

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Kinsey O'Shea, AICP; Town Planner/Current Development *KC for KO*

**Date:** April 12, 2019

**Subject:** RZN19-0001/ORD 1892-Request to rezone 5.550 acres in the R-5 Transitional Residential and GC General Commercial Zoning Districts to PR Planned Residential Zoning District on the 1000 block of North Main Street (Tax Map Nos 226-20 9-11; 226-A 284-290; 226-A 293; 226-3 1-4) for the development of a mixed use multi-family and commercial development by John Neel of Gay and Neel, Inc. (applicant) for Landmark Properties, Inc. (contract purchaser).

**SUMMARY OF REQUEST**

<b>Property Location</b>	1003-1107 blk North Main St; 908-1006 Montgomery St; 101 Broce Dr.
<b>Tax Parcel Numbers</b>	226-20 9-11; 226-A 284-290; 226-A 293; 226-3 1-4
<b>Parcel(s) Size</b>	5.550 acres
<b>Present Zoning District</b>	GC General Commercial and R-5 Transitional Residential
<b>Current Use</b>	Commercial; Office; Laundromat; Gas and Service Station; Residential
<b>Adjacent Zoning Districts</b>	<b>North:</b> GC General Commercial; R-5 Transitional Residential <b>East:</b> GC General Commercial across Main Street <b>South:</b> GC General Commercial <b>West:</b> R-5 Transitional Residential
<b>Adjacent Uses</b>	<b>North:</b> Single-family residential; Office <b>East:</b> Single-family residential; Office; YMCA Thrift Store <b>South:</b> Restaurant; Single-family residential <b>West:</b> Single-family residential
<b>Adopted Future Land Use</b>	High Impact Commercial; Medium-Density Residential
<b>Proposed Uses</b>	Multi-family residential; Mixed commercial uses (complete list in application)
<b>Proposed District Standards</b>	
<b>Maximum Height</b>	70'
<b>Minimum Setbacks</b>	<b>Front:</b> 0' <b>Side:</b> 0' <b>Rear:</b> 0'
<b>Maximum lot coverage</b>	85% impervious
<b>Maximum FAR</b>	1.60
<b>Proposed Maximum Density</b>	825 bedrooms (148.6 br/ac)
<b>Proposed Minimum Parking</b>	0.80 parking spaces/bedroom (100% structured parking)
<b>Proposed Bike Parking</b>	1 space per bedroom
<b>Minimum Open Space</b>	20% of total district area; including 5,000 square feet active recreation

## **EVALUATION OF APPLICATION**

This staff report is divided into topical areas of evaluation. Many of the overarching principles in the Comprehensive Plan, the Residential Infill Guidelines, and the Zoning Ordinance overlap into key topical focus areas. To aid in review of the staff report each topic or focus area is covered only once. The analysis is contained in the staff report. The pertinent text sections from the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance have been included as an appendix to this report.

The Town has also received input from *Development Strategies* regarding student housing redevelopment in the Patrick Henry Corridor and analysis specific to proposed projects within this Corridor. While this proposal is not within the Corridor nor is it redevelopment of existing multi-family student housing, *Development Strategies* was asked to provide analysis specific to the proposed Landmark's The Standard at Blacksburg. Many of the elements from *Development Strategies* analysis from other student housing project are also relevant to this project. This guidance will be referenced in the staff report and the full document is included as an attachment.

The staff report also includes a summary of key elements to provide guidance to Planning Commission for discussion at the work session.

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## **BACKGROUND AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The rezoning request comprises 15 individual parcels, mainly along the 1000-block of North Main Street. There are 4 parcels included in the rezoning area with frontage on Montgomery Street, and 2 parcels on Broce Drive. Please see the attached aerial image in the Staff GIS maps for the rezoning area. The 9 parcels along Main Street are a mix of commercial uses, including the North Main Street Laundromat; several single-family homes, some of which have been converted to office uses; the DanceTech/Romp 'n' Roll and Squared Away Storage building; and Price's Service Center and gas station at the corner of Broce Drive and North Main Street. According to the applicant, there is approximately 13,000 square feet of leasable commercial space existing on the properties today. The parcels along Montgomery Street are all single-family residences. The parcel on Broce Drive is a single-family residence.

This area of North Main Street is a mix of commercial, office and residential uses. Cross streets off of Main Street generally do not align with one another, except Progress Street, which is a signalized intersection. There are 2 vehicle travel lanes in each direction, with 5'-6' sidewalks on each side of the street. The sidewalks are located at the back of the curb. There is significant grade change both along North Main Street—approximately 17'; as well as from North Main Street to the rear of the properties on Montgomery Street—approximately 28'.

The properties along Main Street are zoned GC General Commercial, while the Broce Drive and Montgomery Street properties are zoned R-5 Transitional Residential. Properties adjacent and across Main Street are zoned GC General Commercial. Please see the Staff GIS maps for illustration of the surrounding zoning districts.

## **DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

The proposed development entails the demolition of all existing structures on site. The applicant proposes to build a single building, which is proffered to meet a minimum of National Green Building Standard's Bronze Level, with a mix of uses including commercial, leasing office, Live/Work residential units, multifamily residential units, and structured parking. There is no surface parking in this development. A number of retaining walls, mostly to the west and south of the site will be required to accommodate the grade changes that exist. The building's floors would be stepped to accommodate the grading as well—for example, the ground level commercial space on the southern end of the development will be a full story lower than the ground level leasing, live/work, and commercial space north of the parking garage entrance on Main Street. The application's

floor level plans (Sheets A0-01 through A0-06) illustrate the various floor levels of the development, and relationship to grade.

The commercial component of the development is proposed to be approximately 17,800 square feet, including a single large two-story volume commercial space of approximately 13,800 square feet on a single floor as a southern anchor of the building on Main Street. The remainder of the commercial space along the northern part of the Main Street frontage and wrapping the corner at Broce Drive could be divided into several different tenants. Additionally, on the ground floor along North Main Street, the applicant has proposed 4 Live/Work units in which a residential tenant also operates a business out of the unit, with storefront space along Main Street. The Main Street ground floor also contains the leasing office for the development, and bike shop area for tenant use both of which are specific to the development. There are also 2 residential units on the ground floor fronting on Main Street.

The rear portion of the ground floor and upper levels of the building are divided into a mix of studios, 1-, 2-, 3-, 4-, and 5-bedroom units. Sheet A0-01 provides a breakdown of the unit types and percentages of total units. Not all units are proposed to have bed/bath parity, which is more common for purpose-built student housing development such as the proposed project. The development is proposed to have a maximum of 825 bedrooms, which equates to approximately 147 bedrooms per acre. Interior to the building are several courtyards that make up much of the development's residential amenity areas. Additionally, the development will include a rooftop pool area on the top floor of the parking deck, as well as a club and exercise area. There are other amenity areas/yards toward the rear of the development adjacent to the single-family homes on Montgomery Street.

Parking for this development is provided in a single parking structure, wrapped on 3 sides by the building. The parking deck will contain a total of  $\pm 740$  parking spaces for both commercial and residential uses, including at least 6 electric car charging stations that may be on the first, second, or third levels of the garage. There is no specificity as to whether these spaces will be available to commercial use, or residential use, or both. The residential parking ratio is proposed to be 0.8 parking spaces per bedroom, and the commercial space is proposed to accommodate 4 spaces per 1000 square feet of leasable area. Additionally, the development is proposed to provide a 1:1 bicycle parking to bedroom ratio, including at least 80% covered spaces.

Lastly, the development includes the dedication of 5' of additional right-of-way along both the Montgomery Street and Broce Drive frontages. The dedication of this right-of-way is typically not required with a rezoning request however with a binding plan, such as the in the Planned Residential district. the right-of-way impacts the design and right-of-way needs to be shown now. These frontages will also be improved with new sidewalks where there is currently no sidewalk today. The Main Street frontage includes wider sidewalks with street trees and other plantings, as well as a bus pull-off in front of the retail space at the south corner of the building.

### **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION**

There are a number of analysis points for evaluation of a request to rezone a property within Town. The policies and maps in the Comprehensive Plan lend guidance to the Town's vision of growth in the future, while specific codes and requirements in the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, and the Town Code ensure that the development meets all applicable regulations. Specifically, the Zoning Ordinance calls out the criteria for evaluation of a rezoning request, as found below:

Section 1151 of the Zoning Ordinance requires the Commission to study all rezoning requests to determine:

- 1) *Whether the proposed amendment conforms to the general guidelines and policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan.*

- 2) *The relationship of the proposed amendment to the purposes of the general planning program of the Town, with appropriate consideration as to whether the change will further the purposes of [the Zoning Ordinance] and the general welfare of the entire community.*
- 3) *The need and justification for the change.*
- 4) *When pertaining to a change in the district classification of the property, the effect of the change, if any, on the property, surrounding property, and on public services and facilities. In addition, the Commission shall consider the appropriateness of the property for the proposed change as related to the purposes set forth at the beginning of each district classification.*

Additionally, section 1162 of the Zoning Ordinance states that proposals for rezoning to a planned zoning district constitute an application for conditional zoning. Section 1160 of the Zoning Ordinance gives guidance to the evaluation of proffers that may be proffered by the applicant.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **Comprehensive Plan Map Series Evaluation of Application**

In evaluating whether the proposed use conforms to the general guidelines and policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan, all applicable sections of the Plan should be included in the review of the application. The Comprehensive Plan offers a wide range of guiding principles for the future of development with Town. The following text identifies the designation of the proposed rezoning property on the maps in the Future Land Use map series. ***Other relevant Comprehensive Plan text sections applicable to this request are included in the Staff Appendix in Attachment B.***

#### **Map A: Future Land Use Designation**

In evaluating whether the proposed planned residential development conforms to the general guidelines and policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use designation of the subject property shall be one of the considerations of the evaluation.

The property is split into two different Future Land Use designations. The larger portion fronting on Main Street is designated **High Impact Commercial**, while the smaller portion fronting on Montgomery Street and the single-family property on Broce Drive are designated **Medium Density Residential**.

#### **Commercial Designation**

High Impact Commercial is defined as:

*Small or large commercial developments with a need for high visibility and have a high impact on the surrounding environment, including but not limited to factors such as lighting, noise, parking, traffic, and hours of operation. Examples include large retail establishments, restaurants, hotels/motels, and auto-related uses. Typical implementing zoning districts: Downtown Commercial (DC), General Commercial (GC), Planned Commercial (PC), and Mixed Use (MXD).*

Of the proposed 5.5-acre development site, approximately 4.6 acres is designated as High Impact Commercial. Please see the Staff GIS maps showing the Future Land Use. There are 9 individual parcels with frontage on Main Street, and are owned by 5 different owners. The commercial parcels range in depth from just  $\pm 100'$  to  $\pm 425'$ . The relatively shallow depth, and narrow parcel configuration, combined with a number of individual property owners makes the prospect of meaningful commercial development more challenging along this stretch of Main Street. Furthermore, the direct interface with single-family residential properties and significant grade change may hinder development of high-intensity commercial uses. The applicant has stated that the approximate square footage of existing leasable commercial space is 13,000 square feet, and does not include several of the existing structures' basement or attic spaces.

The applicant indicates while the zoning would change to a residential zoning district there will be a small net gain in commercial square footage with the project compared to the existing development. The parcels included in the rezoning application are underutilized today. The current pattern of development with many owners and small parcels does make it more difficult to assemble parcels for redevelopment. The topography is also an impediment to commercial redevelopment.

In their work on the Downtown Study, *Development Strategies* introduced a more urban forms for redevelopment in the downtown core. In their memo on this project, *Development Strategies* raises the question of how urban this corridor should be in the future. While this question was considered for the Downtown Study, Planning Commission and Town Council have not contemplated the desired level of intensity and desired development form for this corridor. In particular, *Development Strategies* notes that if a more urban, high-quality pedestrian-oriented development is desired, structured parking is a needed element. However, in a college town, the expense of structured parking is typically only absorbed by high density student housing.

