



Meeting Summary  
March 23, 2016

**Attendance**

Panel Members: Don Taylor, Vice Chair  
Phil Engelke  
Bob Gorman  
Sujit Mishra  
Julie Wilson

DPZ Staff: Kristin O'Connor, Kate Bolinger, Lisa Kenney

**Royal Farms Store #230 - #16-06**

Owner: MIT-Montevideo, LLC  
Developer: Royal Farms  
Architect: Ratcliffe Architects  
Engineer: Benchmark Engineering, Inc.

**Oxford Square, Parcels Z & AA - #16-07**

Owner/Developer: Kellogg-CCP, LLC  
c/o David P. Scheffenacker, Jr.  
Home Builder: Lennar Homes  
Architect: Middleburg Architectural Service  
Engineer: Fisher Collins and Carter, Inc.

1. **Call to Order** – DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor opened the meeting at 7:33 pm, calling for introductions of the Panel, staff and Project team.
2. **Review of Royal Farms Store #230 – #16 -06** – Mr. Dave Thompson, Benchmark Engineering, offered an overview of the proposed project. He described the proposal for a Royal Farms gas station canopy and store, to be located on half of a site that is also planned to include a CVS Pharmacy. Plans for the CVS project have already been reviewed by the DAP and the Department of Planning and Zoning, and Mr. Thompson stated that construction of the CVS could begin this summer.

In describing the site context, Mr. Thompson noted that Howard County has two capital projects planned adjacent to the project site. These projects include construction of a new public road immediately west of the site (the new Montevideo Road) to align with Port Capital Drive, and planned cross section improvements to Route 1. Plans call for a 6 foot sidewalk along the site's Route 1 frontage.

Vehicles will not access the site from Route 1, but rather from the new public road to the west and the existing Montevideo Road to the east. Vehicle access points are proposed at the rear of the site. He described how the Royal Farms store will feature two entrances, one from the building's front façade and one from the rear façade. Parking is proposed along each of the building's four facades.

Mr. Thompson stated that the landscaping would mimic landscaping planned for the adjacent CVS project. Evergreens are planned for the rear of the site for screening.

William Moltorff, Ratcliffe Architects, described the proposed materials as timeless and low maintenance. He stated that the colors of the brick, HardiePlank siding, and trim proposed for the Royal Farms store building were chosen to match the adjacent CVS building. Mr. Moltorff noted that the dumpster would be enclosed by a PVC fence. He described a proposed freestanding pylon sign that would be 25 feet high with a stone base, brick piers, and PVC columns. The gas canopy columns would feature stone surrounds.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor directed staff to present comments on the project. Ms. Kate Bolinger, DPZ, noted that that the project proposes to use the Commercial Redevelopment (CR) Overlay District zone. The purpose statement in the CR Overlay District zoning code contains multiple references to design. Ms. Bolinger cited the purpose of the CR Overlay District as to promote:

- 1) Redevelopment that benefits surrounding residential and business areas by creating and enhancing well designed centers that help create a vibrant marketplace;
- 2) The encouragement of the most favorable arrangement of building, parking, vehicle circulation, pedestrian circulation, public areas, landscaped areas and other site features based on physical site characteristics and character of surrounding developments; this arrangement is subject to and required to meet the design standards of the *Route 1 Manual*;
- 3) The provision of creative high-quality architectural and site design that minimizes isolated buildings or pad sites and presents a positive image along or near the US Route 1 corridor;
- 4) The development of a mixture of commercial land uses based on market conditions, the site characteristics, and the current or intended future character of the surrounding developments; and
- 5) The encouragement of projects which involve the assembly and redevelopment of the greatest number of adjoining properties, and the discouragement of smaller projects that obstruct the assembly and redevelopment of adjoining properties.

