WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, April 4, 2016, to discuss the Lakeside North High Rise Development Proposal.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:33 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: David Moran, Assistant City Manager; Celia Craze, Director of Planning and Community Development; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: David Hillman, Southern Management Corporation; Arthur Horne, Shipley & Horne, P.A.; Brad Frome, Assistant Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Infrastructure for Prince George's County; Jim Giese, Greenbelt News Review; Molly Lester, Bill Orleans and others.

Following introductions, Mr. Hillman thanked Council for the opportunity to meet with them. He said Southern Management is the largest apartment community owner in the mid-Atlantic region and they currently have approximately 75 communities in Maryland, including the Lakeside North community. Mr. Hillman reported that Lakeside North currently has approximately 1,000 residents. Ms. Craze mentioned that Lakeside North is a well maintained and well managed property.

Mr. Hillman explained that he was interested in building a luxury high rise apartment building on approximately five acres of unused land on the northern edge of the Lakeside North property. He said Southern Management has three other luxury high rise apartment projects in Maryland, located in Towson, Bethesda and Hanover (Palisades of Arundel Preserve). Mr. Hillman noted that the Lakeside North property will need to be rezoned in order to proceed with the proposed high rise project. He added that if Council expressed serious opposition to the project, he was not planning to proceed.

Mr. Horne reviewed the conceptual site plans for the project. He said the building will be 25 stories in height, contain approximately 400 residential units with structured parking, and utilize approximately 20% of the land available. Mr. Horne said the State Highway Administration has already agreed to grant access to the building directly off of Kenilworth Avenue, which will alleviate traffic flow on Ridge Road. He added that the building height is aligned with the high-rises already on Ivy Lane (rooflines will be the same).

Mr. Frome said the County is appreciative of the risk Mr. Hillman has taken in the County with projects such as the new hotels in College Park. He said the entire area will benefit from the economic spin off from these hotels. Mr. Frome stated that the County is very supportive of the luxury housing project proposed by Mr. Hillman, noting that the County does not have enough luxury housing options available to residents.

Ms. Davis said she was not in favor of project. She asked whether there was interest in proceeding with the project even if the Federal Bureau of Investigation does not choose the Greenbelt site for its headquarters relocation. Mr. Hillman said yes.

Ms. Pope said she liked the proposed project, noting that a large number of people are looking for luxury residential of this type.

Mr. Horne said Congressman Hoyer has offered his full support of the project, as long as the City indicated its support.

Mr. Putens said he believes this project is a unique opportunity for the City and believes that the issues regarding zoning were workable.

In response to a question from Mr. Herling, Mr. Hillman said he thinks the proposed project will attract many residents that may otherwise go to Montgomery County for luxury housing. He said many older residents of Lakeside North have moved to the Palisades at Arundel Preserve.

Ms. Davis commented that the City will have luxury high-rise apartment available in the North Core. She said she would prefer an apartment project that was geared more towards active adults, was lower in height and less luxury. Ms. Davis expressed concerns about the building casting a shadow to the surrounding areas and the disturbance to the existing eco-system in place.

Mr. Hillman said there is very little difference in cost between the construction of a luxury apartment and a more basic apartment. He said similar type apartments in Arundel and Towson rent for $2,400 a month (including utilities) for a two bedroom and two bath unit.

Mr. Hillman said the project plan includes construction of a community center and playgrounds for residents. Ms. Mach mentioned the playground agreements currently in place with the City and homeowner associations.

Mayor Jordan expressed concern about the building's lighting impacts on surrounding areas and asked that if the project moves forward, efforts be taken to mitigate this concern. He also expressed concern regarding the impact the project will have on trees and asked if tree replacement/mitigation would be done. Mr. Horne said yes, all County requirements would be met.

In response to a question from Mayor Jordan, Mr. Hillman said a shuttle would likely be provided for transportation for residents to the Greenbelt Metro.

Mr. Roberts expressed concern about destruction of the existing forest and said this type of building needs to be located in a more appropriate location.

In response to a question from Mayor Jordan, Ms. Craze expressed concern with significant zoning issues related to the proposed building. She said there needs to be an assessment of what rezoning will accomplish in the concept of the plan and the area.

Ms. Davis said some things that Council likes to see in a new apartment building are electric charging stations for vehicles and the institution of a tenant association. Ms. Mach and Ms. Davis suggested that space for a day care facility be considered.

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Ms. Davis and Mr. Putens commented on the need for senior living, active adult and assisted living facilities in the City.

Mr. Hillman said if Council indicates its support of the project, and zoning changes can be approved, he expects engineering and architecture work would begin next year. He estimated it would be another two years to complete construction.

Mr. Herling asked if there was interest by Mr. Hillman, or any other developer in the area, in building affordable house in the County. Mr. Hillman mentioned that a large number of affordable housing options already exist in the County. He explained the cost of new apartment construction is approximately $200,000 per unit, with $100,000 for the actual construction and the rest being permits and fees.

Ms. Mach said the proposed project was very interesting and looked good, but asked that every effort be taken to save large trees. She stressed the need (if the project is developed) that the County allow for children residing in the building to attend Greenbelt schools. Ms. Mach asked if the building would have space for the storage of bikes. Mr. Hillman said yes.

Molly Lester asked that if a study is undertaken to determine the shadow of the proposed high-rise, a process be provided to allow for public input. Mr. Hillman said a public input process would be provided.

Ms. Davis asked that a larger map be provided to Council showing where the proposed building will be located in relation to the other high rises and buildings on Ivy Lane and Cherrywood Lane, as well as the Greenbelt Metro Station.

After further discussion, Mayor Jordan indicated that the next steps will involve the developer continuing to work on zoning issues and City staff review of the proposed project. Mayor Jordan commented that Council was not entirely opposed to the project. Ms. Davis mentioned that she had serious concerns and Mr. Roberts noted his opposition. Council thanked Mr. Hillman and Mr. Horne for briefing Council on the proposed project.

Molly Lester, 6-M Hillside Road, said she hoped County Executive Baker will consider making an appointment of a member from Greenbelt Homes, Inc. to the County Commission on Common Ownership Communities.

Informational Items

Several informational items were discussed.

The meeting ended at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Murray
City Clerk

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