#### Loss of Commercial Land

There is a limited amount of commercially-designated and zoned land within the Town of Blacksburg. These locations are generally along the arterial roadway corridors within Town, offering public utilities, robust transportation networks, and Blacksburg Transit bus service, in an effort to ensure that the future commercial needs of the Town can be accommodated. The Future Land Use designation of High Impact Commercial does not contemplate residential density, though each of the implementing districts do allow residential uses to provide for vertical mixed-use development.

There have been a number of rezoning requests in recent years seeking to change commercial areas to residential areas, which results in the permanent loss of commercial capacity. The trend to use commercial land for residential uses is primarily driven by the current pressures of the student housing market. Examples of residential rezonings that have included rezoning land from commercial to residential include The Preston Row development, Cedar Run Overlook development, and Uptown Phase III development. They are all planned residential developments that are located within High Impact Commercial designated areas. Preston Row on Progress Street is approximately one acre located off Main Street. Cedar Run Overlook is located off Main Street, at the end of Dowdy Drive, a private road, and is approximately 6 acres. Uptown Phase III is a standalone residential building within a commercial development at the corner of Main Street and Giles Road. Apart from Uptown Phase III, none of these developments has an associated commercial component.

Planning Commission and Town Council should evaluate the loss of commercial land on a case-by-case basis. With a growing student and non-student population, the need for retail and commercial services will also continue to grow. Commercial and service uses for the population should occur in areas that are in a convenient location with infrastructure to support these uses, which is reflected in the Future Land Use designation. The Town's commercial land use policy has specifically been to stimulate redevelopment of older commercial areas with new commercial development. This policy has been successful and addresses the fact that there are not many suitable areas for new greenfield commercial developments. The potential loss of this land to residential zoning will limit the available land for further commercial development. The Town's Comprehensive Plan is designed to look at community needs in the long term. The evaluation should also include the impacts associated with the residential component of the project which come with the commercial redevelopment proposed.

### Commercial Uses in the Planned Residential District

Section 3113 (c) of the Zoning Ordinance provides additional regulation within the Planned Residential District regarding commercial and/or office uses. The maximum area for commercial and/or office uses is 10% of the gross area of the PR district. In addition, commercial and office uses shall be expressly designed for the service and convenience of the PR district. The application proposes 17,800 square feet of commercial area which is approximately 7.36% of the gross land area of the PR district. However, while the application notes that the commercial and office uses are designed to serve the inhabitants of the district, the scale of the proposed commercial is indicative of a mixed use project that would serve the greater citizenry. If the commercial uses only met the needs of the project residents, it would not serve as meaningful commercial space. The applicant is trying to be responsive to the Town's policy for a substantial commercial component for mixed use developments. The Planned Residential district has been selected because it allows for consideration of the high density residential development desired by the applicant.

The application does show a net gain of commercial development with the proposed project of approximately 4,000-5,000 square feet. The application proposes a single, large-volume 2-story space of approximately 13,800 square feet at the southern end of the development. The application states that this space is available for a single tenant, and therefore due to the binding nature of a PRD, would not be allowed to be subdivided into smaller commercial spaces. An additional  $\pm 4,000$  square feet of commercial space is proposed at the northern end of the development. The application is unclear as to whether the Live/Work units are counted in the additional commercial space, or if they are in addition to the commercial space calculation. The total square footage of the Live/Work units is approximately 4,217 for the four units. Additionally, a "bike shop" is proposed along the Main Street Frontage, and appears to be approximately the same size as the  $\pm 1,000$  square foot residential units. The Main Street frontage is a mix of commercial, residential support, and residential uses. There are 2 residential units, in addition to the 4 Live/Work units that will have frontage directly at grade on Main Street. The leasing office and bike shop comprise the residential support uses along Main Street. In total, there is approximately  $\pm 25,000$  square feet of ground floor space along Main Street, of which approximately 70% is the northern and southern commercial spaces.

The total project square footage, minus the parking garage, is approximately  $\pm 384,900$  square feet. The 17,800 square feet of dedicated commercial represents approximately 4.6% of the total project square footage. Except for Terrace View, no other recent Planned Residential rezoning has incorporated a commercial component. The commercial portion of the Terrace View development is smaller in comparison to the whole development (3,600 square feet of 775,000 square feet) at approximately 0.4%. It should be noted, however, that most of the recent Planned Residential projects have been in residentially designated areas as opposed to commercially designated areas.

### Residential Designation

Medium Density Residential is defined as:

*Up to and including ten dwelling units per acre; or up to 20 bedrooms per acre, whichever is less. Typical implementing zoning districts: Transitional Residential (R-5), Old Town Residential (OTR), Planned Residential (PR), and Planned Manufactured Home (PMH).*

The combined acreage of the parcels designated as Medium-Density Residential is approximately 1.1 acres, and therefore could support up to 22 total bedrooms; however, not all of the parcels are contiguous. Overall, the development site could support up to 242 total bedrooms if the maximum density in the existing R-5 and GC zoning districts are combined.

The surrounding neighborhood is mostly made up of smaller single-family homes, but there are several attached units as well. It is not possible to calculate actual overall developed density of this neighborhood. Medium density residential and the implementing districts typically provide a transition between less-dense single-family neighborhoods and higher intensity uses such as commercial/office or multifamily districts. The mix of dwelling size and types in these areas can provide a variety of housing options for a mix of demographic market segments. Many of the homes in the immediate area are rented as opposed to owner-occupied. The north and west neighboring sides of the development are also designated Medium-Density Residential. In some cases, a street may serve as the dividing line between zoning districts or future land use designations; however, both sides of Montgomery Street and Broce Drive are designated Medium-Density Residential, and are developed with residential buildings in similar sizes and scales to one another but vastly different in scale to the development proposed.

#### **Map B: Urban Development Areas/Mixed Use Areas**

A portion of the proposed development is located in an Urban Development Area, and in a Mixed Use Area. A site's designation within an Urban Development Area does not obligate approval of a rezoning request, nor does the lack of such designation preclude the approval of a rezoning in an Urban Development Area. The commercial parcels are generally the boundary of these designations, and do not include three of the four parcels on Montgomery Street. Specifically, the development is within Mixed Use Area/UDA-C. Mixed Use Area C is described as "a balance of commercial and residential mixed uses is desired to provide a natural transition from the commercial orientation on North Main Street, Prices Fork and Patrick Henry Drive to the adjacent residential uses". The Staff Appendix contains more information on this designation.

#### **Map C: Neighborhood, Employment and Service Areas Map**

The site is located at the confluence of three different designations on the Neighborhood, Employment, and Service Areas map. The portion along Main Street and Broce Drive is designated as a commercial area. The Montgomery Street frontage is designated as commercial, urban/walkable, and multi-unit residential. The purpose of this map is to use broad-brush strokes to categorize areas of town based on similar characteristics of both residential development, and also neighborhood character. These designations take into account key issues for the future for each of the neighborhood types. The supporting text for these designations is found in the Staff Appendix.

#### **Proposed Corridor Study North Main Street**

The Town has a number of ongoing planning initiatives including consideration of the South Main, North Main and University City Boulevard commercial corridors. Studies are proposed for these areas to look at land use patterns, redevelopment opportunities and constraints, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and zoning changes. These studies along with implementation of the recently completed downtown study and needed zoning ordinance text amendments are included in a multi-year planning work program. A specific timeframe to begin the North Main study has not been established. The applicant is aware that a future study will occur but it is not within the timeline of the rezoning.

#### **Multi-Family Housing Inventory/Student Housing Policy**

In response to market demand and growth of University enrollment, the Town has approved a number of new multi-family residential projects. Town staff recently updated data on existing, approved and pending multi-family development. There are currently 20,192 bedrooms of multi-family housing available and 2,790 of approved but not yet constructed. The majority of these units are student oriented housing. For a number of years, the Town had an informal policy encouraging the redevelopment of older existing student housing developments with new development at greater density in areas where the community is accustomed to student housing. The goal was to have additional student housing capacity in areas that were already student

oriented and with infrastructure to support the development. The Town Council has adopted a formal policy regarding new student housing proposals with resolution #2-F-19. The policy indicates that Town Council will specifically evaluate the following with respect to student-oriented housing proposals:

- a. Council will consider limited opportunities for some additional student-oriented housing for high quality projects in appropriate locations in the Town; and
- b. Council will encourage redevelopment of older housing units in student-oriented areas of Town where supporting infrastructure is already available and fewer lifestyle conflicts with adjacent neighborhoods are likely to occur.

It also includes the following guidance with regard to future student housing development:

- a. Student housing proposals in commercial districts should include significant square footage dedicated to commercial and office uses. In downtown, student housing proposals should be limited to areas specified in the recently completed Downtown Strategic Plan.
- b. Applications for student-oriented housing should be thoughtfully designed and geared specifically to the Blacksburg community while being sensitive to the context of the site and using quality building material to fit in the surrounding areas.

## **ZONING ORDINANCE EVALUATION OF APPLICATION**

### **Intent of Districts**

There is a statement of purpose for each district in the Zoning Ordinance.

#### *Planned Residential §3110*

*The purpose of this district is to provide for the development of planned residential communities that incorporate a variety of housing options as well as certain limited commercial and office uses designed to serve the inhabitants of the district. This district is intended to allow greater flexibility than is generally possible under conventional zoning district regulations by encouraging ingenuity, imagination and high quality design to create a superior living environment for the residents of the planned community. The PR district is particularly appropriate for parcels which contain a number of constraints to conventional development. In addition to an improved quality of design, the PR district creates an opportunity to reflect changes in the technology of land development, provide opportunities for new approaches to home ownership, and provide for an efficient use of land which can result in reduced development costs.*

It is the burden of the applicant to prove that the design submitted meets the intent of the Planned Residential District. In some cases, a development application for a PR district provides the Town with a housing model or type that is not found elsewhere in town, such as the Shadowlake Village Co-Housing Community PR district. In other instances, the PR district allows an applicant to put forward housing for an underserved population and proffer limitations to ensure the need is met as with the Grissom Lane Senior Housing development. In all cases, these applications are reviewed by the Planning Commission and Town Council for their merits on a case-by-case basis. The applicant has indicated that the project is a different product in that it is mixed-use, includes structured parking, and will meet LEED Bronze standards. Further detail on the applicant's justification is included in the application on Page 18.

### **Density & Occupancy, Lifestyle Conflicts**

Not only does the physical development of the property affect the neighborhood compatibility, but also the lifestyle of the target market for the project. There are a number of Town policies and goals that encourage the provision of housing for a variety of different citizens with different lifestyle needs. Blacksburg has been identified as both a great place to retire, as well as a good place to raise a family. The University is actively growing undergraduate enrollment which is affecting the Town's housing market.

Density

The density of the development is also a factor in considering whether the proposed development is appropriate to the surrounding neighborhood. The Planned Residential Zoning District allows an applicant to choose a maximum residential density. This proposed standard should be considered and evaluated for its appropriateness and compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, given the target market for the proposed development, the demographics of the surrounding neighborhood, and the proposal’s mitigation of adverse impacts.

It is unknown what the current developed density is in the surrounding neighborhood, as the residential uses may or may not be developed at the maximum allowed density per the zoning district. Most of the commercial buildings along Main Street in this area do not have a residential component. However, there may be some older attached residential structures in the R-5 district that were developed at a time when the zoning allowed greater density, and are therefore above the currently-allowed density.

The applicant has proposed a density of approximately 149 bedrooms per acre (148.6). The overall density allowed by right on the site under the combined GC and R-5 zoning is 242 bedrooms, which is approximately 44 bedrooms per acre average. The FLU of Medium-Density Residential allows up to 20 bedrooms per acre; however the High Impact Commercial designation does not contemplate residential density, though the implementing districts allow residential uses at 48 bedrooms per acre for Downtown Commercial and General Commercial Zoning Districts, but there is no maximum density specified in the Planned Commercial District, which is also an implementing district for the High Impact Commercial designation. Overall, the proposed density represents approximately 3.5-times the allowed density by-right.

