

The Spectrum at Watkins Mill -- Magnolia
Statement in Support of Sketch Plan Amendment Application

I. INTRODUCTION

The Applicant, BPTC Thirteen, LLC, is submitting this Application to amend Sketch Plan No. ASK-8940-2021 for the Spectrum at Watkins Mill project (“Spectrum”) to allow non-age-restricted multi-family development on a site in the Spectrum, Block R, currently approved for senior housing (the “Application”).¹ As detailed below, the Application is in response to the increased demand for housing options not only for residents moving to the area in response to expansion of life science and tech jobs, but also for seniors who prefer to live in attainable, multi-generational buildings.

BACKGROUND

The Property and Surrounding Uses

The Spectrum includes approximately 31 acres in the northwest quadrant of North Frederick Avenue and Watkins Mill Road, which is zoned Mixed-Use Development (MXD).

The Spectrum is surrounded by a variety of uses. To the immediate East is a heavily forested stream valley buffer, beyond which are commercial and residential uses, including those located across North Frederick Avenue. To the immediate South is a vacant lot owned by the City of Gaithersburg for a Senior Center, with commercial uses located beyond either side of Watkins Mill Road. The area to the North of the Spectrum is improved with commercial uses on the other side of the Pepco utility corridor. To the west across Paramount Park Drive is the former Humane

¹ The Spectrum at Watkins Mill project is subject to Sketch Plan No. Z-301A, approved by Ordinance O-2-12 on March 19, 2012 and subsequently amended by Sketch Plan Amendment ASK-8940-2021 on October 28, 2021. Pursuant to Section 24-198(c)(2) of the City Zoning Ordinance, for amendments involving a change in use, the Schematic Development Plan may be amended by the filing of a new application in accordance with Section 24-160D.9.

Society of the United States headquarters site, also zoned MXD, a portion of which is currently being fitted out to house a “drop off” Medical Day Care facility providing “...specialty care for the elderly dealing with disabilities and dementia”. To the Southwest, across Interstate 270, is Watkins Mill Town Center, the unbuilt portion of which is being developed with a mix of residential and commercial uses by an entity related to the Applicant. In the Watkins Mill Town Center Urban Core, there is a pending application submitted by a developer of Life Science office projects.



_____ Subject Property (Magnolia) _____ Overall Spectrum Development

Figure 1 Aerial

Prior Approvals and Existing Development

The subject property was part of approvals for the Multi-phased Spectrum development in 2005 (SDP-05-003), 2007 (SDP-07-001), 2009 (SP-09-0004), 2010 (SP-07-0017), ultimately leading to a revised Sketch Plan Z-301A in 2012.

Sketch Plan Z-301A for the Spectrum was approved by Ordinance O-2-12 on March 19, 2012 (the “Sketch Plan”). The Sketch Plan approved senior housing on Block R, including up to 158 age-restricted residential units, 1,500 square feet (“SF”) of commercial use, and a maximum building height of six stories. Subsequent approvals for other parcels within the development have minimally altered the conditions of Block R. The Schematic Development Plan SDP-11-002 for the Majestic increased the allowable height for Block R from 6 stories to 9 stories. The Schematic Development Plan SDP-8198-2019 for the Royal Farms and Starbucks parcels then increased the allowable square footage of “Office/Retail/Restaurant” from 1,500 SF to 7,500 SF.

Pursuant to the Sketch Plan and subsequent Schematic Development Plan and Final Site Plan approvals, approximately 40,000 square feet of retail and restaurant uses in multiple buildings have been constructed at the Spectrum. Notable project elements include:

- *Paramount East and West*, a 224-unit apartment building, which opened in 2013 (Buildings A & C on the Sketch Plan);
- *Majestic*, a 243-unit apartment building, which opened in 2016 (Building H on the Sketch Plan);
- *Performers’ Park*
- Royal Farms convenience store and service station (approximately 4,800 square feet);
- Starbucks (approximately 2,500 square feet).

