

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



Memorandum

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director *JS*
Development Review and Historic Preservation

DATE: February 2, 2009

SUBJECT: Supplemental Report – ZC # 08-21 (Canal Parc)
4460 MacArthur Boulevard, NW

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. *08-21*
EXHIBIT NO. *4B*

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
ZONING COMMISSION

This submission is in response to The Athena Group, LLC (applicant) January 21, 2008 submission to the Zoning Commission (Commission) which responds to the Commission's comments and requests at the December 1, 2008 public hearing.

Building Facade

The Commission expressed concerns regarding the "heaviness" and the over accessorizing of the buildings. In response, the applicant has simplified the facades through the use of flat rooflines on Buildings 1 and 2, the use of lighter color bricks with less variety, and removed many of the accessories on the building such as shutters and railings. The applicant has replaced the side stoops with front stoops, provided windows for the English basements and presented a formal entrance on the end unit of Building 7 which front MacArthur Boulevard. These elements are characteristics of many townhouses in Washington. The internal buildings have a more Tudor-style façade that breaks up the roofline with the V-bays similar to other buildings in the neighborhood. The garages which front on the internal park have been redesigned so that they are less prominent and have less visual impact on the building façade by having a mix of single, double, and two-single car entries which are recessed four feet from the property line.

Wetlands

In response to the Commission's concern about the height of the retaining walls that reached a maximum height of 14 feet, the applicant has reduced the maximum height to approximately four feet by stepping the wall down. In addition to reducing the height of the walls, the applicant has increased the setback from the wetlands. These changes have resulted in the opening up of the area and reduction of the canyon-like effect that would be created by the proposed retaining walls and the existing retaining walls on the other side of the wetland (Sheets 5 and 6 of the applicant's submission). The proposed reductions will cause less impact to the wetlands, provide more safety for the residents, provide more open space, and be an improvement of the overall project.

Volumetric Studies

The applicant has provided a volumetric study to address the Commission's concerns of compatibility of the proposed townhouse use and their density with the surrounding community. The aerial perspectives with the proposed development superimposed show that the community is developed with a variety of unit types, lot sizes, density, open space and architecture.

Height

Under the PUD regulation, the maximum height permitted is 60 feet with no limit on the number of stories. A majority of the buildings in the proposal would remain at 4 stories with a few having 3 stories. However, with changes in the rooflines the building heights would now range between 28 feet and 42 feet. The visual height, measured from the front of the building to the top of the parapet would now be between 35 feet and 49 feet. The 4 story buildings remain internal to the development. Since the property slopes down towards the rear, visibility from MacArthur Boulevard would be reduced and therefore would not seem to tower over the two and three story buildings along MacArthur Boulevard.

Roof Terraces

The applicant has provided photographic samples of roof terraces created by building setbacks at both the front and rear of buildings. The applicant proposes two affordable units in Building 1 that would not have a fourth floor or roof terraces. Since the buildings are not very high, the fourth floor of the other units would be visible and the gap would bring attention to these affordable units when viewed from MacArthur Boulevard and from Building 2.

Miscellaneous Items

1. In the November 21, 2008 OP Report, it was noted that the applicant needed to provide a table which compares the matter-of-right requirements in the existing zone versus the requirements of the proposed zone as outlined in Section 2403.11(a). The applicant provided the table at the December 1, 2008 public hearing.
2. OP recommended to the applicant that they undertake an assessment of the Canal View retaining wall prior to construction and that subsequent to the development a second assessment be undertaken to determine if there has been any damage to the wall which the applicant would be responsible for repairing. The applicant verbally agreed to such an assessment, however to date, neither the Canal View Homeowners Association nor OP have received such an assessment.
3. The applicant provided the National Green Home Building Guidelines as requested by the Commission to supplement the Program Designer's Report that the project would be designed at Bronze Level.
4. FEMS is in agreement with the street widths and revised turnaround area that would give access to their vehicles and equipment in an emergency.
5. In the November 21, 2008 OP Report it was noted that the amenity package is relatively light when balanced against the flexibility requested. However, neither the applicant, the ANC nor the parties has proposed additional amenities.
6. The applicant would not be participating in the Certified Business Enterprise (CBE) program offered by the Department of Small and Local Business Development to engage the District's small and local businesses in the proposed development. OP continues to strongly encourage participation in this program, especially for projects that are requiring PUD approval.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Through the direction of the Commission at the November 1, 2008 public hearing, the applicant has made changes to the architecture which seems to make the proposed Canal Parc development more consistent and compatible with the architecture of building in the neighborhood. OP believes that the proposal redevelopment of the site with 37 single-family attached (rowhouse) units would be compatible with the various residential unit types in the neighborhood. Along with the houses, open space and passive recreational areas have been incorporated into the site as well as the preservation of the wetland to augment the overall development. The proposal would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for redevelopment of a site formerly developed with an institutional use. The development would conform to the land use, density, and height allowed under the PUD/R-5-A regulations and therefore OP recommend approval of the proposal.