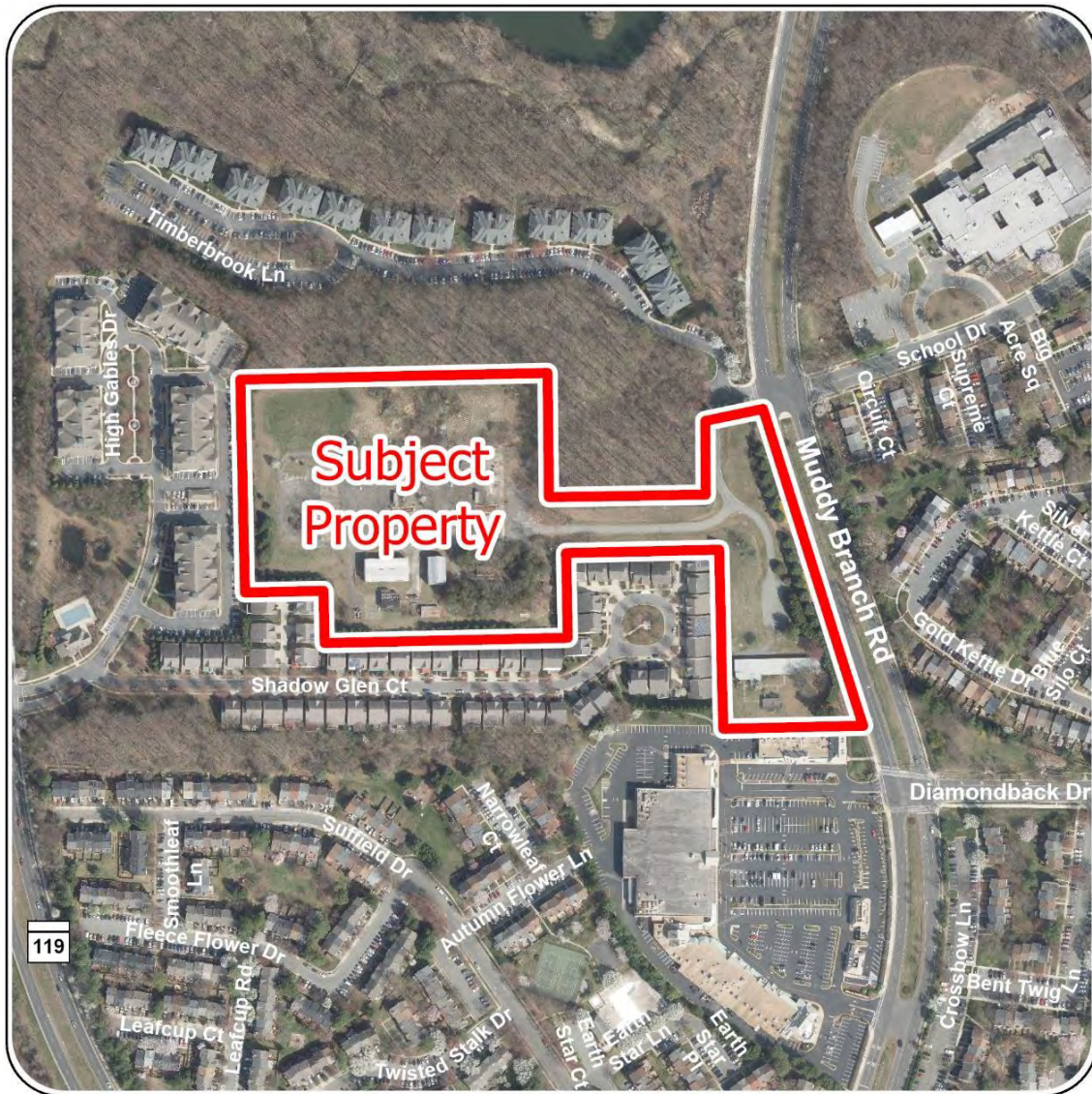
Tax Assessment Map # FS32, Parcel P322

TAX ACCOUNT NUMBERS:

ID # 09-00821711

REQUEST

The applicant, Pleasants Development/Muddy Branch Investments, LLC (“Applicant”), has submitted Sketch Plan application SK-9497-2023¹ (“Application” or “Project”), to establish a new sketch plan for approximately 13.71 acres of land at 770 Muddy Branch Road, surrounded by the Muddy Branch Shopping Center, Lakelands Ridge, City-owned park land, and the Timberbrook Condominium, in accordance with § 24-160D.9(a) “Application for the MXD Zone and sketch plan approval” and § 24-160d.10(a) “Findings required” of the City Code. The Application proposes to create a residential community of up to 380 multifamily units.² This Application will establish the first sketch plan for this property.



