

# Memo

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Jim Chandler, Assistant City Administrator and Director, Community & Economic Development  
Kate Powers, City Planner

Date: July 27, 2021

Re: 6400 American Boulevard – Detailed Site Plan (DSP-21006) Discussion

Attachments: Applicant’s Presentation  
Draft Detailed Site Plan  
Draft Statement of Justification  
Elevations and Renderings

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City Council with recommendations related to the detailed site plan (DSP) application for 6400 American Boulevard.

## **Project Summary**

- The applicant, TDC Parcel N Investor, LLC, is proposing a mixed-use, multifamily development at the intersection of America Boulevard and East-West Highway.
- The subject property is a 2.42-acre lot located at 6400 America Boulevard, within the Prince George’s Plaza Transit District Overlay Zone and Downtown Core area.

## **Project Location Details**

The Subject Property is an existing surface parking lot in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of America Boulevard and East-West Highway. The property is a total of 2.42 acres and zoned M-U-I (Mixed Use – Infill) / T-D-O (Transit District Overlay). Located within the boundaries of the Prince George’s Plaza Transit District Development Plan (TDDP), the site is part of the Downtown Core Character Area.

The Property is positioned at the southern entrance of University Town Center. It abuts an existing commercial office building to the southwest (Parcel H). Retail, food store, and healthcare uses are located directly to the east across America Boulevard. Metro I and Metro II are located to the north and east of the site. Existing retail at The Mall at Prince George’s is located across Belcrest Road and the furthest most western border of the property.

## Summary of Development Proposal

The applicant is proposing the development of an eight-story,  $\pm 412,321$  square foot mixed-use building with the following breakdown:

- $\pm 308,690$  square feet of residential uses
- $\pm 12,812$  square feet of interior amenity space
- $\pm 2,052$  square feet of ground-floor commercial uses

The applicant is proposing  $\pm 316$  units of multifamily housing in addition to limited ground floor commercial space at the corner of America Boulevard and Liberty Lane. A proposed unit breakdown is as follows:

- 75 studios (23.7% of the total units)
- 173 one-bedroom units (54.8% of the total units)
- 68 two-bedroom units (21.5% of the total units)

A multi-story parking structure is proposed as part of the development. This parking structure will include a total of 272 parking spaces and be built within the interior of the Property and wrapped by the mixed-use building. The entrance of the parking structure will be along Liberty Lane.

Below is an overhead view of the proposed project. Each use is designated with a different color.



## Parking Garage

While the primary building entrances and exits are located on America Boulevard (A Street), the loading dock and garage entrance are proposed along Liberty Lane (B Street). Of the proposed 272 parking spaces, approximately 20 will be reserved for visitors, retail users, and future residents. The parking garage will feature Standard 9.5' x 19' parking spaces. ADA parking spaces will be 9.5' x 19' with 5'-10' wide

embark/debark areas. The proposed 272 parking spaces comply with the parking ratios outlined in the TDDP. See calculation below.

**Maximum Parking Ratios** (TDDP, p. 259)

Downtown Core (Residential Development) : 1.25 spaces per dwelling unit

(316 proposed units) \* (1.25 spaces) = 395 spaces

**272**                      <                      **395**  
proposed parking spaces                      maximum parking spaces

The applicant provided illustrated renderings of the building elevations. The structured garage can be seen in the image below.



There are various guidelines related to structured parking within the Transit District Overlay Zone, as seen below.

