

**From:** [Cirner, Casey L.](#)  
**To:** [Jud Ashman](#); [Yamil Hernández](#); [Neil Harris](#); [Lisa Henderson](#); [Jim McNulty](#); [Robert Wu](#); [Planning External Mailing](#)  
**Cc:** [Laura Mehfoud](#); [Rob Robinson](#); [Gregory Mann](#); [Brian R. Lang](#); [Ian P. Duke](#); [Siti Abdul-Rahman \(sabdulrahman@wdgarch.com\)](#); [Nancy Randall](#)  
**Subject:** Z-9928-2024 Gateway Lakeforest (481 N. Frederick Avenue, 101 Lakeforest Boulevard & 702 Russell Avenue)  
**Date:** Friday, May 23, 2025 3:28:29 PM  
**Attachments:** image001.png  
image002.png  
image008.png  
image009.png

This email is from an **external source**. Please use caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good afternoon Mayor Ashman, Members of the Gaithersburg City Council and Gaithersburg City Planning Commission:

Please find linked below, a letter from the Applicant responding to comments received at the Joint Public Hearing held on April 21, 2025 on the above-referenced application.

<https://miles.sharefile.com/public/share/web-sf151ed29b5f04b9292189cbb6283716c>

We appreciate your consideration of this letter and request that it be included in the record of the above-captioned matter.

The Applicant and its team will be available at the upcoming Planning Commission and Mayor and Council meetings to answer any questions.

Have a nice holiday weekend.

Regards,  
Casey Cirner

**Casey L. Cirner** (She/Her/Hers)

*Principal*

11 N. Washington Street | Suite 700 | Rockville, MD 20850-4229  
D: +1 301.517.4817 | C: +1 301.642.3450 | F: +1 301.841.7986



vCard | [ccirner@milesstockbridge.com](mailto:ccirner@milesstockbridge.com)



---

Confidentiality Notice:

This e-mail, including any attachment(s), is intended for receipt and use by the intended addressee(s), and may contain confidential and privileged information. If you are not an intended recipient of this e-mail, you are hereby notified that any unauthorized use or distribution of this e-mail is strictly prohibited, and requested to delete this communication and its attachment(s) without making any copies thereof and to contact the sender of this e-mail immediately. Nothing contained in the body and/or header of this e-mail is intended as a signature or intended to bind the addressor or any person represented by the addressor to the terms of any agreement that may be the subject of this e-mail or its attachment(s), except where such intent is expressly indicated.

Any federal tax advice provided in this communication is not intended or written by the author to be used, and cannot be used by the recipient, for the purpose of avoiding penalties which may be imposed on the recipient by the IRS. Please contact the author if you would like to receive written advice in a format which complies with IRS rules and may be relied upon to avoid penalties.

---

[Secure Upload/Download files click here.](#)



Casey L. Cirner  
(301) 517-4817  
[ccirner@milesstockbridge.com](mailto:ccirner@milesstockbridge.com)

May 23, 2025

Mr. Jud Ashman, Mayor,  
and Members of the Gaithersburg City Council, and  
Members of the Gaithersburg City Planning Commission  
City of Gaithersburg  
31 South Summit Avenue  
Gaithersburg, MD 20877-2030

Re: Z-9928-2024 Gateway Lakeforest  
481 N. Frederick Avenue, 101 Lakeforest Boulevard & 702 Russell Avenue  
(collectively the “Property”)  
April 21, 2025 Joint Public Hearing (“JPH”) Follow Up

Dear Mayor Ashman, Council Members and Planning Commission Members:

On behalf of the applicant, 417 Development, LLC (the “Applicant”), thank you for the opportunity to present at the JPH the proposed zoning map amendment and schematic development plan (Z-9928-2024) to rezone the Property from the C-2 Zone to the Corridor Development (CD) Zone for the proposed urban mixed use redevelopment project. The Applicant is writing to respond before the Planning Commission’s record closes on May 23, 2025, to a few questions and comments from the JPH regarding pedestrian connectivity, the proposed unit mix, 8-story building height, construction type, courtyard sunlight, existing tenant phasing, the ground-floor retail location and associated vehicular circulation, and traffic study.