There have been a number of requests for student-oriented multifamily Planned Residential Zoning Districts over the last several years. This chart does not include smaller developments, those that are not targeted toward students, or duplex/townhome developments. The following chart illustrates the various developments’ status, density, and parking ratio. The greatest density of housing proposed through rezoning was the original application for the Stadium View development in the Houston-Harrell neighborhood at 154 bedrooms/acre. This application was subsequently revised to the density shown in the chart below.

Year	Development	Status	Density	Parking Ratio
2012	The Edge PRD	approved, completed	62 br/ac	1 sp/br
2014	The Retreat PRD	approved, completed	20 br/ac	1.01/br
2016	Sturbridge Square	approved	89 br/ac	0.75 sp/br
2017	Stonegate II	approved	20 br/ac	1.05/br
2017	Warren Street Stadium View	pending, under review	73 br/ac	0.82 sp/br
2017	Hearthstone Redevelopment PRD	approved, under construction	48 br/ac	0.78 sp/br
2018	Cedar Run Overlook	approved	35 br/ac	0.93 sp/br
2018	Frith/The View	pending, under review	68 br/ac	0.89 sp/br
2018	Terrace View PRD 2018	approved	114 br/ac	0.77 sp/br
2018	30-R	approved	58 br/ac	0.85 sp/br
2018	1222 Patrick Henry	approved	66 br/ac	0.75 sp/br
2019	<b>The Standard</b>	pending, under review	<b>147 br/ac</b>	0.8 sp/br+ commercial

Occupancy

The Planned Residential District restricts residential occupancy to a family plus 2 unrelated individuals, or no more than 4 unrelated individuals in townhome and multifamily developments. However, because the applicant is creating new use types, the ability to create a different occupancy standard is allowed under the district’s flexibility. The applicant proposes that this PR district shall have a maximum occupancy of one person per lease per bedroom for a maximum of 825 leases. No more than five unrelated persons shall occupy a dwelling unit. With an occupancy standard of one person per bedroom, 5 unrelated individuals could only reside in a unit with 5 bedrooms. It should be noted that there are other multifamily developments that have proposed 5 bedroom units. The Retreat PRD is an example of a previous rezoning request to permit 5-bedroom units through the PRD process. There are also some units in Foxridge that have an occupancy of greater than 4 unrelated individuals.

**Development Standards**

The characteristics of physical site development are regulated by the Zoning District standards. In a Planned Residential Zoning District the applicant may propose most of the individual standards for the proposed development. The layout and standards of the development, if approved, are binding. Since the applicant proposes the standards in the PRD, the evaluation of the proposed standards is different. The evaluation should be based on how well the proposed standards, when applied, fit into the existing character of the surrounding area. The Planning Commission and Town Council evaluate each Planned Residential development on its own merit. In this instance, the surrounding area contains existing mixed residential uses, as well as a number of different commercial and industrial uses. There is a great deal of flexibility in proposing the development’s standards, but the standards should not be so out of scale or character, or different from the various surrounding districts as to create an incompatibility in use or site layout.

The following table illustrates the proposed Planned Residential District standards for the proposed development:

<b>MAXIMUM HEIGHT</b>	70'
<b>MINIMUM SETBACKS</b>	Front: 0' Side: 0' Rear: 0'
<b>MAXIMUM LOT COVERAGE</b>	85% impervious
<b>MAXIMUM FAR</b>	1.6
<b>PROPOSED MAXIMUM DENSITY</b>	825 bedrooms (148.6 bedrooms/acre)
<b>PROPOSED MINIMUM PARKING</b>	0.8 spaces per bedroom plus 4 sp./1000 sf commercial (±740 spaces) 100% structured parking
<b>PROPOSED BIKE PARKING</b>	1 space per bedroom (min. 825 spaces)
<b>PROPOSED MINIMUM OPEN SPACE</b>	20% of total district area (see open space in application text)

**Building Design: Orientation, Style, Materials, Scale, Massing, and Height**

The building orientation, style, materials, scale, massing, and height of a development are elements affecting how a proposed development fits into the surrounding area.

Building Massing and Materials

The elevations show a number of different materials and colors, but no specificity has been provided regarding the types of materials proposed for the development. The applicant should provide additional information regarding the types of materials, as well as information regarding percentage of each material and/or color per façade to ensure that the building is visually interesting and includes quality materials. Typically, materials such

as vinyl siding are not included in a project and limits on the use of less durable products such as EIFS are encouraged.

The elevations provided with the application show an articulation in the building façade, as well as some variation in the rooflines. The total building length will be approximately 745' and will take up the entire block from Montgomery Street to Broce Drive along Main Street, except for the Abby's restaurant parcel at the corner of Main Street and Montgomery Street. The building will appear to be broken in the southern third for the entrance into the parking garage, but there will be an interior one-story corridor bridge over the driveway, as well as the parking garage structure beyond. For comparison, the long façade of The Gables Shopping Center building on South Main Street is approximately 750' long. The Brownstone building downtown is approximately 270' long, including the Capone's store in the old Annie Kay's space. The proposed Terrace View building façade along Patrick Henry Drive is approximately 600' in length, but is separated into three distinct facades separated by open space courtyards. Nothing of this length, mass and height has been constructed in Town to date. This is a very urban form of development and more akin to some of the new forms proposed in the downtown core.

A building of this size must contain a number of architectural features to break up the bulk of the façade into a smaller, more human-scale. The application does show a number of different materials and colors, but more variation should be added in a vertical arrangement by changing colors, textures, and materials to reduce the monolithic appearance of such a large building. The middle façade areas of the Main Street elevation (sheet A4-01) as well as the east elevation along Broce Drive need the most attention in this matter. There are several spots on the north and south end of the Main Street façade that accomplish this by providing a mix of materials and colors in sections one or two window-bays wide. The windows along these facades are of varying styles and sizes, for the most part, and therefore help to add visual interest to these sections of the façade. Additionally, the inclusion of the large vertical art installations adds considerable interest, and should be used as an additional tool for adding interest to the facades of the building. The overall architectural style of the project is similar to other designs for student-oriented development in other locations.

*Development Strategies* noted that the design of the proposed building is broken into three distinct sections but additional articulation would help reduce the mass of the building. In particular, the central section has limited color variation, articulation, and change in materials without an architectural centerpiece.

### Art

The application states that the development will commission two art installations on the façade from local artists, and that such commissions shall be installed within 12 months of the issuance of certificate of occupancy. The application further states that if Blacksburg ever has a public art commission or committee, any future art installations would be reviewed by the committee. The proposed art will add visual interest to the structure. The architectural renderings show the general location and size of the proposed art. There have been limited installations of public art throughout Town, including the murals at Market Square Park, 16 Frogs project, and the stormwater storm drain art. No other private development has proposed a similar art commission for a project and the proposal to add the visual arts in the community is appreciated.

### Building Orientation

The building is oriented such that all facades address the streets on which it fronts. The Main Street façade will have at-grade commercial entrances to the businesses at the north and south end, as well as at-grade entries into both the Live/Work units, and the leasing office. The remaining ground-floor residential units do not have direct access onto the Main Street sidewalk, and are only accessible from the interior of the building. The Broce Drive façade will feature commercial entrances into the commercial space that wraps the corner of the building, as well as entrances into the residential portion of the building. The Montgomery Street façade does not have a

direct interface with the street, but the 2 corner units that face the street will have their primary windows facing the street.

### Grade Change and Floors

Due to the grade change across the site, it may be most beneficial to think of the elevation of the building from the top down, as opposed to from the bottom up. The 6<sup>th</sup> floor will all have the same finished floor elevation, but the ground level elevation across parts of the building is different depending on location of a particular portion of the building. Not all floors are the same depth. The sheets A0-01 through A0-06 in the application demonstrate the various floors of the building in relation to the grade change across the site. These graphics take a “layer cake” approach to explaining the building components on each level and are perhaps the easiest way to understand how the building is integrated into the grade changes on the parcels.

### Building Height

The building is proposed to have a maximum height of 70’, or 6 stories, however, not all parts of the building will be the full 6 stories/70’. The bulk of the building at this full height will be toward the center parking garage structure. The other portion of the building that will have the same floor elevation as the top of the parking structure and amenity area will be the northwest residential units. Sheets A4-01 and A4-02 provide a visual of the varying height from perspectives around the site.

### Setbacks

Setbacks or required yards provide areas on a property that are to remain free from structures. This allows for both landscaping and open space around buildings for light and air circulation, but it also generally provides areas where public utilities may be installed. In many cases, public utility easements are established around the interior of lot lines, within the setbacks to allow for both Town public utilities, but also for private utilities such as telecommunications, gas, and power. Consistent setbacks in a neighborhood can help maintain a sense of regular rhythm and uniformity while also allowing for landscaping and open space.

The application text states that the building setback will be 0’ from all property lines. Meanwhile, the master plan visually shows the location of the building in relation to the property lines. The plan shows that the building is set back from each of the property lines, though no dimension is given. These areas between the building and the property lines are shown to have sidewalk in places, street trees, open lawn areas, and other landscape areas. In some of these locations, walls are proposed to accommodate grade changes. The yards or setback areas of a development can provide a transitional space between uses of differing intensities. Where the building most directly impacts the rear yards of the homes on Broce Drive, the lawn area shows a row of trees to help soften the stark contrast of the building to the smaller neighboring residential structures. More specific information on the proposed dimensions of the different setbacks is needed if the intent is to provide a setback other than the 0’ proposed. Information on setbacks will assist in evaluating the impacts on adjacent properties as well as the pedestrian experience on the sidewalk. Additional visuals might also be helpful to illustrate the relationship to surrounding parcels.

### Easements

The applicant will have to ensure, at this stage, that public utilities can be accommodated in areas free from structures. Public utility lines, such as domestic water, fire service, storm, or sanitary sewer typically require a 15’ easement centered on the utility line to provide space for Town crews to perform maintenance and repair on this infrastructure. The plan will have to show that all proposed public utilities serving the site can be accommodated in appropriate Public Utility Easements (PUEs).

### Green Building

There has been an increased awareness and desire for additional sustainable building practices. The building is proposed to be designed and constructed to meet the National Green Building Standard's Bronze Level Standard. The applicant is proposing to verify the project meets this standard through third party review of the architectural designs and site development plan. *Development Strategies* noted the inherent sustainability in the proposal to redevelop a site with existing infrastructure. However, the application does not include best practices for stormwater such as rain gardens or permeable pavement. The applicant should clarify if third party certification is proffered or if as written, the proffer requires review only.

### Buffering/Landscaping

The Landscaping Development Standards in the Zoning Ordinance set the requirements for all required landscaping in the Town. The tree canopy coverage requirements are based on use type, and for residential uses, including Planned Residential, the tree canopy coverage should be in keeping with the residential use type proposed. This development is a multifamily residential development, and thus would correspond to the canopy requirements for either RM-48 or RM-27, both of which are 10% of the total site. The applicant will have to show that the plan will meet the overall canopy coverage requirement. The applicant should provide additional detail to ensure that this requirement is met.

Additionally, there are landscape requirements for street trees. One tree per every 30' of public street frontage shall be provided. The application shows a number of street trees along Main Street, and along Montgomery Street, but none are shown on Broce Drive, and no overall calculation has been provided. The applicant will have to ensure and show that the development meets the total number of street trees required for the project. There is no text in the application that specifically discusses either overall canopy or street tree requirements.

This development is a more urban product, and so it is not expected that there will be large areas of landscaping; however, trees and landscaping can help to both visually soften a large building, and provide visual relief to residents within the units themselves. There are a number of units that only face the interior courtyards or the parking structure. The applicant should consider providing trees and landscaping within the interior courtyard amenity spaces and along the garage façade in addition to the perimeter open space yard areas.

