



**BUDGET WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Tuesday, May 31, 2005, for the purpose of meeting with the owners of Springhill Lake Apartments.**

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:10 p.m. in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens arrived at about 8:15 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: David Moran, Assistant City Manager; Celia W. Craze and Terri Hruby, Planning and Community Development; Joe McNeal, Recreation; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Patti Shwayder, David Douglas, Joe DeTuno, André Gingles, Sharon Thames, Rudy Horton, and Willis Faulkner, AIMCO; Ken Dunn, LSA Associates; Mike Watkins, DPZ; José Morales, County Board of Education; Bob Kuntz, Director of Planning, County Schools; Joyce Chestnut and Brian Gibbons, Advisory Planning Board members and Springhill Lake residents; Bill Wilkerson and Emmett Jordan, Advisory Planning Board; Kap Kapastin, Beltway Plaza; Tom White, Greenbelt News Review; and Courtney Burns, the Gazette.

Conceptual Site Plan for Redevelopment of Springhill Lake

Following introductions, Ms. Craze suggested using the list of “big picture” items in her memo dated May 27, 2005, as a guide for discussion. She stressed that it would be important to determine whether Council wished to fundamentally accept the proposal to redevelop Springhill Lake prior to getting into a lot of details. She said it was her belief that AIMCO’s plan will have to continue to work its way through the Conceptual Site Plan process while the details continue to be worked on. She pointed out that two of the items on her list refer to the Recreation Center.

Mayor Davis asked about the rezoning issue. Ms. Craze said they need to have their underlying zone be R10 in order to be able to reach their desired density.

Ms. Shwayder gave an overview of how the plan had evolved. She said although their original intention was to do a major renovation of the existing complex, they had been persuaded by people inside their organization, as well as a suggestion at a City Council work session, to think outside the box, tear it down and redevelop it.

Mayor Davis asked Ms. Shwayder to explain the much-increased density. Ms. Shwayder said it was simply a question of the economic threshold of the development, as well as an effort to create a transit-oriented community near the Metro station.

Mr. Roberts objected to the increased density in an apartment environment. He said more of a mixture of homeownership was needed to balance it. He said it had already been proved once that a large, dense, apartment complex would not work there.

Mr. Watkins said this plan was really not radically different from the one Council had seen previously. He said the densest part was closest to the Metro and the commerce center. The townhouses, which are the least dense, are located the farthest away, at the south end.

There was some discussion regarding possible problems with having the townhouses bought for investment and then rented out. Ms. Mach pointed out that this phenomenon can be controlled if the ownership form is a cooperative. Mayor Davis commented that the Council and the other parts of the City were strongly interested in seeing community stability established in Greenbelt West.

Ms. Shwayder said they were open to doing more condos within the apartment structure and were flexible about letting the market drive renting and selling. Mr. DeTuno added that there are practical issues involved, however, in that they are in the rental business and have to sell off their property either to sell either condos or townhouses. He said that was the reason the townhouses were separated—because there would be a different ownership.

In response to a question from Mayor Davis about income levels, Ms. Shwayder said they anticipated a mix of rents, probably entering at about \$1,000, which is comparable to many at Springhill Lake now.

Regarding the 23.55 acres of mandatory parkland dedication, Mr. Dunn pointed out that this plan has 89 acres of open space, which is more than Springhill Lake has now. Mr. Roberts questioned the counting of relatively small spaces between buildings to come up with that figure. He said his concern is with active recreation space, which this community has lacked from the beginning. In addition to Greenbelt West itself, he said, this has a great deal of impact on the rest of the City's facilities. He said he found this plan to be unacceptable because it was "just a lot of buildings."

Mr. Watkins said he thought there was a semantical issue, which sparked a conversation about the meanings of such terms as parkland and open space. Mayor Davis said she wanted to hear about the mandatory dedicated parkland, not just the ball fields.

