PGCPB No. 04-237 File No. DSP-01002/03

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board is charged with the approval of Detailed Site Plans pursuant to Part 3, Division 9 of the Zoning Ordinance of the Prince George's County Code; and

WHEREAS, in consideration of evidence presented at a public hearing on October 7, 2004, regarding Detailed Site Plan DSP-01002/03 for Boulevard at Prince George's Metro Center, the Planning Board finds:

1. **Request:** The subject application proposes to remove a previously approved greenscreen that was designed to cover the east and north sides of the building (see applicant's justification statement in Finding 6).

2. **Development Data Summary**

	EXISTING	**PROPOSED**
Zone(s)	M-X-T	M-X-T
Use(s)	Parking Garage	Parking Garage
Acreage	4.63	4.63
Lots	1	1
Parcels	0	0
Square Footage/GFA	0	0

3. **Location:** The site is located in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Belcrest Road and Toledo Road, within close proximity of the Metro station.

4. **Surroundings and use:** Toledo Road is located to the north of the site and runs east to west and connects Belcrest Road to Adelphi Road. Across Toledo Road is Subarea 2, currently a surface parking lot; to the east of the proposed parking garage is the Prince George's County Memorial Library. To the west is the newly built Center for Disease Control building. To the south are surface parking facilities for the existing Metro buildings on the site.

5. **Previous Approvals**: The conceptual site plan for Subareas 2 and 3 of the Prince George's Plaza Transit District Overlay Zone (TDOZ) was approved by the District Council on January 8, 2001. The plan proposes a mixed-use development with a "main street" theme that will include office, retail and residential. Both subareas were reviewed as one site and combined consist of 40.1 acres in the M-X-T Zone and 7.6 acres in the O-S Zone, for a total of 47.7 gross acres. Primary amendments to the transit district development plan for the subject property, TP-00002, were approved by the District Council on February 26, 2001.

   The original Detailed Site Plan, DSP-01002, was approved by the Planning Board on June 21, 2001. Two staff-level revisions were approved, the first for the purpose of reducing the size of the

garage from 519,869 square feet to 444,778 square feet, the addition of a pedestrian plaza on the west side of the garage, and a change in paving materials. The second revision was for the purpose of revising the exterior finish of the parking garage, which the staff found to be highly superior to the original exterior finish. The change replaced the previously approved rib pattern precast with an eight-inch by eight-inch split-face block pattern. The lowest horizontal band of the garage now includes the new split-face block pattern where before it was smooth concrete. Further, the change included the incorporation of two colors in lieu of the one color previously approved. The background color matches the color of the Metro IV building precast color; the second color is a shade darker.

6. **Justification statement:** The applicant has proposed the following justification statement for the proposed revision, in letter dated May 26, 2004, to Susan Lareuse from Linda Ryan:

"The purpose of this proposed detailed site plan revision is to replace the green screen treatment on the north and east sides of the new parking garage. As illustrated on the enclosed renderings, Prince George's Metro Center proposes to supplement the proposed landscape plantings at the base of the garage with significantly larger evergreen plant materials to provide screening and softening of the garage façade in lieu of the ivy-covered green screen structure. Additionally, the garage façade has been architecturally enhanced through the use of texture and color as indicated on the revised rendering.

"The trellis on the top of the garage will be retained and is in fact constructed as evidenced by the enclosed photograph. The plant material for growth onto the trellis will [be] placed in planter boxes on the top of the garage. This planting has not been completed yet.

"In this photograph you can also see the landscaping installed at the base of the garage per the approved plan.

"Under this proposed revision the screening and softening effect will be more immediate than waiting for ivy to grow up the side of the garage. The 12–14' height Leyland cypress trees will grow approximately 3 foot per year, and will provide a fast-growing evergreen screen.