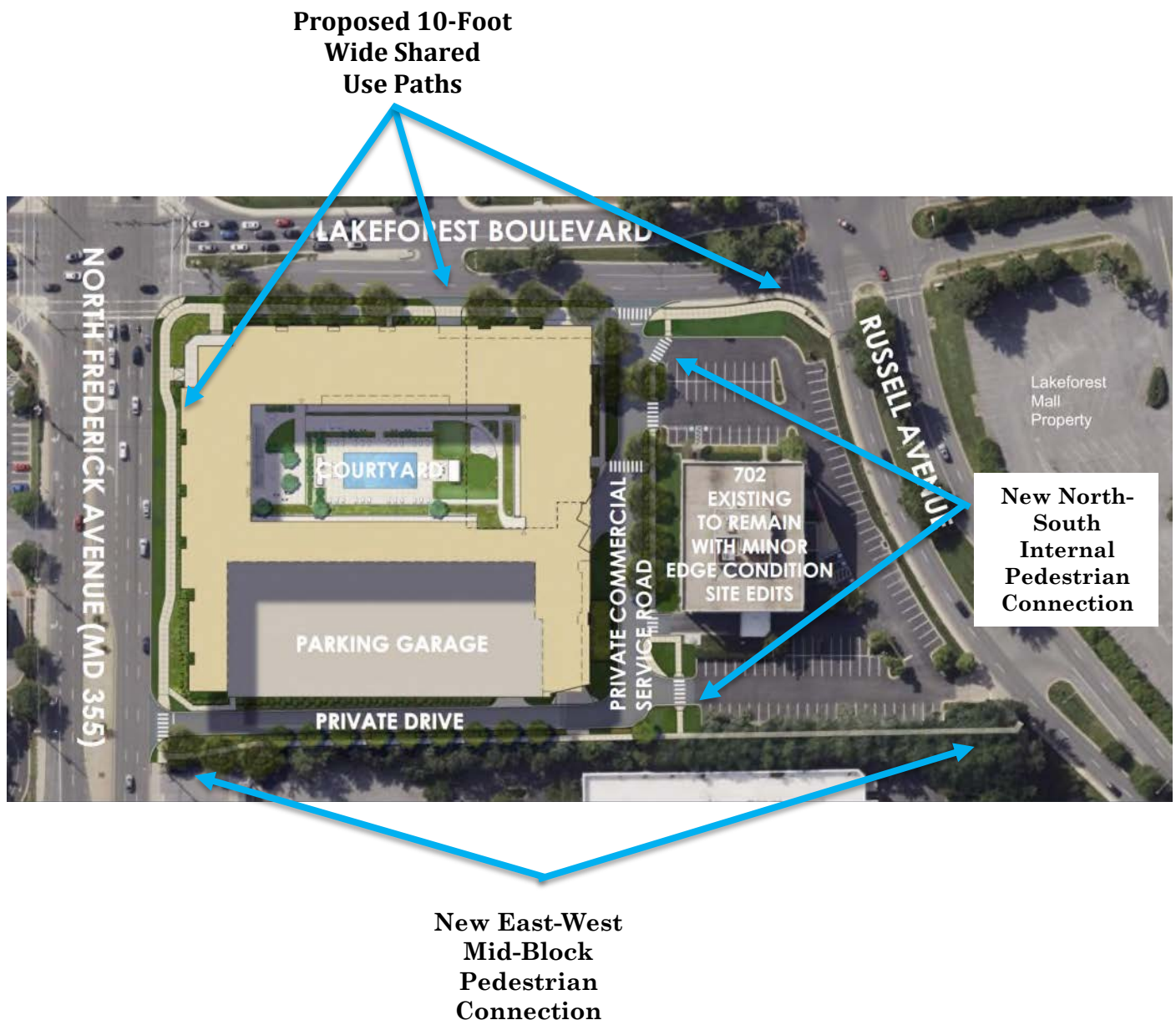
As presented at the JPH, the Property consists of the 3 record parcels prominently located at the intersection of N. Frederick Avenue and Lakeforest Boulevard and is bounded by those rights-of-way and Russell Avenue to the east. The project proposes the immediate redevelopment of the existing 40-year-old office buildings at 481 N. Frederick Avenue and 101 Lakeforest Boulevard with a multifamily building containing up to 410 units, amenity space and structured parking over up to 20,100 square feet of ground floor commercial (“Project”). The existing office building at 702 Russell Avenue will be retained for employment use and repositioned by the application for future redevelopment.

