

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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Office of the Director

MEMORANDUM

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TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: *MSR*
Ellen McCarthy, Director
Office of Planning

DATE: October 7, 2005

SUBJECT: Preliminary Report for Zoning Commission Case No. 05-24
Eastgate Gardens
Square 5318, Lots 9-20; Square 5319, Lots 20-36; and Square 5320, Lots 29-36

PROPOSAL

The District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) and A&R/THC II, LLC (Applicant) seeks approval for a consolidated Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the development of approximately 16-acres in the southeastern quadrant of the District. The development will consist of a mix of housing types including single-family detached dwellings, row houses, and multi-family dwellings. New streets and alleys, open space and recreational space will be provided along with the new development.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends the case be setdown for public hearing. The proposal is a very important residential development in furtherance of the District's aim to provide a variety of housing types for different income levels. The preliminary information provided shows that the application is consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Regulations and elements of the Comprehensive Plan. In order to accomplish a more detailed review, the applicant should submit the following information:

- Identify all units that do not meet the side and rear yard requirements.
- Provide a First Source Agreement with the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services
- Provide a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Business Opportunity Commission
- Provide details of the urban tree park.

BACKGROUND

The area, bounded by F Street, Drake Place, 51st Street, Finch Street, and Benning Road, S.E. was formerly developed with Eastgate Gardens, a public, 230-apartment, housing complex. These

2005-10-07
District of Columbia
Office of Planning

05-24
13

apartments were demolished in 2002. In 2002, the applicant submitted an application to the Zoning Commission (ZC Case No. 02-49) for the site to be developed with 169 dwelling units composed of a mix of housing types and a 2-story, 25,000 square foot community service center fronting on Benning Road between F and Fitch Streets. The applicant has since re-evaluated the proposal based on the availability of funds and the needs of the community and has submitted a new application that does not include the envisioned community service center. A decision will be made at a later date for the development of the community service center or in the alternative a residential development.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The subject site is composed of a number of vacant lots that total approximately 16 acres. There are currently a number of streets and alleys on the property which will all be closed and new roads and alleys will be introduced as part of the new development. The site is in the southeast quadrant of the City and is bounded generally by F Street to the north, Drake Place and 51st Street to the east, Finch Street to the south, and Benning Road to the west.

The subject property is within the Marshall Heights neighborhood, which is predominantly developed with residential use and in particular single-family detached, semi-detached dwellings, and apartment buildings. There are several vacant and abandoned properties in the community. The Fletcher-Johnson Middle School, J.C. Nalle Elementary School and C.W. Harris Elementary School are in close proximity to the site. The area is in the R-5-A zone district.

Small retail pockets and strip centers are located along Benning Road providing a limited range of goods and services. The centers are located on small parcels (less than one acre) and are generally in blighted condition. Directly across the western portion of the site along Benning Road is a strip center in the C-2-A district.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A&R/THC, LLC is developing the site under contract to DCHA with a combination of public and private funds. The applicant proposes to construct 189 dwelling units in a variety of housing types. The applicant states that the development will include assisted rental units, affordable and market rate rental units, and assisted and market rate homeownership units. The homeownership units will be indistinguishable from rentals, and subsidized units will be indistinguishable from market-rate and are sited to provide a mixture of household types.

ZONING

The subject property is zoned R-5-A. The applicant has provided a table on page C-8.10 of the submitted plans showing how each new lot will meet the zoning requirements.

FLEXIBILITY

The applicant is requesting flexibility for the side and rear yard requirements. OP recommends that the applicant identify all the individual lots which will require flexibility for these requirements.

PURPOSE OF A PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The purpose and standards for Planned Unit Developments are outlined in 11 DCMR, Chapter 24. A PUD is “designed to encourage high quality developments that provide public benefits.”

Development of the site utilizing the PUD process will facilitate the redevelopment of a large vacant site in the Marshall Heights neighborhood. The request will allow a diversified development that will provide housing for a variety of income levels, a variety of housing types, as well as family sizes. The PUD process will allow the applicant to propose a residential development whose design, architecture and site planning are complementary to the surrounding community. Through the flexibility of the PUD process, the design of the project will be able to achieve a development that provides open space, parking on site to serve the new residents, tree preservation, pedestrian access, stormwater runoff, and slope stability. Section 2403 further outlines the standards under which the application is evaluated.

2403.3 The impact of the project on the surrounding area and the operation of city services and facilities shall not be found to be unacceptable, but shall instead be found to be either favorable, capable of being mitigated, or acceptable given the quality of public benefits in the project.

The Marshall Height neighborhood is beginning to experience some revitalization with a number of new housing projects in the area. The area has an abundance of rental apartments and the applicant is striving to encourage homeownership at all levels. The site has been vacant for a number of years and the development of the site will contribute to the general improvement of the area. The adequacy of city services to the proposed development will be further analyzed and presented prior to the public hearing.