There is no specific buffer yard requirement for the Planned Residential district as a whole because the nature of the proposed developments can vary so widely and the buffering proposed should be appropriate for the type and intensity and context of the development proposed. Each application is evaluated with regards to buffering to determine the appropriateness of the proposal as it relates to the surrounding uses and neighborhood, and whether the effects of proposed buffering mitigate any adverse impacts to the surrounding area.

The master plan shows a row of trees along the northern property line abutting the rear yards of the homes that front on Broce Drive. However, there are several places in the development, adjacent to single-family residences that do not have any buffering or trees proposed. Additional trees and landscaping should be provided wherever possible to help mitigate the impact of the proposed development on neighboring properties.

There is no specificity in tree species, or number of different species; but at a minimum, many of these trees should be evergreens to provide screening year-round. Buffer yards with a variety of evergreen, deciduous, and flowering trees provide the most visual interest, and the inclusion of shrubs can also help to screen the lower portions of a building that may be visible when trees begin to grow and open up at the bottom. Multiple species in the landscape can also help prevent wholesale vegetation removal in the case of a pest or blight on one

particular species. Trees and shrubs should be selected for their appropriateness to the location in which they are proposed—for example, in the tight space between the building and rear yards of the Broce Drive homes, columnar trees, or trees with an upright growth pattern are most appropriate. Street trees along Main Street and Broce Drive should also be somewhat upright, given the relatively narrow space for canopy spread. The open lawn areas can benefit from larger, more open trees to provide shade and additional canopy. Smaller evergreen trees and larger evergreen shrubs should be selected to screen any dumpster areas, mechanical areas, or other improvements that need to be screened from view.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements**

Many individual policies and regulations address streetscape, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements as being a high priority to encouraging walkability and contributing to a high quality of life in Town. Providing enhanced pedestrian and bicycle facilities will encourage alternate-transportation behavior and lead to less dependency on personal vehicle trips. These facilities may include wider sidewalks, separation between the street and the sidewalk with a vegetated buffer strip, on or off-street bicycle facilities, covered bicycle parking, and other elements to provide a pleasant and safe streetscape experience. Often, private development serves an important role in providing missing links in the sidewalk and trail network throughout Town, as there is not enough funding within the Town's budget to complete all the bicycle and pedestrian projects as the Town grows.

#### Sidewalks

The overall sidewalk network in this area is lacking, especially considering the overall density of the neighborhood. In some areas, there may not be enough right-of-way to construct sidewalk, and no development has occurred to require the construction of sidewalks. Generally, where sidewalks do exist, they are against the back of the curb, without a buffer strip, which does not provide a particularly safe or pleasant pedestrian experience. Additionally, there are very few street trees along Main Street, which can contribute positively to the pedestrian experience.

Sidewalks are required to be constructed along all public street frontages of a development. The Town standard for sidewalks is a 5' wide concrete walk, with a 4' vegetated buffer strip between the sidewalk and the back of the curb. This strip can provide space for street signage, snow removal, mailboxes, and provide a buffer for pedestrians on the sidewalk from vehicles on the adjacent street. The existing sidewalk on Main Street in both directions, and across the street, is 6' wide, and immediately behind the back of the curb. However, the time of development or redevelopment is often the only time to provide improvements that meet current standards and the needs of pedestrians. The application proposes an 8' wide concrete sidewalk along the entire frontage of the Main Street façade which represents a full block except for Abby's restaurant. The sidewalk varies from immediately behind the back of the curb for most of the frontage, to providing space for the landscape buffer in front of the Live/Work units. This section of Main Street is heavily traveled, and while the speed limit is 35 mph, the southbound traffic adjacent to the development is coming downhill from a long grade with no breaks such as traffic signals. The provision of a buffer strip along this section of Main Street is necessary to improve the pedestrian experience and safety along this block. In addition, a 10' sidewalk with a 4' vegetated buffer strip is preferred for pedestrians due to the more urban nature of the project with reduced setbacks and increased height. *Development Strategies* indicated that further widening the sidewalks and adding a generous planting strip would improve the pedestrian experience. The memo also noted that the existing corridor is not bicyclist- or pedestrian-friendly and significant improvements are needed.

There is no existing sidewalk along Montgomery Street. There is existing sidewalk on the opposite side of Broce Drive, which is approximately 5' wide and constructed within the right-of-way, immediately behind the back of the curb. The plan proposes no buffer strips along either the Broce Drive or Montgomery Street frontages.

These sidewalks are proposed as 5' wide, immediately adjacent to the back of the curb. While this is an improvement to existing conditions, it does not meet the Town standard for sidewalks. A modification to the requirement for vegetated buffer strip is required, for the plan as proposed.

#### Pedestrian/Bicycle Crossings

Not only is the sidewalk network in this area lacking, but there is also a concern with pedestrian and bicycle crossings on Main Street. This section of Main Street does not have any crosswalks between the signalized intersections of Patrick Henry and Main, or Progress and Main, which are approximately 3,600 feet apart. There are no median refuge islands, or other safe places to cross the street. This is especially concerning considering that people riding the bus may have to cross the street at uncontrolled locations, which may be especially dangerous during certain times of day or night. While it is not the responsibility of this developer, improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities are needed for the entire length of North Main Street from Progress Street to Patrick Henry Drive. This should be considered when the Town begins the previously mentioned proposed corridor study for North Main Street. *Development Strategies* noted that the applicant should work with Town staff to consider if any changes can be made to improve the ability to cross Main Street. It was also noted that the street grid in this area is lacking and the project includes nearly 800 feet of frontage along Main Street with no intersecting street.

#### Bicycle Facilities

There are no existing bicycle facilities in this area. Progress Street south/east of the traffic signal is painted with sharrow markings, as is Giles Road, but there are no bike lanes or sharrows on the west side of Main Street near the proposed development. Cyclists are allowed to bike on sidewalks outside of the Downtown Commercial zoning district, but a narrow sidewalk width can prevent cyclists and pedestrians from effectively and safely sharing the space. The proposed 8' sidewalk along Main Street may help cyclists feel comfortable for the length of the block, but in order to more safely mix bicycles and pedestrians, a 10' sidewalk is preferred. However, there is no further continuance of this width beyond the development site. The 35mph speed limit and significant traffic volume may deter many cyclists from cycling on Main Street. Bicycle facilities are another issue that should be considered in the North Main Street corridor study. In particular, the study may consider options for a road diet to provide improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

#### Bicycle Parking

The application states that bicycle parking will be provided at a ratio of 1 space per bedroom. The required bicycle parking ratio for multifamily developments is 0.25 spaces per bedroom. The proposed bicycle parking ratio exceeds the requirement and is the highest ratio that any recent project has proposed. The application further states that at least 80% of the spaces will be covered. Staff recommend the applicant clearly demonstrate that the space provided in the building is sufficient to accommodate the space needed to park 80% or 660 bicycles. The plan shows a number of bike rooms on the ground floor of the building, as well as the bike shop area on the Main Street frontage. The bike shop is intended to be for the use of residents to maintain and repair their bicycles. Several other developments including Stadium View and Terrace View have included facilities for bicycle maintenance.

The application also states that the development is willing to become a hub for the ROAM Bikeshare, and will work with ROAM to provide a docking station onsite. At present, the bikeshare program does not have a standard or package to provide to private entities for partnering with ROAM for providing bikeshare stations. However, staff suggest the applicant consider this during the design stage to ensure a space where this could be provided in the future.

### Corridor Committee

The Corridor Committee reviews development applications and makes recommendations based on the Paths to the Future map in the Comprehensive Plan and comments on opportunities that may arise to enhance bicycle and pedestrian routes and facilities in Town. The Committee recommended that a connection along the rear of the proposal towards Broce Drive would be a valuable addition, while noting that one intervening parcel would remain unconnected. The Committee noted the lack of sufficient bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the North Main Street corridor.

### **Parking and Circulation**

#### Parking Ratio

The Planned Residential District allows applicants to choose a parking ratio that is different from the standards in the zoning ordinance with information to indicate why the proposed ratio is appropriate and will not have any negative effect on surrounding uses. The Town standard ratio is 1.1 parking spaces per bedroom for multifamily residential uses. This standard was designed primarily to respond to the parking demands associated with multifamily housing geared toward students.

However, in certain situations, a different ratio may be appropriate given the development's proximity to transit, the University, services, or the target market demographic. Providing the right amount of parking for a development is critical for the safety and convenience of the development's residents, but also for the safety and convenience of the surrounding neighborhood. Without adequate parking, residents and guests may overflow into the neighborhoods, where there may already be pressure for parking due to the rental tenancy, or small lot size. The Town is also concerned about developments that may be over parked adding unnecessary impervious surfaces. The goal is "right-sizing" the parking for each development to accommodate residents and guests. The current trend for student populations indicates that fewer students are bringing vehicles to campus. However, in this location, any overflow parking would impact the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant may want to provide more information on how they determined the proposed parking ratio.

This development includes 100% structured parking wrapped by building façade on three sides. *Development Strategies* commended the applicant for the proposed structured parking hidden from view which is considered a best practice. The garage will also include at least 6 electric car charging stations. It is unclear if these charging spaces will be available to commercial uses, residential uses, or both. The application states that there will be commercial parking provided at a rate of 4 spaces per 1000 square feet of commercial space. There are a number of different commercial uses proposed to be allowed in this particular development. In calculating the various parking requirements for each of the uses, the average across all uses is 1/250 square feet, which is equivalent to 4/1000 square feet. Thus, based on the allowed uses in the proposed district, the parking appears to be adequate. However, no specifics are known regarding the types of commercial uses that will ultimately occupy the spaces, and so the actual parking need may be more or less than what is proposed.

The application further states that the commercial parking will be in addition to the residential parking. The Zoning Ordinance does allow a reduction of up to 20% for shared uses (to account for potential internal capture, or multiple stops in one trip), but not when one of the uses is residential. The proposed residential parking ratio is 0.8 parking spaces per bedroom. The location of this development is walkable to both Downtown and to the University. The site is also served by Blacksburg Transit on the Main Street North route, and nearby Progress Street routes. Many of the recently-approved planned residential district developments have proposed parking ratios less than the required 1.1 parking spaces per bedroom. The consideration of a proposed parking ratio should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and should take into account the overall transportation network, target market, access to transit, and other factors.

The plan also shows three parallel parking spaces along Broce Drive. The sidewalk is shown at the back of the curb at this location. If the parking were to be removed, it would allow space for a vegetated buffer strip between the sidewalk and the curb. If a modification to this requirement is requested and approved, at a minimum, at least one of these parking spaces should be designated as ADA.

### Entrance and Circulation

The master plan shows 2 entrances to the site: one along North Main Street, and another on Montgomery Street. North Main Street is a four-lane road, without medians, thus left-turns are permitted into and out of any cross street or entrance. Currently, there are 8 entrances onto Main Street for the various uses, including 2 each for the service station and the laundromat. There are 3 entrances along the Broce Drive frontage, and 4 entrances on Montgomery Street. The reduction of the number of curb cuts and entrances will provide for better safety for both vehicles, and bike/ped users. *Development Strategies* noted the reduction of curb cuts will significantly improve the pedestrian experience.

The Main Street entrance will provide access to the first floor of the parking garage, which will be mainly for the commercial uses. The Montgomery Street entrance will access the third floor of the parking garage, as well as the service and loading area for the commercial uses, trash and recycling pickup, and a fire lane for the rear access of the building.

### **Open Space**

The provision of open space is another component of residential communities that it is included as a requirement for nearly every type of residential development. The Planned Residential Zoning District Standards and the Use & Design Standards for Multifamily Dwellings §4216(a)(6) require a minimum of 20% open space for developments. It is important that the open space be meaningful in its size and function and geared toward the use of the residents in the development. A minimum of 5,000 square feet of the required open space shall be dedicated for active or passive recreation for residents.

