



Sandy Spring-Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium PreserveAshton.net

SSARPC, Post Office Box 518, Ashton, MD 20861

Re: Ashton Meeting Place
Preliminary Plan Number: 120080070
Site Plan File Number: 820080040

May 5, 2008

Royce Hanson, Chairman
MNCPPC Planning Board
ATTN: Ashton Meeting Place
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chairman Hanson:

The steering committee of the Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC) is pleased to say that, in our opinion, the current site plan for Ashton Meeting Place substantially conforms to the Sandy Spring-Ashton Master Plan. This site plan, which has been three years in the making, illustrates what can be accomplished if developers and citizens work together, along with Park and Planning, State Highway Administration, Department of Public Works and Transportation, and other agency staff to ensure compliance with both the overall vision and the specific guidelines of a master plan.

After the Board denied the previous site plan in June 2007, the developer agreed to a charette with our group and other community members. The new layout is much like the concept that our group presented to the Planning Board in June and was agreed upon at the charette. In subsequent weeks, our design team worked through the details with the developer's designers. The result is what you see before you today and includes the following key features:

- 1) True active fronts achieved by front doors facing the street for retail, restaurant and office spaces that will generate pedestrian activity.
- 2) On-street parking on both frontages.
- 3) Size, scale, form, and pattern of buildings reminiscent of a rural village center, particularly along the streets.
- 4) Architectural details compatible with a rural village (e.g., clapboard siding, standing seam roofs, stone).
- 5) A smaller grocery store, located on the interior of the site.
- 6) Six single family units of mixed design on the R-60 parcel, with detached garages.

Two issues remain: the design of the green at the corner, and the mix of residential unit sizes.

The developer has stated he will agree to change the green. The current plan shows a circuitous route around an elevated lawn, with no access into or through the space, and a walled off corner plaza. The SSARPC recommends that a path be built diagonally across the green, along the most direct route to the plaza. If a direct route through the green is not provided, eventually walkers not willing to walk to the prescribed side paths will wear a path through the grass. The site is very close to Sherwood High School and we expect and hope that students will walk from the school to frequent the center. Environmental Planning staff Candy Bunnag and staff arborist Amy Lindsey have determined that a raised path can be constructed without damaging the existing large tree that will be a focal point of the green.

The developer has not indicated whether he will assure that there will be a mix of house sizes with detached garages on the R-60 portion, as agreed on at the July charette.

The SSARPC Steering Committee recommends that the Planning Board approve the plan provided that the following conditions are met: First, provide a path diagonally across the green, and second, show a variety of house sizes, and provide all houses with detached garages.

It is our hope that the Planning Board will approve this plan with the stated conditions and continue to demand that development proposals in our area adhere to the Master Plan's vision and guidelines. As we have seen with AMP, there is a great difference between true active fronts and just putting a building right up to the street. As the next three proposals for Ashton and Sandy Spring come before you, we fully expect the Board and the staff will be as vigilant in demanding compliance with the Master Plan.

The marriage of community, developer and planner has proven to work to maintain a way of life and move it toward the future. We hope to continue that relationship.

Sincerely,

Michelle Layton
Co-chair

Donna Selden
Co-chair