Ms. Bolinger stated that in terms of canopy and building placement, the *Route 1 Manual* calls for clustering of buildings to create a uniform street edge. She noted that in the proposed plan, the gas canopy nearly aligns with the CVS building, but the Royal Farms store building is set back from the gas canopy by approximately 80 feet. Ms. Bolinger asked if there might be an opportunity to bring the store building closer to the canopy by reducing the drive aisle width between the canopy and building. She also asked if the canopy and store building could somehow be integrated or connected in order to give the impression of one structure.

Ms. Bolinger acknowledged that the applicant had responded to staff's request that plans show the location of the future sidewalk to be constructed along US 1 frontage by providing a revised plan to the DAP at the meeting. However, the revised site plan did not address staff's comment that a paved pedestrian walkway be provided from the US 1 frontage and future sidewalk to the property.

Staff requested that the applicant reconsider the design of the pylon sign to comply with the *Route 1 Manual's* recommendation for monument or low-profile, ground-mounted type signs over freestanding pole-mounted signs, and that the sign use materials that complement the proposed building as well as the CVS building and CVS sign. Ms. Bolinger acknowledged that in the applicant modified the sign to feature a complementary stone base and brick piers.

Ms. Bolinger noted that staff requested information on proposed screening method and materials for the dumpster, and that the applicant's presentation provided that information. The *Route 1 Manual* requires that dumpsters are enclosed with a continuous, solid, opaque wall or fence, or a Type D landscape screening treatment.

The final staff comment requested more information on types of plantings proposed, and Ms. Bolinger noted that the revised site plan included captions indicating plant materials.

DAP member Bob Gorman initiated discussion with the applicant, asking if customers could enter from the front and back of the store. Jeff Bainbridge, Royal Farms, confirmed that customers could use either entrance, but stated that most customers use the front entrance. Mr. Gorman asked if the locations of the gas canopy and the Royal Farms store building could be reversed in order to place the building along Route 1, aligning with the CVS building.

Mr. Bainbridge stated that historically, Royal Farms has placed the gas canopy in front because customers are looking for the canopy. He further suggested that should the Royal Farms building be located in the front, it could block views of the adjacent CVS.

Mr. Taylor expressed his support for Mr. Gorman's suggestion of flipping the gas canopy and building. He noted that the intent of the *Route 1 Manual* is to create a streetscape, and that the canopy is quite transparent. He suggested that pulling the building forward would solidify the streetscape. Mr. Taylor stated that the proposed building is not unattractive, and the public is familiar with Royal Farms, so the site may cater to the local customer base more than drivers passing through. He also noted that incoming vehicular traffic will enter at the back of the site.

Mr. Thompson indicated that the back façade of the Royal Farms building contains a glass double entry door, while the front façade features more glazing, allowing views of the gas pumps from the front. Mr. Bainbridge noted that all of the store equipment is towards the back of the store, precluding additional glazing along the back façade.

DAP member Julie Wilson stated her agreement with other Panel members' concerns regarding the canopy placement as proposed along Route 1. Ms. Wilson suggested an alternative layout in which the store building and canopy would be rotated 90 degrees. Mr. Thompson responded that the site is likely not large enough to accommodate this arrangement.

Mr. Bainbridge stated that they have designed the project to comply with the requirements in the *Route 1 Manual* in terms of matching the existing CVS materials and colors as much as possible. He stated that the proposed layout with the gas canopy in front is needed to market and run the business.

DAP member Sujit Mishra expressed his preference for a layout in which the canopy and store building are rotated 90 degrees. He noted that in the applicant's proposed site layout, the gas canopy is situated as a prominent corner feature.

Mr. Gorman noted that the Royal Farms faced is distinctive, and a different site layout would be convenient for customers as well as in compliance with staff recommendations.

Sang Oh, Esq., Talkin & Oh LLP, stated that the *Route 1 Manual* refers to three specific zones, and that when the CR zone was created, it only referenced the *Route 1 Manual*. Mr. Oh indicated that adding a gas station along Route 1 is challenging because in the past the use was not allowed.