### ***Pedestrian Connectivity with Lakeforest Mall***

It was suggested at the JPH that the Applicant focus on pedestrian connectivity between the Property and Lakeforest Mall. In response thereto, the Applicant highlights below the pedestrian connections with Lakeforest Mall incorporated into the Project through frontage improvements, site design and new mid-block pedestrian connections.

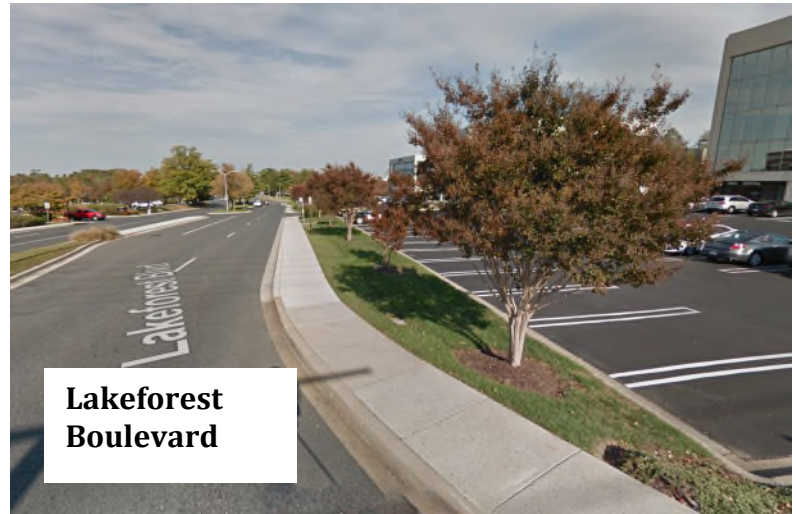
Across Russell Avenue from the Property is Lakeforest Mall, which is proposed for redevelopment with 1.4 million square feet of commercial uses, 1,600 residential units, including GAP housing and green/open space areas under the MXD zone. See Z-9444-2022, SK-9444-2022 and SDP-9736-2024. Facing the Project at Lakeforest Mall (Blocks G and H), across Russell Avenue, are 3 proposed multifamily buildings and shared use paths.

The Project will establish pedestrian connections with Lakeforest Mall through the proposed 10-foot-wide shared use paths that will physically connect the Project to Lakeforest Mall. As depicted below, the shared-use paths are proposed along N. Frederick Avenue and Lakeforest Boulevard, will be separated from the curb by grass panels and activated with landscaping and seating:



The 10-foot-wide shared use paths will replace the existing 5-foot-wide sidewalks at back of curb along N. Frederick Avenue and Lakeforest Boulevard, shown here:

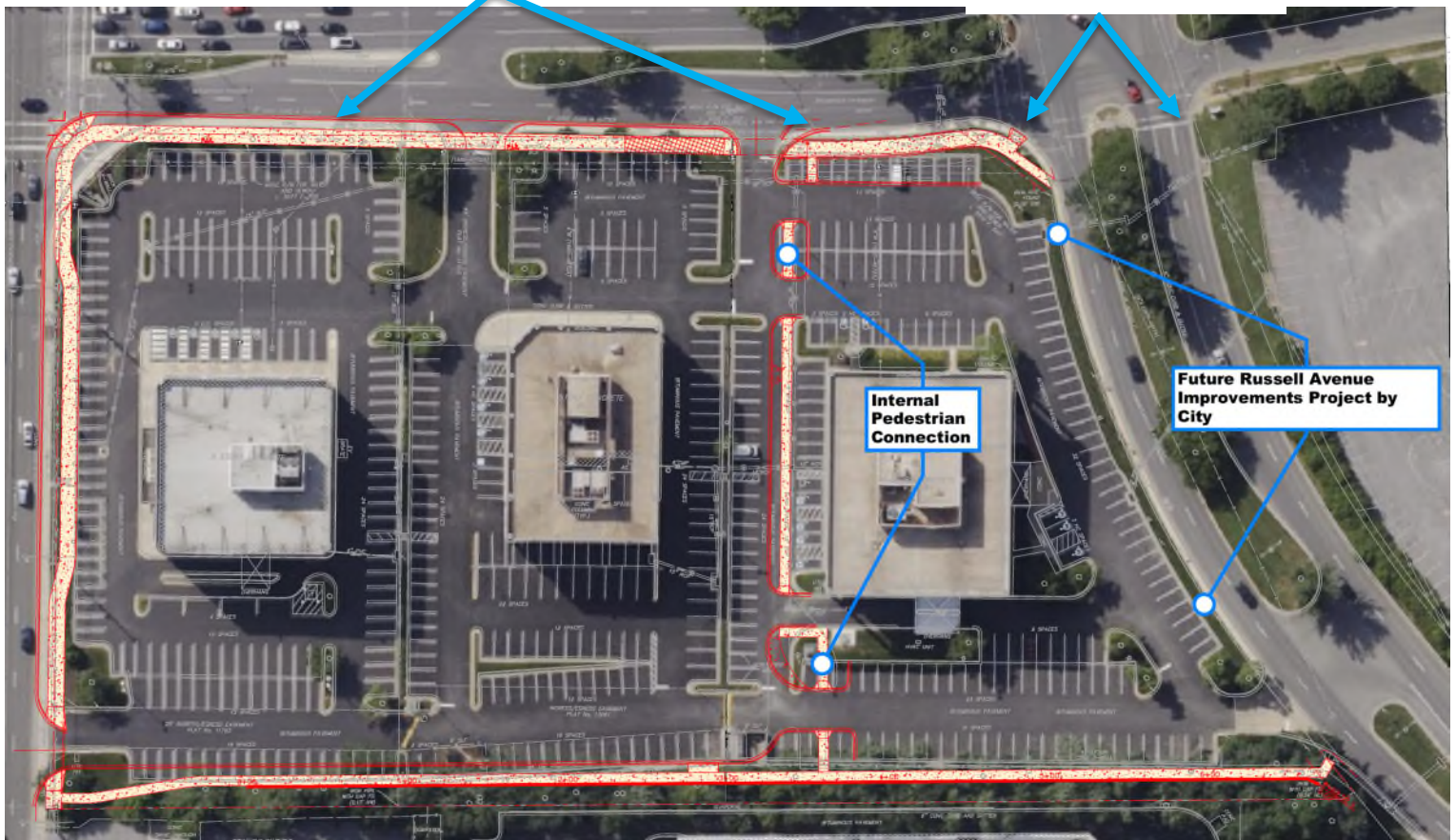
### Existing Pedestrian Network



The 10-foot wide shared-use paths will extend to the signalized intersection of Lakeforest Boulevard and Russell Avenue, where pedestrians can cross into the mall property, and will tie into the City's Russell Avenue improvement project, all as depicted below:

**Lakeforest Boulevard  
Proposed 10-Foot Wide  
Shared Use Paths**

**Lakeforest/Russell  
Crosswalk**



The Project incorporates site design elements that will foster pedestrian connectivity between the Property and Lakeforest Mall. The Applicant has intentionally located the Project's residential building lobby at the northwest building corner at the intersection of N. Frederick Avenue/Lakeforest Boulevard. The retail entrance is located at the opposite end of the building at its northeast corner situated at the intersection of Lakeforest Boulevard and the Project's proposed private commercial service drive.

