

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING DIVISION  
STAFF REPORT**

November 1, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Detailed Application CPD2006-0004Z Thomas Farm Community Center

**Applicant:** City of Rockville  
Recreation and Park Department  
111 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

**Owner:** Mayor & Council of Rockville

**Date Filed:** April 20, 2006

**Public Hearing:** November 1, 2006

**Location:** Southwest corner of the intersection of Fallsgrove Drive and West Montgomery Avenue.



**REQUEST:**

The applicant seeks detailed (final) approval for the construction of a 17,878 square foot City owned and operated community center and parking lot on 18.6 acres of land on Fallsgrove Drive near the intersection of West Montgomery Avenue in the Fallsgrove development.

**PREVIOUS RELATED ACTION:**

- CPD1999-0004, Concept Plan Application for Comprehensive Planned Development approved by Mayor and Council, February 22, 2000.
- CPD2000-0004A through CPD2004-0004X, Detailed Applications for Comprehensive Planned Development CPD1999-0004. All approved by Planning Commission, except CPD2001-0004Q. Detailed Application CPD2000-0004I has expired and Detailed Application CPD2003-0004V was withdrawn.
- CPD1999-0004B, Concept Plan Amendment to modify the concept plan to allow a hotel of 125,000 to 150,000 square feet in lieu of a corresponding amount of office; permit office development in lieu of multi-family development on a residential parcel; allow a child care facility as an approved use in Fallsgrove; transfer unused retail space from the Village Center to one of the neighboring parcels, approved by the Mayor Council, August 1, 2005.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Approval, subject to the following conditions:

1. Submit for approval of the Chief of Planning, Eleven (11) copies of the Detailed Application plans as shown to the Planning Commission including the revisions required at the November 1, 2006 meeting. These plans, along with the landscape plan, will constitute the Signature Set.
2. That all structures meet the requirements of the City's construction codes, the Fire and Life Safety Codes, Maryland Building Code for the Handicapped and Federal ADA requirements.
3. That permits for any signs are obtained from the Division of Inspection Services, according to guidelines established in the approved Concept Plan requiring a comprehensive sign package approved by the Sign Review Board.
4. Submission, for review and approval of the Department of Public Works (DPW), of the following detailed engineering plans, studies and computations:
  - a. Storm drainage study for the site with computations and drainage area map;
  - b. On site stormwater management (SWM) plans;
  - c. Sediment control plans, with existing and proposed contours, for all disturbed areas;
  - d. Public improvements plan including:
    - i. Pedestrian crossing of Falls Grove Drive at entrance to site;
    - ii. Driveway entrance;
    - iii. Water and sewer house connections;

All detailed engineering plans must be on 24" x 36" mylars, at 1"=30' scale.

5. Post bonds and obtain permits from DPW.
6. Comply with all conditions of stormwater management concept plan approval letter dated October 26, 2006, as may be amended.
7. All internal and external traffic control devices (i.e., signs, signals, marking, and devices placed on, over or adjacent to a roadway or pathway to regulate, warn, or guide pedestrians and/or vehicular traffic) shall comply with the latest edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). A signing and pavement-marking plan shall be submitted to DPW and approved by the Chief of Traffic & Transportation before the issuance of a Public Works Permit (PWK).

8. Submission, of eleven (11) copies of the approved Signing and Pavement-Marking Plan to the Chief of Planning prior to the issuance of first building permit.
9. Submission, of on-site lighting plan, including photometrics to the Chief of Planning prior to the issuance of first building permit.
10. No permits will be issued for work within the Transco gas pipeline ROW until all necessary approvals are obtained from Transco.
11. Relocate Fallsgrove Drive crosswalk closer to the entrance driveway intersection. Final location to be approved by the Department of Public Works during detailed engineering.
12. A Forestry Permit is required for this project. Conditions for issuance of the Forestry Permit are:
  - a. Submittal and approval of the Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) by the City Forester.
    - i. Completed application form, including contact information and checklist items must be submitted with the Forest Conservation Plan.
    - ii. All proposed and existing utilities and easements must be shown on the FCP.
      1. Significant replacement trees cannot be located within the PUE or other easements.
    - iii. The landscape plan must be included as part of the FCP submission and will be reviewed by Forestry prior to approval of the Signature Set.
    - iv. Additional landscaping not shown on the current Landscape Plan is proposed around the site to meet Forest Conservation requirements. The additional tree locations and types will be determined on the Forest Conservation Plan and shown on the Signature Set.
  - b. A Forest Conservation Easement must be recorded over the property where trees are being planted to meet Forest Conservation requirements.
  - c. Approval of a Sediment Control Plan.
    - i. The SCP and FCP must be consistent and will be reviewed together.

