

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
PO Box 1164
Olney, MD 20830

April 15, 2007

Montgomery County Planning Board
Royce Hanson, Chairman
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Ref: Preliminary Plan # 120070080, Kirk Farm, Olney Town Center, Olney, Maryland.

Dear Chairman Hanson and Members of the Planning Board:

The Olney Town Center Advisory Committee was authorized by the Montgomery County Planning Board in May 2006 to develop a concept plan for the Olney town center, develop a concept for a civic center/town commons, and to review development proposals within the town center and provide our recommendations to the Planning Board. *The purpose of this letter is to provide our recommendation on the revised development plan, dated December 18, 2006, for Kirk Farm by owners Danny and Paula Sayag.*

The Sayag's presented their proposal to our committee at our July 17th, 2006 meeting. We are very pleased with the Sayag's compliance with the letter and spirit of the urban design controls in the Town Center section of the Olney Master Plan and the Mixed-Use Town Center Zone (MXTC). In addition to placing the building up to the sidewalk and putting the parking behind the building, they have given attention to their development's connectivity with possible future redevelopment of neighboring parcels, provided a multi-story affect to their single-story buildings, and provided aesthetically pleasing façades on all sides. They propose a façade to match neighboring retail developments. Overall, we recommend approval of the redevelopment with the following considerations.

1. Recommend on-street parking.
2. Recommend a more detailed plan for sidewalk amenities/street furniture.
3. Recommend a barrier/fence along the rear parking lot to protect the adjacent streambed.

1. On-street parking is an important feature along roads such as Hillcrest Avenue. In addition to assisting with the available parking, it offers benefits of traffic calming. The proximity of parked cars along the side of the road induces slower, safer speeds. On-street parking adds functionality to the mixed-use zone by increasing a visitor's options to approach the stores from parking in either the front or the back of the building. This provides the public with options that can improve safety, convenience, and utility for the shopper. Furthermore the on-street parking would be the closest spots to the store entrances enhancing access for handicapped. The proposal is designed to have on-street parking in front of the building. The Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT), however, has recommended against it. Our committee recognizes the important role that on-street parking will play in the development of a vibrant town center and we urge the board to recognize that on-street parking on this side street would help create a more pedestrian-oriented environment. We understand, and support, that on-street parking in front of the building does not count towards the required on-site parking for the proposal. The proposal already provides the required on-site parking. We do ask, however, that additional on-street parking be allowed in front of the building.

2. The Sayag's plan for the building provides approximately 8-foot wide sidewalk and 7-foot greenway in the front of the building. The development proposal at our July 17th meeting did not include specifics for sidewalk amenities. Since a primary objective for the long-term redevelopment in the Olney Town Center is to greatly improve pedestrian access, safety, and comfort it is vital that careful accommodations be given to customers approaching on foot. We recommend that the Sayag's add detail to their plan to include some of the following possible amenities:

- Consistent signage package for all shops in the development;
- Use of paving patterns and or materials to establish the pedestrian cadence (either movement or resting zones) and to unify/reconcile the vertical and horizontal architecture of the development;
- Streetscape/landscape lighting, beyond the required building lighting, to provide a safe walking environment and enhanced aesthetic;
- Plantings that help define the pedestrian zones and can also screen necessary utilities; and
- Street furniture package that includes seating, waste receptacles, and bicycle and stroller parking for patrons approaching without cars from the same or similar manufacturer's line/collection for a cohesive look.

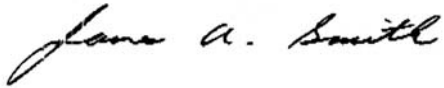
3. The development's rear parking lot abuts the James Creek stream valley. We rely on the development review process for all due precaution and the normal development standards and safeguards to protect this environmentally sensitive area. We ask, however, that due to the proximity of this parking lot to the stream valley bed, that landscaping be put in place around the back and sides of the parking lot that will take the form of a landscape buffer.

Related to this third recommendation, we are aware of the staff recommendation that the portion of the Sayag's property in stream valley buffer not be included in the ten percent

public use space and that the area to the right of the entrance be dedicated for public use. The OTCAC generally supports this recommendation by the Planning Board Staff. However, in situations where the environmental protection requirements are such that they can also support public use without compromise to the protection of the environment, the OTCAC would support this dual use as a portion of the ten percent public use space requirement. It is our belief that this is *not* such a case.

We recommend approval of the Sayag's proposal with the three considerations enumerated above. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this proposal and for your consideration of the advisory committee's recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James A. Smith". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

James A. Smith, Chair
Olney Town Center Advisory Committee