"Please note that the green screen plantings of Wisteria and fiveleaf Akebia as required by Condition 1.3 of the Approval resolution (enclosed) would grow much more slowly, take approximately 20 years to reach full height (which is shown on the renderings) and would be brown in the winter. Furthermore, English Ivy has recently been identified by the Maryland Invasive Species Council as 'widely recognized by biologists and natural resource managers to degrade natural resources and/or negatively impact native species". The berries become distributed by birds and other wildlife. Concerns over Wisteria have also been expressed by other sources. The provision of Leyland cypress will provide a non-invasive evergreen alternative that will provide year round visual buffering of the garage structure.

"More specifically, the revisions to the plan include to the following:

"- Retain trellis on top of garage.

"- Remove green structures from both north and east sides of the garage.

"- In each location where a green screen was located on both sides of the garage, change the previously proposed ivy plantings for the green screen to a grouping of three to four 12' - 14' Leyland Cypress, to add immediate screening and softening to the garage, and incorporate with the other plantings as follows:

"- Additionally, the north elevation will be planted with a row of 3-1/2" to 4" caliper Greenspire Littleleaf Lindens, with Leland Cypress, assorted evergreen shrubs and ornamental groundcover as the backdrop.

"- The east elevation will incorporate a grouping of 2-1/2" to 3" Thornless Honeylocus between the Leland Cypress. Additional massings of Dark American Arborvitae and large ornamental shrubs will serve as a backdrop to screen the fountain and to minimize the scale of the garage."

Required findings for a Detailed Site Plan in the Transit District Overlay Zone (TDOZ) as stated in the Transit District Development Plan

7. **The Transit District Site Plan is in strict conformance with any Mandatory Development Requirements of the Transit District Development Plan;**

Comment: The plans to eliminate the greenscreen from the garage and the increase in size of plant material is in conformance to the mandatory development requirements of the TDDP.

8. **The Transit District Site Plan is consistent with, and reflects the guidelines and criteria contained in the Transit District Development Plan;**

The transit district detailed site plan is consistent with and reflects the guidelines and criteria contained in the transit district development plan, particularly the following criteria and guidelines:

S-22 All parking structures shall provide a minimum of 5 percent of the total surface area in green space. The greenspace shall be planted with shade trees and shrubs. Tree planter boxes shall contain a minimum of 500 cubic feet of soil per tree, provide drainage and have an irrigation system.

The applicant has provided the following additional justification statement in regard to S-22:

"We are sending by e-mail a copy of the pan showing the calculations for the top of the garage.

As you will recall the square footage numbers for the 5% green space requirement in the original staff report were from the original architectural drawings for the garage. With the 01 revision, the garage was redesigned from Finfrock Architects, and reduced in size slightly. On sheet A207 of that approval, you will see the total square footage of the top of the garage as 69,323 SF. A 5% green space requirement would be 3,466.15 SF. The trellis is 3,556 SF or 5.13%.

"The applicant is proposing 26 planter boxes on top of the garage at the locations shown on the arrows on the plan. The planter boxes are self-irrigated as described on the attached specification sheet. Within each planter box the applicant is proposing two trumpet creeper and three seagreen junipers. The specifications for the trumpet creeper as an excellent vine for trellis use is attached.

"As stated in the resolution of approval for the original garage via DSP-01002, the use of trellis and vines was found by the Planning Board to meet the intent of S-22."

Comment: S-22 clearly envisioned the planting of trees and shrubs on the top level of a parking garage and did not envision planting boxes with a trellis system as a method of providing shade to the parking area. However, as found by the staff and the Planning Board in the original approval, the intent of S-22 is fulfilled through this creative design approach. Even without the greenscreen on the two sides of the parking structure, staff believes that the emphasis of S-22, that being providing shade elements on the top of the garage, continues to be fulfilled.

G3 Landscape planting and/or low walls should be used to screen views of parking areas selectively and soften the facade treatment of parking structures where possible.