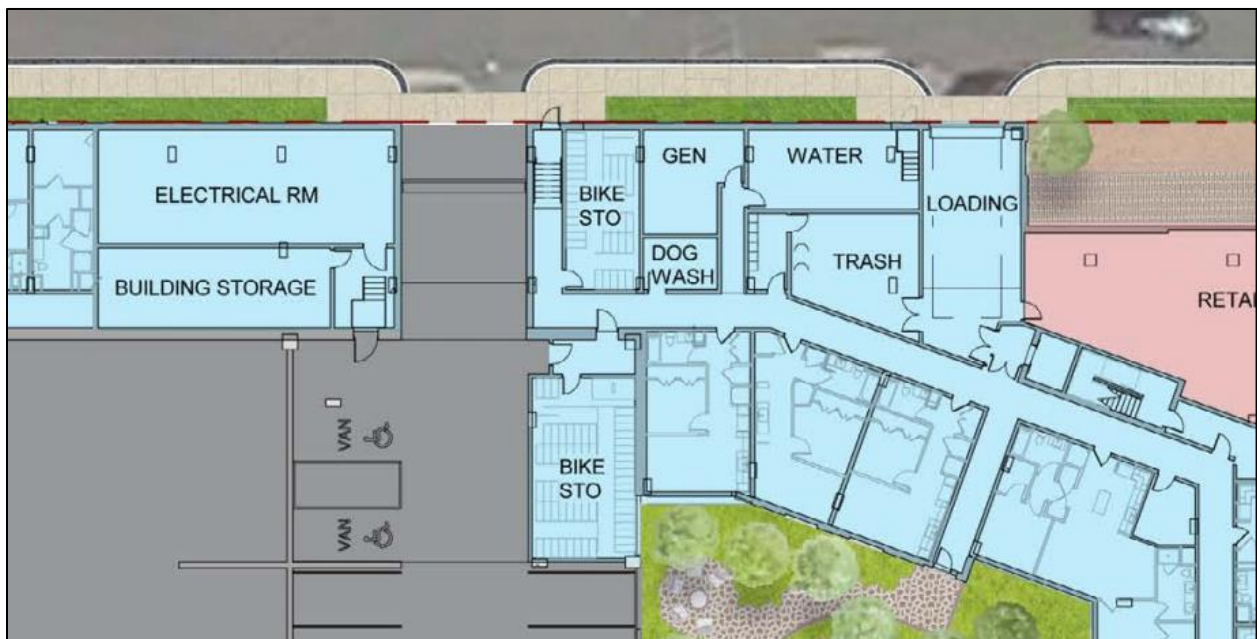
- *Where otherwise permitted, parking garages that front directly on a street shall be provided with architectural treatment, liner uses and buildings, murals, landscape, or any other screening techniques in order to screen the garage from the street (TDDP, p. 261).*
- *Garages should use articulation or fenestration treatments that break up the massing of the garage and/or add visual interest (TDDP, p. 261).*

- *When designing and constructing above-ground parking structures, consideration should be given to the installation of renewable energy systems (such as solar photovoltaic panels or wind generators) or green roofs on or above their top deck (TDDP, p. 261).*

To remain aligned with the policies outlined in the Prince George’s Plaza TDDP, Staff recommends any part of the structured parking garage visible to pedestrians include screening either through the use of architectural treatments, public art, or landscaping. This will make the development more pedestrian friendly and add visual interest. Staff also recommends the applicant consider installing renewable energy systems or green roof elements on the garage roof as outlined in Chapter 6 of the TDDP.

Additionally, staff recommends the inclusion of parking spaces accompanied by EV charging stations within the structured parking garage.

Adjacent to the garage entrance, the building includes two bike storage rooms as seen in the image below.



Staff wants to ensure minimal obstructions to bicyclists when entering and exiting the storage area. Staff recommends the doors leading to the bike room be automatic to allow ease of access to individuals bringing their bikes indoors. The bike storage area should also include a wall mount bike pump and bike repair stand.

**Architecture**

The building entrance is proposed at the corner of East-West Highway and America Boulevard and includes extensive corner glazing. This area is highlighted with a canopy and local mural artwork. This corner is the gateway to the southern entrance of University Town Center. An illustrated rendering of the building from the corner of East-West Highway and America Boulevard can be seen on the following page.





Staff recommends the applicant include at least one more architectural element to further demarcate the building entrance which may include molding, cornices, material change, or color change.

The entrance of the retail space is proposed at the corner of America Boulevard and Liberty Lane. Similarly to the lobby entrance, the retail space features extensive glazing in addition to an eight-story masonry façade extending along America Boulevard and continuing along Liberty Lane. The streetscape will be activated through outdoor seating and a public mural. An illustrative rendering can be seen below.



The proposed multifamily building is designed with two aesthetic themes – one along America Boulevard and another along East-West Highway and Liberty Lane. Details are outlined below.