Location

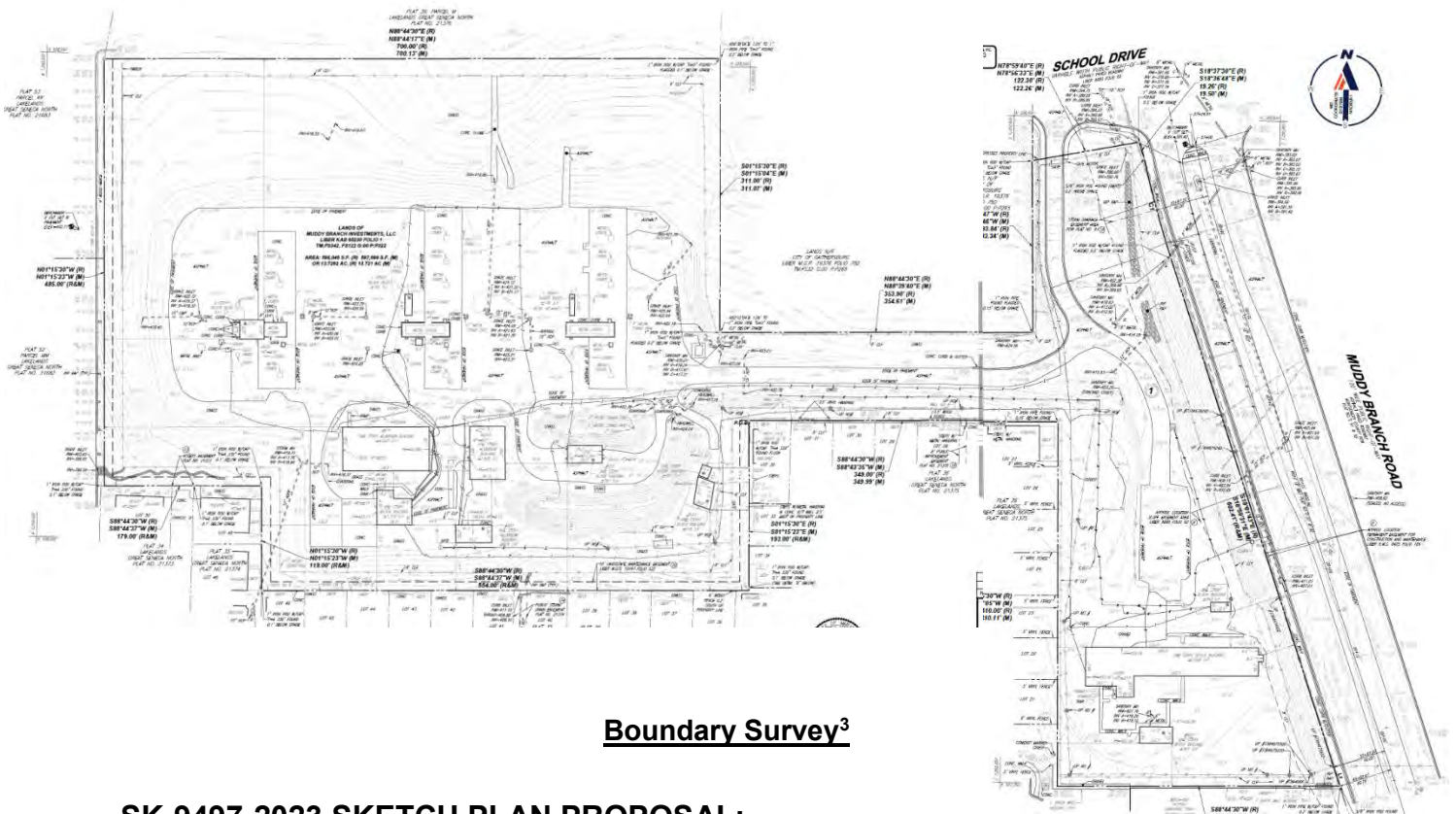
¹ Exhibit #01

² Exhibit #02, Exhibit #03

GENERAL INFORMATION

LOCATION:

The subject area of the application (“Site” or “Property”) is located at 770 Muddy Branch Road and includes one unplatted parcel that was formerly used by the federal government, with a land area of approximately 13.71 acres. The Property is bounded by City-owned and Lakelands Ridge-owned HOA parcels and the Timberbrook multifamily condominium community to the north, Muddy Branch Road to the east, Muddy Branch Shopping Center and the Lakelands Ridge single family detached houses to the south, and the Lakelands Ridge multifamily condominiums to the west. The only access point to the Site is along a driveway that begins at the School Drive stub-out on the west side of Muddy Branch Road.



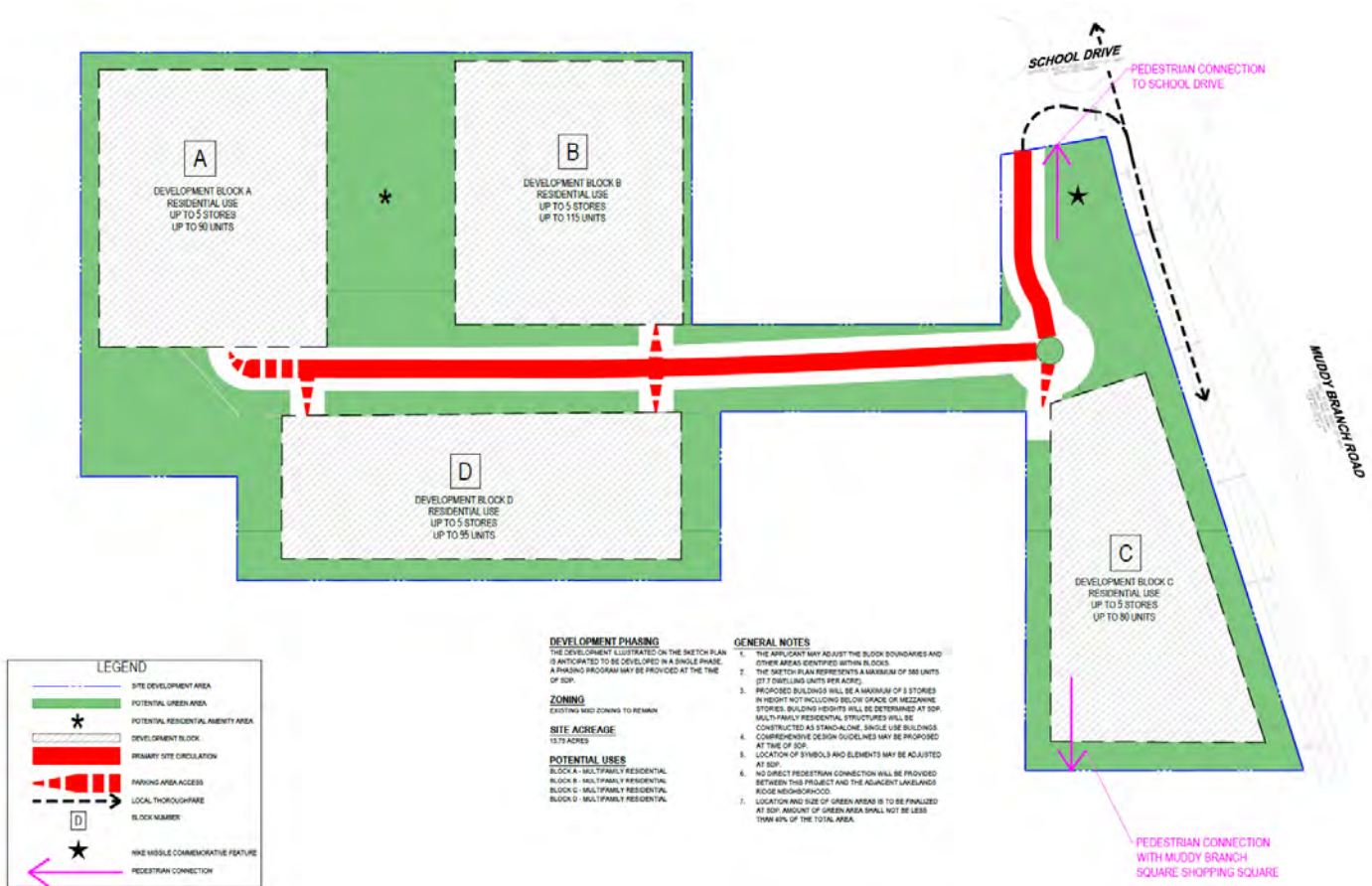
Boundary Survey³

SK-9497-2023 SKETCH PLAN PROPOSAL:

The Applicant, as stated, has submitted an application seeking to establish a new sketch plan in accordance with § 24-160D.9(a) “Application for the MXD Zone and sketch plan approval” and § 24-160d.10(a) “Findings required” of the City Code. This will be the first sketch plan established for the currently vacant Property, which was formerly owned and used by the federal government as a military anti-aircraft missile defense site and a research facility for NIST.⁴

³ Exhibit #04

⁴ For a complete review of topics such as site plan history, zoning, environmental context, and overview of application refer to Exhibit #27: Preliminary Background Report



Proposed Sketch Plan⁵

A joint public hearing before the Mayor and City Council and Planning Commission was held on March 20, 2023.⁶ The applicant gave an overview of the proposed sketch plan, noting that the Nike Site will be redeveloped as a multifamily use and noted that they had met with the surrounding communities several times before formally submitting the sketch plan application. The Applicant summarized the plan’s layout, noting access to the site, building placement and height, buffers for the surrounding properties, and the addition of stormwater management, which is currently not present on the Property. The Applicant further noted that the sketch plan reflects comments received from the surrounding communities.

The Mayor and City Council and Planning Commission did not express any opposition to the proposed multifamily residential community proposed for this area, but did have concerns about the lack of pedestrian connections to the adjacent communities, remediation of the Nike site, the visual impact of the proposed 5-story buildings, the proximity of the proposed buildings to the existing communities, movement through the

⁵ Exhibit #03

⁶ Exhibit #41

intersection of School Drive with Timberbrook and this development, movement through the intersection of School Drive and Muddy Branch Road, and additional safety measures that may be needed above and beyond a new traffic light.

There were nine speakers from the public, whose primary concerns were traffic impacts to Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway, traffic and pedestrian safety when crossing Muddy Branch Road and Great Seneca Highway, parking impacts to the adjacent communities, density of the proposed housing, construction impacts to the adjacent homes, public safety concerns and snow event challenges related to the single-point access to the site, potential cut-through vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and safety and security for existing residents. During the course of the hearing, the Applicant offered the following responses to concerns raised by the Mayor and City Council, Planning Commission, and the public:

- In response to concerns about traffic and parking, the Applicant noted that those issues will be further addressed at the next review stage (schematic development plan), since the sketch plan serves as a high-level guide for the overall development. The applicant did note that the proposed residential units will include off-street surface parking in conformance with the City's Zoning Ordinance and will provide affordable housing units as required by the City Code.
- In response to concerns about traffic and safety, the Applicant noted that they have conducted a preliminary traffic impact study, though it is not required as part of the sketch plan application. The Applicant further noted that the traffic study showed that the proposed multifamily residential development will warrant a traffic signal being installed at the intersection of Muddy Branch Road and School Drive, which should improve traffic flow and vehicular and pedestrian safety in the neighborhood.
- In response to a question about further remediation of past uses on the site, the applicant stated that they have an approved action plan with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) under the Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP), which will allow the site to be used for residential buildings once the VCP is completed.
- In response to the concern about density, the Applicant noted that the proposed density is similar to the density of the surrounding communities, and much lower than other newly-constructed multifamily buildings, such as those at Crown.

As noted in the Applicant's Statement,⁷ sketch plan SK-9497-2023 will serve as a compatible neighbor to the existing Lakelands Ridge, Timberbrook, and Shady Grove Village communities by providing a similar multifamily residential use with appropriate buffers, connections, green space, stormwater treatment, and amenities.

The Application proposes a maximum of 380 dwelling units in four separate blocks, with each block consisting of a building with adjacent surface parking. A single private road with sidewalks and landscaping provides access to all four blocks. Staff notes that the maximum 380 units proposed across the entire 13.71-acre site (27.7 units per acre) is

⁷ Exhibit #02

compatible with the adjacent Timberbrook Condos (168 units on 9.74 acres, or 17.2 units per acre) and Lakelands Ridge Condos (159 units on 9.39 acres, or 16.9 units per acre), and is significantly less dense than other recently-approved multifamily projects in the MXD Zone, such as Avention at Crown (145.4 units per acre), Kentlands Apartments (117.7 units per acre), Camden at Washingtonian (62.3 units per acre), Fairfield at Crown (59.5 units per acre), and Kentlands Market Square Phase 1 (52.1 units per acre. Staff further notes that the density of multifamily projects within the City has been steadily increasing since 2012, reflecting the strong appreciation in land values over the same period of time.⁸ This higher land cost has contributed to the need for additional units (density) in order to make newer multifamily development projects financially viable.

DEVELOPMENT PHASING

THE DEVELOPMENT ILLUSTRATED ON THE SKETCH PLAN IS ANTICIPATED TO BE DEVELOPED IN A SINGLE PHASE. A PHASING PROGRAM MAY BE PROVIDED AT THE TIME OF SDP.

ZONING

EXISTING MXD ZONING TO REMAIN

SITE ACREAGE

13.73 ACRES

POTENTIAL USES

- BLOCK A - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- BLOCK B - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- BLOCK C - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL
- BLOCK D - MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL

GENERAL NOTES

1. THE APPLICANT MAY ADJUST THE BLOCK BOUNDARIES AND OTHER AREAS IDENTIFIED WITHIN BLOCKS.
2. THE SKETCH PLAN REPRESENTS A MAXIMUM OF 380 UNITS (27.7 DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE).
3. PROPOSED BUILDINGS WILL BE A MAXIMUM OF 5 STORIES IN HEIGHT NOT INCLUDING BELOW GRADE OR MEZZANINE STORIES. BUILDING HEIGHTS WILL BE DETERMINED AT SDP. MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES WILL BE CONSTRUCTED AS STAND-ALONE, SINGLE USE BUILDINGS.
4. COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN GUIDELINES MAY BE PROPOSED AT TIME OF SDP.
5. LOCATION OF SYMBOLS AND ELEMENTS MAY BE ADJUSTED AT SDP.
6. NO DIRECT PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION WILL BE PROVIDED BETWEEN THIS PROJECT AND THE ADJACENT LAKELANDS RIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD.
7. LOCATION AND SIZE OF GREEN AREAS IS TO BE FINALIZED AT SDP. AMOUNT OF GREEN AREA SHALL NOT BE LESS THAN 40% OF THE TOTAL AREA.