Ms. Craze said the recreational and open space requirements could be met in several ways: mandatory dedicated parkland; fee-in-lieu; private facilities; or a combination of those three. She said they were trying to find space for a ball field but might have enough space only for pick-up fields. Regarding a suggestion to put a ball field in the center of town, she said there are many people who do not wish to live near a ball field.

Regarding the City's property at the Recreation Center, Ms. Craze said there is also a Program Open Space encumbrance there of 8.4 acres that the City would have to replace if it sold or traded the property.

Mr. Gingles spoke to say that it is at the stage of the preliminary plan of subdivision that the detail Council was seeking would come up the first time, followed by the Detailed Site Plan.

Mr. Herling said the City's understanding in January 2004 was that there would be a public charette. He added that as the project becomes denser, its recreational needs keep increasing. Particularly given the lack of recreational area in Greenbelt Station, this is a concern. He said he continues to support the idea of having the common areas and activity center in the middle of the project. To the latter, Mayor Davis replied that a realignment of the streets would be required, including the loss of many trees.

Mr. Watkins again stressed that "we're not so far apart." He said they want a variety of open-space formats, which will be apparent at the preliminary plan stage: including parks, greens, plazas, and tot lots.

### Board of Education Plans

The Mayor suggested moving to the question of the schools now. Following a brief reminiscence about the 10 baseball teams fielded by Springhill Lake in the 1970s, Mr. Morales began to describe plans for the combined elementary and middle schools. The plan favored by the board is priced at \$46 million for the entire complex, including the renovation of the historic wing of the middle school and the elimination of the bus parking lot. Mr. Kuntz said the current plan for the historic wing is that it would be "multifunctional." Mr. Putens asked if they could consider turning it over to the City. Mr. Morales said, yes, but they would first have to turn it over to the county for surplus. He said if that route were pursued, the assumption would still be that the county would pay to renovate it before turning it over.

In response to a question from Mayor Davis about combining the buildings for the two schools, Mr. Kuntz said there were significant advantages and savings to shared facilities.

Mr. Roberts said he was not interested in having the City own the historic wing. He suggested moving the new structure closer to the historic wing in order to preserve more of the trees. There was agreement that this looked possible. Mr. Morales also assured Mr. Roberts that the board was not "giving away" the existing elementary school property.

Mr. Roberts raised another concern about whether the configuration of elementary and middle schools would provide enough seats. Mr. Kuntz said there would be 150 more than currently in the elementary school and three hundred more in the middle school. Ms. Mach said she thought that was probably adequate for the middle school but maybe not for the elementary. Mayor Davis commented that the new populations of Greenbelt Station might feed into these schools as well.

Mayor Davis asked about ball fields here and was told there would be three for softball and one multipurpose. She asked about spectator seating. Mr. Kuntz said it was not planned but could be done. The Mayor asked if there would be lighting. Mr. Kuntz said they did not usually do that. The Mayor asked about basketball. Mr. Kuntz said it was part of the physical education curriculum but not available after hours.

In response to a suggestion from Ms. Chestnut about moving the bus loops, there was further discussion of realigning things to preserve as many trees as possible.

Mayor Davis stressed that it was essential that Springhill Lake and the school board work together and agree. She asked Mr. Morales to keep the City informed regarding decisions and developments, and he said he would.

#### Conceptual Site Plan for Redevelopment of Springhill Lake, cont'd.

The Mayor asked Mr. Kapastin if he would like to speak. He described this redevelopment as a "great opportunity." He said he saw two possibilities in particular: reorientation of a "face" of the mall toward Springhill Lake, and a continuation of Cherrywood Terrace into Beltway Plaza. He suggested it might make more sense to have the higher density housing on the outer ring, rather than the townhouses. He said he would, of course, oppose additional commercial. Mr. Douglas said they were planning commercial but predominantly professional office space, with little retail. Mr. Kapastin said they were speaking with an architect about ideas. Mr. Douglas also reminded him that they had included some suggestions for the north side of Beltway Plaza in the first design charette. Council encouraged further conversation between Springhill Lake and Beltway Plaza.