The text of the application states that a minimum of 20% of the district shall be provided as open space. The plan identifies 2 interior courtyards, as well as 2 lawn areas toward the rear of the property as being the open space provided. The plan and application also state that residential recreation amenities are provided in the pool, club room, and fitness center on the roof of the garage, and a study room on the ground floor. While the open space areas are in relatively large blocks, it still appears to be somewhat “leftover” space with no programming. The courtyard areas would benefit from being larger, as some of the areas are quite narrow, and being surrounded by a tall structure (4-5 stories), will feel quite enclosed. The proposed open space is all internally oriented which is typical of a more urban product. *Development Strategies* noted that the courtyards could be increased in size since they will be surrounded by relatively tall structures and additional information may be needed to ensure the open space meets the intent of the code.

### **Signage**

The Planned Residential District allows applicants to propose a cohesive signage plan for the entire development as a part of the review of the application. Zoning Ordinance Section 5532 states that a maximum of 2 permanent signs and 3 directional signs are permitted per lot in any residential zoning district. Additionally, 1 freestanding identification sign is permitted at each primary entrance to a residential development, up to a maximum of 2. The Planned Residential District requires that signage be proposed as a part of the project as maximum sizes do not exist for this District. The Planned Residential District allows for greater flexibility and signage may be proposed that is greater in size or quantity, or of a different form, than what is ordinarily allowed in Town.

The application text specifies signage for the development. In summary:

- **Main Street Frontage:**
  - A maximum of 240 square feet of attached, suspended, awning, cabinet, v-shaped, or projecting signage shall be allowed on the Main Street two-story commercial façade near the intersection of Montgomery Street and Main Street.
  - A maximum of 30 square feet of attached, suspended, awning, cabinet, v-shaped, or projecting signage shall be allowed per each Live/Work unit along Main Street.
  - A maximum of 180 square feet of attached, suspended, awning, cabinet, v-shaped, or projecting signage shall be allowed on the Main Street façade of the 1-story commercial space near the intersection of Broce Drive and Main Street.
  - A maximum of 500 square feet of attached, suspended, awning, cabinet, v-shaped, or projecting signage shall be allowed on the Main Street façade of the residential building, including the leasing office and the parking garage entrance.
- **Broce Drive Frontage:**
  - A maximum of 120 square feet of attached, suspended, awning, cabinet, v-shaped, or projecting signage shall be allowed on the Broce Drive façade of the 1-story commercial space near the intersection of Broce Drive and Main Street.
  - A maximum of 200 square feet of attached, suspended, awning, cabinet, v-shaped, or projecting signage shall be allowed on the Broce Drive façade of the residential building.
- Proposed artwork on the building shall be excluded from signage calculations, and therefore will not count against the maximum allowable signage for the project.

The proposed signage totals up to a maximum of 1,360 square feet, including up to 700 square feet of residential signage. The sizes of the signage proposed may be inappropriate given a particular sign type, such as a projecting or v-shaped sign. The applicant should provide illustrations of how these signs would appear, or more detail regarding maximum numbers of signs, dimensions of signs, and locations of signage.

In the General Commercial Zoning District, the signage for a multi-tenant, multi-use building would be up to 8% of each façade, or no more than 120 square feet on each façade. Each individual tenant would be allowed up to 8% or 120 square feet of their own façade. This method for measurement and calculation has been applied at many of the multi-tenant shopping centers in town, such as Gables, First and Main, and University Crossroads. The signage for this development, if calculated under the General Commercial signage regulations, could have approximately ±650 square feet of signage, including the two-story single tenant space at the south end of the development, each of the four Live/Work units, the commercial space along Main Street, the commercial space along Broce Drive, and one residential sign on each of the Main Street and Broce Drive frontages.

More detail should be provided regarding the specific type, materials, and allotment of signage per façade for individual commercial tenant spaces, as well as location and type for residential signage.

### **Solid Waste and Recycling**

The application states that solid waste and recycling will be handled by a private contractor. The application states that there will be a single compacting facility and dumpster “at a central location for the convenience of all residents”. Trash access will be via trash chute feeding directly into the dumpster. Additionally, the application states that full single stream recycling facilities will be provided on each level of the building. Staff will collect recycling from each floor and take it to the centralized pickup area on the ground level near the service area at the rear of the southern commercial space. The plans show the residential trash chute on Level 3 near the rear of the garage. More information will need to be provided to show how levels 1 and 2 have access

to trash disposal. Furthermore, additional trash chutes need to be placed throughout the building to provide more convenient access for the residents.

### **EVALUATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE IMPACTS**

In evaluating the potential effect on public services and facilities that this rezoning would have, the Town Engineering department has reviewed the Master Plan and application and the following comments are provided.

#### **Sanitary Sewer**

The Town engineering staff has reviewed the application with regards to sanitary sewer and comments are provided in an email as Attachment C. Based on the original information provided to the applicant by the Town, no sewer issues were anticipated. Updated modeling indicated there is a sewer issue, and the Town has committed to addressing this sewer deficiency.

#### **Water**

Town engineering staff has reviewed the application with regards to water services and additional information is needed from the applicant regarding water looping and adequate pressure/flow. The comments are provided in Attachment D.

#### **Stormwater Management**

The stormwater concept plan submitted by the applicant has been reviewed and approved. The Town's stormwater engineer has provided a memo to the applicant regarding the approval, which is attached to this staff report.

#### **Traffic & Transportation**

The applicant provided a traffic analysis for the Town staff to review. Based on the analysis provided, the anticipated trip generation from the proposed development represents approximately a 20-30% increase over existing traffic volumes on Main Street. The traffic generated by the proposed project meets the warrants for the installation of 2 left turn lanes: one at Montgomery Street and one at the new garage entrance. In addition, the queuing analysis indicates that traffic may backup on North Main Street in both the northbound and southbound directions potentially blocking intersections during peak times. The proposal does not include either left turn lane and justification for this exclusion is provided in the traffic study. Engineering staff have reviewed the justification and conclude that improvements should be included in the traffic study and implemented as part of the master plan. Analysis at the new site entrance indicates that this entrance will operate at a Level of Service F in the PM Peak Hour. This type of delay creates safety concerns as drivers tend to attempt movements that they would not otherwise under normal delay conditions. Staff recommends considering changes to mitigate this issues such as restricting certain movements or providing a dedicated right turn lane exiting the development. Please see the attached memo for the specific comments from Town engineering staff regarding traffic and transportation. Transportation issues need to be worked out at the rezoning stage of review.

#### **Blacksburg Transit**

Blacksburg Transit has reviewed the proposed development and states that the plan reflects preliminary meetings with the developers. There is currently a bus stop (sign on a post) at the northern end of the development. Consideration should be given by the applicant to improve this stop with a concrete pad and shelter since the proposed project will generate additional student ridership. The existing stop at the southern end of the development is being improved with a bus pull-off, shelter, and amenities. Phil Andes, Operations

Supervisor for Blacksburg Transit indicates that this stop may be a time-check stop, and likely the primary stop for the development.

### **Emergency Services**

The Fire Code Official has reviewed the plan and has indicated that an additional consideration for fire safety would be to improve the sidewalk leading to the bike room along the northwest side of the building along Broce Drive to 12' wide, and capable of supporting a load of 75,000 pounds to provide direct access to the building. He further states that mountable curb along this section would be adequate to provide access for the trucks.

EMS has indicated generally for residential structures and parking garages, that elevators and access points should be easily accessible from the mouth of the garage, as the ambulances will not make the ceiling clearance of a garage. Secondly, elevators should be wide enough to accommodate the full length of the stretcher lying flat. Furthermore, interior building signage should be clear and easy to read, providing emergency services, as well as guests and visitors with clear directions to a range of units in a wing. The applicant may wish to provide additional detail to verify building design meets these suggestions.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING**

A neighborhood meeting was held on March 27, 2019. There were a number of citizen attendees. Notes and the sign in sheet from the meeting are included as attachments to this report.

### **KEY DISCUSSION ELEMENTS:**

- **Loss of commercial land**
- **Residential density proposed**
- **Urban nature of product**
- **Building scale, mass, and height**
- **Architectural features such as materials, articulation, rooflines**
- **Signage**
- **Open space**
- **Perimeter buffering**
- **Canopy coverage**
- **Utility easements**
- **Sidewalk width**
- **Transportation including bike/ped and vehicles**

### **SUMMARY**

The Planning Commission is asked to consider and make a recommendation of approval or denial of the proposed Rezoning request. If the request is approved, the property will be rezoned Planned Residential with any proffers offered by the applicant and accepted by Town Council. Any changes to the master plan would be required to be reviewed through the public hearing process to amend this PR district. If denied, the property will continue to be zoned R-5 Transitional Residential and GC General Commercial, and any such subsequent development application will have to adhere to all the minimum standards found therein. The decision to grant or deny the rezoning request is a discretionary decision, and should be made according to the criteria outlined in §1151, and with the analysis provided.

**PROFFER STATEMENT**

A proffer statement has been provided with the application. It is undated, and unsigned. The proffers, generally are as follows:

- 1) Occupancy shall be one person per lease per bedroom.
- 2) Maximum building height shall be 70' measured from the average grade to the highest point of the structure.
- 3) There will be onsite property management, and 24-hour on-call maintenance and emergency contact.
- 4) Each lease shall include the Community Rules and Regulations
- 5) The development will provide \$15,000 subsidy to Blacksburg Transit to support transit service in this area.
- 6) The proposed structure shall be designed and constructed to meet the National Green Building Standard's Bronze Level Standards. The conformance with this NGBS performance level will be verified by a third party through review of the Architectural designs and Site Development Plan.
- 7) The property will be developed in substantial conformance with the application.
- 1) A minimum of 6 electric car charging stations will be provided in the garage.

The Town Attorney has indicated that Proffer #5 is not able to be accepted by the Town. The applicant will have to remove this proffer, and revise it should they wish to provide other support for Transit.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Staff GIS Maps
- B. Staff Appendix
- C. Sanitary Sewer Email
- D. Water Services Memo
- E. Stormwater Management Concept Approval Letter
- F. Traffic and Transportation Memo
- G. Development Strategies Memo
- H. Neighborhood Meeting Notes & Sign-In Sheets