American Boulevard

- Masonry with fiber cement accents to the 8th floor with vertical or horizontal cementitious siding from the 8th floor to the parapet.
- The masonry façade is comprised of the 2 face brick colors (reddish-orange brick and black brick).
- Inclusion of three bays approximately 45-65 feet in width.
- The 8th floor fiber cement is articulated with three colors and textures.

East-West Highway and Liberty Lane

- Masonry base to the 4th floor slab
- Fiber cement siding articulated with three colors (medium gray, darker gray, silver gray) and textures (horizontal siding texture, vertical siding texture).
- The three bays along East-West Highway are approximately 76’ in length.
- The four bays along Liberty Lane are approximately 65-90’ in length

The building’s south elevation, as seen from East-West Highway, is depicted in the image below.



Staff recommends further attention be paid to the architectural design along East-West Highway. Located in the Downtown Core, there is an opportunity to establish a sense of identity and contribute to the visual and architectural character of the area.

Located within short walking distance of the Prince George’s Plaza metro station, this is an area of high pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The massing and articulation of the building should reflect this.

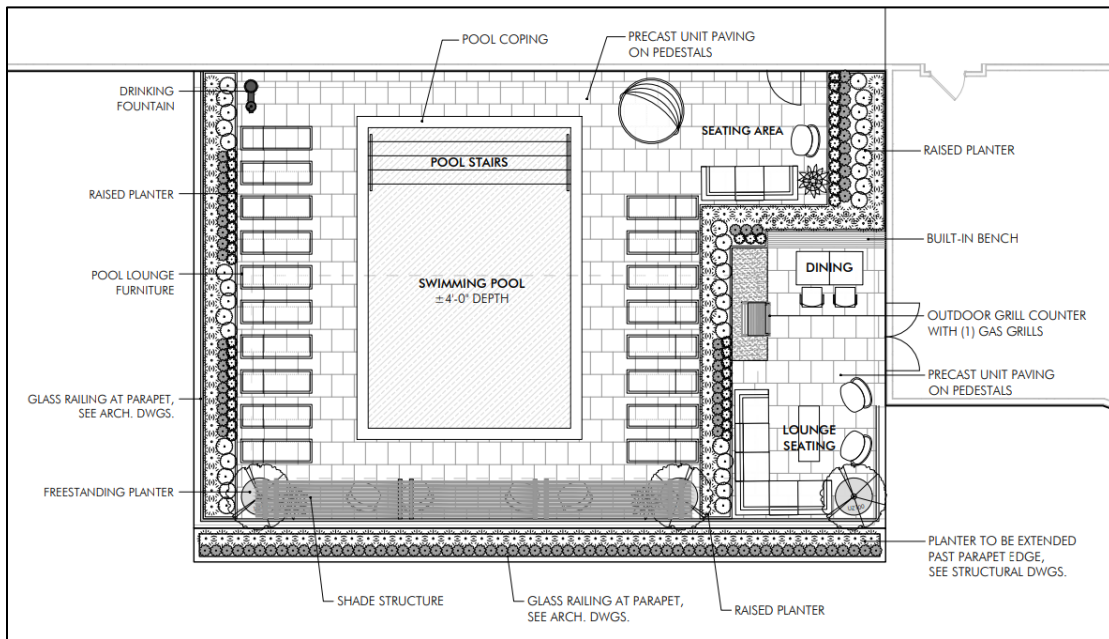
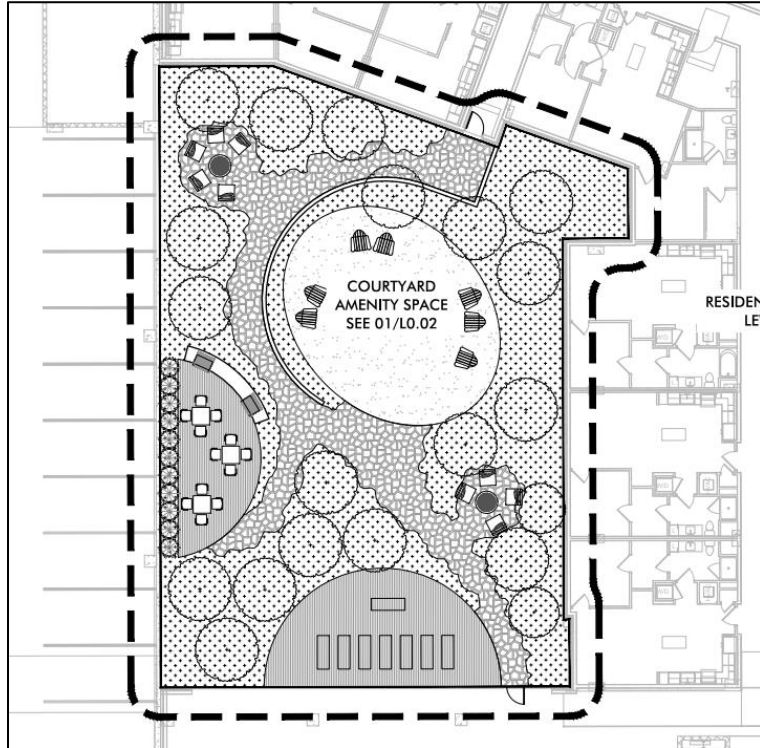
The building design should focus more on the pedestrian experience rather than the vehicular experience. Further irregularities in the design of the façade, specifically on the ground floor, can break up the massing/volume of the building.

