

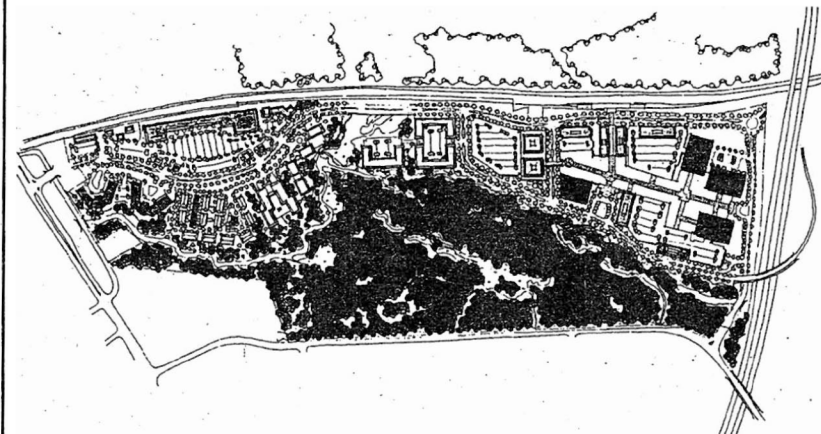
July 12 Hearing Scheduled on Greenbelt Station Plans

by Elaine Skolnik

In their race to "beat the clock," Metroland developers have nailed down a hearing date on Greenbelt Station's concept plan and preliminary plan of subdivision before the Prince George's County Planning Board's August recess. After several earlier postponement requests by Metroland, a hearing on Greenbelt Station will be held, barring further postponements, on Thursday, July 12, in the County Administration Building in Upper Marlboro.

Metroland's apparent objective from the start has been to reach the finish line before

Site Plan - Alternative A



DESIGNS BY EDWA

Conceptual site plan submitted for Greenbelt station. The CSX railroad tracks run across the top, Cherrywood Lane across the bottom, the Capital Beltway is on the right side to the north and Greenbelt Road is on the left side. The northern section would consist of retail, commercial, residences, offices, and a hotel. The southern section would consist of stores in a strip mall and residences. The final plan may or may not look like this or any of the other alternatives submitted at this time.

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their competitor, the Sector Plan/Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) is adopted. His planning and zoning document took more than two years to prepare in worksessions with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) team leaders, and a sector planning group of representatives, including municipal officials, from Berwyn Heights, College Park and Greenbelt. The group has recommended the Sector Plan/SMA as the most effective planning tool for carrying out the umbrella vision for development of the Greenbelt Metro Area.

In supporting the Sector Plan/SMA tool, the Greenbelt City Council saw it as the best way to achieve comprehensive development of the Greenbelt Metro/A.H. Smith tracts and to protect "the sensitive environmental features and redevelopment/integration of the surrounding inner-Beltway communities." The sector plan covers approximately 1,600 acres immediately surrounding the Greenbelt Metrorail and MARC rail station.

Metroland Plan

Metroland's Greenbelt Station made its debut in October 1998. Planned originally as a 240-acre regional upscale urban mall complex, its centerpiece was a 1.4 to 1.8 million square foot complex featuring several department stores, restaurants, cinemas, hotel and other amenities. Office and residential buildings were also envisioned. The mall concept has since been revised to what is called a main street design and the complex now covers about 132 acres.

With the Prince George's County Council scheduled to review the Sector Plan/SMA on September 18, with possible final action on the plan in October, Metroland's fast-tracking of its

"Greenbelt Station" project aided earlier by the County Council's passage of CB-35 in May 1998, has not given the private developer a commanding lead over the sector plan in the "beat the clock" race.

CB-35 established a new land use category, Metro Planned Community, in the 1-2 heavy industrial zone, that would permit construction of a mixed-use development at and adjacent to a metro station. Later the developers requested revision of CB-35 when they changed the mall concept to a main street design. The county council endorsed this change when it subsequently passed CB-47.

Environmental Concerns

Even with the support of many county and state officials, Metroland developers, in their effort to fast-track Greenbelt Station, have encountered major setbacks. Slowing them down considerably was a prolonged battle over the environmentally sensitive land on the A.H. Smith tract — wetlands, floodplain, habitat — and the failed wetland mitigation site mandated when the Metro station was constructed.

Determining the size of the environmental envelope triggered a myriad of meetings with representatives of the nearby municipalities, M-NCPPC, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, county and state agencies and the community group, Citizens to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek (CCRIC). This issue was finally resolved when the state agreed to purchase about 78 acres on the Smith Tract, the owner donating additional acreage to comprise a 111-acre environmental envelope.

Roads

Another major issue requiring the attention of all parties is centered on the roadway system to serve the proposed Greenbelt Sta-

tion development and its effect on Greenbelt's local roads. Both the Greenbelt City Council and CCRIC have fought against proposed Beltway ramps to create a full interchange between the existing College Park and Kenilworth Avenue interchanges. One serious concern is the further destruction of wetlands to provide for the new ramps. There is also fear that the ramps will lead to increased density on the Smith-Metro core tracts and that area drivers will utilize the ramps as an easy short-cut to Greenbelt Road.

A further concern is the inevitable deflection of interchange traffic on to Cherrywood Lane, a residential street, and an additional adverse effect on nearby county and state highways. Compounding the problem also are defects identified in the construction of the Cherrywood Lane bridge over the Beltway. For five years, two outside bridge lanes have been closed.

To prepare for its upcoming July meeting, last week Metroland circulated a brochure in response to M-NCPPC staff requests and Greenbelt staff and consultants' reports. But as if to insure that Metroland will win out, whether or not it beats the clock on county adoption of the Sector Plan/SMA, County Councilman Thomas Hendershot, a strong and long-time advocate of commercial development, has introduced an amendment to the Sector Plan which would remove its power to impose Development District Standards on a Conceptual Site Plan or preliminary plan of subdivision filed with the Planning Board for Metro Planned Community uses "pursuant to CB-47-2000."

With respect to the conceptual site plan and preliminary plan of