**RZN19-0001  
The Standard  
at Blacksburg**

**1003-1107  
North Main Street**

**908-1006  
Montgomery Street**

**101 Broce Drive**

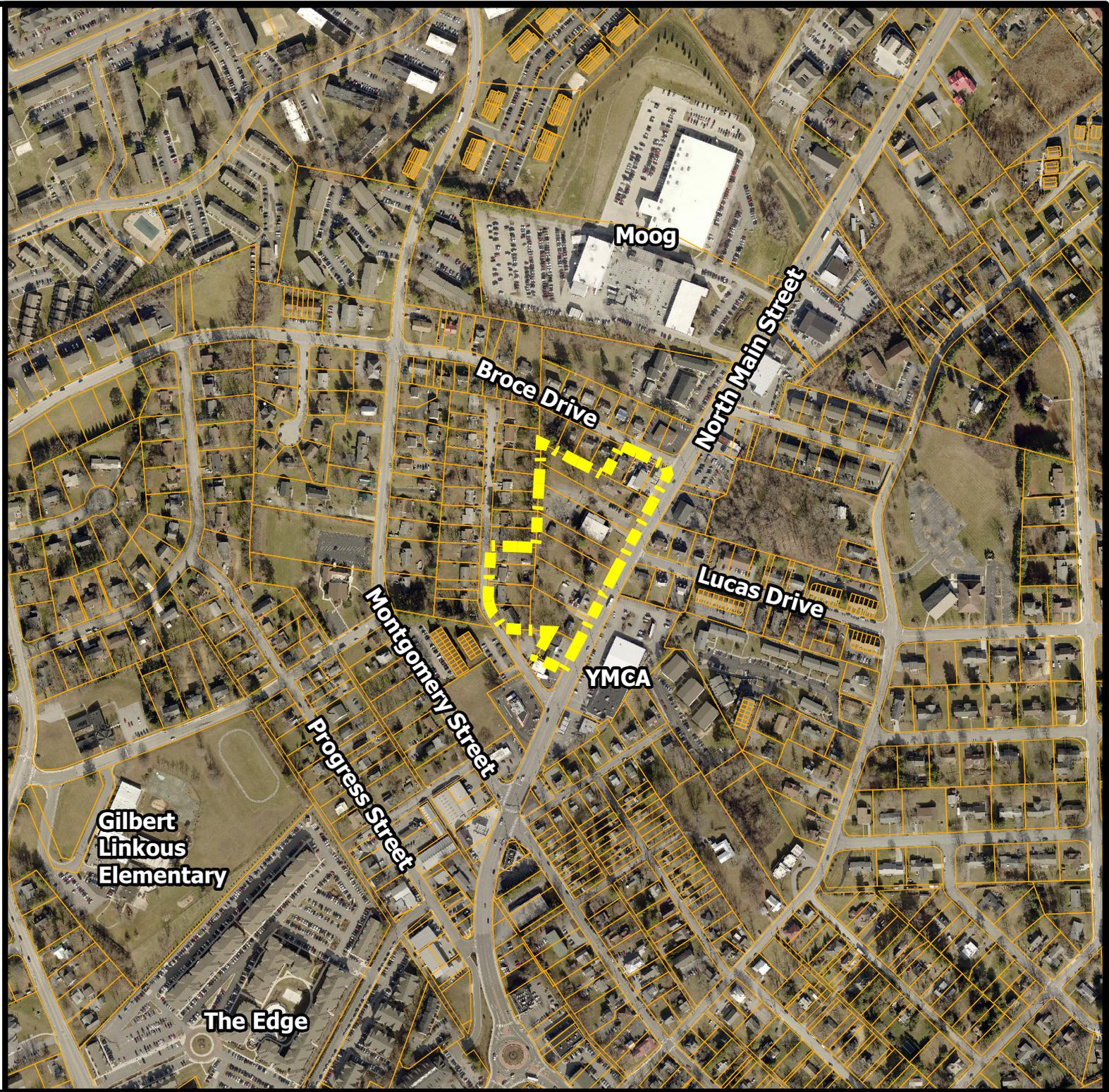


**RZN19-0001  
The Standard  
at Blacksburg**

**1003-1107  
North Main Street**

**908-1006  
Montgomery Street**

**101 Broce Drive**



**RZN19-0001**  
**The Standard**  
**at Blacksburg**

1003-1107  
North Main Street

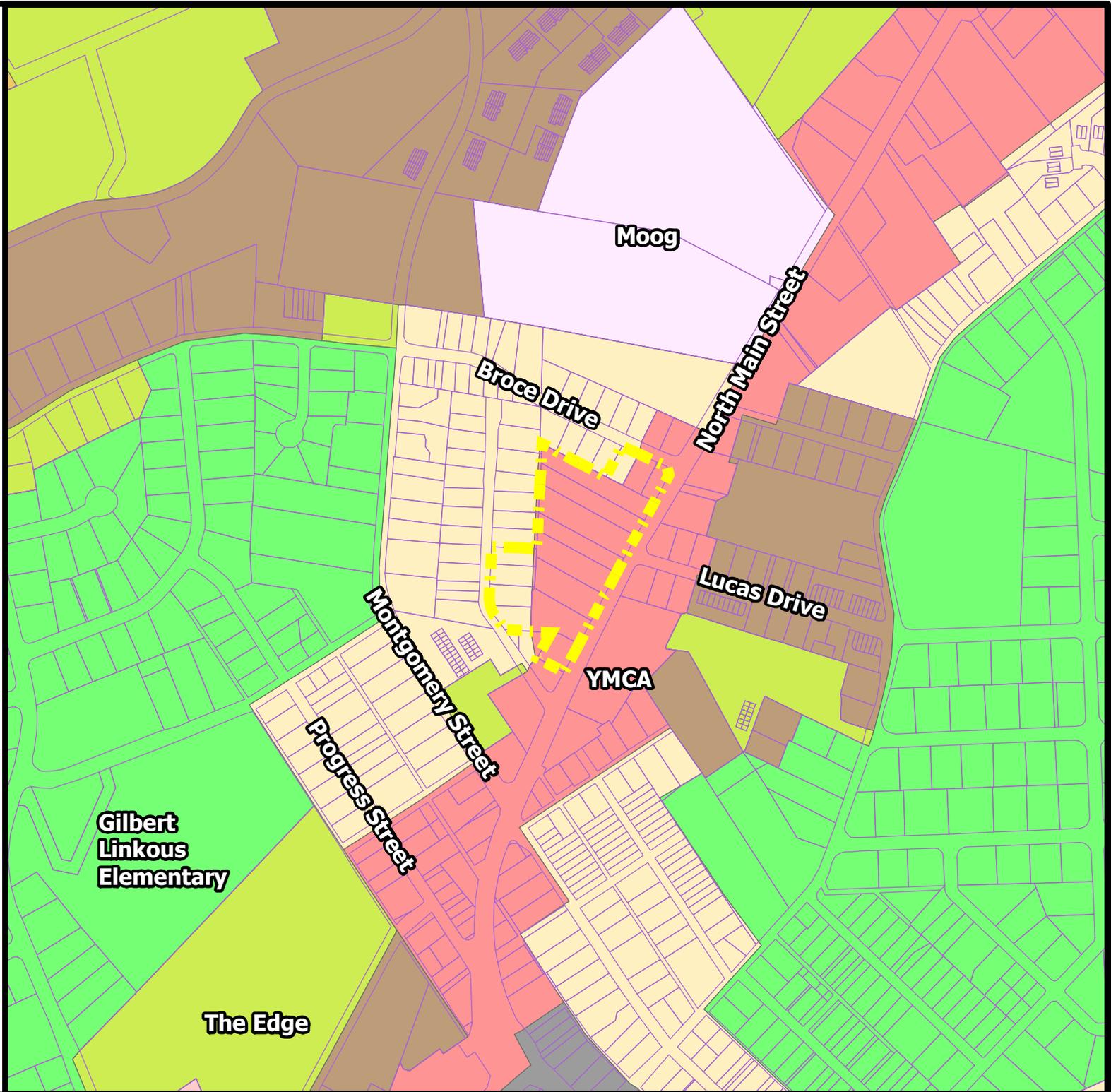
908-1006  
Montgomery Street

101 Broce Drive

**Zoning**

**Legend**

-  Rezoning Area
-  Parcels
-  R-4 Low Density Residential
-  R-5 Transitional Residential
-  RM-27 Low Density Multiunit Residential
-  RM-48 Medium Density Multiunit Residential
-  O Office
-  DC Downtown Commercial
-  GC General Commercial
-  RD Research and Development
-  PR Planned Residential



# RZN19-0001 The Standard at Blacksburg

1003-1107  
North Main Street

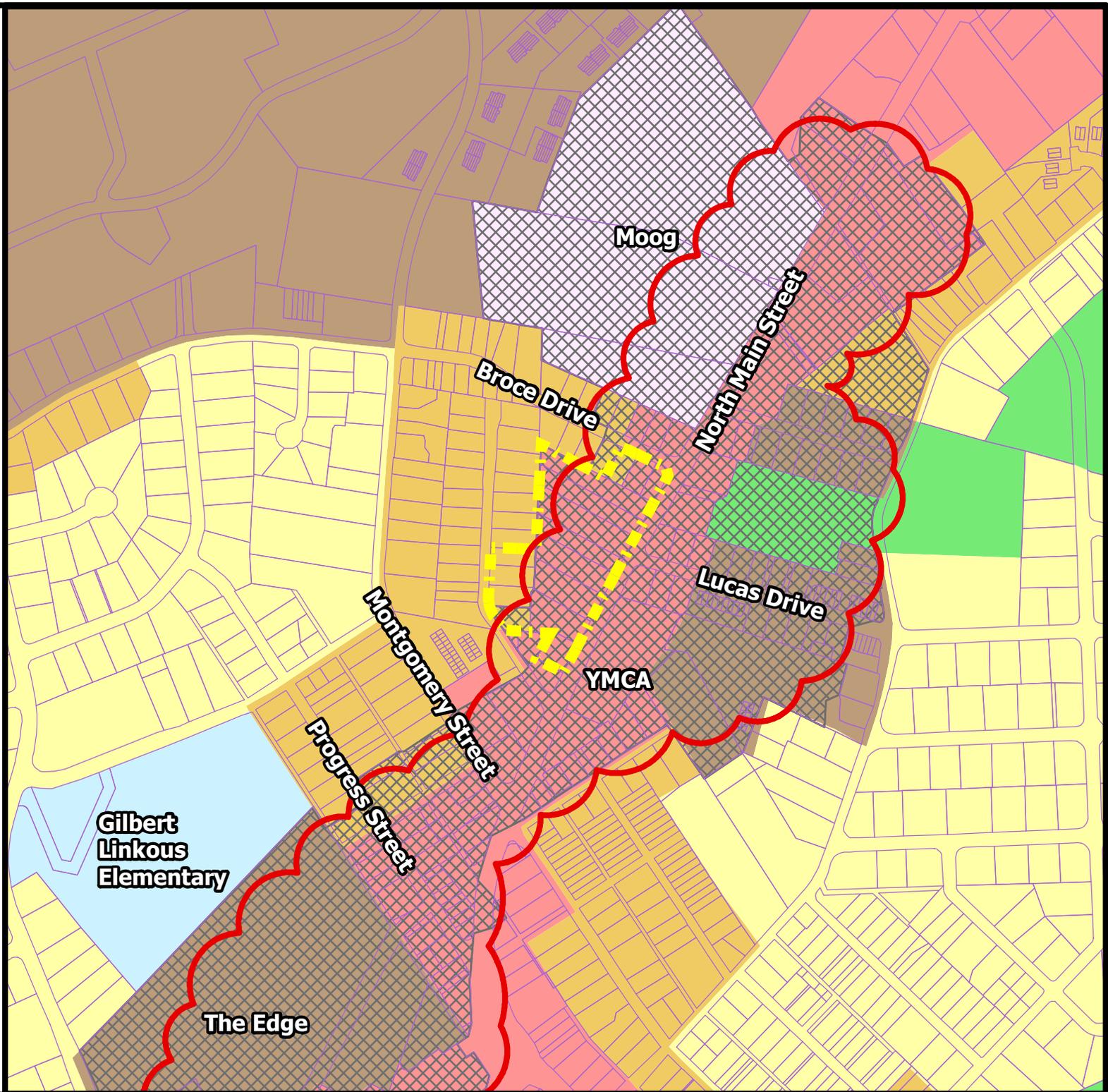
908-1006  
Montgomery Street

101 Broce Drive

## Future Land Use

### Legend

-  Mixed Use Area
-  Rezoning Area
-  Parcels
-  UDA
-  Low Density Residential
-  Medium Density Residential
-  High Density Residential
-  Park Land / Open Space / Resource Protection
-  Civic
-  High Impact Commercial
-  Research / Development



## **RZN19-0001 The Standard at Blacksburg PRD**

### **Staff Appendix**

This appendix is provided to give additional supporting information from the Comprehensive Plan, and the Zoning Ordinance in order to allow the staff report to focus on the analysis of the application.

### **Physical Site Development**

#### Building Design: Orientation, Style, Materials, Scale, Massing, and Height

- Comprehensive Plan Land Use Policy LU.6 Consider the compatibility of development with surrounding uses. Utilize strategies such as landscaping or other buffering techniques along with modification of site design to minimize impacts and facilitate compatibility.
- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle CCP.21 The Town is concerned about the height, mass, and placement of buildings, cell towers, or other features of considerable height on viewsheds.
- CCP 12. To serve the needs of the community, support opportunities for commercial development and redevelopment in appropriate locations.
- Multifamily Dwelling Use & Design Standard for building orientation §4216 (a)(3):
  - The street elevation of the residential buildings shall have at least one (1) street-oriented entrance and contain the principal windows of the front unit.