Additionally, the use of public art along the East-West Highway façade can enhance the pedestrian experience and create a sense of place.



## Building Amenities

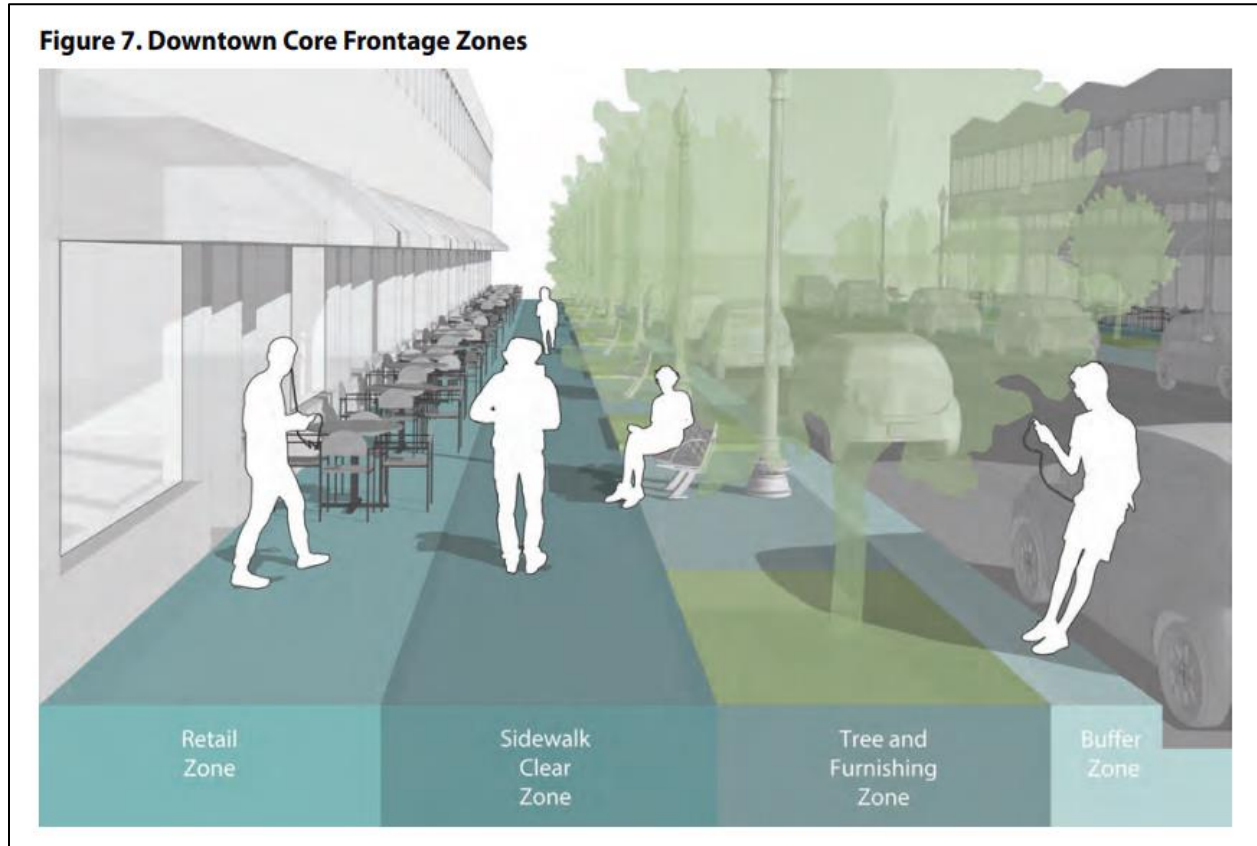
The proposed multifamily development includes various amenities for building residents. These include an interior courtyard and a rooftop terrace featuring a swimming pool and sun deck which are depicted in the images below.



