

PLAINSBORO TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
FEBRUARY 20, 2024
MINUTES

MEETING HELD:

February 20, 2024, in the Court Room of the Municipal Center

PLANNING BOARD MEMBER ATTENDANCE:

Peter Cantú, Ed Yates, Cary Spiegel, Arthur Lehrhaupt, Richard Keevey, Jetal Doshi, Joseph Greer, and Sharmila Maheshwari were present.

Sanjeev Agarwal and Sanjana Raturi were absent.

TOWNSHIP/CONSULTANT ATTENDANCE:

Bonnie N. Flynn, Director of Planning and Community Development; Ron Yake, Township Planner/Zoning Officer; Lou Ploskonka and Abd Elazeem Youssef, CME Associates, Planning Board Engineers; Trishka Cecil, Mason, Griffin & Pierson, P. C., Planning Board Attorney and Josi Easter, Board Secretary.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

There were 15 members of the public including the applicant.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

Arthur Lehrhaupt, Planning Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and read the certification of meeting notices.

ROLL CALL:

Cantú -	yes	Keevey -	yes	Raturi -	absent
Yates -	yes	Agarwal -	absent	Maheshwari	yes
Spiegel -	yes	Doshi -	yes		
Lehrhaupt -	yes	Greer -	yes		

It was MOVED by KEEVEY and seconded by SPIEGEL to approve the January 31, 2024 Planning Board Minutes as submitted.

Via voice vote the January 31, 2024 Planning Board Minutes were approved.

P22-09 WRV Nurseries., Princeton Nurseries - Pre-Application/Concept Plan Discussion, Block 102, Lots 5 & 6 & Block 106, Lot 1

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Chair Lehrhaupt asked Bonnie Flynn, Director of Planning and Community Development to give an overview of the application.

Ms. Flynn stated that the Board approved a General Development Plan (GDP) for the 109-acre parcel known as Princeton Nurseries on September 21, 2020. The GDP calls for a: vibrant; pedestrian friendly; mixed use community with various housing types; open space; retail; entertainment and office use. The property was owned by Princeton University who sold it to WRV Nurseries LLC. (WRV), the applicant presenting tonight. WRV consists of three development companies: Woodmont Realty Holdings, LLC.; Russo Development, LLC. and Vision Real Estate Partners. Staff have been working with the team since the fall of 2022 and thought it was a good idea to bring the Concept Plan before the Board for feedback. WRV presented their plan to the DRC on January 17, 2024, and made a few changes based on comments from the committee.

Kate Coffey from Day Pitney, LLP. on behalf of WRV specified that they have worked closely with the Township Professionals to refine their proposal for the development in accordance with the GDP.

Steve A. Santola, Executive Vice President & General Counsel for Woodmont Properties indicated that his presentation gives some background and highlights why they believe it fits well with the GDP. They have been working closely with the Township Professionals for over a year on the Concept Plan and have appreciated the constant feedback. They believe they have tried to be flexible, while trying to create a project that is going to work and meet the market. The three developers have extensive amount of experience in mixed use development and along with Princeton University as part of the team, they have great professionals working on this project. The site is on Route 1 and has 270 acres, 109 of which are in Plainsboro and is across the street from Princeton Forrestal Village. The spine road runs into South Brunswick which has indicated that they are not interested in a mixed-use development on their site. Therefore, they are focusing on data centers, office, industrial flex, life sciences and pharma with them.

Kate Keller, Principal at Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes LLC., noted that she was involved with the GDP approval in 2020 and has been working on this project since 2016. The initial GDP for Princeton Nurseries was established in 1999. It had corporate offices on the site, a small amount of supplemental retail, 220 residential units, which is now Barclay Square, and established preserved land in the area west of Mapleton Road. The University along with the Township worked on a plan for the site before the GDP was scheduled to expire on August 20, 2019. In the meantime, a Master Plan Amendment was adopted, recommending that the site be utilized as an integrated mixed-use neighborhood development within the PMUD Zone. The

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2020 Zoning Amendments were put in place upon the recommendations of the Master Plan Amendment and they appeared before the Board in September 2020 seeking the GDP approval for the site, which was granted.

Ms. Keller identified that their proposal for the site has been guided by seven guiding core principles which have been memorialized in the GDP. The idea is to have a distinct main street environment, which is where the gathering spaces, pedestrian realm and retail spaces are and will include a central civic space. It will be a pedestrian friendly area that is conducive to walking and is visually interesting. They then thought how that would translate into the residential neighborhood. Those that are part of the mixed-use development and townhouses and other types of residential neighborhoods outside of the central core. It includes strategic open spaces that are located within residential neighborhoods and within the mixed-use central core as well as the central civic space. Special attention was paid to the Parking Zone to make sure they are appropriately screened. The plan shows a proposed roundabout into South Brunswick which will be the central traffic spine and a second connection over the river, if possible, due to environmental constraints.