Sketch Plan Development Summary⁹

Following the public hearing, the applicant submitted an addendum to their Statement,¹⁰ along with information about the preliminary traffic impact study and related traffic and design analyses.¹¹ The Commission’s record closed at 5:00 p.m. on April 21, 2023, and only one additional public comment, which raised concerns about stormwater discharge and water quality, was received.¹² As stated, the Applicant has provided a supplemental statement with the following information:

- The Applicant reiterated the inclusion of green space, landscape buffers, amenities, appropriate architecture, and the opportunity to commemorate the

⁸ Staff reviewed SDAT records for all garden style and high rise multifamily properties within the City of Gaithersburg that were completed and in existence on both August 1, 2012 and April 1, 2023 and found that the total assessed land value had increased from \$260,762,200 to \$309,751,200, or 18.8%, over the 128-month time period.

⁹ Exhibit #03

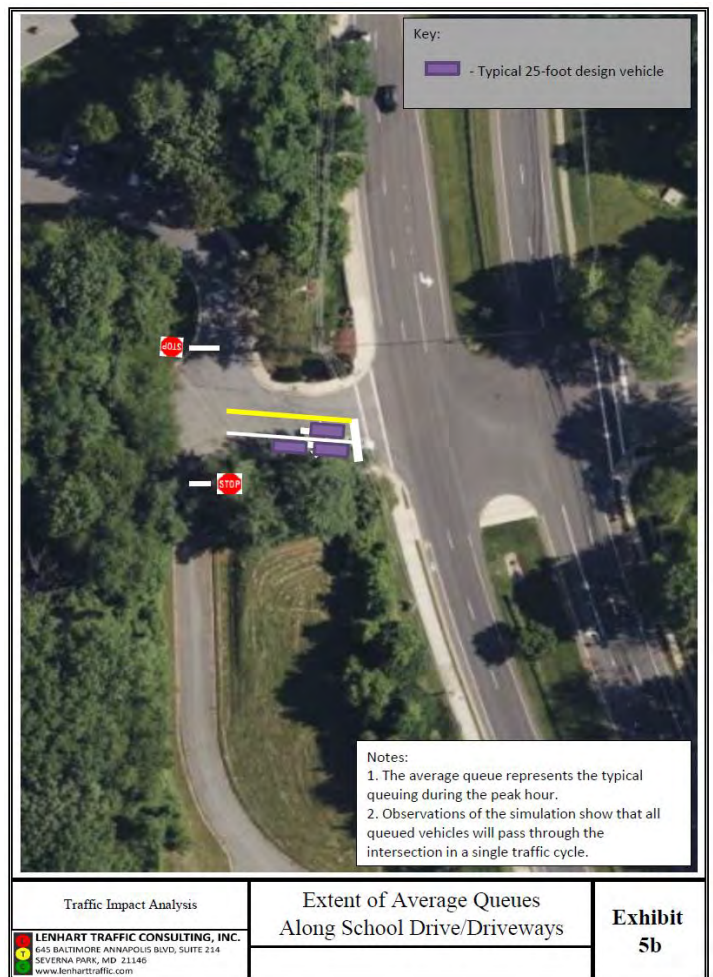
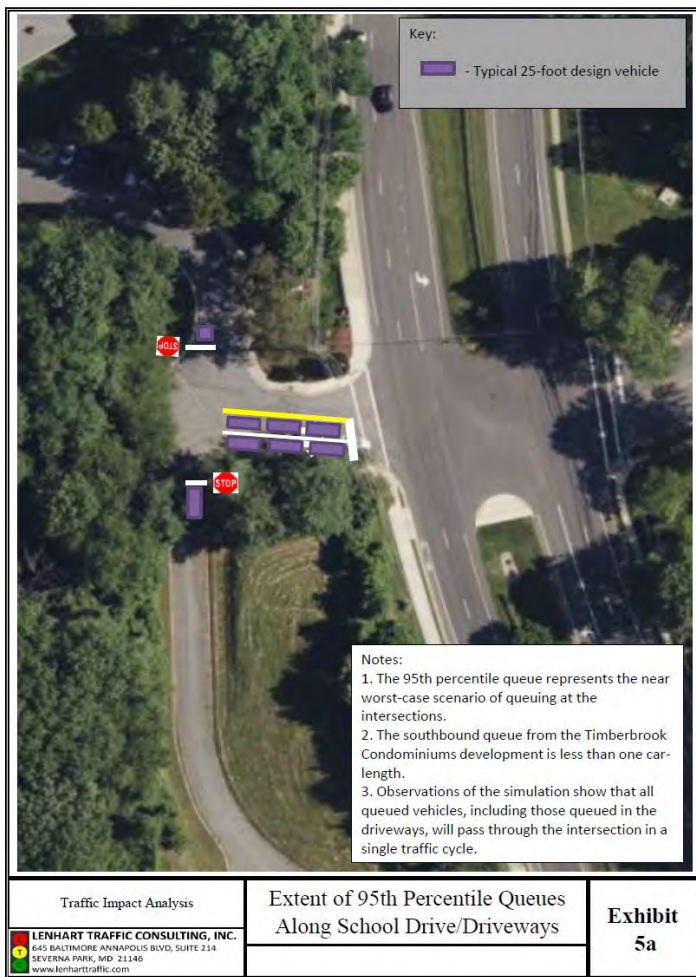
¹⁰ Exhibit #53

¹¹ Exhibit #54

¹² Exhibit # 40

Property's past use as a Nike Missile launch site. The details of each of these items will be provided during future plan reviews, as the project progresses through the schematic development plan and final site plan stages.


- The Applicant has provided a copy of the preliminary traffic impact study and related correspondence, noting that this study was conducted as a proactive measure and is not a requirement of the sketch plan application itself.
 - The study shows that a traffic signal is warranted at the intersection of School Drive and Muddy Branch Road, once the proposed multifamily development is completed.
 - The study reviewed the vehicular queuing at the both the School Drive/ Timberbrook Lane intersection and the School Drive/Muddy Branch Road intersection and found that after the completion of the multifamily development, the queuing will operate similar to the way it operates now.



Traffic Analysis, Queue Studies¹³

¹³ Exhibit #54

- The study shows that both the intersection of School Drive/Muddy Branch Road and the intersection of School Drive/Timberbrook Lane will operate at an acceptable level of service upon completion of the proposed multifamily development, and that no sight distance issues exist at the intersection of Muddy Branch Road/School Drive.
- The study noted that the total peak hour trips generated by the proposed 380-unit multifamily development would be 141 in the morning and 184 in the afternoon.