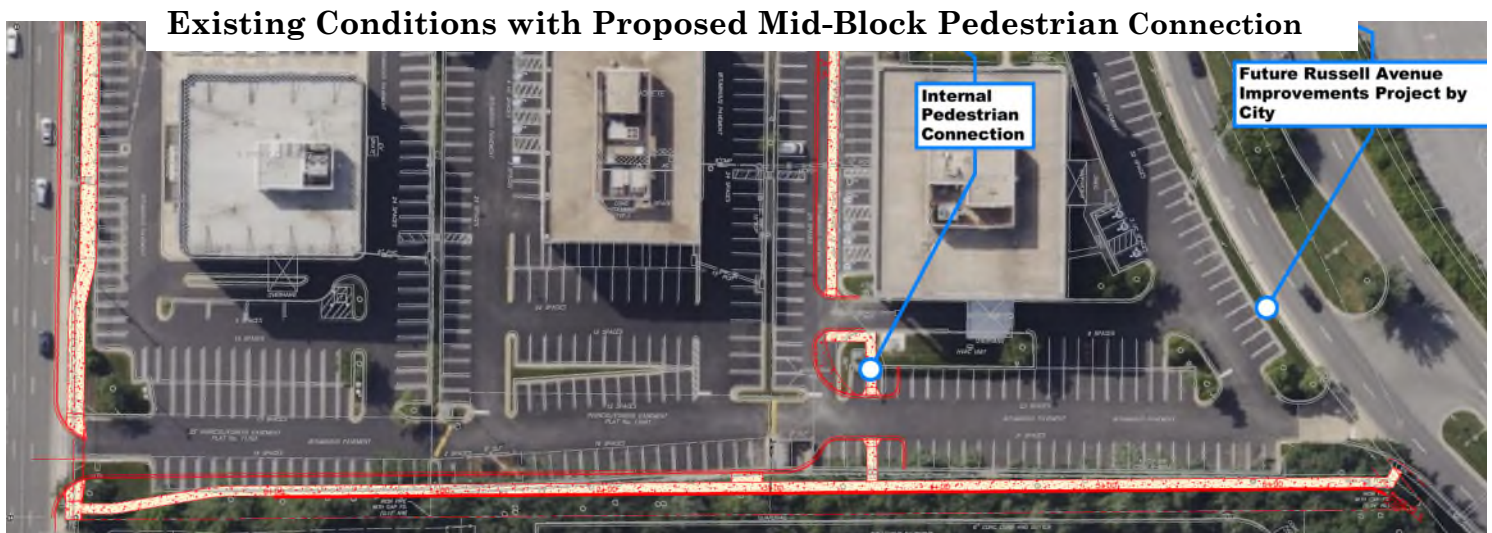
**Residential Entrance**      **Retail Entrance**



The Applicant proposes café tables, seating and lush landscaping at the Project's retail entrance for gathering and social interactions. This synergy will energize the Lakeforest Boulevard streetscape, to draw pedestrian traffic towards Lakeforest Mall to facilitate pedestrian movements and connections with the Mall and the future transit station.



The Applicant also proposes a new mid-block east-west pedestrian connection from N. Frederick Avenue to Russell Avenue at the rear of the mixed-use building as depicted on the attached **Exhibit A** incorporated herein. As depicted below, this proposed pedestrian connection will replace existing surface parking to connect pedestrians within and along the N. Frederick Avenue corridor to Russell Avenue and ultimately, Lakeforest Mall and the transit center.