Mr. Gibbons asked whether the redeveloped Springhill Lake and Greenbelt Station together would have enough critical mass to command some improvements in TheBus service. Ms. Craze said Ms. Hruby was talking to the county about that.

Mayor Davis moved on to the Recreation Center and the City's property. She said it appeared that in the plan their "luxury towers" were sited on the Recreation Center. It was explained that this was not quite true, and Ms. Shwayder said the Rec Center could actually be left where it was if the City wished. Mayor Davis said in the best of all worlds, it would be more central. She added that the City already had plans to expand it, as well as having the funding for it, with the result that if the Center were replaced elsewhere on the property, it would need to meet the expanded needs.

Mr. Putens emphasized that what Council sees is an increasing density with a City obligation to provide recreation for all these people. He said the question before the Council was, "How can we accommodate the open-space and recreational needs of Greenbelt West?"

Ms. Mach commented that if the one Recreation Center would have to serve both Greenbelt Station and Springhill Lake, then the existing location is central

Mr. Roberts said he preferred the existing location and suggested that the luxury towers be moved elsewhere so that all the recreation space could be put in that northwest corner.

Ms. Craze said she and Mr. McNeal had set down a plan for the ideal Rec Center for Greenbelt West, and it included 20,000 square feet, including a competition-sized gym, as well as the rooms and computer lab that are part of the existing plan for the expanded center. She said the existing site is constrained by wetlands and the stream.

She suggested another idea would be to use the historic middle school for a recreation center and add a gym to it.

There was brief discussion of locating the Rec Center at Greenbelt Station rather than Springhill Lake. Mr. Watkins said he thought it would be better to put uses near the Metro that use transit, and recreation typically does not.

Ms. Shwayder commented that another reason the density had increased was to support the various "wish lists" – in this case, a big increase in their contribution to the schools. Similarly, she said, increasing the number of townhouses for sale would also shift the economics, since it would mean they would then sell off more of their land. She said Council needs to take these things into consideration, too. Council told her they appreciated having this explanation.

Mayor Davis asked how soon more information would be forthcoming about dealing with the Rec Center. Ms. Craze said she hoped they would be further forward by the next planned meeting date with Council, which is June 23.

There was brief discussion of the traffic and fiscal impact studies, and the relocation plan for tenants.

There was discussion of having more meetings for input from the public. Mr. Watkins encouraged having fewer meetings with more information. Ms. Shwayder argued for holding the next one in the fall; she said there was little information available now that had not been presented at their earlier meetings. Mayor Davis encouraged them to hold a public meeting on June 15, since Council could not meet that night, and there would be no conflict. Mr. Watkins suggested setting aside one night (July 12) during the July charette for this purpose instead of meeting in June. Mayor Davis said she still wanted to see a public meeting on June 15 so that the broader community could comment.

#### Other Springhill Lake Items

Newsletter: There was discussion of the fact that the City is still not receiving the Springhill Lake newsletter. Ms. Thames said it was coming out monthly, and she would find out what the problem was. The Mayor also asked to receive the quarterly update Ms. Shwayder mentioned on the redevelopment plans.

Window Guards: Ms. Craze said they had asked Springhill Lake to try to deal with the problem of children falling out of windows so that there would not have to be code written on it. Mr. Horton is talking with the Fire Department about the problems with sealing or blocking the windows from opening too far. He said they will be asking people to voluntarily let them put a window stop on until a further plan can be developed. Ms. Thames said they would be putting information in their newsletter and e-mail communications. Mayor Davis suggested door-hangers to attract attention, and Ms. Shwayder agreed that was worth trying.

#### Other Business

A number of informational announcements were made.

Mayor Davis and Mr. Roberts both indicated they had objections to County Councilmember Peters' draft bill to exclude GHI from having to submit a detailed site plan and comply with other requirements for applying to put an addition on a house that exceeded 25% of the total square footage.

Mr. Moran announced that Mr. Peters found the SRO money. It was generally agreed to apply the increased revenues to reducing the tax rate increase by at least a penny.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher  
City Clerk