Mr. Taylor explained that the role of the Panel is to improve design along the Route 1 corridor. Mr. Oh sought guidance on how the store could be designed if the proposed site layout were flipped. Mr. Taylor suggested that the front façade of the proposed store would be appropriate to face Route 1, but the gas pumps facing Route 1 would not be appropriate.

**The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Board for consideration during its project review.**

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor made the following motion:

1. "That the applicant seriously consider the relocation of the building to face directly on Route 1." Seconded by DAP member Phil Engelke.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

2. "That the applicant consider complying with the staff recommendations for the pedestrian access off of the Route 1 sidewalk and the other staff recommendations." Seconded DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor.

Vote: 5-0 to approve.

For reference, the staff recommendations included the following:

### **Staff Comments - CR Overlay District Purpose**

*The applicant should describe how the proposal addresses the purpose of the CR Overlay District, specifically how the project promotes the following:*

1. *Redevelopment that benefits the surrounding residential and business areas by creating and enhancing well designed centers that help create a vibrant marketplace.*
2. *The encouragement of the most favorable arrangement of building, parking, vehicle circulation, pedestrian circulation, public areas, landscaped areas and other site features based on the physical site characteristics and the character of the surrounding developments. This arrangement is subject to and required to meet the design standards of the Route 1 Manual.*
3. *The provision of creative high-quality architectural and site design that minimizes isolated buildings or pad sites and presents a positive image along or near the U.S. Route 1 corridor.*
4. *The development of a mixture of commercial land uses based on market conditions, the site characteristics, and the current or intended future character of the surrounding developments.*
5. *The encouragement of projects which involve the assembly and redevelopment of the greatest number of adjoining properties, and the discouragement of smaller projects that obstruct the assembly and redevelopment of adjoining properties.*

### **Staff Comments – Route 1 Manual**

1. *Canopy and building placement – the Route 1 Manual calls for clustering of buildings to create a uniform street edge (page 35). As proposed, the gas canopy nearly aligns with the CVS building, but the Royal Farms store building is set back from the gas canopy by ~80 feet. Is there an opportunity to bring the store building closer to the canopy by reducing the drive aisle width? Further, is there an opportunity to integrate or connect the canopy with the Royal Farms store building?*
2. *Sidewalk – plans should indicate the location of the future sidewalk to be constructed along the US 1 frontage. The Route 1 Manual requires 6 foot wide sidewalks along the US 1 frontage. Please refer to the sidewalk and crosswalks section of the Route 1 Manual (beginning on page 26).*

3. *Pedestrian connections – provide a paved pedestrian connection from the US 1 frontage and future sidewalk so that pedestrians have a second access point to the property. The Route 1 Manual requires a minimum internal pedestrian walkway width of 5 feet. The manual further requires that walkways connect public rights-of-way and bus stops to building entrances (page 45).*
4. *Pylon sign – the Route 1 Manual recommends monument or low-profile, ground-mounted type signs over freestanding pole-mounted signs (page 44). The applicant should reconsider the design of the pylon sign to comply with the recommendation. The monument sign could use materials that complement the proposed building as well as the CVS building and CVS sign.*
5. *Dumpster enclosure – please indicate proposed screening method and materials for the dumpster. The Route 1 Manual requires that dumpsters are enclosed with a continuous, solid, opaque wall or fence, or a Type D landscape screening treatment. Please refer to the trash enclosures section of the Route 1 Manual (page 42).*
6. *Landscape plan – please indicate the types of plantings proposed, including treatment of the bioretention areas to the northeast of the property. Please refer to the landscape section of the Route 1 Manual (beginning on page 40).*

- 3. Review of Oxford Square, Parcels Z & AA – #16 -07** – Mr. Matthew Fitzsimmons, Hord Coplan Macht, gave an overview of the entire Oxford Square project, indicating the project's mix of uses, focal points, and amenity spaces. He stated that the current submission comprises parcels AA and Z, where townhouses are proposed. He described how both of these parcels slope toward a central green space (an existing wetland/natural area), and that the CSX rail line borders the parcels to the west. Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that because of the presence of the rail line, the site would require noise mitigation in the form of a sound wall.