The Project makes significant improvements to the pedestrian network at the Property, implements design elements that move pedestrian traffic towards Lakeforest Mall and extends its improvements beyond the Project boundaries to connect the 10-foot-wide shared use paths to the Lakeforest Boulevard/Russell Avenue signalized intersection, all to enhance pedestrian connectivity between the Property and Lakeforest Mall.

### ***Unit Mix***

The Applicant proposes up to 410 residential units, with the schematic development plan currently including a preliminary mix of 62 studios, 245 one-bedroom, and 103 two-bedroom units. While not currently included on the schematic development plan, the Applicant intends to provide an appropriate number of three-bedroom units to support a diverse range of housing needs. The final unit mix will be shaped by a future market study and further analysis of Project feasibility and design.

Given the early stage of the entitlement process and the number of outstanding variables, including construction costs, financing, and timeline uncertainty, it is premature to fix the unit mix at this time. The Planning Commission will ultimately approve the final mix at final site plan. The market study will be timed accordingly to provide the most current data to inform that decision.

The current unit mix on the schematic development plan is intentionally dense to preserve flexibility. By front-loading the unit mix on the plan with studios and one-bedroom units, the Applicant retains the ability to shift toward larger units later in the process. Adding two- and three-bedroom units reduces the total unit count, which is allowed without a schematic development plan amendment. In contrast, increasing the number of units requires a formal amendment to the schematic development plan prior to final site plan and will delay the Project. Similarly, reducing the number of units would not trigger a new traffic analysis. This approach also aligns with the approved traffic impact study, which assumes a maximum of 410 units.

As required under City Reg-03-19, the Applicant will provide fifteen percent (15%) of the units as Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs), evenly distributed throughout the Project

### ***Building Height, Construction and Courtyard***

At the JPH, the Applicant received questions about the 8-story building height, type of construction, and access to sunlight from within the proposed courtyard. The proposed CD zone does allow building heights up to 10 stories or 120 feet or higher. However, the Applicant has determined that a building up to 8-stories is appropriate for the Project because of the cost of construction. Construction costs have not recovered since the pandemic and the market faces the uncertainty of tariffs that will only increase costs further. The type of construction proposed for the Project is a two-part construction strategy - Type IA construction for the podium and parking levels, and Type IIIA construction for the upper residential floors. Type IA construction for the lower levels, including the parking garage, retail spaces, and shared residential amenities, will use a non-combustible, fire-resistant concrete system for its superior durability, structural capacity, and fire performance. This makes it ideal for high-traffic, publicly accessible functions. The five stories above the podium will house the residential units and is Type IIIA construction—wood-frame over non-combustible construction, which is increasingly popular for multifamily housing across the region due to its faster construction timeline, material availability, and significantly reduced

construction costs compared to full concrete or steel systems that would be triggered by a taller building. Additional units also require additional structured parking, which is tremendously expensive. These cost efficiencies are critical to achieving financial feasibility while delivering housing at a price point that addresses the growing demand for attainable living options in the City.

The Project amenities include a courtyard internal to the building for the use and enjoyment of the residents. The main pedestrian entrance to the residential building at the N. Frederick Avenue/Lakeforest Boulevard intersection opens to a double-height lobby and first floor amenities with direct views of the streetscape and internal to the courtyard space. The courtyard is 1/2 an acre in size and includes outdoor recreational amenities such as a swimming pool surrounded by a deck, quiet areas to relax, tables, seating and grilling stations flanked with landscaping. First floor units have walkout patios connected to the courtyard and screened with landscaping for privacy. The remaining interior units on floors 2-8 have terraces and windows overlooking the courtyard to connect residents to the outdoors and provide air and light.