Ms. Keller stated that as part of the GDP they used the concept of Use Districts. The idea behind Use Districts, is because of the generalized nature of the plan and to allow for creative development in the future, the GDP acknowledged that there wasn't going to be one set plan that would be appropriate. There could be several creative options that could be determined at the time of the site plan approval, that would meet the seven guiding core principles. They decided that the site will be organized into five distinct use districts. In the middle/center of the site would be the spine. This is where the densest uses would be located and are within the mixed-use core with the tallest buildings, etc. On either side would be the flex areas, which will be the transition zones between the center mixed-use districts and the residential neighborhood. Then the residential would be at the edges of the property. The mixed-use concept will be adjusted during the site plan review process to ensure that the guiding core principles are met, and the design follows the tenents set forth. The GDP includes maximums of 650,000 sq. ft of nonresidential and 950 residential units. Their proposal meets all these requirements.

Mr. Santola noted that their phasing plan shows a fiscal positive during each step of the process. He showed the wetlands which are untouchable, because the DRCC has jurisdiction over the property and the already built entrance. The mixed-use core and civic space are vitally important, and they plan to develop it in phase 1. The residential neighborhoods will have 10 or 11 distinct residential styles within the community such as: condominium flats; apartments; stacked townhomes; cottage homes; single family homes and traditional townhomes. The Civic Space is an acre and will include: an amphitheater; water body; park; meeting place; a convening

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place; an event space and a place for residents, office workers and retail employees to mix and mingle. They believe it is important to bring residential and retail spaces together for the development to be successful, even though it will take 5 to 6 years for the residential to sell out. The heart of the civic space will be Main Street, which can be closed off to traffic on party days. A great amenity for the site will be a gateway hotel with over 100 rooms, with a liquor license and an established restaurateur. Area D will be ground floor retail with 70,000 sq. ft. of office above and Phase 3 will include the Town Center Grocer. In area E there is a lot of flexibility with a retail pad as part of the secondary phase and on another parcel they have two options, a standalone retail or retail at grade with active adult apartments above. They are going to do the sitework for the entire community which will be grassed and paved until the rest of the core is done and they can make decisions depending on what is happening in the market.

Mr. Santola indicated that the GDP permits active adult homes, and their plan includes active adult flats and townhomes. Area E will be active adult rental apartments if they decide to do it as mixed-use. They tried to create an environment that is walkable with two residential areas with a downtown like experience, and they worked with Township staff regarding what the back alleys should look like, the streetscapes, the park pieces that are in between and the pedestrian and bicycle linkage plan that shows how it connects internally and with the surrounding areas. Their residential concepts will be strong in the market, such as the single-family homes with flush garages.

Mr. Santola noted that there are a variety of ways to manage stormwater, such as: subsurface, swales, basin and dry well. Their traffic analysis shows that for the proposed development there is a 26.4% reduction during the AM peak compared to the GDP. What the GDP allows and what they are presenting is a 16% reduction during the PM peak and a 19.5% reduction on Saturday midday peak. In the initial phase, 100% of the central civic square will be constructed along with 170,000 sq. ft. of retail. Neither of which is required in the initial phase of the GDP. Their goal is to do buildings A & B, the central core and all the sitework for the rest of the project. Phase 2 is non-residential and includes a grocer and a hotel. They did a preliminary parking study and color coded it with what they thought the uses would be. Such as retail and residential visitor parking etc. Buildings A & B, and if they get to E, will have internally constructed parking.

Mr. Santola stated that 3 townhomes have been removed from the plan and they adjusted the lengths of some of the buildings. The maximum width of the buildings will be 146'. They also reduced the buildings to 6 units with a handful having 7. Since Affordable Housing units must be in the multifamily section of the project, they took the multifamily sections and broke them out into buildings, not including

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single family homes and came up with 59 buildings that have multifamily residential units in them. Of those, 18 will have affordable homes in them. They split them up into quadrants and while there are small clusters, they are in different spots. They are dispersed throughout Buildings A & B and on the eastern side. The 2 key elements of making sure that affordable housing blended in nicely and fairly are; when walking by no one will know the difference and all affordable homes will have access to all the available amenities provided. In the central core they are working on a concept for a clubhouse that will be about 10,000 sq. ft on 2 levels with a whole open deck overlooking the park. It will have features such as a golf simulator, 2 bowling lanes, a fitness club, and a café. That they hope will draw in everyone around.