Mr. Fitzsimmons described the organization of the townhouses, amenity spaces, pedestrian connections and streets. He noted that the townhouses are arranged to create small courts with views toward the central green space. He stated that a community-wide shared-use path continues through these parcels, running along one side of the central green space and then connecting to an adjacent school site. He indicated that the project would provide two new public streets with sidewalks. The sound wall would be located parallel to the new street 'A,' and both the sound wall and street would align with the CSX rail line.

The project aims to minimize the amount of retaining walls needed and address stormwater management with outdoor spaces. As a result, Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that an area previously slated for a small parking area was redesigned as open space with stormwater management functionality.

Mr. Josh Bundy, Lennar Homes, explained the intent in designing the townhouses was to create a smaller housing option (with 18 foot wide footprints) compared to other homes in Oxford Square, while maintaining continuity of design in brick and color choices. The smaller homes are intended to allow additional buyers entry to the community.

DAP Vice Chair Don Taylor recused himself from the discussion due to his working relationship with Lennar Homes. DAP member Phil Engelke took over as Chair. Mr. Engelke directed staff to present comments on the project. Ms. Kate Bolinger, DPZ, noted several staff comments related to elevations.

Regarding the rear elevations, staff sought additional information in terms of materials, door and window pattern, and garage doors. She requested confirmation from the applicant that the rear elevations would feature single-car width garage doors, and that each unit would feature a one-car wide parking pad. Mr. Bundy confirmed that each unit would feature a single-car garage and one-car parking pad.

For the side elevations, staff noted that the typical side elevation presented in the submittal package featured minimal architectural detail. Ms. Bolinger suggested that end unit townhouses with high visibility be given enhanced architectural treatment, or screened with landscaping.

Related to the front elevations, staff observed that the proposed front facades appeared to be quite similar to townhouses already constructed in other blocks of Oxford Square. Ms. Bolinger asked if the applicant considered varying the architectural style so that these townhouses would be distinguishable from other homes in the community. She acknowledged the applicant's stated design intent to provide continuity with the other homes.

Ms. Bolinger noted that the townhouses along Banbury Drive would feature two-story units facing a five story apartment building across the street. Staff recommended that the height of the townhouses along Banbury Drive be increased to provide better transition from the apartment building.

Regarding the sound wall, Ms. Bolinger suggested that it incorporate green/vegetated screening to complement the natural area/wetland feature nearby.

Ms. Bolinger concluded the staff comments with a suggestion that an additional paved connection to the neighboring elementary school and associated play area be considered. Such connection could perhaps be made with a gateway through the fencing located along the eastern boundary of parcel AA.

DAP member Julie Wilson began the Panel's conversation with the applicant, and commended the site design for the green space, paths and the overall layout. Ms. Wilson requested that the applicant explain why the shared-use path, which runs through a green area, was designed at an 8 foot width (wider than most sidewalks). She stated her preference for narrower pathways in natural areas. Mr. Fitzsimmons explained that the 8 foot width would allow bicyclists as well as pedestrians to use the same pathway, and that the width could have been greater to accommodate these users. He noted the width was limited to 8 feet in order to minimize impervious area.

Ms. Wilson asked for additional information about how the applicant redistributed parking spaces when the small parking area was redesigned as open space with stormwater management. Mr. Fitzsimmons indicated that these parking spaces were relocated to a bank of head-in parking spaces fronting the green space.

DAP member Bob Gorman described the overall plan as refreshing and commendable. Regarding the shared-use path, he stated his agreement for the 8 foot width, indicating any narrower would be problematic for multiple users. Mr. Gorman asked why the applicant did not design the path as a loop around the entire green space. He also asked if the path could connect to all of the project's alleyways, since many residents may exit their garages in addition to their front door to access the path. Mr. Fitzsimmons noted that the design features landscaping to screen alleyways from the pathway, and that many of the landscaped areas also provide stormwater management function. Mr. Gorman suggested these connections could be made with soft pathways rather than paved.