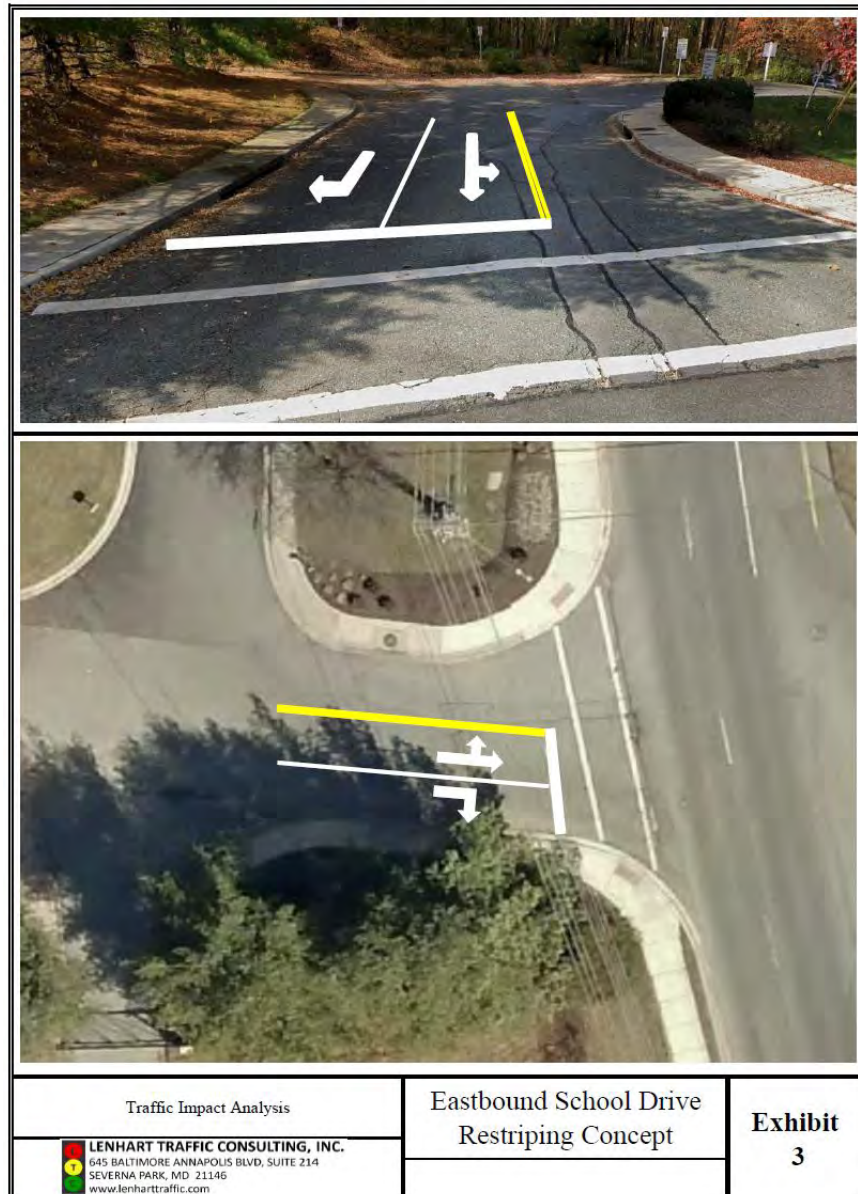
<u>Trip Generation Rates</u>							
Multifamily Housing, Low-Rise (ITE-220, Units)				<u>Trip Distribution (In/Out)</u>			
				Morning Trips = 0.31 x Units + 22.85		24/76	
				Evening Trips = 0.43 x Units + 20.55		63/37	
<u>Trip Generation Totals</u>							
		AM Peak			PM Peak		
		In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Multifamily Housing, Low-Rise (ITE-220, Units)	380 units	34	107	141	116	68	184
Total:		34	107	141	116	68	184
NOTE: Trip Generation Rates obtained from the ITE Trip Generation Manual, 11th Edition							
Traffic Impact Analysis				Trip Generation for Site			Exhibit
 LENHART TRAFFIC CONSULTING, INC. 645 BALTIMORE ANNAPOLIS BLVD, SUITE 214 SEVERNA PARK, MD 21146 www.lenharttraffic.com							2

Traffic Analysis, Trip Generation¹⁴

- Lastly, the study found that the crash rate at the intersection of Muddy Branch Road and School Drive is much lower (0.34 crashes per 1 million vehicles) than the Maryland SHA threshold for a safety investigation (1.0 crash per 1 million vehicles), indicating that the intersection is operating safely.

¹⁴ Exhibit #54

- The Applicant provided a turning movement analysis showing that passenger cars, trucks, and fire trucks are able to enter and exit the Property safely using the existing intersections and roads.¹⁵
- The Applicant is proposing to provide pavement markings (stripe) in the existing School Drive stub-out that intersects Timberbrook Lane and the private drive connecting to the proposed multifamily development. This change will result in two marked outbound lanes and one marked inbound lane, which should improve circulation through both this intersection and the Muddy Branch Road/School Drive intersection.



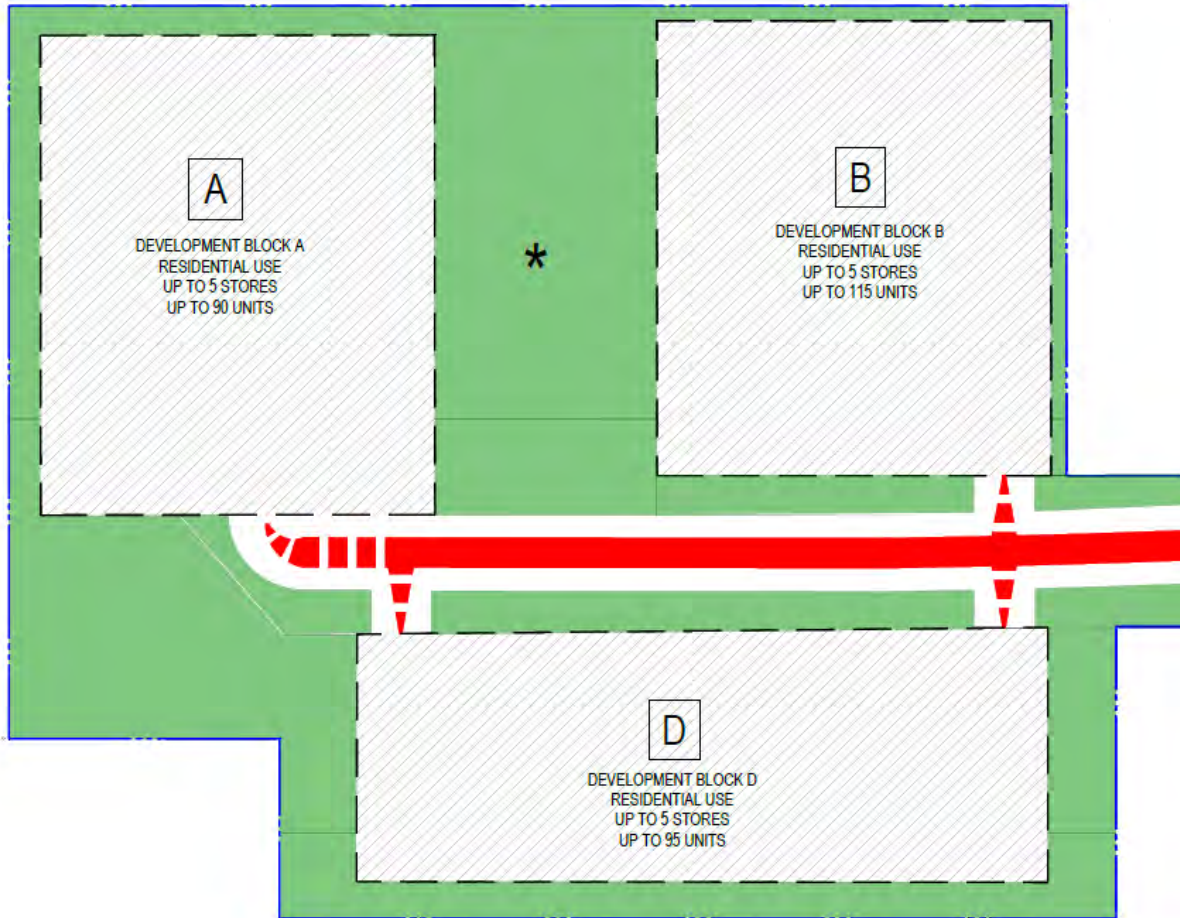
Traffic Analysis, Restriping at School Drive¹⁶