Additionally, approximately two (2) acres in the Southwestern corner of the Spectrum were dedicated to Montgomery County in 2011 for a police station and approximately 1.8 acres on the Western side of the Spectrum were dedicated to the City in 2013 for a 30,000 SF senior center. While the police station is currently under construction, the senior center has not been built. Finally, the Applicant has dedicated significant right-of-way for transportation improvements,

including the Watkins Mill Interchange, that support the Spectrum and the surrounding community.

II. THE APPLICATION

This Application is for a Sketch Plan Amendment to allow the thoughtful development of approximately 244 high-quality residential units on the Block R Site that will be multi-generational rather than age restricted. As shown in the proposed Sketch Plan below, the Block R Site consists of approximately 1.75 acres and is located on the western side of the stream valley buffer at the center of the Spectrum:



Figure 1: Proposed Area of Amendment

The Applicant proposes to develop the Block R site with an approximately 244-unit, non-age-restricted building known as the Magnolia. Due to the significant grade difference across the property, the proposed building will have a maximum height of seven stories on the Northeastern corner and will step down to four stories at the Southwestern corner. Parking will be provided in

two and a half levels below grade and elevator served. The proposed building will be constructed of brick and precast materials, consistent with the Paramount, Majestic, and recently approved Paramount North multifamily buildings in the Spectrum. Significant indoor and outdoor amenities will be provided for residents.

Under the existing approved Schematic Development Plan and subsequent approvals, the Block R Site is restricted to 158 senior housing units and approximately 7,500 square feet of ground floor “Office/Retail/Restaurant” space. As noted, the Applicant now proposes a non-age-restricted building. Since the initial approval of the Spectrum in 2005, circumstances have changed, and the removal of the age restriction is justified, as follows:

1. Continuous Care Facilities: The senior housing market has shifted away from “stand-alone” senior housing that provides minimal services to senior housing complexes providing integrated independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, and memory care in one location. These facilities require a minimum of four- to eight-acre parcels. An example within the City is the recently constructed *Carnegie at Washingtonian Center* Continuous Care senior housing building, which includes Independent Living, Assisted Living, and Memory Care) on approximately 8.5 acres. Similarly, in Montgomery County, the 1,500-unit *Grandview Bethesda* Continuous Care senior community is under construction, with delivery scheduled in early 2025. The *Grandview* will be located on approximately 33 acres of land at the former Marriott headquarters site. This community is approved for 1,500 units, including Independent Living, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing, and Memory Care, in line with the current trends in senior housing.²

² Summarizing a July 2024 market study of the Gaithersburg Senior Housing market, a senior executive of Welltower noted that the proposed site is “very challenging from a supply perspective,” concluding there is an oversupply of (non-subsidized) senior housing in the area. E-mail to Applicant. 12 July 2024.

By contrast, the Block R Site is only approximately 1.75 acres and cannot accommodate a facility with integrated Independent Living, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing, and/or Memory Care. This type of facility, which has eclipsed stand-alone senior living in the market, cannot be constructed on the Block R Site, and therefore, removal of the age restriction is justified.

2. Adjacent 30,000 SF Senior Center: The Sketch Plan was approved with a condition that the Applicant dedicate land adjacent to Block R for the construction of a senior center and that the Applicant would develop age-restricted multifamily to complement that center. The Applicant dedicated the site for the center, built the frontage road, and brought utilities to the site.

After the imposition of the “Senior Only” restriction on Block R, the City appointed a “Site Selection Task Force” to review and determine the best location for a senior center within the City. The resulting *Mature Adult Recreation Center Site Selection Task Team Report* dated August 10, 2009, ranked the Spectrum, referred to therein as the “Spectrum/Casey East site,” as the least desirable -- seventh out of seven – of possible locations for a senior center within the City. Recently, the City initiated a “*Multi-Generational Recreational Facility Feasibility Study*”. The City now joins Montgomery County in recognizing that the needs of active seniors are best met in multi-generational spaces. For these reasons, and the fact that there is no funding for the construction of a senior center in the City’s Capital Program for the next five years, it appears to be highly unlikely that a senior center will be constructed on the land the Applicant dedicated to the City. Without the complementary senior center, there is no rationale for requiring an age-restricted building on the Block R site.