Comment: The staff agrees with the applicant's proposal to soften the façade of the parking structure as viewed from pedestrian and vehicular passersby. The number of plant materials incorporated into the landscaping is increased, and based on analysis of the plans there is not much room to add more plantings to the foundation area. However, the staff recommends that the plant species be changed in one instance, where a larger growing species would be more appropriate and may grow as large as 30–40 feet in height. Specifically, the recommendation is to change approximately 50 percent of the Leyland Cypress to Green Giant Arborvitae.

The Community Planning Division has reviewed the plans for conformance to the Prince George's Plaza Transit District Development Plan and has provided input on this issue:

"The substitution of the evergreen Leyland Cypress tree is acceptable for the previously approved ornamental Columnar Hornbeam tree. However, the revised plans for DSP-01002/03 are not in accordance with the previously approved DSP-01002 for the requirements of TDDP-S22 and G3, which are reflected in conditions e, f, g, and h. The applicant should provide the required green screen landscape vines and irrigation system for the garage foundation plant material in order to comply with conditions e, f, g, and h as stated in Resolution No. 01-118."

Comment: The Development Review Division recognizes that the Planning Board approved the

original proposal of the greenscreen when it was proposed by the applicant and that the Planning Board's approval included conditions attached to the approval of those plans. However, since the applicant has filed this revision to the detailed site plan in accordance with the procedures set forth by the Zoning Ordinance, it is allowable for the Planning Board to consider the new proposal independent of the previously approved plans and conditions. The Community Planning Division is not saying they are actually opposed to the revision nor are they saying that the application conflicts with the requirements of the TDDP.

9. **The Transit District Site Plan meets all of the requirements of the Transit District Overlay Zone and applicable regulations of the M-X-T Zone;**

The Detailed Site Plan generally meets all the requirements of the Transit District Overlay Zone.

10. **The location, size and design of buildings, signs, other structures, open spaces, landscaping, pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems, and parking and loading areas maximize safety and efficiency and are adequate to meet the purposes of the Transit District Overlay Zone;**

The proposed application has been designed so that Subarea 3 will function both independently and in harmony with the existing and proposed uses in Subareas 2 and 3, as well as the entire transit district overlay zone.

The design is respectful of both proposed and existing uses and has taken into consideration architecture, site design, layout of buildings, and circulation, both pedestrian and vehicular.

11. **Each structure and use, in the manner proposed, is compatible with other structures in the Transit District and with existing and proposed adjacent development.**

Staff has reviewed the subject application in relation to existing and proposed development within the transit district overlay zone. Staff is of the opinion that this application is compatible with structures and uses that are either existing or proposed within the transit district overlay zone.

12. **In addition to the findings above, the following is required for Detailed Site Plans:**

a. The Planning Board shall find that the Detailed Site Plan is in general conformance with the approved Conceptual Site Plan.

The proposed application is generally in conformance with the conceptual site plan.

Required Findings for Detailed Site Plans in the M-X-T Zone

13. **The proposed development is in conformance with the purposes and other provisions of this Division;**

The proposed plan is one component of the overall project known as the Boulevard at Prince George's Metro, also known as University Town Center. At the time of final buildout, the boulevard will provide for high quality and distinctive architecture, as determined through the public hearing process, and for additional retail and office development. As originally found in the review of this project, it will enhance the economic status of the county and provide an expanding source of desirable employment and living opportunities.

The transit district development plan (TDDP) will ensure that the detailed site plan maximizes public and private development potential and promotes the effective and optimum use of transit and other major transportation systems.

14. **The proposed development has an outward orientation which either is physically and visually integrated with existing adjacent development or catalyzes adjacent community improvement and rejuvenation;**

The proposed removal of the greenscreen and the upgraded façade treatment, and the additional plant material will have an outward orientation along both Toledo Road and Adelphi Road.

As this project continues to develop, other requirements of the TDDP will further ensure that new development will be physically and visually integrated with existing adjacent development. Because of the magnitude of the proposed development, it also has the potential to catalyze adjacent community improvement and rejuvenation.

15. **The proposed development is compatible with existing and proposed development in the vicinity;**

Staff is of the opinion that this application is compatible with structures and uses that are either existing or proposed within the transit district overlay zone.

