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HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING
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Voice/Relay

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TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

Planning Board Meeting of August 4, 2022

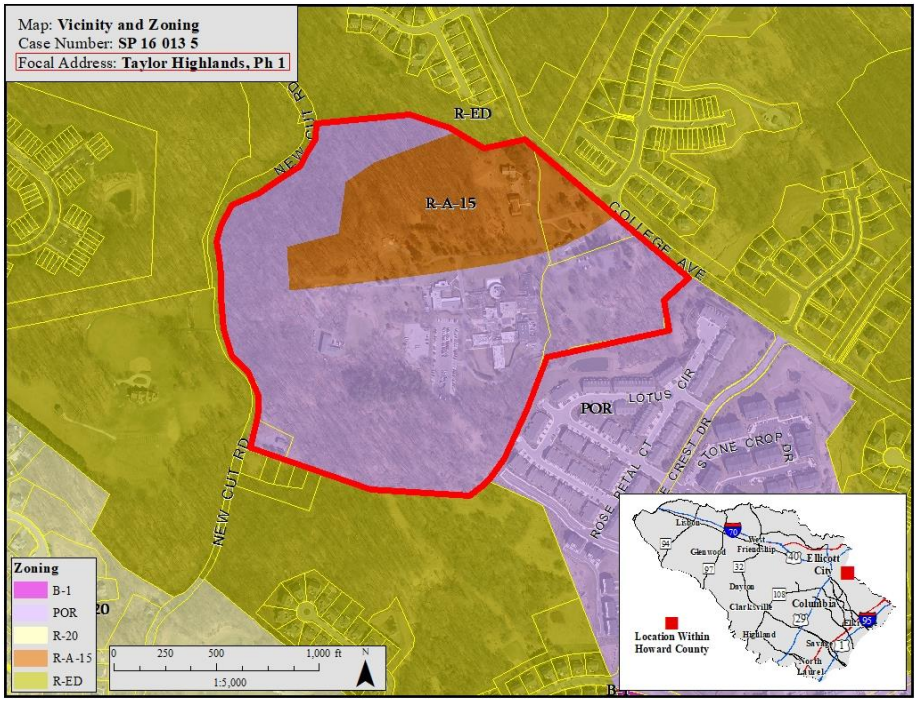
Case No./Petitioner: **SP-16-013, Taylor Service Company**

Project Name: Taylor Highlands- Phase 1

DPZ Planner: Eric Buschman, ebuschman@howardcountymd.gov

Request: Scenic road plan review. A request to review Preliminary Equivalent Sketch Plan (SP-16-013) in accordance with Section 16.125(c) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations for a subdivision that abuts or adjoins a scenic road. This request is for an application to subdivide 64.63 acres of R-A-15 and POR zoned land into single-family attached lots, open space lots and buildable bulk parcels. The Phase 1 development will include 74 townhomes, 178 apartment units and a clubhouse.

Location: The property is located at 4100 College Avenue in Ellicott City and is identified as Parcels 73, 74 and 93 on Tax Map 25, Grid 20. The property contains the former Sheppard Pratt campus which includes multiple buildings, parking lots and related improvements.



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Vicinal Properties:

The subject property is adjacent to single-family detached homes constructed in the early 2000's and wooded open space to the north on College Avenue. Directly across College Avenue is the Autumn River development which consists of single-family detached homes and townhomes constructed in 2013. To the south on College Avenue is the Village Crest development which consists of age-restricted adult housing constructed in 2006. Along New Cut Road, the adjacent properties consist mostly of wooded open space. A large residential parcel is located on the opposite side of New Cut Road and a wastewater pumping station and 3 unbuilt residential lots exist to the south.

Legal Notice: The property was properly posted and verified by DPZ in accordance with the legal requirements for Planning Board public meetings.

Regulatory Compliance: This project must comply with the Amended Fifth Edition of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the Zoning Regulations, the Howard County Design Manual, the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, the Howard County Forest Conservation Manual and the Howard County Landscape Manual.