#### Setbacks, Lot Coverage, Buffer Yards & Landscaping

- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle CCP.15 Blacksburg is a responsible headwaters community for Southwest Virginia
- CCP.16: Responsible site design and development practices will minimize environmental impacts within the town
- Comprehensive Plan Environment Objective E.17 As a part of the development review process, the Town will evaluate a proposed development's impact and proposed mitigation measures for the following:
  - Open Space
  - Urban forest canopy
  - Watershed
- Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Objectives & Policy S.6: Promote, protect and enhance the Town's urban forests through Town initiatives and in the development review process. Minimize site disturbance to protect existing tree canopy, native vegetation, and pervious surfaces to encourage open space.

### **Streetscape, Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements**

- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle CCP.1. Well-designed pedestrian and bicycle friendly routes and facilities are essential to the Town's identity as a walkable and bikeable community.
- CCP.14: Transit connections and bus stop facilities are important components to support transit as a viable transportation option in town. These elements should be part of the design of new developments and be coordinated with Blacksburg Transit regarding service availability.
- Comprehensive Plan Transportation Objective & Policy T.10 Complete the construction of a connected sidewalk system.
- T.11: Minimize pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.
- CCP.18 Minimize light pollution, balancing dark skies with a safe pedestrian and vehicular

experience at night

- T.12: Maintain and improve the aesthetic quality of the pedestrian environment by planting street trees and other landscaping, and installing street furniture where appropriate.
- T.16: Develop and implement a comprehensive bicycle parking program throughout the Town and in coordination with Blacksburg Transit to install covered bicycle racks at public sites and commercial and residential locations, as well as to coordinate with Montgomery County and the New River Valley Planning District Commission for bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the region.
- T.17: Investigate implementing a bike share program
- T.20: Monitor the public transportation provided to ensure effectiveness and efficiency while maintaining the priorities of safety, courtesy and scheduling.
- T. 22: Enhance transit accessibility and convenience; lower parking demand, energy use, and air pollution by reducing traffic on local roads; and educate the community on the positive environmental impact from using public transit in order to encourage its overall use throughout the Town.
- T.27: Increase the number of covered bus shelters and covered bike parking provided at transit stops where appropriate.
- T.28: During the development review process, ensure that transit service and access to/from the transit stop and the development are provided.
- Comprehensive Plan Environment Objective EN.34 Support citizens in establishing and reaching vehicle travel reduction goals to reduce air pollution.
- Residential Infill Guidelines Best Practice #3: Create a pedestrian friendly streetscape
- Residential Infill Guidelines Site Design & Parking:
  - The design of the space between the edge of the curb and the front of a building is essential for encouraging pedestrian activity and promoting safety and security.
  - [Sidewalks] contribute to the character of the neighborhoods by providing safe places for people to travel and interact with one another.
  - Walkways should connect public sidewalks and parking areas to all main entrances on the site. For townhouses...fronting on the street, the sidewalk may be used to meet this standard
- Multifamily Use & Design Standard for sidewalks §4216 (a)(2):
  - Sidewalks shall connect each unit to the parking area serving that unit, to other units onsite, and to other buildings or uses on adjacent lots.
- Site Development Plans Minimum Standards and Improvements Required §5120(d)(1):
  - Sidewalks meeting the design standards of the Subdivision Ordinance shall be provide on public or private land along all parts of a site abutting a developed public street where such sidewalks do not exist as of the date of the application for site plan approval. The provision of these sidewalks will advance the goal of the Blacksburg comprehensive plan of development of “a network of walkways in the Town to increase the safety and convenience of pedestrian travel.” The Town Council finds that the need for such sidewalks in this Town is substantially generated by the development

### **Parking and Circulation**

- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle CCP.13 Increasing the safety and efficiency of traffic flow on arterial and collector roads is important in maximizing the functionality of the transportation network.

- CCP.14 Transit connections and bus stop facilities are important components to support transit as a viable transportation option in Town. These elements should be part of the design of new development and be coordinate with Blacksburg Transit regarding service availability.
- Comprehensive Plan Transportation Objective & Policy T.50 The development review process ensures:
  - Surface parking facilities are landscaped and appropriately lighted
  - Structured parking facilities are designed to minimize the visual impact of the bulk of the structure and the horizontal appearance of a parking deck
  - New parking lots minimize impacts on stormwater
- Multifamily Dwelling Use & Design Standards §4216(a)(4):
  - All parking spaces shall be located behind the front building line
- Multifamily Dwelling Use & Design Standards §4216(a)(5):
  - Entrances to the site should be minimized and placed in such a way as to maximize safety, maximize efficient traffic circulation, and minimize the impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood.

### **Density & Occupancy, Housing Variety, and Lifestyle Conflicts**

- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle CCP.2. Lifestyle conflicts are inherent in a college town, where neighborhoods may have a mix of students and non-students.
- Comprehensive Plan Land Use Objective & Policy LU.7: Encourage developers to work with surrounding property owners and tenants to resolve community concerns prior to formalizing development plans.
- Comprehensive Plan Jobs & Housing Objective & Policy J&H. 48: Plan for the housing demands of a changing and diversifying population
- J&H. 51: Promote varying types of housing types needed, including:
  - Rental or starter homes for purchase by graduate students and young families
  - Young professional housing and services in the Downtown area
  - Workforce housing for those making 80% - 120% of AMI
  - Affordable workforce housing options for LMI families making less than 80% of AMI
  - Housing with universal design features to allow aging-in-place

### **Loss of Commercial Land**

- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle 9: With limited availability of commercial land, efficient use of the land is critical to provide services to a growing population. Redevelopment of aging commercial centers is the most significant opportunity to meet this need. Residential development should not encroach in these areas unless incorporated as part of a well-designed mixed use project.
- CCP. 12: To serve the needs of the community, support opportunities for commercial development and redevelopment in appropriate locations.

### **Open Space**

- Comprehensive Plan Community Character Principle CCP.6. Creation of public and private parks and recreation amenities is an important part of land use development decisions
- CCP.17 The preservation of open spaces is an important part of community identity.
- Multifamily Use & Design Standard for open space, recreation, and trails §4216(a)(6)
  - Except in the Downtown Commercial (DC) district and the Mixed Use (MXD) district, for any development of twenty (20) or more bedrooms, a minimum of twenty (20) percent of the gross land area shall be reserved as open space. A specific recreational activity

area or areas shall be developed and maintained for the residents of the development as a part of this open space

### **UDA/Mixed Use Area C**

#### ***Urban Development Areas***

UDA are intended to serve as a focal point for growth over the next 10 to 20 years. Development within the UDA should be compact, using Traditional Neighborhood Design principles, or part of a mixed use development designed to accommodate pedestrian and vehicular traffic with a full complement of services and amenities. Development in a UDA should also provide for transit facilities or stops. Designated UDA are intended to be developed at urban densities and intensities and may include single-family residences at four dwellings per developable acre, townhouses at six dwellings per developable acre, or multifamily units at 12 units per developable acre or higher—or a combination of these unit types—or commercial development at a floor area ratio of 0.4 per acre or higher. Individual parcels or groups of parcels within a UDA may be either higher or lower than the general density/intensity standards, as long as these general density/intensity standards are available in some combinations in the UDA when taken as a whole. Compact, mixed uses are appropriate in UDA and development in these areas should be guided in part by the mixed use area guidelines discussed later in this chapter. The designation of UDA does not prevent rezoning of developments outside a UDA, nor obligate the Town to approve rezoning within a UDA. The designation of UDA does not affect existing zoning, nor do UDA mandate a specific type or style of development on a property.

Within the Town, there are eight geographic areas designated as UDA. The UDA are shown on Map B of the Town's Land Use Map Series. While the UDA generally correspond with areas designated as mixed use on the Future Land Use Map, Map A of the Town's Land Use Map Series, the boundaries are not synonymous. (*Also refer to Blacksburg Administrative Manual*)

#### ***Mixed Use Area Overlay Description***

Mixed Use Areas are developments containing a mix of both residential and non-residential uses. These areas are located on major roads, served by public utilities and transit. It is not anticipated that all property within every Mixed Use Area will be developed into a mixed use development. The designation of a Mixed Use Area on the Future Land Use map does not obligate the Town to approve a rezoning for a mixed use development. The designation does not mandate a specific type or style of development on a property. Regardless of zoning classification, all properties within a Mixed Use Area should complement adjacent properties with vehicular connections, coordinating pedestrian amenities, and complementary architecture and site design features.

*Typical Implementing Zoning Districts:* Mixed Use (MXD), Downtown Commercial (DC), General Commercial (GC), Planned Residential District (PR), and Planned Commercial District (PC).

**Mixed Use Area C** is located along North Main Street between Prices Fork and Patrick Henry Drive. A balance of commercial and residential mixed uses is desired to provide a natural transition from the commercial orientation on North Main Street, Prices Fork and Patrick Henry Drive to the adjacent residential uses. Limited vehicular entrances on these arterial streets and landscaping techniques should be implemented to avoid the impression of a strip commercial shopping center.

#### **Comprehensive Plan Map C Excerpts:**

##### ***A 1. Commercial and Employment Areas***

There are five core commercial and employment areas in Town where needs of employees, customers and suppliers converge. These areas in the Town contain the majority of the jobs in Blacksburg but do

not incorporate home-based businesses, which have minimal land use impacts. These areas include all but one of the Town's gateway entrances (the other primary gateway, North Main Street, is discussed under *A 4. Suburban Residential Neighborhood Areas* later in this chapter). The five core commercial and employment areas are listed below and then the relevant areas are individually discussed in greater detail:

- University
- Retail (Downtown, South Main Street, University City Boulevard)
- Corporate Research Center
- Blacksburg Industrial Park
- Hospital/460 Business

### University

Virginia Tech is the largest employer in Blacksburg, with 6,500 employees in 2011. Virginia Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Virginia Tech) was established in 1872 and contains historic structures on-campus, including Smithfield Plantation and Solitude. Adjacent to the Downtown, Virginia Tech's presence has promoted the growth of a retail employment center in the Downtown to serve the needs of students, faculty and staff. Some Downtown properties adjacent to campus have been converted to university-related uses as Virginia Tech has expanded. As Virginia Tech continues to grow, it will be important for the Town to work closely with the University to balance the economic value from these entities' developments in order to maintain the integrity of commercial and residential areas in Town. To this end, it will also be important to effectively coordinate the Town's Comprehensive Plan with Virginia Tech's Master Plan, most notably to create a seamless transition between the campus and the Downtown with a free flow of bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular traffic between the two areas. The development along College Avenue in coordination with the University can serve as a model for this collaboration, and the best practices from that project can be applied to other coordinated developments. The construction of the Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech that is adjacent to the Downtown will benefit from this successful coordination, as the addition of this important cultural amenity will attract residents and visitors to the Downtown.

### Retail

In addition to the Historic Downtown retail employment and commercial area that developed largely as a result of the presence of Virginia Tech, two other retail employment and commercial areas have developed along primary transportation routes through the Town on South Main Street and University City Boulevard. Businesses located in these areas serve the day-to-day needs of residents, such as grocery stores, pharmacies, banks, or gas stations, as well as businesses meeting more quality of life needs, including restaurants, clothing stores, specialty shops, coffee shops, bakeries, and bicycle shops. Businesses located in the Historic Downtown area tend to be locally owned, while most national chains are located in the other employment and commercial areas. Town Council is considering a live/work overlay district in the Downtown to add to the variety of arts and tourism-related employment and commercial offerings in this area.

Commercial and employment areas contain a variety of building styles, age and quality. New development in these areas should be designed to fit the character of the area in which they are located; designs should create a community gathering place as well as a commercial center, and should provide convenient pedestrian and bicycle access. Redevelopment of aging commercial centers is the most significant opportunity to meet the demand for limited availability of commercial land in these areas and to allow for the preservation of historic landmarks and properties in the Downtown. As established commercial areas redevelop over time, a re-orientation to a pedestrian focus is a primary

design goal to help create more cohesive neighborhoods. In both new construction and in the refurbishment of older structures, quality building materials should be used and maintained to ensure economic viability over time.