16. **The mix of uses, and the arrangement and design of buildings and other improvements, reflect a cohesive development capable of sustaining an independent environment of continuing quality and stability;**

Subareas 2 and 3 are already developed with 1.237 million square feet of office buildings, plus the Center for Disease Control provides for a significant employment base that will help to contribute to a stable environment. The addition of the underground parking garage and the development of the student housing will enhance the existing and proposed development on the site. Future development, such as the retail uses including restaurants, a cinema, and outdoor plazas, will also enhance the quality of the transit district.

17. **If the development is staged, each building phase is designed as a self-sufficient entity, while allowing for effective integration of subsequent phases;**

While this revision to the plan has been reviewed and processed independently, detailed site plans for the development of the retail components will be presented to the Planning Board in the near future. These submissions build upon each other such that the combined elements of the overall development will ultimately become a self-sufficient entity that will allow for effective integration of future phases of the development.

18. **The pedestrian system is convenient and is comprehensively designed to encourage pedestrian activity within the development;**

In the original approval of the plans it was found that a major component of the detailed site plan was the main street with wide sidewalks, special paving, street trees, landscaping, furniture, and lighting that is comprehensively designed to encourage pedestrian activity. The pedestrian system will connect into existing streets that will create convenient access to the Metro station and surrounding subareas.

19. **On the Detailed Site Plan, in areas of the development which are to be used for pedestrian activities or as gathering places for people, adequate attention has been paid to human scale, high quality urban design and other amenities, such as the types and textures of materials, landscaping and screening, street furniture and lighting (natural and artificial).**

In the original approval of the plans it was found that the plans provide for the movement of the pedestrian.

Referrals

20. The detailed site plan was referred to the Town of University Park and the City of Hyattsville. Only the Town of University Park has responded as follows in letter dated September 24, 2004, John L. Brunner, Mayor, to Susan Lareuse:

"The applicant in the above-referenced appeal proposes to reverse the recommendation of staff and the decision of the Planning Board adopted on June 21, 2001, regarding the façade of a garage located at the Prince George's Metro Center.

"The Planning Board approved the construction of 'greenscreens' to be erected on the east and the north sides of the garage. A 'greenscreen' is a wire element affixed to a structure that facilitates crawling plants. The applicant was to plant Fiveleaf akebia, Chinese wisteria, and

English ivy at the base of the 'greenscreens' (Condition 1e) and install an irrigation system at the base of the east and north sides of the garage (Condition 1f). **After months of research and discussions, it was agreed by all parties that a 'greenscreen' would be the most appropriate measure to**

mitigate the massiveness of the structure (305' in width), buffer the structure from residential areas on the east side and proposed on the north side, and provide year-round evergreen.

"In place of the 'greenscreen' the applicant has proposed to install **Leland Cypress** and enhance low-level aspects of the landscaping. **Leland Cypress** is not an acceptable substitute for the following reasons: It has a small and weak root system which makes the tree unstable; it has a life span of only 20-25 years; and it grows to a height under ideal conditions of only 30-40 feet. (Reference Virginia Tech & State University).

"However, the selection of **English ivy**, as originally proposed and approved, to grow on the 'greenscreen' has its own drawbacks; primarily, it is a non-native, invasive plant and grows best on flat surfaces.

"There seems to be, on the other hand, viable alternatives to the use of **English ivy**. They are **Baltic ivy, Bulgarica, Hebron, Rochester, and Thorndale, and 238th Street.** Baltic ivy is apparently being used at Camden Yards**.** (Reference University of Maryland – Maryland Cooperative Extension Service.) Please see full inquiry and response e-mailed to Ms. Lareuse on September 22, 2004.

"Other planting options include **Carolina Jessamine, Gelsimium sempervirens, Crossvine**, **Bignonia capreolata, and trumpet honeysuckle, Lonicera sempervirens**. (Reference National Wildlife Federation, Craig Tufts, Chief Naturalist.) Please see full inquiry and response e-mailed to Ms. Lareuse on September 22, 2004.