I. General Information

Plan History:

- ECP-15-076- An Environmental Concept Plan was submitted on December 7, 2015 and approved on June 15, 2016.
- SP-16-013- A Preliminary Equivalent Sketch Plan was submitted on June 29, 2016 to subdivide the property for 88 townhomes and 160 apartment units. The plan was revised in September 2016 to include 4 additional apartment units. A "technically complete" letter was issued on July 6, 2017. The plan originals were not signed by DPZ due to Council Bill Nos. 56-2018 and 20-2019, which temporarily prohibited the issuance of development plan approvals for properties located within the Tiber Branch watershed until October 27, 2019. The plan was revised in accordance with Council Resolution No. 123-2019 (stormwater management Design Manual amendments), Council Bill No. 62-2019 (Forest Conservation regulation amendments) and Council Bill No. 63-2019 (scenic road regulation amendments). The current plan proposes 74 townhomes and 178 apartment units.
- WP-17-048- An Alternative Compliance Petition was submitted on January 24, 2018 to remove 72 specimen trees and was approved on February 21, 2018.
- WP-21-012- An Alternative Compliance Petition was submitted on May 21, 2021 to remove 16 additional specimen trees and was partially approved on June 11, 2021 for the removal of 13 of the 16 requested trees.

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Existing Environmental Conditions and Site Improvements:

The property contains 64.63 acres and is improved with a private hospital complex (Taylor Manor Hospital, historic site #975). The property has public road frontage on College Avenue and New Cut Road, which are designated as scenic roads. The hospital complex contains multiple buildings and is primarily accessed from an asphalt driveway along College Avenue. A maintenance building is accessed from New Cut Road via gravel driveway. The area surrounding the hospital is maintained as lawn and the remainder of the property contains 34.42 acres of forest, perennial and intermittent streams, 0.52 acres of wetlands, 1.13 acres of floodplain and 9.34 acres of steep slopes (25% or greater). A ridge is located near the center of the site and the steep slopes are generally located along the New Cut Road frontage and near the northern and southern property boundaries. This property is located within the Tiber Watershed.

Character and Quality of the Scenic Road:

College Avenue

The subject property has approximately 500 feet of public road frontage along College Avenue which was designated as a scenic road by the County Council in 1994. At that time, the County's Scenic Road Inventory described College Avenue as a narrow, rolling, winding road that passes through an area of steep, forested terrain. The scenic character of the road is created primarily by outstanding natural features, varied terrain, forest and streams. This portion of College Avenue currently contains residential developments of single-family homes, townhomes and condominiums constructed between 2005-2015. The roadway along the property frontage was improved with a traffic circle in 2013 with the construction of the adjacent Autumn River development.

With this proposal, the existing asphalt driveway from College Avenue will be removed and a private roadway will be constructed to provide access at the existing traffic circle. The existing trees will be retained within 75' of the roadway and native deciduous and evergreen trees will be planted and the area will be recorded as a Forest Conservation Easement. A sewer main and storm drain are proposed at the northern property boundary.

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View of Existing Site Conditions Along College Ave at Northern Property Line

* The wooded area to the right of the existing driveway will be impacted by the construction of a sewer line and storm drain. The existing driveway will be removed and the trees within the lawn area will be retained. Forest plantings are proposed within 75' of the roadway extending south to the existing traffic circle.



View of Existing Site Conditions Along College Ave at Traffic Circle

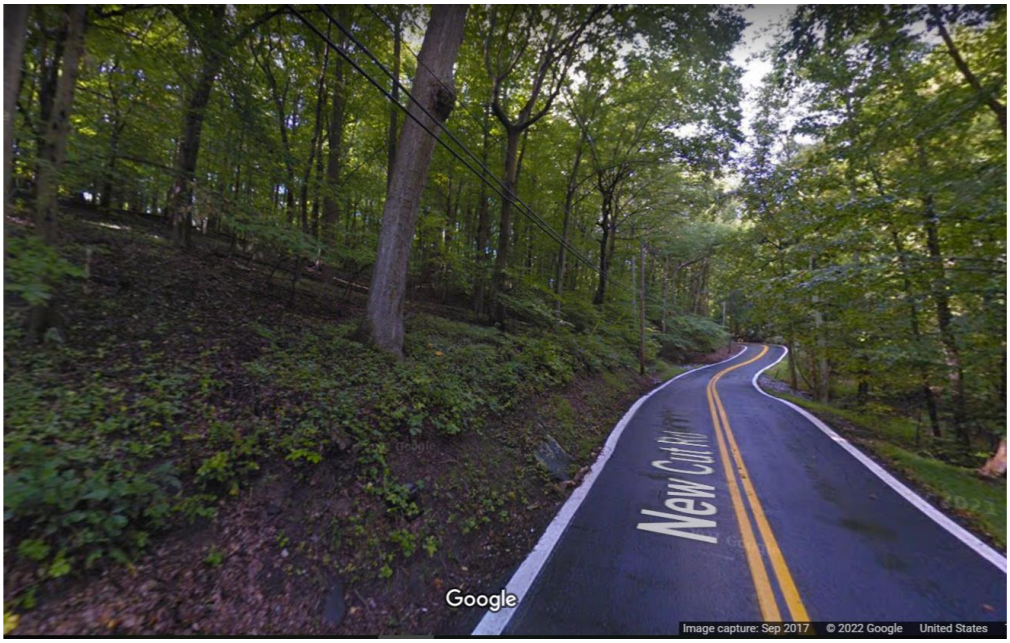
* The proposed access (private road) is located in the center of the photograph at the existing traffic circle.