The JPH included a question about the amount of sunlight that will be received within the courtyard. As the Applicant explained, the courtyard is intentionally designed to maximize sunlight exposure through both its substantial size and orientation. The large open area allows greater sky visibility, reducing shadowing from surrounding massing, which is limited in height. This shortens the length of any shadow cast into the courtyard, causing them to move quickly throughout the day, particularly during peak daylight hours. The width-to-height ratio of the courtyard configuration allows sunlight to penetrate deeper into the open space, enhancing usability and comfort for residents. The courtyard design prioritizes quality of life by ensuring it remains a bright, inviting space for recreation, and social gathering.



## **Tenant Phasing**

The Property currently includes 3 Class B office buildings constructed in the late 1970's that are nearing the end of their useful lives, making this site a prime candidate for redevelopment. The Project includes the immediate redevelopment of the 2 office buildings at 481 Frederick Avenue and 101 Lakeforest Boulevard and will retain the office building at 702 Russell Avenue for its future redevelopment under the proposed CD zoning classification. The retention of 702 Russell Avenue is necessary to transition tenants under existing leases out of 481 Frederick Avenue and 101 Lakeforest Boulevard for their demolition. This allows the Applicant to move forward with the Project while meeting its contractual obligations and providing continuity of its tenants' business operations and provision of services within the City.