STANDARDS FOR PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The application meets the minimum 15,000 square foot area requirements of Section 2401.1 (c) to request a PUD. Pursuant to Section 2402.3, the applicant has elected to file a consolidated PUD. The PUD standards state that the “impact of the project on the surrounding area and upon the operations of city services and facilities shall not be unacceptable, but shall instead be found to be either favorable, capable of being mitigated, or acceptable given the quality of public benefits in the project.” Based on the information provided, the proposed replacement of an old public housing project with a new residential development, OP believes that the project will be favorable. The proposed development will be less intense than the development it is replacing and therefore its impact on city services and facilities will be less. The applicant has elected to pursue the planned unit development approach, which provides beneficial site planning and design flexibility that this project requires to meet the special needs of the future residents as well as the surrounding community. The PUD will allow the Zoning Commission, the Office of Planning, and the community to review the plans for the development.

PUBLIC BENEFITS AND AMENITIES

Section 2403.5 through 2403.13 discusses the definition and evaluation of public benefits and amenities. Benefits provided by this project will be an attractive and functional residential community that will benefit the area. In addition, it is a residential development that promotes homeownership and provides a variety of housing types to encourage long-term residency and increase neighborhood stability. The area needs housing that is affordable to a variety of income levels.

OP believes that the benefits of the proposed housing will compensate for the deviations from the side and rear yard requirements for some of the units. Section 2403.9 outlines *“Public benefits and project amenities of the proposed PUD may be exhibited and documented in any of the following or additional categories:*

- (a) Urban design, architecture, landscaping, or creation or preservation of open spaces;*
- (b) Site planning, and efficient and economical land utilization;*
- (c) Effective and safe vehicular and pedestrian access, transportation management measures, connections to public transit service, and other measures to mitigate adverse traffic impacts;*
- (f) Housing and affordable housing;*
- (h) Environmental benefits, such as stormwater runoff controls and preservation of open space or trees;*
- (i) Uses of special value to the neighborhood or the District of Columbia as a whole;*

OP is generally supportive of the architecture and design of the proposed development. Community organizations have been intimately involved and supportive of the architectural style, colors, and building features on the units.

The design and layout of the development is sensitive to the natural topography of the property and preserves open space in areas where the slopes are steepest. Due to the site's topography, stormwater management will be important to prevent runoff onto adjacent properties. OP recommends the applicant include environmentally sensitive stormwater management practices.

The street layout on the property has been designed to connect with the streets of the existing community. The houses will front outward in order to integrate the new development into the existing community. Pedestrian walkways are provided throughout the development to provide easy access throughout the new community and link with Benning Road, a major transportation corridor with many Metrobus routes.

The main amenity of the proposed application is the provision of the mix of housing with the prominence given to the affordable housing. The 189 units will be a combination of low, moderate and market rate housing as follows:

- 53 townhouses units for rental at 60% AMI
- 36 townhouses for sale at below 60% of AMI
- 25 townhouses for sale at 60-80% of AMI
- 44 townhouses for sale at above 80% of AMI
- 20 detached houses for sale at above 80% of AMI
- 8 grand-homes units for rent at below 60% AMI

OP recommends that the applicant participate in a First Source Agreement with the District of Columbia Department of Employment Services and should obtain a Memorandum of Understanding with the Local Business Opportunity Commission.

The proposed development will be of special value to the community because it serves to instigate further economic development in the area, provide homeownership opportunities, and serve persons of varying incomes.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND PUBLIC POLICIES

The Generalized Land Use Map recommends the subject site for moderate density residential. Additionally, the Generalized Land Use Policies Map identifies the area as a “development opportunity area.” The R-5-A zoning and the proposed project is not inconsistent with these recommendations.

Section 2403.4 of the Zoning Regulations requires that the application is “not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and with other adopted public policies and active programs related to the subject site.” The PUD is also consistent with other sections of the Comprehensive Plan including the following Major Themes:

- Section 102 - Stabilizing and Improving District Neighborhoods,
- Section 105 – Preserving and Promoting Cultural and Natural Amenities;
- Section 106 - Respecting and Improving the Physical Character of the District;
- Section 111 - Providing Diversity and Overall Social Responsibilities.

Specifically, the application is consistent with Chapter 11, Land Use, of the Comprehensive Plan. The area is designated as a “development opportunity area” which is defined in Section 1118.3 as “. . . areas that offer opportunities to accommodate new growth and development. Development opportunity areas may be designated for housing, commercial development, employment centers, or for a mixture of uses.”

The proposed development will replace a rental housing community that became unfit for habitation and therefore had to be demolished. The redevelopment of the property with a mixture of housing type will help in stabilizing the overall community and will be a significant contribution to the District’s housing stock.