3. Prohibitively High Monthly Rent Excludes Many Elderly: Senior housing, as it has evolved over the last several decades, operates on two models: (a) high base monthly rent with add-on charges for services and (b) an upfront payment with a monthly charge.

a. Monthly Rent Model: On average in Montgomery County, base monthly rent for Independent Living is about \$4,184, Assisted Living is \$9,399, Skilled Nursing is \$10,697, and Memory Care is \$10,701 per month.³ Gaithersburg residents pay an average of \$4,163 a month for Independent Living.⁴

b. Upfront Payment Plus Monthly Payment Model: This model is used by communities including the *Grandview Bethesda* (\$536,000 upfront plus \$3,333 per month), and *Asbury Methodist Village* in Gaithersburg (\$143,000 upfront plus \$2,698 per month).

These models appeal to seniors who want to live in an ‘adults-only’ environment and have significant financial resources—often generated by selling their homes. And even among homeowners, there are significant inequities by race and ethnicity. As a recent study conducted by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University found, “older black homeowners have the lowest median equity at \$123,000, compared to \$251,000 for older white homeowners, \$200,000 for older Hispanic owners, and \$270,000 for older owners who are Asian, multiracial, or another race.”⁵

The trend towards an increase in demand for rental units that serve aging renters is expected to increase. But for most renters, the payment of an upfront entrance fee is unrealistic. “(O)lder

³ “Finding your perfect senior independent living community in Montgomery County, MD.” 2024. 12 July 2024 <<https://www.kithward.com/senior-living/united-states/maryland/montgomery-county>>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Housing America’s Older Adults,” Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. 2023. www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/reports/files/Harvard_JCHS_Housing_Older_Adults_2023.pdf

renters have only 2 percent of the net worth of older homeowners,”⁶ researchers found. “The number of older renters”, according to a 2023 report, “will continue to rise as those aged 50-64, who have lower homeownership rates, enter old age. Older renter households are more likely to be people of color. The rentership rate among older Black and Hispanic households is particularly high at 37 and 34 percent, respectively.”⁷ Harvard researchers found that older Americans – both current homeowners and renters – want to live in multifamily buildings as they age, noting: “older households seek onsite amenities, cost savings and reduced responsibilities for repairs and maintenance.”⁸

Many seniors who live in our community do not have a home to sell, have limited savings, and need an affordable solution that will enable them to age in place. Many also want or need to live near family members who are also renters. Spectrum Apartments also offers on-site leasing and maintenance teams available to assist residents with tasks as simple as changing light bulbs or technology challenges. These services and amenities currently are offered for the following monthly rent:

- Paramount Studio - \$1,760 per month;
- Spectrum Majestic Jr. One Bedroom - \$1,804 - \$1,849 per month;
- Paramount One Bedroom - \$1,862 - \$2,062 per month;
- Majestic One bedroom - \$1,890 - \$2,000 per month.⁹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. p. 9.

⁸ Ibid. p. 9.

⁹ Senior and market-rate apartments typically have additional charges for internet, pets, and parking. However, the charges for market-rate units are typically significantly less than those charged at “Senior Only” buildings. Spectrum Apartment rents as of July 2024 and subject to change and unit amenities.

While affordability is an important reason many seniors seek non-age-restricted living, personal preference is also a factor.

4. Desire to Live in a Multi-Generational Community: Finally, the requested change from age-restricted to multi-generational multifamily addresses a market need for a more attainable housing option for seniors and empty-nesters who want to age in place in a multi-generational building and for workers seeking apartments in the area.