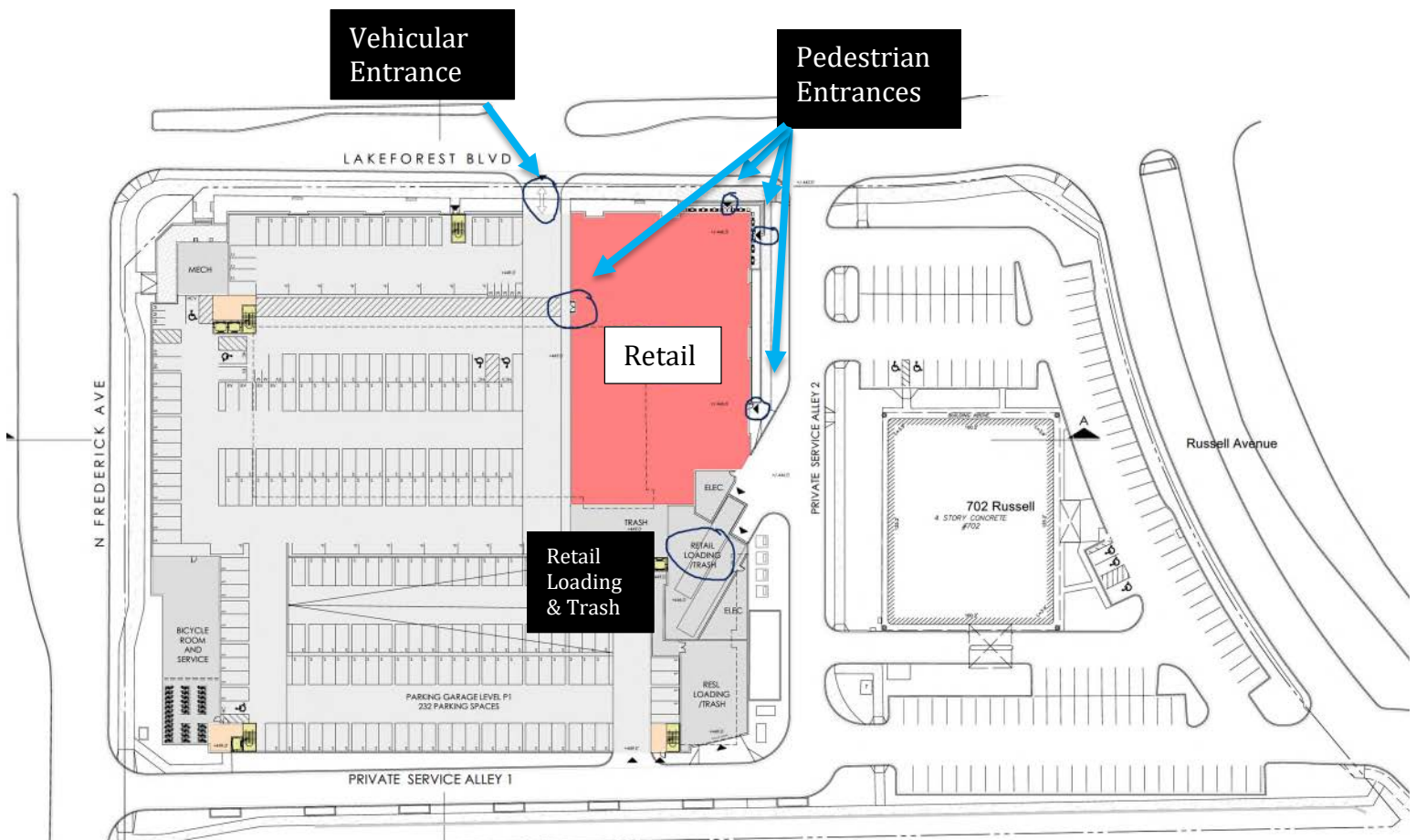
## **Retail Location**

The proposed 20,100 square feet of ground-floor retail is located at the northeast corner of the mixed-use building at the intersection of Lakeforest Boulevard and the proposed private commercial service drive. To the east of the retail is 702 Russell Avenue and to its west is the residential building entrance prominently placed at the N. Frederick Avenue/ Lakeforest Boulevard intersection, all as depicted below:



The Property slopes 27 feet from N. Frederick Avenue to Russell Avenue. The Project takes advantage of this sloping topography by placing its first floor at the street edge on N. Frederick Avenue, which provides 1-level of structured parking under the building. The sloping site topography also pushes the commercial loading and mechanical areas towards the northeast side of the building. To have the necessary proximity with its loading area, the retail space was placed at the northeast building corner.

Vehicular access to the retail space is from a parking garage entrance on Lakeforest Boulevard in between the residential and retail building pedestrian entrances. A pedestrian entrance to the retail space is provided within the structured parking for convenience and protection from the weather, all as depicted below:



The retail façade consists of a glass-wrapped building corner with pedestrian entrances on Lakeforest Boulevard and the proposed private commercial service drive. Seating, café tables and landscaping create a lively inviting space at the pedestrian entrance to enhance the street-level experience, as set forth below:



The design and activation of the space will draw attention, making the retail space visible from Lakeforest Boulevard. The retail space will also be self-sustaining due to the synergy created between the mix of residential and retail uses within the Project. Lakeforest Boulevard also has the traffic to support the retail use because it is a proposed BRT route, a pedestrian and vehicular gateway to Lakeforest Mall and an integral part of the Corridor's road network. The retail component will be proximate to the proposed transit station location along Russell Avenue and situated along the main pedestrian route from the transit station to N. Frederick Avenue. Its location will be further emphasized by wayfinding signage on the N. Frederick Avenue building façade. The Applicant is confident that the retail component is properly sited within the Project.

### **Traffic Study**

The Traffic Impact Study for the Project was prepared in coordination with the City's Department of Public Works and has been approved by the City. It analyzes the proposed traffic generated from the Project at the intersections identified by the City, which takes into consideration those intersections that will be improved by the Lakeforest Mall developer and the City (Russell Avenue improvements project), as well as the vehicular trips from the existing office buildings at the Property that currently use the road network.

Mayor Ashman, Council Members and  
Planning Commission Members  
May 23, 2025  
Page 12



The Applicant looks forward to answering any further questions that you may have as you consider approval of this application.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Casey L. Cirner', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Casey L. Cirner

cc: Brian Lang, Senior Vice President Acquisitions & Development, Guardian Realty  
Laura Mehfoud, AICP, Planner II  
Rob Robinson, III, AICP, CEP, Long Range Planning Manager

