

2201 North Pershing Drive

Response Booklet to Community and Site Plan Review Committee
Questions



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Introduction

Over the course of the past 18 months, Abbey Road Property Group has met numerous times with the Lyon Park Citizens Association, the Site Plan Review Committee, the County Staff, and other interested parties. The document that follows is a compilation of questions we have received along the way and the answers that arose as we refined the design of our proposal in response to community feedback.

Section 1: Land Use and Zoning

Mixed-Use

Is this type of mixed-use development appropriate for this location? The project site was originally built in a typical post-War suburban development pattern, with single-story, auto-oriented strip retail centers served by surface parking lots located in front of the shops. Our proposal would replace this low-density, single-use format with a medium-density, mixed-use project with ground floor retail pulled up to the sidewalk on Pershing Drive, and three to four stories of residential use above, with the residential recessed back off the retail base to create a tapered building mass. In general, development trends in the Washington area and throughout the country are moving in this direction. Pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development can serve as an antidote to the auto-oriented, single-use forms which have contributed to sprawl, and can help create a stronger sense of place. We believe this site presents an excellent opportunity in this regard due to the following factors:

- The site adjoins a major arterial roadway (Arlington Boulevard);
- The majority of adjoining uses are also of medium density, and the existing context includes buildings of significant mass, minimizing potential conflicts with the proposed use. Sheffield Court includes 589 apartments to the north, Washington-Lee Apartments includes another 369 apartments to the south, the Days Inn and the Bromptons office/retail building are located immediately across Pershing Drive, and Fort Myer is to the east across Arlington Boulevard.
- The site is served by multiple bus lines and is approximately 0.75 miles from the nearest Metro station at Clarendon;
- The plan includes a related URD application for two single-family homes on Barton Street to the west, thereby reaffirming the single-family character and zoning of the neighborhood heading to the west from the site.

The planning approach has been guided by a “medium density” philosophy, with residential density and building heights set at levels substantially less than those typically found in the heart of the Metro corridor, but greater than those seen in single-use projects with less transportation infrastructure to support them.

The project has been recognized by the Smart Growth Alliance’s Project Recognition Jury, which specifically referenced the mixed-use nature of the proposal. As they stated in their letter of support:

“The jury believes your proposal is an excellent example of redeveloping older suburban strip centers into more walkable and neighborhood-friendly places. These are the kind of projects we hope to see more of in the region.”

Zoning Precedent

Will this be a precedent for other C-1 sites in the County? At the fourth Site Plan Review Committee meeting, the County Staff provided a presentation on the planning context of this site. This presentation reviewed land use, density, scale, massing, and precedent issues, and concluded that due to several unique characteristics of this location, it is highly unlikely that this proposal would set a precedent for C-1 zoned properties at the intersection of Pershing Drive and Washington Blvd or elsewhere in the County, but this site likely would establish a precedent for the Days Inn property located directly across Pershing Drive.

C-O-1.5 vs. C-O-1.0 Zoning

Would redevelopment of the site be viable under the C-O-1.0 zoning category as compared to the C-O-1.5 zoning category requested by the applicant? The C-O-1.0 zoning district allows a 1.0 FAR for commercial space and 40 dwelling units per acre, whereas the C-O-1.5 district allows a 1.5 FAR for commercial space and 72 dwelling units per acre. If the project were configured the same way as currently proposed, with the same amount of retail space but with C-O-1.0 zoning, the permitted residential unit count would be 101 units as opposed to the 188 units in the current plan. At this level of density, redevelopment of the existing use would not be economically viable.

Prior to the development of this proposal, we did consider a different conceptual plan, which included townhomes on the western portion of the site and a mixed-use retail and residential building on the eastern portion of the site. This concept could have been viable with a mixture of C-O-1.0 and C-O-1.5 zoning; however, based on input from the community and County staff, we were directed to maximize the retail component of the project to the extent practicable. This resulted in the elimination of the townhomes, and the additional retail provided, plus the additional unit count derived from replacing townhomes with apartments in this part of the site, necessitated the request for the C-O-1.5 zoning over the entire property.