Increasingly, older Americans, especially Baby Boomers, prefer to live in mixed-aged, multi-generational communities. They may choose this option because they want to live with their children or near their grandchildren, and/or they may prefer to live in more diverse communities that enable them to interact with younger people.

According to the Council on Aging, age-restricted retirement communities tend to be predominantly white, politically conservative, and not multi-generational.¹⁰ But the council sees a trend toward senior living that “values inclusion over exclusion”, noting: “Boomers seem destined to transform the business of aging. For a growing number of older adults, living with neighbors of all ages and all walks of life makes more sense. These seniors believe that intergenerational connections are not just valuable for them but their community and country.”¹¹

While the Applicant did not initially develop the Paramount and Majestic anticipating multi-generational living, it has occurred organically at Spectrum apartments. This should not be surprising, given the diversity of the resident population. In a study of multi-generational

¹⁰ “Multigenerational Housing: What Makes a Community a Paradise for Seniors?” Council on Aging. Jan. 11, 2022. www.councilonaging.org/blog/multigenerational-housing-what-makes-a-community-a-paradise-for-seniors/

¹¹ Ibid.

housing, the Urban Land Institute found: “Culturally, as the U.S. population continues to grow and evolve through immigration, more new residents – particularly those of Asian and Latino descent – are bringing with them a tradition of living with multiple generations.”¹²

The seniors who are aging in place at the Spectrum often have family members who also live in the complex. These seniors seek multi-generational living in adaptable apartments with elevators, underground parking, pools, libraries, business centers, exercise facilities, scheduled resident activities, a summer concert series, and walkable restaurants and retail amenities.

The Applicant has found that multi-family buildings can be designed with the amenities, security features, and accessibility that attract seniors who want to live in a mixed-age building.

The Magnolia has been designed to include features that appeal to seniors and others with mobility impairments or disabilities including elevator service for all units, valet trash, underground parking, FOB-controlled unit access, exercise facilities with equipment designed for seniors, and on-site maintenance services. Additionally, the Applicant intends to provide enhanced accessibility in a minimum of 5% of the units, which will be attractive to seniors and others with mobility issues who do not require assisted living or memory care and wish to live in a multi-generational community. These enhanced accessibility units will include the following features:

- Flooring: On podium levels, units will have high-end vinyl tiling throughout, making unit navigation easier for those using wheelchairs or walkers.
- Side-by-Side Washer/Dryer: This is a highly desirable feature not typically found in new multifamily developments that is helpful for residents who struggle with lifting.

¹² “Residential Futures II: Thought Provoking Ideas on What’s Next for Multi-generational Housing and Intergenerational Communities”. Urban Land Institute, 2014.

- Roll-in Showers: Most Podium-level units have been designed to offer roll-in/ low threshold showers that can be converted to include a pull-down seat or facility a shower chair. These showers will include hand showers. All units will accommodate grab bars within bathrooms.
- Toilets areas in accessible units have been designed to enable installation of grab bars for both left and right-handed occupants.
- Notification System for Hearing and Vision-Impaired Units: Enhancements for the hearing- and sight-impaired can be installed throughout the building based on need.

Finally, by eliminating the age restriction and adding units to the Block R Site, the project will provide needed housing for workers in the City's growing technology and life sciences industries. Such housing is crucial to retaining existing companies and attracting new companies.

In summary, the Applicant's proposal to develop Magnolia as a multi-generational community will optimize the Spectrum's housing options to appeal to a broader range of seniors and younger tenants who want the benefits of living in a project with modern, well-designed amenities in a walkable mixed-use, mixed age community. The project as proposed in the Application is more responsive to market conditions than age-restricted housing and will better contribute to the continued success of the Spectrum and the surrounding area.

III. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS – SECTION 24-160D.9

The Application includes the following as required pursuant to Section 24-160D.9 of the Zoning Ordinance: (1) an application form and fee; (2) a sketch plan reflecting the boundaries of the entire tract and the applicable information required by Section 24-169(a); (3) a proposed phasing or staging plan of development, public facilities and information regarding such plan's consistency with provision of master planned or otherwise necessary public facilities; and (4) a statement demonstrating general compliance with any master plan recommendations for the

property, including any special conditions or requirements related to the property set forth in the master plan.