¹⁵ See Appendix A of Exhibit #54 (PDF pages 11-19)

¹⁶ Exhibit #54

- The Applicant notes that, based on the traffic study and other traffic movement analyses, the single point of access to the site appears to be adequate and safe. The Applicant further notes that the adjacent properties, Lakelands Ridge and Timberbrook Condo, currently have only a single point of access and appear to be able to receive adequate emergency services via that access.

Blocks A, B, and D



Proposed Sketch Plan, Blocks A, B, & D¹⁷

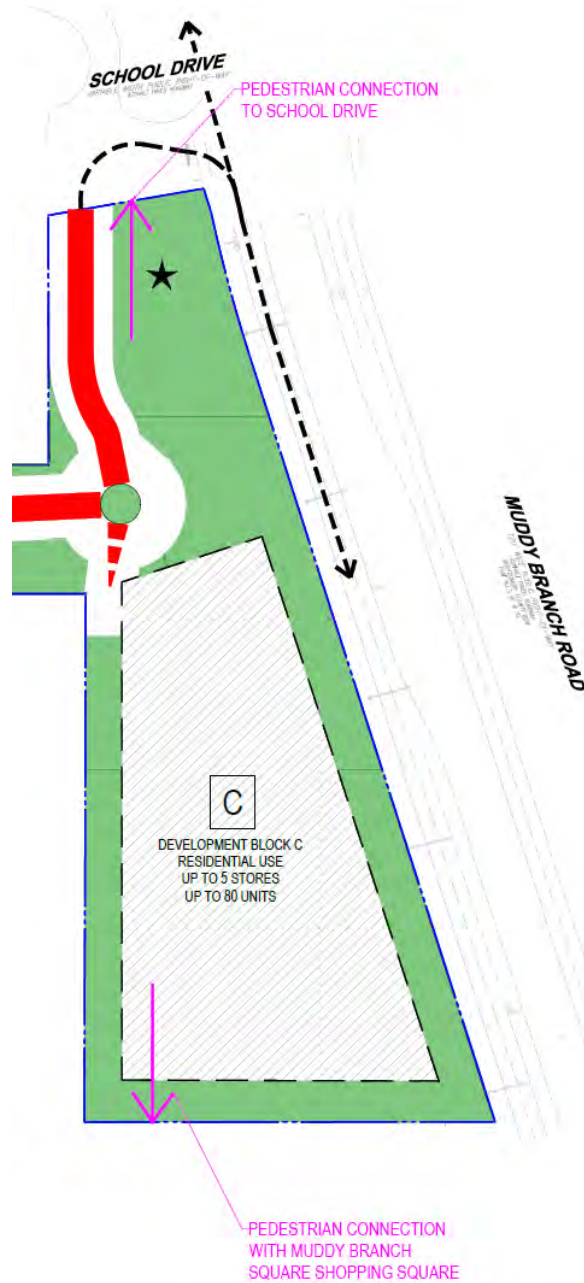
Blocks A, B, and D are arranged in a “U” shape around a proposed amenity area that will include open lawn and could include a small clubhouse building and a pool. The main private road separates Block D to the south from Blocks A and B to the north, and provides both vehicular and bicycle/pedestrian access. Each block will include a multifamily building up to five stories in height, with adjacent surface parking and landscaping.

Block A allows up to 90 units, Block B allows up to 115 units, and Block D allows up to 95 units, for a total of 300 units in this area, or 79% of the total unit count. As mentioned in the supplemental statement, no bicycle/pedestrian connections are provided to the

¹⁷ Exhibit #03

Lakelands Ridge community due to that community's concerns. City staff notes that it would be beneficial to have at least one bicycle/pedestrian connection to Lakelands Ridge that would allow residents and children to more easily move between the communities.

Block C



Proposed Sketch Plan, Block C¹⁸

Block C is located along Muddy Branch Road, a short distance from the other blocks in the development. This block is located south of the main private road, with vehicular and bicycle/pedestrian access provided by a private driveway that extends from a potential

¹⁸ Exhibit #03

small traffic circle where the private road turns 90 degrees. This block's somewhat isolated location provides opportunities for more unique units and architectural massing that take advantage of its prominence on a small hill overlooking Muddy Branch Road and the adjacent shopping center. Similar to the other blocks, Block C will include a multifamily building up to five stories in height, with adjacent surface parking and landscaping. The maximum number of units on Block C is 80, or 21% of the total unit count.

Bicycle/Pedestrian connections are provided to the adjacent Muddy Branch Square Shopping Center and the School Drive stub-out next to Muddy Branch Road. The Applicant is also proposing an entrance feature along the private road to the north of Block C, which could include artwork or other features that commemorate the Property's former use as an anti-missile defense system.