## ANALYSIS

### Background

On February 22, 2000, the Mayor and Council approved CPD1999-0004, authorizing development on the former Thomas Farm site, now known as Fallsgrove. The initial approval authorized a total of 1,530 dwelling units, 150,000 square feet commercial retail and 950,000 square feet of office/research and development space. A subsequent Concept Plan amendment approved August 1, 2005 modified the development totals to allow a hotel of 125,000 to 150,000 square feet in lieu of a corresponding amount of office; permit office development in lieu of multi-family development on a residential parcel; allow a child care facility as an approved use in Fallsgrove; transfer unused retail space from the Village Center to one of the neighboring parcels. A Comprehensive Planned Development is implemented through the approval of

individual detailed applications for all or part of a development as required in section 25-656 of the Zoning Ordinance. This application is part of a series of detailed applications.

### **Property Description**

Fallsgrove consists of approximately 254 acres bounded by Shade Grove Road, Darnestown Road, West Montgomery Avenue and Research Boulevard. The topography is rolling on a majority of the site including an upland forest area near the intersection of Fallsgrove Drive and West Montgomery Avenue.

This development application is for the property at the southwest corner of the intersection of Fallsgrove Drive and West Montgomery Avenue (MD 28). The northeastern corner of the property has a 50 foot wide gas easement that runs through the property. The gas easement prevents structures and trees from being located in or around the easement. The southern portion of the property is bounded by a stream valley buffer and the eastern half of the property contains an upland forest within an existing forest conservation easement. The western part of the property has an existing tot lot and a park and play fields and/or courts are planned for the future. Also in the future, the site may contain a Montgomery County Elementary School. There is one proposed access point to the subject property onto Fallsgrove Drive.

The property is subject to all the conditions and requirements of the approved overall Fallsgrove CPD. All of the off-site transportation improvements required by the Fallsgrove CPD have been completed with the exception of the I-270/Shady Grove Road improvement. City staff has been working closely with the Developer and the State Highway Administration to move this improvement forward. There has been some difficulty in right-of-way acquisition for the final off-site improvement and Developer has signed contracts and is waiting for SHA to put together the final Deed for the conveyance and for the plats to be finalized.

### **Required Findings**

Per Section 25-567 of the Zoning and Planning Ordinance, the Planning Commission shall approve a detailed application if it finds:

- (1) That all requirements and findings necessary to issuance of a Use Permit under Division 2 (Use Permit) of Article V hereof have been met; and*

The application is in compliance with this condition. With the recommended conditions, this application will not adversely affect the health or safety of persons in or adjacent to the neighborhood, nor be detrimental to the public welfare, nor overburden existing and programmed public facilities and will not constitute a violation of any provision of this Code or other applicable law.

- (2) That all requirements and findings necessary for the approval of a Preliminary Plan under Division 2 (Special Requirements related to Use and Development) of Article XV hereof have been met; and*

The proposed layout of the site meets the provisions for a Preliminary Plan and is consistent with the Master Plan of developing the site into a park with a recreation facility and MCPS school site.

- (3) *That the Detailed Application complies, without substantial deviation, with terms and conditions of approval of the Exploratory Application by the Council; and*

The application is in compliance with approved Comprehensive Plan Development Concept Plan application. The concept plan recommends the site for a park, recreation facility and school site for MCPS on an 18.6 acre site. The application is consistent with the land uses, size, and location as described in CPD.

- (4) *That the requirements of Division 5 (Open Space, Common Areas and Recreational Facilities in Cluster or Planned Residential Unit Developments)*

The area is already dedicated to the City for recreation and park uses.

## **PROPOSAL**

The applicant is proposing a one-story, 17,878 square foot City owned and operated Community Center, to be built in the Falls Grove neighborhood at the intersection of West Montgomery Avenue and Falls Grove Drive, on land dedicated to the City as parkland by the Falls Grove developer. Plans call for the facility to include a substantial lobby area, a 5,700 square foot multi-purpose gymnasium, two multi-purpose rooms, a game room, a fitness center, kitchenette, locker rooms, offices, storage and a 120 space parking lot. This use is consistent with the amended CPD Concept Plan for the site, which the developer dedicated to the City for a park, recreational facilities, and school site for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) located on the property. The Community Center will serve western Rockville.

The Community Center and parking lot will hug the northeastern property line of the site. Access is provided to the property off of Falls Grove Drive. A two-way drive-way with parking on both sides will provide access to the Community Center. The Center will be sited on the high point of the site between existing trails and tot lot. The building will also encroach into the northern edge of the existing Forest Conservation Area and trees that are affected will be replanted as specified by the City's Forestry requirements. The applicant is restricted from moving the building closer to the property line and planting some trees on the north side of the parking lot by an existing Transco Gas easement.

## **Architecture**

Some "Green building" principles have been utilized in the designing this building, featuring among other elements a geothermal system to provide energy efficient heating and cooling. Exterior materials include large-scale textured masonry units and glass. Roof shapes are gently formed curves with metal standing seams giving an overall appearance of a modern technological building. The curved roof also allows for lots of interior day light. A gallery space

is intended to serve as the main circulation “spine” through the project and will be used for art display and social public gathering. The building is sited to fit reasonably close to the forest without major disturbances to the forest.