IV. REQUIRED FINDINGS

Pursuant to Section 24-160D.10(a) of the Zoning Ordinance, a sketch plan may only be approved by the City Council upon findings that:

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

(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

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

1. **The Application Meets and Accomplishes the Purposes, Objectives, Requirements and Standards of the MXD Zone; and**

A. *It is the objective of this zone to establish procedures and standards for the implementation of master plan use recommendations for comprehensively planned multi-use projects. It is also intended that this zone provide a more flexible approach to the comprehensive design and development of multi-use projects than the procedures and regulations applicable under the various conventional zoning categories. In so doing, it is intended that this zoning category be utilized to implement existing public plans and pertinent city policies in a manner and to a degree more closely compatible with said city plans and policies than may be possible under other zoning categories. The specific purposes of this zone are: To establish standards and procedures through which the land use objectives and guidelines of approved and adopted master plans can serve as the basis for evaluating an individual development proposal, as well as ensuring that development proposed will implement the adopted master plan and other relevant planning and development policies and guidelines for the area considered for MXD zoning.*

The Application responds to changes in the senior housing market, including housing for seniors who wish to live in a multi-generational setting, since the Spectrum was initially approved. In addition to providing housing resources for a range of age groups and seniors with more limited financial resources, the building is proposed with approximately 86 more units than previously approved for the Block R Site.

B. To encourage orderly, staged development of large-scale comprehensively planned, multi-use developments by providing procedures for various zoning and plan approvals, including development phasing.

The Application does not propose a phasing plan. It is anticipated that, following approval of this Application, the residential project will immediately proceed to Final Site Plan approval, followed by construction.

C. To encourage design flexibility and coordination of architectural style building and signage.

Architectural details will be determined at the time of Final Site Plan and will be in compliance with the approved Design Guidelines for the Spectrum. It is intended that the Magnolia will utilize the same high-quality design and materials used in the existing multi-family projects within the development.

D. To ensure the integration and internal and external compatibility of applicable residential and nonresidential uses by providing a suitable residential environment that is enhanced and complemented by uses such as commercial, recreational, open space, employment and institutional uses and amenities within a multi-use development. A multi-use development is defined as a single parcel or a group of contiguous parcels of land zoned MXD, which, among the various parcels comprising that contiguous area, include residential, commercial, recreational, open space, employment and institutional uses and amenities.

By removing the age restriction from Block R, the Application broadens the mix of residential uses in a manner that is responsive to long-term market conditions. The Magnolia will appeal to both seniors and workers in the City's growing tech and R&D employment base. This

change enhances the marketability of the multi-family building, thereby contributing to the continued viability and vitality of the Spectrum. The proposed building will be linked to the other uses at the Spectrum, including the complementary commercial uses at the Spectrum, by pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular connections, shared amenities and open spaces.

E. To assure compatibility of the proposed land uses with internal and surrounding uses by incorporating higher standards of land planning and site design than could be accomplished under conventional zoning categories and to provide a superior quality of development exceeding that which could be achieved under conventional zoning regulations and procedures.

The residential project will achieve the same superior quality of development as existing development at the Spectrum by using enhanced site design, a mix of uses, diverse and high-quality architectural elements, structured parking, and well-landscaped amenity spaces that are internally and externally linked by pedestrian and roadway connections. The development proposed in the Application will maintain pedestrian connectivity to existing and proposed development in the Project and will be constructed in accordance with applicable Design Guidelines to ensure compatibility within the Project.

F. To encourage the efficient use of land by: locating employment retail uses convenient to residential areas; reducing reliance upon automobile use and encourage pedestrian and other non-vehicular circulation systems; retaining and providing useable open space and active recreation areas close to employment and residential populations; and providing for the development of comprehensive non-vehicular circulation networks, separated from vehicular roadways, which constitute a system of linkages among residential areas, open spaces, recreational areas, commercial and employment areas, and public facilities.