STAFF FINDINGS ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SK-9497-2023

FINDINGS:

Approval of sketch plan amendment SK-9497-2023 and its subject parcels (Property) by the Mayor and City Council is governed under § 24-160D.9(a) of the City Code, and must satisfy the findings required under § 24-160D.10 of the City Code. The following outlines the findings and justifications under § 24-160D.10 that should be considered by the Planning Commission should it recommend approval of SK-9497-2023 to the Mayor and City Council:

Section 24-160D.10. – Findings Required

(a) The City Council shall approve MXD zoning and the accompanying sketch plan only upon finding that:

(1) The application meets or accomplishes the purposes, objectives, and minimum standards and requirements of the zone; and

- Application SK-9497-2023 proposes to redevelop a dilapidated former federal government site that has been vacant for more than a decade with a new multifamily residential community that will include open space, landscape buffers, amenities, stormwater management, and a public display commemorating the historic use of the property.
 - The proposed multifamily development provides an additional option to meet the increased demand for housing needed to support surrounding job growth, particularly in the life sciences and education sectors, and enhances the existing horizontal mix of uses in the area.
 - The additional dwelling units proposed by SK-9497-2023 will expand the customer and worker base for the existing businesses and institutional uses in the surrounding area, strengthening their success.
 - The proposed residential units will help meet the housing needs for the City's expected population growth over the next 30 years, as identified by the draft Round 10.0 MWCOG Forecast and the City's 2019 Visioning Exercise, including creating housing options for the City's aging population.
 - The proposed residential development will include units in conformance with the City's Affordable Housing Ordinance, and will be the first such units constructed in this part of the City.
 - The proposed redevelopment of the former federal uses on the site includes several remediation measures that will improve the overall environmental quality of the area.

- The site layout and proposed multifamily use of Application SK-9497-2023 promotes compatibility with the surrounding uses and helps fulfill the City's vision of a walkable, integrated, live/work/play community.
- Application SK-9497-2023 proposes to create internal pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections to serve the new development and its shared amenities and open spaces, as well as a single vehicular connection and two pedestrian connections to the surrounding community.
- Because of the small scale of the proposed development, Application SK-9497-2023 does not include a phasing plan, as the applicant expects to construct the entire multifamily development in a single phase, consistent with market demand.
- The applicant is committed to using architectural styles and streetscapes that are coordinated with those in the surrounding community, to create both a compatible and harmonious reflection of the existing community and a separate visual identity for this new development.
- Application SK-9497-2023 encourages the efficient use of land by:
 - Siting multifamily housing next to two communities that already have multifamily buildings located within them.
 - Creating a new multifamily residential community on previously-developed land adjacent to existing residential, commercial, and institutional development, avoiding suburban sprawl and reducing the costs and environmental impacts from the extension of utilities, roads, and other infrastructure. This siting of housing close to existing and future jobs and commercial uses will enhance the existing horizontal mix of uses and help reduce overall vehicle miles traveled
 - Connecting to the existing and surrounding uses and to the rest of the City and region via multiple transportation options, including a vehicular roadway, sidewalks, and pedestrian and bike facilities, all of which connect to the multimodal facilities along Muddy Branch Road, including several County Ride-On bus routes.
 - Providing open space, landscape buffers, stormwater management, and amenities that serve the residents, visitors, and surrounding areas.
- Application SK-9497-2023 is currently zoned MXD, which allows multifamily residential as a permitted use.
- The Project is located adjacent to and readily accessible from Muddy Branch Road, and this access is adequate to service the proposed development. It is intended that vehicular access will be provided both within and to the site so that traffic does not have an adverse impact on the surrounding area or cause internal circulation or safety problems, including the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Muddy Branch Road and School Drive, should a formal traffic study and signal warrant analysis conducted at the next stage of review (schematic development plan) recommend such a signal.
- No buildings proposed by Application SK-9497-2023 will exceed five stories and none will be within 100 feet of an adjoining property not zoned MXD.

- The Project will provide a minimum of 40% green area, as required by the MXD Zone. The Applicant will provide additional detail and information about the Project's green area during the next review stage (Schematic Development Plan).
- All utilities proposed by Application SK-9497-2023 will be placed underground.

(2) The application is in accord with recommendations in the applicable master plan for the area and is consistent with any special conditions or requirements contained in said master plan; and

The Property is included in the Land Use Element of the 2003 Master Plan, which was adopted on April 6, 2004, and is identified as Map Designation 28. In addition, the Application is subject to other relevant sections of the adopted Master Plan that are currently active:¹⁹

- the Historic Preservation Element of the 2018 Master Plan;
- the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Element of the 2018 Master Plan;
- the Environment and Sustainability Element of the 2009 Master Plan
- the Process and Overview Element of the 2009 Master Plan;
- the Transportation Element of the 2009 Master Plan; and
- the Water Resources Element of the 2009 Master Plan;

*2003 Master Plan Land Use Element:*²⁰

Under Section 20-18(a), the Planning Commission may determine that events since the adoption of the Master Plan make the land use recommendation in that Plan “no longer relevant.” In anticipation of a future subdivision plan for the new multifamily residential use should the sketch plan be approved, staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that the 2003 Master Plan Land Use Element's land use recommendation for this Property is no longer relevant, based upon the following:

- As previously mentioned, the Application is identified as Map Designation 28 in the 2003 Master Plan Land Use Element. Based upon discussions the City had with the federal government, the 2003 Master Plan Land Use Element anticipated that this Property (former Nike Missile Site) would be conveyed to the City of Gaithersburg, and the City would then use it as a public park. As such, the 2003 Master Plan recommended an Open Space land use designation and recommended a zoning change from the MXD (mixed use development) Zone to the R-A (low density residential) Zone, which is the City's de facto zoning for public parks, open space, and public and institutional uses. The Open Space land use recommendation was adopted as part of the 2003 Master Plan approval, but the rezoning did not occur, and the Property remains in the MXD Zone.

¹⁹ The Property was not included in the Land Use Element of the 2009 Master Plan (See Exhibit #16) and although it was included in the Neighborhood 4 Land use Plan of the 1997 Master Plan, the land use recommendation in that plan was superseded by the 2003 Master Plan (though the Property was rezoned to MXD following the adoption of the 1997 Master Plan). For additional information, please refer to the Preliminary Background Report (Exhibit #27).

²⁰ See Exhibit #15

- The Property was included in the Parks, Recreation, and Culture Element of the 2018 Master Plan²¹ (adopted August 5, 2019), under the “foreseeable cultural arts facilities,” which expanded upon the 2003 Master Plan’s assumption that the City could acquire the Site for use as a public park:

NIKE MISSILE SITE: This site is currently owned by the Federal government and was previously used as a launch site for NIKE missiles and then activities of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), including the development of robotic rescue equipment. If the City were to take ownership of the site, its development would be determined based on community input, feasibility, environmental impact, resources and identified needs. Cultural arts uses could include classrooms, art and performance studios.