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New Cut Road

The subject property has approximately 1,100 feet of public road frontage along New Cut Road which was designated as a scenic road by the County Council in 1994. At that time, the County's Scenic Road Inventory described New Cut Road as a rolling, winding road with outstanding natural features, varied terrain with steep, sometimes rocky valley walls, forest and a stream which parallels the road. This portion of New Cut Road remains consistent with the character as described in the 1994 Scenic Road Inventory.

With this proposal, the existing gravel driveway entrance from New Cut Road will be removed and planted within a Forest Conservation Easement. The remainder of the road frontage contains mature forest and steep slopes and will be preserved in Forest Conservation Easements.



View of Existing Site Conditions along New Cut Rd at Northern Property Line

* The forested area shall remain undisturbed for a depth of at least 180' from the roadway, except for a 20' wide clearing for construction of a storm drain outfall.



View of Existing Site Conditions along New Cut Rd at Existing Driveway

***** The existing gravel driveway will be removed and the area will be planted as a Forest Conservation Easement.

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A visual assessment was provided in accordance with Section 16.125(c)(4)(iii) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. The visual assessment complies with the submission requirements listed in subsections a through e. The assessment describes the character and quality of scenic College Avenue and New Cut Road.

There are several residential subdivisions located along College Avenue near the Taylor Highlands- Phase 1 project area. An exhibit has been included showing the various views from College Avenue in the vicinity of these developments and is attached with this staff report. There are seven older single-family detached homes northwest of the subject property with direct access to College Ave, which contain minimal vegetative buffering between the roadway and the houses. The adjacent contemporary single-family detached communities (Autumn Overlook, Hogg Property, Autumn River) contain homes with rear elevations oriented to the road buffered by various levels of landscaping.

The project proposes to retain the majority of the existing vegetation within 75' of College Ave and supplement it with native deciduous and evergreen trees planted according to the Forest Conservation Manual. The developer proposes to utilize 2" caliper native trees planted at a 20'x20' spacing. Grading and stormwater management facilities are to be located at least 75' from the College Ave roadway. As proposed, the vegetative buffer from the roadway will be denser than currently exists in the adjacent College Ave corridor.

The two closest townhomes to College Ave (Lot 16andLot 1) will be oriented so that the other attached units will be sequentially located further away from the road right-of-way. The closest corner of the proposed Apartment Building (Building 'B') will be 312' from College Ave. The townhome lots nearest College Ave (Lots 1-6) will be oriented to face the existing traffic circle at the entrance to the community and will be buffered by existing vegetation and the proposed forest conservation plantings. The proposed sewer main and storm drain were consolidated to one location to minimize breaks in the 75' wooded buffer.

The frontage along New Cut Road is adjacent to a wooded stream valley, which defines the scenic character of the road. A residential driveway exists on the opposite side of the road and a sewage pumping station to the south. The roadway along the property frontage is narrow, winding and conforms to the natural topography. An existing gravel driveway exists along the property frontage on New Cut Rd, which served as a service road for the Sheppard Pratt campus. This gravel driveway will be removed and planted as a Forest Conservation Easement.

The nearest townhome and a stormwater management facility will be located approximately 300' and 150' respectively from the scenic roadway. Due to the steep slopes in this area, the townhomes will also be located at an elevation least 85' uphill from the elevation of the existing road. The existing mature forest and steep slopes will be retained along the entire New Cut Road frontage with a varying width of 180'-450'. The proposed storm drains have been consolidated on this side of the property and one outfall is proposed along New Cut Rd which will require the removal of 4 trees 12"+ diameter. The proposed structures, parking lots, stormwater management facilities and loading areas will not be visible from the roadway, therefore, there will be little to no impact to the scenic viewshed along New Cut Road. Further, the viewshed will be protected by the creation of Forest Conservation Easements within county-owned open space lots and will be enhanced by the removal of the existing gravel driveway and planting of forest.