"In its appeal, the applicant also has contended that it has refinished the garage facade with a new texture that makes the garage more attractive. However, the application of the 'Finfrock' does not qualify as a substitute for a 'greenscreen.' With its horizontal bars, it makes the structure appear only more massive rather than less, which was one of the intents of utilizing a 'greenscreen.'

"It should also be noted that the applicant has not submitted a sample of the roof trellis for review, as required (Condition 1g). Neither has the applicant furnished drawings of the proposed planters nor plans for the rooftop irrigation system. In addition, the applicant has not identified the crawling evergreen vines to be used on the rooftop trellis.

"In summary, the Council and I believe that the staff and Planning Board made the correct decision in 2001, and that the applicant has the flexibility and leads to come up with suitable planting materials in use of the 'greenscreens.'"

Comment: The staff disagrees with the Town of University Park in that the town prefers the retention of the greenscreens as were originally approved and the staff believes that the use of the greenscreens are no longer appropriate. Originally the exterior finish material of the garage was proposed as a ribbed precast panel system which is not nearly as attractive as the revised finish of the structure as was approved through the first revision to this case. The upgrading of the exterior finish of the structure reduces the need to cover portions of the structure with greenscreens. Further, the staff has investigated the use of greenscreens in the Maryland area and has come to the conclusion that they have been used with little success due to climate variations. Greenscreens are very popular and are used successfully in climates where there is little fluctuation, so that the plants thrive throughout the year. The use of deciduous plant material is clearly a poor choice for the greenscreen because in the fall and winter the dieback of the plants becomes an unsightly appearance. However, the use of evergreen species limits the selection. Determining whether the plant is equipped with the appropriate mechanisms for ascending a green screen is also a consideration. Some plants twine and attach readily to a vertical element while others will not attach to the smooth surface of a metal structure. Lastly, another consideration is the form of the plant. The mayor quotes other forms of English ivy in his referral response as being suitable plants. However, the English ivy (Hedera helix) may be well known as a ground cover, but when this plant grows upright, it changes from its immature form to its mature form, which is shrubby; the leaf pattern also changes and it develops berries, all of which deter from its use on a greenscreen.

The staff believes that the elimination of the greenscreen is the best option for this case. The proposed trellis and plant materials located on the top of the garage being a combination of juniper shrubs and the Trumpet vine, are good species selections. In an e-mail response from the Home and Garden Information Center dated September 20, 2004, the Trumpet Vine was recommended. However, the staff recommends that the applicant add a second vine species to the planting as an experiment in case one species does not grow well in the planters, and to provide a comparison study to determine if either species outperforms the other. The staff recommends that the applicant revise the plans to add the trumpet vine in the plant list and to specify a second species, Trumpet Honeysuckle (Lonicera sempervirens), to be planted in the planters in an equal amount to the Trumpet vine.

21. If the conditions of approval are adopted, the detailed site plan represents a reasonable alternative for satisfying the site design guidelines without requiring unreasonable costs and without detracting substantially from the utility of the proposed development for its intended use.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code, the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted the findings contained herein and APPROVED the Detailed Site Plan DSP-01002/03, subject to the following condition:

1. Prior to signature approval, the plans shall be modified as follows:

a. Substitute 50 percent of the Leyland Cypress with the Green Giant Arborvitae.

b. Add Trumpet Vine to the plant list.

c. Add the Trumpet Honeysuckle to the plant list and indicate that it is to be used in the planter boxes in equal amount to the Trumpet Vine.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board's action must be filed with the District Council of Prince George's County within thirty (30) days following the final notice of the Planning Board's decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Eley, seconded by Commissioner Harley, with Commissioners Eley, Harley, Squire, Vaughns and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, October 7, 2004, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 4th day of November 2004.

Trudye Morgan Johnson
Executive Director

By Frances J. Guertin
Planning Board Administrator

TMJ:FJG:SL:rmk