Staff recommends the interior courtyard include dedicated space for dogs. Ideally, this space would be fenced with a double gated entry and pet waste station.

### **Build-To Line and Frontage Zone Modifications**

The applicant is requesting modifications to the build-to line and frontage zone standards within the TDDP. For reference, the frontage zone is the area between the street curb and the building façade/build-to line. A depiction of the Downtown Core frontage zone can be seen below (TDDP, p. 206).



On America Boulevard, a build-to line of 15' is proposed with the applicant requesting a modification to provide less than the 20' frontage zone provided by the TDDP. The proposed frontage zone will include a 6' clear sidewalk zone, 4' tree and furnishing zone, and 5' buffer zone.

On Liberty Lane, a build-to line of 10' is proposed with the applicant requesting a modification to provide less than the 15' frontage zone provided by the TDDP. The proposed frontage zone includes a 5' clear sidewalk zone and 4.5' buffer zone to residential uses.

Generally, Staff encourages roadways to meet the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation Urban Street Standards. Ideally, sidewalks would be 8' in width to align with DPW&T's guidelines. However, the frontage zones proposed are consistent with adjacent developments.

### **Planning Committee Review**

On July 20, 2021, the applicant met with the Hyattsville Planning Committee to present and discuss the proposed project at 6400 America Boulevard.

The Planning Committee expressed that the project was an improvement from the existing surface parking lot but indicated that the building design and architecture needs improvement.



The Planning Committee adopted the following comments and recommendations for City Council's consideration.

- As a critical Downtown site, the Planning Committee believes the architecture of the proposed multifamily building needs to be improved with greater attention paid to the East-West Highway facade. The facade of the building appears to be an afterthought of the project team.
- The Planning Committee recommends the proposed brick pattern should extend vertically along the building.
- The Planning Committee recommends the applicant clearly demarcate the lobby/building entrance at the corner of East-West Highway and America Boulevard.
- The Planning Committee recommends the applicant improve the walkability and pedestrian connectivity of the site including wider sidewalks, enhanced streetscape, as well as appropriate traffic calming devices and speed limits.
- The Planning Committee recommends the applicant ensure there is adequate parking especially for retail users and visitors.
- The Planning Committee recommends the applicant include affordable and accessible units for seniors within the building.

Several committee members noted that the proposed development seems like a “background building” and that the quality of the architecture needs to be improved overall. Building proportions, materials, and construction methods should all be improved. Specifically, it was mentioned that the general form of the building could be more pleasing if it had more traditional proportions.

One committee member stated that there is no clarity in the design. Another committee member suggested the addition of Juliet balconies along the East-West Highway façade to improve the design aesthetic as well as indicate that the building is residential in nature.

The following comments and recommendation were proposed but ultimately not adopted by the Planning Committee.

- The Planning Committee believes the color scheme of the building is underwhelming and should be improved.
- The Planning Committee has concerns with the proposed podium construction and its long-term durability.

### **Timeline**

The applicant's presented to the City Council on July 19<sup>th</sup> and presented to the Planning Committee on July 20<sup>th</sup>.

This item is scheduled for discussion at the Council's August 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

The Prince George's County Planning Board has not yet scheduled a hearing for this application.