The Petitioner surveyed approximately 27 trees 12" diameter or larger located within 100' of College Avenue and anticipate removing 8 of these trees. The trees are predominately red maples, hollies, cedar, locust and black cherry. The survey identified over 300 trees 12" diameter or larger located within 100' of New Cut Road. Four of these trees will be removed to accommodate a storm drain outfall. A survey plan of existing vegetation has been included as an exhibit attached with this staff report.

The Taylor Manor Hospital is located on the subject property and is listed on the Howard County Historic Sites Inventory as #975. The hospital is not part of the Taylor Highlands- Phase 1 project and will be retained on Buildable Bulk Parcel 'A'. The hospital complex originally contained more than a dozen buildings and at least 8

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of the buildings were historic. Most of the buildings were demolished in 2008-2009 but the administration building, and the New Center building remain. The buildings are currently being utilized by Howard County Police and Fire for training and will be demolished in the future.

II. Planning Board Criteria

In accordance with Section 16.125(c)(5)(i) and (ii) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the following criteria must be considered by the Planning Board when evaluating the initial plan submittal.

1. ***Access.*** **Whether the property has frontage on a non-scenic road, the impacts to environmental features, and traffic safety.**
    - **a. Wherever practicable, access shall be located along a non-scenic road.**
      A The number of units proposed with this plan require there to be two access points from subdivision to the public right of way. Access to and from this proposed subdivision will be from the College Avenue circle and Taylor Way which is a private road that connects to Village Crest Drive. The property also has frontage on New Cut Road but creating an access road in this location would impact steep slopes.

    - **b. Only to the extent vehicular access cannot be practicably located along a non-scenic road, access along a scenic road shall be permitted at an existing driveway location.**
      Access to the proposed subdivision will be at an existing traffic circle on College Avenue and at an existing road stub at Taylor Way (private road). There will be no new vehicular entrance points created along the scenic roads.

    - **c. Only to the extent vehicular access cannot be practicably located along a non-scenic road or at an existing driveway, additional access along a scenic road may be permitted.**
      This criterion is not applicable as the project will be utilizing the vehicular access point that exists along the College Ave. traffic circle.

    - **d. To the extent that any access is permitted along a scenic road, such access shall preserve the alignment, topography and surroundings to minimize interference with views from the road while ensuring public safety.**
      The proposed access minimizes interference with views by utilizing the existing traffic circle on College Avenue, which has been determined to be a safe access point. The design of the traffic circle meets sight distance requirements and will provide pedestrian connections to the adjacent residential subdivision.

2. ***Buffers.*** **The buffer preserves or enhances the visual character of the road and surrounding area, and whether access minimizes impacts to the buffer.**

   Section 16.125(c)(2) requires that new major subdivisions inside the planned service area maintain a minimum 100-foot continuous vegetated buffer between the road and subdivision to preserve or enhance the visual character of the road. However, Section 16.125(c)(5)(ii), allows the Planning Board to reduce an existing non-wooded buffer to no-less than 75 feet, if a buffer less than 100-foot wide could provide natural screening or if replanted as forest or wooded area.

   The property frontage to the north of the existing traffic circle extending to the existing driveway is proposed to be planted with a 75-foot wooded buffer and permanently protected as a Forest Conservation Easement. The majority of this area is currently non-wooded and contains open lawn area and scattered trees. The area to the west of the existing driveway is currently wooded which will

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be retained within 75’ of the roadway, except for a 20’ wide sewer easement and a 20’ wide clearing proposed for construction of a storm drain along the northern property line.

There is no access proposed along New Cut Road. The frontage along New Cut Road exists as forest which will be preserved as a buffer within 180’-450’ of the roadway, except for a 20’ wide clearing for construction of a storm drain and outfall. Within this buffer, existing vegetation including canopy trees and understory plant communities shall be preserved and permanently protected in a Forest Conservation Easement within a County-owned open space lot. The existing gravel driveway will be removed, and the area will be planted as a Forest Conservation Easement. The applicant’s scenic road exhibit demonstrates that the line of sight from New Cut Road will not distort the natural forested views from the new development of townhomes approximately 310’ away and 85’-95’ uphill from the roadway.

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Amy Gowan
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7/21/2022

Amy Gowan, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

Date