Ron Yake, Township Planner mentioned that the applicant annotated the DRC Memo responding to all the comments and feedback that was offered at the DRC meeting. The Township staff is confident that the applicant has substantially dealt with all the issues identified in the memo. However, the cover memo that is included articulates the fact that the applicant has addressed the issues but that there are issues that can't be addressed until the site plan and subdivision applications are submitted. Some of the comments that the applicant has responded to are as follows: single-family homes and the relationship of the garages being set back or at the front building line, such that the garages don't become a dominant architectural element on that single family street; visitor parking as it relates to that single family area, with the idea being, that they pair the driveways as much as possible so that they can free up more of the curbside spaces for visitor parking; Affordable Housing, it was mentioned that a shared parking analysis will be done and the goal is that there is more than adequate parking provided in the residential areas as well as nonresidential areas; pedestrian pathways as it relates to the townhouse rear garage access alleys, that people will want to have access to and the applicant responded with a comprehensive pathway system through the alleys that interconnect with the overall pedestrian system in the site; street intersections with regard to the garage access alleys and how they joined streets and the circulation through the alleys will accommodate vehicles; the South Brunswick connection through a roundabout and a possible second connection at the brook; open space, there is a central civic space that is the most important space in the project and is well in excess of what is required in the GDP; stormwater management will be addressed pursuant to the current regulations; architectural details of all the buildings and the need for details and design of the residential and nonresidential to be substantially in accordance with the design standards for the Princeton Nurseries; lastly there is some reference in the GDP about transit, both providing a shuttle service for a period of time and pursuing opportunities for New Jersey Transit to provide access to the site.

Chairman Lehrhaupt asked if for comments or questions from the Board.

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Ed Yates asked for clarification of the numbers of affordable units.

Kate Coffey replied that the proposal lists 450 non age-restricted units and then with the unlocking of the nonresidential as part of the 1st phase, there is an additional 300 non age-restricted units as well as 96 affordable units and 103 age-restricted in phase 1. The final phase will have an additional 97 age restricted units that would be permitted.

Mr. Yates asked if the possibility of the E building having additional residential above retail would bring them over the 950-unit total.

Chris Erb replied that it was included in the total.

Mr. Yates asked if when they present the storm water management, they could provide the 100-year flood plain and the applicant replied yes.

Mr. Yates asked that regarding affordable housing he would like to see the breakdown of the units in each building, how many are on the same floor and how many are coupled together.

Rich Keevey asked Mr. Yake if there was anything in the memo that concerns staff.

Mr. Yake replied that no since this is in the concept level.

Mr. Yates commented that he appreciates the applicant's major movement on the length of the townhomes as well as the amount of retail with smaller size stores and with the second opening to South Brunswick.

Mayor Cantu remarked that the project has been reviewed for at least two years or more and the history goes back many more years with the development of the GDP etc. Staff has done an outstanding job in working with the developer and he thinks the developer's response in many cases is reflected in the memo. There are obviously some things that need to continue to be addressed as part of the process, but a lot of credit goes to staff and the professional consultants for the work they have done with the development and the developer. He hopes that they continue to address the remaining issues that this project presents.

Joe Greer asked, have the principals of the Nurseries sat down with the principals of Princeton Forrestal Village? Will one cause the detriment of the other since both developments will have hotels, main street etc. How will they compete, and have they spoken to them to see how they can work in concert.

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Mr. Santola stated that interestingly they were part of the ownership awhile back and managed it in the early 2000s. They have not sat down with them, and they can certainly do that.

Mr. Greer asked if the Main Street would be open to all residents of Plainsboro.

Mr. Santola replied that yes it will be open to everyone.

Mr. Yake stated that pedestrian interconnectivity is going to be important as it relates to the Princeton Forrestal Village and the planning for the Nurseries.

Mr. Greer asked Mr. Santola if the project will be scaled back if the market is not right.

Mr. Santola stated that the project will not be scaled back if the housing market slows down. Since they are using a market driven sell-out of the entire project of 6 years the only change may be how long it would take them to finish the entire project, not the scope of the project. They will be managing the retail spaces and apartments.

Mr. Greer asked when the traffic analysis was performed.

Mr. Santola stated that the analysis is based on what they are building versus what is permitted in the GDP.

Cary Speigel asked what kind of activities are planned at the civic center and how will they be used it as an anchor to draw people in.

Mr. Santola stated that some of the uses are mini bars with golf simulators; anything pet related; pet wash; dry cleaning pick up; club room; billiards; multiple televisions; fitness center etc.

Mr. Spiegel asked if the pipes for the water retention ponds will be under the parking spaces, and they replied that they don't know since this is only a concept plan.

Mr. Spiegel asked about how pedestrians will cross College Road to go over to Princeton Forrestal and they replied that they are cross walks and existing pedestrian connections.

Mr. Spiegel asked if there was any consultation with the County regarding the additional traffic that may occur on Route 1.

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Mr. Penke stated that the State has jurisdiction over Route 1.

Mayor Cantu commented that there has been a lot of attention to the area over the years but very little action. It has been a continuing battle to try to get focus and attention to Route 1 in general.

Mr. Spiegel asked if there is an estimate on how long it will take a school bus to get to the different schools and Mr. Santola replied that they don't have one.

Chair Lehrhaupt asked if they could share their timeline.

Chris Erb replied that they are working on putting the site plan application packet together now and conservatively they are looking to submit it by May and hopefully back to the Board by midsummer.

There being no further questions or comments from the Board or members of the public, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Josi Easter, Board Secretary

Board Approval Date: _____