Mr. Gorman noted the new street 'A' parallel to the rail line seemed very long without a break for turning around, particularly with the removal of the small parking area. Mr. Fitzsimmons explained that the street terminates in a 'T' turnaround and has been designed using County standards.

Mr. Engelke observed that the sound wall, like the new street 'A,' seemed very long as well. He suggested that perhaps the wall could be broken up with a green feature, or public art, rather than repeating the same pattern over the entire length. He noted that there are some model examples of walls with interesting patterns in Phoenix, Arizona that the applicant could look to for inspiration.

DAP member Sujit Mishra complimented the applicant on the composition of the open space and built space. He suggested that when a corner unit's side elevation fronts a road, the side elevation should be treated as a front façade with enhanced architectural detail. He suggested the townhouses could be made slightly different than other homes in the area while still offering some design continuity.

Mr. Bundy stated that high visibility side elevations in other phases of Oxford Square have been given full brick treatment, and that such treatment would also be applied to these townhouses. He suggested that the townhouses would be designed with six different colors to avoid a cookie-cutter appearance. He also indicated there would be a variety of brick colors which are randomly intermixed among each individual unit resulting in a random variation that ties together.

Ms. Wilson expressed her agreement with Mr. Mishra regarding the need for enhanced composition of the side elevations, noting their minimalist appearance with a few windows. She further stated that the front elevations appeared to be missing composition, with perhaps too many different designs creating too much random variation without enough common elements across units. Ms. Wilson pointed to images of built homes in other areas of Oxford Square and noted that individual units contain common elements that tie them together.

Mr. Mishra stated his preference for siding products that are more environmentally friendly than vinyl. He suggested that canopies be provided over front doors for greater functionality and protection from the elements. He also recommended that shutters, when provided, should be functional rather than simply aesthetic.

Mr. Engelke noted that historically, not all residential buildings had shutters, and that often materials would vary by block and a simpler material might be used in a certain area. He suggested that given the design intent to provide a smaller product, the townhouse design in this area could be simplified compared to other areas of Oxford Square.

Mr. Gorman observed that the rear yards will need to accommodate trash bins, recycling bins and HVAC units, and that with 18 foot wide units, the placement of these items could be difficult to arrange and conceal from view. He recommended that thought be given to the placement of these items.

Mr. Jeremy Rutter, Project Manager, stated that the developer is very open to the design of the sound wall, and is seeking ways to break up the length of the wall. Mr. Engelke suggested that the developer look for images of walls along Arizona state highways for inspiration.

Mr. Gorman suggested that the applicant might consider shifting the townhouses closest to the area previously designed for a small parking area into that area in order to create a larger turnaround at the end of the new street 'A.'

**The DAP adopted the following recommendations for the project. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning.**

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

1. "That the applicant look at a continuous main pathway around the central open space feature with some sort of connection that links the alleys to that system and it could be a soft path." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 4-0 to approve.

DAP member Sujit Mishra made the following motion:

2. "That the applicant think more about the corner buildings, think of alternative materials other than vinyl siding, think about the functional aspect of the window shutters, and add entrance canopies." Seconded DAP member Bob Gorman.

Vote: 4-0 to approve.

DAP member Julie Wilson made the following motion:

3. "That the applicant take another look at the elevations and composition of them in terms of horizontal lines as well as architectural features so that there's some rhythm to them." Seconded by DAP member Sujit Mishra.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

DAP member Bob Gorman made the following motion:

4. "That as the applicant gets into the detail of how the backs of the units are working, that the applicant think creatively of how to deal with all of the support items – the trash bins, recycling bins, cable boxes, transformers – all of the stuff that supports the houses." Seconded by DAP member Julie Wilson.

Vote: 4-0 to approve

#### **4. Call to Adjourn**

Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 8:54 pm.