- In 2021, the federal government chose to dispose of the Property through its competitive bidding process, which was open to the general public as well as local governments. The Applicant submitted the highest (and winning) bid of \$12,050,006 and was allowed to purchase the property, which it completed on February 4, 2022.
- Because the federal government disposed of the site through a competitive bidding process rather than conveying to the City directly, and because the City did not express interest in acquiring the Property through the competitive bid process and did not participate in that process, the Planning Commission finds that the 2003 Master Plan land use recommendation is no longer relevant.
- Staff notes that the current development proposal is consistent with the 1997 Master Plan²² recommendation of commercial-office-residential land use, which was the last master plan recommendation made prior to the City and federal government discussing the possibility of the Nike Missile Site being conveyed to the City for use as a public park. Map Designation 7, which included this Property, recommended that “this site should be included in a larger overall development plan for the adjacent mixed residential areas.”

2009 Master Plan, other Elements:

- The proposed multifamily residential use, site layout, amenities, and internal and external connectivity proposed by sketch plan Application SK-9497-2023 is in accord with other adopted Elements of the 2009 Master Plan:
 - Process and Overview Element of the 2009 Master Plan:²³
 - 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.

²¹ See Exhibit #49

²² See Exhibit #12

²³ See Exhibit #47

- 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.
- 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.
- State Vision 7, Housing: A range of housing densities, types, and sizes provides residential options for citizens of all ages and incomes.
- State Vision 10, Resource Conservation: waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems, and scenic areas are conserved.
- State Vision 11, Stewardship: Government, business entities, and residents are responsible for the creation of sustainable communities by collaborating to balance efficient growth with resource protection.
 - City Guiding Strategy: Support compact building design and a mix of land uses that promotes sustainable development, creates more secure communities, provides a variety of land use options, and improves environmental outcomes.
- Transportation Element of the 2009 Master Plan:²⁴
 - Objective 1: Promote connectivity within the transportation network for new, infill, and re-development projects.
 - Encourage and promote the sharing of access points between adjacent properties.
 - Preserve existing roadway connections, restore incomplete connections, and create new connections where appropriate.
 - Objective 2: Maintain or improve the functioning of the City’s road network
 - Ensure that existing and future land uses are appropriate for the function of adjacent roadways that serve them.
 - Limit the number of approaches or curb cuts onto collectors and major and minor arterials, by requiring access to the development via minor collector or local streets as infill or redevelopment occurs.
 - Objective 4: Ensure that land use and transportation decisions, strategies, and investments are in step and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare goals of the City of Gaithersburg, its neighborhoods, and its citizens

²⁴ See Exhibit #48

- Continue to ensure all development projects will be viewed with public safety in mind by maintaining and improving access for emergency services.
- Encourage developers to improve environmental quality and promote energy-efficient transportation by providing for a range of transportation alternatives to the automobile, including public transit amenities and projects conducive to bicycling and walking.
- Continue to study the installation of new crosswalks and the addition of signalized crossings to enhance pedestrian safety.

2018 Master Plan, Historic Preservation Element:²⁵

- The proposed multifamily residential use, site layout, amenities, and internal and external connectivity proposed by sketch plan Application SK-9497-2023 is in accord with the adopted Historic Preservation Element of the 2018 Master Plan:
 - The Site is included in the list of Potential Historic Resources, which notes that the properties in the list “may be considered for historic designation by the City” and “should be paid special consideration and integrated to the greatest extent possible into any redevelopment projects.”
 - The Historic District Commission found at its August 24, 2022 meeting that the building and site did not meet the criteria for local historic designation by the City and allowed the demolition permit to be issued.²⁶
 - The Applicant has indicated that one of the amenities for the project will be an area that commemorates the use of the Property as a defense system by the federal government during the Cold War era.²⁷

2022 City Strategic Plan:²⁸

- Sketch plan application SK-9497-2023 is in accord with and fulfills recommendations from the City’s Strategic Plan:
 - The Key Outcome Area for Vibrant Culture includes:
 - Gaithersburg values and promotes the arts and humanities, preserves its heritage, and enriches its diverse community by providing opportunities to come together to enjoy outstanding shared cultural and recreational experiences.
 - The Key Outcome Area and Strategies for Economic Development and Redevelopment include:

²⁵ See Exhibit #17

²⁶ See Exhibit #27 (Preliminary Background Report) and Exhibit #08 (Minutes of the 08/24/2022 HDC Meeting)

²⁷ See Exhibit #02, page 4

²⁸ See Exhibit #50

- Gaithersburg facilitates development and redevelopment opportunities that support and enhance the stability of the local economic base and provide residents with a wide array of employment and housing options.
 - Implement strategies that encourage reinvestment in aging commercial and multi-family properties.
 - Pursue strategies to provide a mix of housing options for a variety of income levels.
- The Key Outcome Area and Strategies for Viable Transportation Options include:
 - Gaithersburg creates neighborhood cohesion through bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and advocates for transportation and public transit options that increase efficient and convenient access.
 - Improve connectivity of people to services, activities, employment, and points of interest.
 - Develop and implement data-driven strategies that keep our community safely in motion.

(3) The application and sketch plan will be internally and externally compatible and harmonious with existing and planned land uses in the MXD zoned areas and adjacent areas.

Application SK-9497-2023 is compatible and harmonious with the land uses in the adjacent area. The proposed multifamily residential use and amenities included in the sketch plan complement nearby residential, commercial, and employment areas, contributing to a larger horizontal mix of uses that offer the opportunity to live, work, play, and shop within a short distance. The Property's proposed multifamily residential housing is consistent with the character of the surrounding Lakelands Ridge, Timberbrook, and Shady Grove Village communities, as envisioned in the 1997 Master Plan. The additional residential units will not adversely impact existing development and adjacent properties and will help support existing employment and commercial uses in the area.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is supportive of the submitted sketch plan amendment, SK-9497-2023. The plan meets and accomplishes the purposes, objectives and minimal standards and requirements of the MXD Zone. The proposed development will not adversely affect the character of the surrounding area nor adversely impact the surrounding area.

Staff recommends THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION, BASED UPON THE FINDINGS PRESENTED HEREIN, THE APPLICANT'S TESTIMONY, AND THE EVIDENCE IN THE RECORD, DETERMINE THAT EVENTS SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE 2003 MASTER PLAN MAKE THE LAND USE RECOMMENDATION IN THAT PLAN NO LONGER RELEVANT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 20-18(A) OF THE CITY CODE.

Staff recommends THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION, BASED UPON THE FINDINGS PRESENTED HEREIN, THE APPLICANT'S TESTIMONY, AND THE EVIDENCE IN THE RECORD, RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF SKETCH PLAN SK-9497-2023 TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WITH NO CONDITIONS.