### **Mayor & Council Comments on Site Design and Architecture**

As per the Concept Plan and Resolution of Approval for Fallsgrove, the Mayor and Council is required to review this application without further public hearing, to comment on the schematic architecture and site design. The Mayor and Council considered the conceptual proposal of this project at its May 8, 2006 meeting. The schematic architecture and site design were generally accepted. Mayor and Council asked staff to explore modification of the kitchen area into a full catering kitchen and also the addition of a portable stage. The Mayor and Council were pleased to hear that the applicant would be incorporating LEED principles into the design of the building.

### **Parking Analysis**

The applicant proposes to provide the required parking in the surface lots that will run along the northern edge of the property. The Community Center parking ratio of one space per 200 square feet of gross floor area translates to 90 required spaces as required by the Zoning Ordinance. The applicant will provide 104 spaces and 16 additional spaces if funding allows for a total of 120 spaces provided. Eight handicapped accessible spaces will be provided with six located near the community center and two near the existing tot lot and future park. On street parking is also allowed along Fallsgrove Drive.

### **Forest/Tree Preservation and Landscaping**

The forest and tree preservation requirements for this site are included in the overall Forest Conservation Plan (FCP) for the Fallsgrove development; however, the proposed community center will remove approximately 0.58 acres of existing forest in conservation easement. Therefore, forestry staff is requiring the reforestation be provided in the amount equal to the removal, or 0.58 acres. It is anticipated that this will be done through the planting of 58, 2.5" caliper trees throughout the site and possibly elsewhere within the Fallsgrove community. The FCP will address this requirement. The applicant is required to provide an updated, separate FCP to ensure protection of reforestation areas and existing forest in addition to all proposed landscaping for the site. Street trees removed for this project will require a one to one replacement. The landscape plan must be submitted for review by the City Forester as part of the FCP. The overall reforestation planting for the site is in substantial compliance with the approved Fallsgrove FCP.

There are some species that need to be substituted in coordination with the City Forester. Additional landscaping not shown on the current landscape plan is proposed in order to meet the 0.58 acre forest conservation requirement for the removal of existing forest.

## **Stormwater Management**

The stormwater management (SWM) concept plan for this site was approved on October 26, 2006. Fallsgrove Pond 3, built by Fallsgrove Associates and located adjacent to and west of West Montgomery Avenue about halfway between Darnestown Road and Gude Drive, provides the majority of the stormwater management requirements for this site. Pond 3 is a regional facility that provides full quantity control and 87% of water quality treatment. The design of Pond 3 assumed this site would be developed into a school and community center. The applicant will construct a bioretention facility on site. This facility will provide the remaining 13% of water quality treatment and all of the recharge treatment for this site. The bioretention facility provides quality treatment by filtering the runoff and recharges runoff into the ground via a stone trench below the facility. The majority of sites within the Fallsgrove development utilized this same approach to stormwater management.

## **Transportation**

As part of the overall CPD1999-0004, a traffic study was conducted for the entire Fallsgrove development. For this detailed application, staff analyzed the on-site circulation patterns for vehicles, trucks, pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as sidewalk, bicycle and transit networks on all frontages of the site and reviewed all site access points for safety and optimum functionality.

There is one access point onto Fallsgrove Drive. Loading will be done in the drop-off circle on-site. There is adequate on-site circulation for vehicles and trucks, and staff has worked with the applicant to ensure safe pedestrian connections throughout the site and on the site frontage.

## **Water and Sewer**

Water and sewer for this site is available in Fallsgrove Drive. Fallsgrove Associates constructed these utility mains in conjunction with the roadway.

## **Publicly Accessible Art in Private Development**

The applicant is not required to provide for a publicly accessible art component since this is a public project. The City will provide art through Art and Public Places Capital Improvements Program.

## **Notification**

Over 360 notification postcards were sent to nearby residents, adjacent property owners and the adjacent Fallsgrove HOAs.

The Department of Recreation and Parks held public meetings to obtain resident input on the planned facility usage, service and programs, and on the facility and site designs, on June 9 and October 5, 2005. The proposed facility services, programs and designs were also posted on the City's website along with an on-line survey. More than 150 responses from residents were received. The project has received extensive coverage in the media as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Planning Commission is required to find that a detailed application is generally consistent with the Concept Plan. If determined to be substantial deviation from the Concept Plan, the application could require an amendment of the Concept Plan by the Mayor and Council. Staff considers this application to be consistent with approved Concept Plan and subsequent amendments, and recommends approval subject to conditions listed in this report. Staff finds that the layout of the site, the architecture and scale and massing are functional and appropriate and is within the spirit of the Fallsgrove Concept Plan.

### **Attachments**

1. Context Map
2. Site Plans
3. Landscape Plans
4. Forest Conservation Plans
5. Architectural Plans