The Spectrum has been planned and designed to efficiently integrate and link open spaces and visitor and resident amenities with residential, retail, restaurant, and employment uses within the Project and provide connections to the surrounding employment and residential uses. The Project will build upon the Spectrum's established design and layout.

G. To provide superior natural environment by the preservation of trees, natural topographic and geologic features, wetlands, watercourses and open spaces.

The development proposed in the Application will be constructed around existing stormwater management and forest conservation approvals for the entire Spectrum project. The applicant will, if and as necessary, provide additional stormwater management features to specifically address the minimal impervious area increase from the previously approved plans.

H. To allow development only in a phased or staged fashion to ensure the adequacy of the provision of public facilities and the concurrent implementation of community amenities.

Electric, gas, phone lines, public water and sewer continue to be available at the site. Fire and Police protection are adequate. At this time, schools are adequate at all levels to accommodate the proposed additional multi-family units. An updated traffic letter has been submitted with this application showing that the proposed change, combined with a reduction of the approved commercial area within the Spectrum, will result in fewer trips to the Spectrum than originally approved.

In summary, the Application meets the purposes and objectives of the MXD Zone.

- Mixed-Use Requirements of the MXD Zone (Section 24-160D.3)

- a. Section 24-160D.3(a)(4) provides the following within the MXD zone:

- Residential uses may be mixed with proposed commercial/industrial/employment uses, rather than located in a separate residential area on the site, upon a finding by the city council that combining residential and nonresidential uses at one location, within a site, will not adversely affect the overall development proposed.*

The Application proposes multifamily residential uses adjacent to commercial uses in the Spectrum. The layout and design of the Spectrum promotes compatibility among the uses and creates a compact, walkable, live/work/play community.

b. Section 24-160D.3(a)(4) provides the following within the MXD zone:

In order to establish an appropriately mixed character within the entire MXD zoned area, the following percentages of floor area proposed on site as shown on a sketch plan shall not exceed:

<i>Retail commercial –</i>	<i>60%</i>
<i>Employment/office –</i>	<i>65%</i>
<i>Other commercial/institutional –</i>	<i>15%</i>

Individual percentages may be exceeded by approval of the city council upon application by an applicant and for good cause shown; provided, however, the cumulative total of all categories shall not exceed one hundred (100) percent.

The change in use of the Block R Site to remove the age restriction and increase the number of units as currently approved will not change the approved mix of non-residential uses.

- Density in Conformance with the Master Plan (Section 24-160D.4)

The 2003 and 2009 Master Plans do not include recommendations or limits for residential or commercial/employment/industrial development on any of the Properties.

- Compatibility Standards (Section 24-160D.5)

All uses shall conform to the purposes of the Mixed-Use Development Zone and shall be compatible with all uses, existing or proposed, in the vicinity of the area covered by the proposed planned development. In order to assist in accomplishing such compatibility, the following requirements shall apply:

All right-of-way requirements, setbacks, height limits, open space or buffer areas recommended in an area master plan or special conditions or requirements stated therein to protect properties adjacent to the MXD zoned areas shall be incorporated into all plans subject to approval under the zone.

The development proposed by the Application will not exceed nine (9) stories, which is within the height limits of the zone. Further, buffers are maintained along the stream valley buffer and forest conservation areas.

Further, the buildings are not proposed within 100 feet of an adjoining property not zoned MXD or in a residential category that is developed for one-family detached homes. No building is proposed to be constructed to a height greater than its distance from any adjoining property not zoned MXD.