The application is consistent with Chapter 3, Housing Element, of the Comprehensive Plan. The general objectives for Housing (Section 302.1) is “*to stimulate production of new and rehabilitated housing to meet all levels of need and demand and to provide incentives for the types of housing needed at desired locations.*” Further, the Plan includes objectives for Low- and Moderate-Income Housing (Section 303.1)

- “(a) *To provide for the housing needs of low- and moderate-income residents;*
- “(b) *To improve the District’s low-rent housing program;*
- “(c) *To create and maintain moderate-cost housing environments that enhance the quality of life for their residents;*

- (d) *To provide opportunities for residents of District-owned and District-assisted housing to achieve self-sufficiency and upward mobility;*
- (f) *To reduce the overall cost of housing among low- and moderate-income households.”*

Chapter 7, Urban Design Element, outlines objectives and policies in support the Urban Design goal to “... *promote the protection, enhancement, and enjoyment of the natural environments and to promote a built environment that serves as a complement to the natural environment, provides visual orientation, enhances the District's aesthetic qualities, emphasizes neighborhood identities, and is functionally efficient.*” (Section 701)

708 *Buildings*

- 708.2 (a) *Design residential, commercial, and all other buildings to complement or enhance the physical character of the District; and*
- (b) *Design buildings to include the use of appropriate arrangements of building materials, height, scale, massing, and buffering to complement the immediate region.*

709 *Streetscape*

- 709.2 (a) *Develop a unifying system of well-designed streets, sidewalks, parks, and pedestrian ways;*
- (j) *Encourage the planting and maintenance of street trees as the single most important streetscape element along commercial and residential streets to provide shade, design continuity, spatial relief, and a juxtaposition of the natural and built environments.*

710 *Areas Of Strong Architectural Character*

- 710.2 (d) *Encourage new development within areas of strong architectural character to contribute to the physical identity and character of those areas;*
- (e) *Encourage building massing and scale of new development to be sensitive to established patterns;*

712.1 *The areas in need of new and improved character objective are to encourage new development or renovation and rehabilitation of older structures in areas with vacant or underused land or buildings to secure a strong, positive physical identity.*

712.2 *The policies established in support of the areas in need of new and improved character objective are as follows:*

- (a) *Encourage well-designed developments in areas that are vacant, underused, or deteriorated. These developments should have strong physical identities;*
- (b) *Encourage in-fill development of attractive design quality in deteriorated areas to stabilize the physical fabric and to encourage renovation and redevelopment;*

The application is consistent with the Ward 7 Plan. Section 1800.3 provides a vision for the ward of being a stable area with a mix of neighborhoods and a variety of housing options. These options would include privately owned single and multifamily housing designed for a wide-range of life styles, such as first time homebuyer. The applicant has worked with the Marshall Heights community and other organizations in the creation of planning principles for the development of the subject site. The policies include:

- Raising the homeownership rate;
- Preserving affordable housing, including rental housing; and
- Serving a broad range of income levels.

AGENCY REFERRALS

This application will be referred to the following District government agencies for review and comment:

1. District Department of Transportation;
2. Metropolitan Police Department;
3. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department;
4. Environmental Health Administration
5. D.C. Board of Education;
6. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs; and
7. Department of Housing and Community Development.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND INVOLVEMENT

The applicant has conducted a series of charettes and larger community meetings in the Marshall Heights community. The applicant continued community outreach and involvement by presenting its plans to ANC-7E and has its support.

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning believes that this is an important residential development for the District to undertake. The benefits of the proposed development outweigh the flexibility requested to reduce the side and rear yard requirements. The application is consistent with the requirements of the Zoning Regulations and elements of the Comprehensive Plan and is therefore recommended for setdown and public hearing. OP will continue to work with the applicant towards a more detailed review prior to the public hearing. In order to accomplish a more detailed review, the applicant should submit the following information:

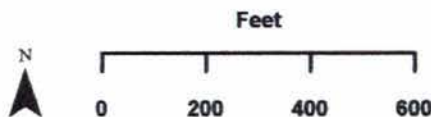
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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Comprehensive Plan



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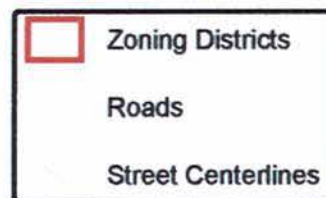


Eastgate Family Housing ZC No. 05-24 Aerial Photograph

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District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

Office of Planning ~ September 23, 2005

This map was created for planning purposes from a variety of sources. It is neither a survey nor a legal document. Information provided by other agencies should be verified with them where appropriate.





**Eastgate Family Housing
ZC No. 05-24
Comprehensive Plan**



 **Government of the
District of Columbia
Anthony A. Williams, Mayor**

Office of Planning ~ September 23, 2005
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