- Minimum Green Area (Section 24-160D.6)

(a) The amount of green area, including designated parks, public and private open space, active and passive recreational areas, required for the residential portion of a mixed use development shall be not less than forty (40) percent of the total area shown for residential use. ... for the commercial/employment/industrial portion of a mixed use development shall be not less than twenty-five (25) percent of the total area devoted to commercial/employment/ industrial uses, except that comparable amenities and/or facilities may be provided in lieu of green area if the city council determines that such amenities or facilities are sufficient to accomplish the purposes of the zone, and would be more beneficial to the proposed development than strict adherence to the specific green area requirement.

With the development proposed by the Application, the Spectrum project will continue to meet the green area requirements of the MXD Zone by providing at least 40% of the residential area and 25% of commercial area as green area. Green area has been recalculated for this project and included in the submission.

- Underground Utilities (Section 24-160D.7(b))

All utility lines in the Mixed-Use Development Zone shall be placed underground. The developer or subdivider shall ensure final and proper completion and installation of utility lines. Poles and lamps for street lighting shall be provided by the developer in accordance with the approved site plan.

The on-site utilities serving the Project will be placed underground, except for the pre-existing overhead utility lines along Frederick Avenue.

2. **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**

There are no specific map designations for the Spectrum in either the 2003 or 2009 Master Plans for the area which includes the Spectrum, nor has it been included in a Special Study Area. However, the Application is in accord with the Land Use Element of the 2009 Master Plan, which confirms MXD zoning for the Spectrum. The Application implements a number of the Guiding Strategies of the City’s Master Plan (2009 Process and Overview), including limiting development to areas already served by adequate public facilities and diversifying the City’s housing stock, and accomplishes the City’s objectives of promoting economic development and increasing the City’s tax base. Moreover, removal of the age-restriction for the Block R Site creates a needed housing resource for workers coming to the City for the growing opportunities in the technology and R&D sectors.

The recently adopted Gaithersburg Housing Element sets forth several competing goals to meet the needs of the senior population – one which sets the call to “*Preserve existing and approved age- and ability- restricted housing projects*” against the significant goal calling to work to address the needs of “*Householders age 65 and over which make 28% less than those aged 45 to 64 and have the second lowest household income after householders under 25 years of age*”.¹³ The existing models for ‘senior only’ apartments have the unintended consequence of working to exclude this large segment of the population of the City through very high monthly rental costs – increasingly coupled with high up-front payments.

¹³ See, Gaithersburg Housing Element, 2003, Page 82.

The “multi-generational approach of the proposed Magnolia apartments – as demonstrated by the existing Paramount and Majestic projects – will continue to expand access to modern, assessable developments to this large, vulnerable population to help meet there needs.

Due to its location and amenities, Spectrum Apartments attracts newcomers taking jobs in the surrounding tech, life science, medical industries, and empty nesters looking to downsize. Typically, prospects are seeking studios and one-bedroom or one-bedroom + den units, although Spectrum also offers two bedroom, large two bedroom + den (Majestic) and three-bedroom units (Paramount). The Applicant has found both the two-bedroom + den and three-bedroom units relatively difficult to lease due to the quality of schools in the cluster and the ready availability of rental townhouses in the immediate area.

While masterplans are not requirements, the Magnolia embraces the goals of the Housing Element, including addressing mobility barriers through the project by including sidewalks and ADA compliant ramps and street crossings, as well as working to make units assessable under Fair Housing.

3. **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 changes to the project proposed in the Application are compatible and harmonious with existing and planned uses in the Spectrum and adjacent MXD-zoned properties. The Application diversifies housing options at the Spectrum, which will promote the sustained development of this community. The residential density will also contribute to the vitality and viability of commercial uses at the Spectrum as well as the WMTC project located across I-270 and will provide options to live near job opportunities in and around the Spectrum.

V. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, the Application to amend the Sketch Plan: (1) meets or accomplishes the purposes, objectives, and minimum standards and requirements of the MXD Zone; (2) is in accord with the Master Plan recommendations for the Spectrum; and (3) is internally and externally compatible and harmonious with existing and planned land uses in the MXD zone areas and adjacent areas, and, therefore, the Applicant respectfully requests its approval.