Offices are part of the desired mix of uses in the Downtown and can contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of Downtown throughout the day and night. Office uses complement retail, restaurant and other commercial uses in the Downtown, and employees of those businesses become patrons of other Downtown businesses. The development of properties, such as the Old Blacksburg Middle School (OBMS) site in accordance with the OBMS Master Plan, provides an opportunity to create office, commercial, and residential uses in a mixed-use development that is street-oriented, pedestrian and bicycle friendly, has easy access to public transportation and is an asset to the vibrant Downtown area.

Both the South Main and University City Boulevard employment and commercial centers can also benefit from greater access to pedestrian and bicycle routes, as well as public transportation that can better connect them to the other commercial and employment centers in the Town as well as to residential neighborhoods.

#### Commercial and Employment Area Issues for the Future

- The activity in these areas generates traffic and congestion. Mass transit, alternative transportation and other creative options, such as staggered working hours and telecommuting, can mitigate some of these negative impacts.
- Connectivity between the non-residential uses in these areas provides options for employees and customers alike to move between the uses without having to go out into the main road network. Connections should be safe for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles.
- There is an opportunity to upgrade technology infrastructure in these areas so they can become more economically competitive.
- Unique utility demands of new Research and Development, Light Industrial or Manufacturing businesses in these areas will need to be accommodated and incorporated into the Town's infrastructure.
- With a variety of commercial and employment areas throughout the Town, strengthening and expanding that economic vitality while adding to a high quality of life for residents is a primary focus.
- Creating a master plan for site redevelopment in these areas helps to assure that appropriate site design is achieved and fosters successful collaboration.
- Site design elements such as street orientation, preservation of historic landmarks, adequate open space, and effective and efficient use of land are important to these areas and can address the Town's goal of economic, environmental and social sustainability.
- Implement the pending 2012 Economic Development Strategies once adopted (*Refer to the Jobs & Housing Chapter*).
- There are a number of aging commercial properties in these areas. Stimulating redevelopment or the refurbishing of existing buildings in accordance with the various Commercial Infill Design principles discussed earlier in this chapter will help make these properties contribute more, both to the Town's economic tax base and the Community Character Principles of Blacksburg.

#### ***A 2. Urban/Walkable Neighborhoods***

Urban/walkable neighborhoods are typically higher density residential neighborhoods located within walking distance of employment and commercial centers. These areas typically have access to all modes

of transportation, including mass transit, bikeways, and pedestrian trails. Streets are typically organized in a grid pattern, which allows for easy pedestrian travel. Pedestrians can travel from these areas to commercial centers, the University, and neighborhood schools.

The urban/walkable neighborhoods in Blacksburg are centered around Downtown and the original "Sixteen Squares." Residential neighborhoods developed over time beginning at Main Street and the Sixteen Squares and eventually moved outward. These are some of the oldest neighborhoods in the Town, and they contain a number of historic homes. There is a strong community sentiment for preserving these structures, and the Blacksburg Historic Overlay District attempts to do this. In addition, two of the neighborhoods in this area, McBryde Village and Miller-Southside, have developed their own neighborhood master plans. The majority of these neighborhoods have a high percentage of rental properties when compared to owner-occupied homes.

The urban/walkable neighborhoods contain open space and greenway connections to better connect them to Downtown. These areas also provide visual and physical resting points, enhance the aesthetic experience, and make the area more desirable in general. Pedestrian trails, such as the Huckleberry Trail, play a significant role in the aesthetic charm and pedestrian orientation of these areas.

Places of worship and neighborhood schools are an important anchor to these areas. They function as gathering places and are recreational and cultural centers for their neighborhoods, providing definition and identity.

#### Urban/Walkable Neighborhood Issues for the Future

- Single-family residential character and neighborhood identity should be preserved in these areas.
- Through education of residents, owners and property managers, as well as the Town's zoning enforcement property maintenance programs, seek to minimize lifestyle conflicts that may occur in these neighborhoods, especially with undergraduate students renting property in these areas.
- More connections in sidewalks and trails benefit children and adults who wish to travel to nearby schools and work from their home without relying on a car or bus. To remedy deficiencies, improve connectivity and ensure property maintenance, utilize programs such as the Safe Routes to School along with other grants or Town funding.
- There is a limited inventory of homes within walking distance of the University and Downtown. In addition, these homes are often beyond the financial reach of many young families, young professionals, or employees of the University or Downtown businesses who would like to live in this area. Creative strategies are needed to encourage more home ownership in these neighborhoods (*Refer to Jobs & Housing Chapter*).
- With the access to Downtown services and amenities, there is an opportunity to provide more opportunities to allow aging in place in these neighborhoods.
- The speed and inattention of drivers using some of these neighborhood streets can be a safety issue. Education and other strategies are needed to combat this ongoing issue (*Refer to Transportation Chapter*).
- Construction of new homes and the redevelopment and refurbishing of the existing housing stock in this area should be done utilizing the Residential Infill Guidelines and, where applicable, the Blacksburg Historic Overlay guidelines.

- The housing stock in these areas is aging and lack of property maintenance is a critical issue for neighborhood identity and character in the future.
- Limited parking is an issue in these neighborhoods. Any opportunities to reduce the number of vehicles being parked in this area should be explored and encouraged.
- Development in this area should be sensitive to balancing the minimization of light pollution with the need for sufficient lighting to create safe pedestrian and vehicular experiences at night.
- Creative design can be used to balance residential infill with protection of important natural systems and viewsheds. The Town's Residential Infill Development Guidelines provide examples and directions on how to design infill development in the Clay and Roanoke Street area, or any other area that can accommodate density but is also sensitive to the surrounding residential context.

### ***A 3. Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhoods***

These neighborhoods are primarily apartment developments rented to students due to the proximity of the Virginia Tech campus. In these dense urban areas with a high concentration of students, there are fewer lifestyle conflicts than in other residential areas because the properties are larger rental developments where residents have a shared set of lifestyle expectations. The compact forms of development in these areas allow residents to rely less on automobiles as they have access to public transit, on- and off- road trail systems, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes. With the exception of the Hethwood and Foxridge neighborhoods, these areas are located just beyond the urban/walkable neighborhoods, and all are located near the Town's major employment and commercial areas. These neighborhoods also have easy access to the US 460 Bypass, the main transportation route to I-81 and surrounding localities.

#### Multi-Unit Residential Neighborhood Issues for the Future

- Transit service in these areas should continue to meet residents' needs.
- Enhancing sidewalk, trail and bicycle opportunities that link these areas of high concentrations of people with Downtown and the University core campus will be beneficial.
- New developments and redevelopments should:
  - Consider providing open areas and recreational opportunities within their developments.
  - Provide landscaped multi-use trail systems for commuting opportunities to the Commercial and Employment areas while providing landscape buffers.
  - Provide strong property management and maintenance.
- Through education of residents, owners and property managers, as well as the Town's zoning enforcement property maintenance programs, seek to minimize lifestyle conflicts that may occur at the interface of these higher density developments with adjacent residential neighbors.
- New multi-family developments in these areas should de-emphasize parking areas, maximize the use of alternate transportation options, be walkable, connect to other developments, have a street presence, and use other principles as detailed in the Residential Infill Guidelines.
- If additional student housing is not provided on-campus, the University should consider providing additional student residences only on property that is currently designated on the Future Land Use map for this high density residential use.

## Kali Casper

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**From:** Margaret Pagington  
**Sent:** Friday, April 12, 2019 12:29 PM  
**To:** Kali Casper  
**Subject:** FW: RZN 19-0001 Sewer Comments

Margaret Pagington  
Town Engineer  
Town of Blacksburg  
400 South Main Street  
O: 540-443-1352  
C: 540-686-5250

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**From:** Margaret Pagington  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 09, 2019 4:07 PM  
**To:** Kinsey O'Shea <KOShea@blacksburg.gov>  
**Cc:** Randy Formica <RFormica@blacksburg.gov>  
**Subject:** RZN 19-0001 Sewer Comments

Kinsey,

Here are my comments for The Standard.

1. Section 6 under The Standard – Planned Residential District should address the fact that the Town has indicated that there is **not** currently adequate capacity to accept the sewer flows from this development, but that the Town will be upgrading the pipe to meet capacity needs.
2. Because the projected wastewater flows are greater than 10,000 gpd, the Town will need approval from the Sanitation Authority that there is adequate capacity in their lines before a site plan can be approved. The Town has sent out a request for confirmation of adequate capacity, and will pass along the approval or identified capacity issues once they are received.
3. The average daily design flow for the sewer lines is greater than 40,000 gpd. Please be aware that a certificate to construct and certificate to operate are required from DEQ for sewer lines with average design flows in excess of 40,000 gpd. Information on this process can be found at:  
<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/WastewaterEngineering/RegulationsCertificates.aspx>

Margaret Pagington  
Town Engineer  
Town of Blacksburg  
400 South Main Street  
O: 540-443-1352  
C: 540-686-5250

**DATE:** March 20, 2019  
**TO:** Kinsey Oshea  
**FROM:** Lori Lester, Water Resources Manager  
**TITLE:** Water Comments for RZN19-0001, The Standard

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**Water Comments:**

- The proposed development at the 1000-1100 Block of North Main Street has water availability on three sides of the project. North Main Street and Broce Drive have an existing 12" water main and Montgomery Street has an existing 6" water main.
- The Town can provide the minimum required pressure (20psi) at the water meter based on the water demand provided. The applicant should investigate if fire pumps, etc. are needed to provide adequate pressure/flow to meet building and fire code requirements for multistory buildings.
- The proposed development does not contain sufficient information to confirm the water line design will meet Town standards. Additional water infrastructure may be required to meet Town of Blacksburg Water Standards and Specifications, fire hydrant spacing, waterline loop, Building and Fire Code, etc.

April 1, 2019

Gay and Neel, Inc.  
Attn: John Neel  
1260 Radford Street  
Christiansburg, VA 24073

RE: RZN19-0001 The Standard at Blacksburg Planned Residential Development - Stormwater Concept Plan

Dear Mr. Neel:

The Engineering Department has completed the review of The Standard at Blacksburg Planned Residential Development. The Concept Plan is **approved** at this time. This 5.55 acre site is located along North Main Street between Montgomery Street NW and Broce Drive. This stormwater concept plans shows the ability of the site to treat quantity stormwater requirements on-site through the installation of a stormwater detention facility underneath the parking garage. This detention pond will reduce the 1-year, 2-year and 10-year storms by 50% of the pre-development flows.

All water quality requirements will be met through the purchase of **4.76** lbs/year of off-site nutrient credits. No on-site water quality is proposed. This does not aid in addressing any of the existing water quality impairments within the Stroubles Creek watershed, but it does meet the minimum state and local stormwater requirements.

**Floodplain Concerns:**

This site is located very close to FEMA regulated floodplain, but the applicant has performed some detailed studies and confirmed that none of the property is in the regulated floodplain. Due to the proximity, concerns regarding backwater from large storm events will be taken into account to prevent flood waters from impacting the function of the underground stormwater facility.

**Downstream Flooding Concerns:**

This stormwater concept plan has also been reviewed for impacts to known flooding problems downstream in the Stroubles Creek drainage area. This development contributes to the drainage basin containing the Webb Street corridor, which experiences significant flooding. The proposed reduction of 50% for the 2-year and 10-year storms are above and beyond minimum requirements for stormwater management. This additional reduction will improve the total discharge in this corridor. This site is only 5.5 acres, so the improvement is only a small proportion of the overall drainage area to Webb Street which is almost 500 acres.

**Comments to be addressed prior to Site Plan Approval:**

1. Suitable access to the stormwater management facility will need to be shown on site plan.
2. This site will need to be covered under the Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) permit. This will need to be attained prior to final site plan approval, and maintenance fees will be required for all years that this permit is active.

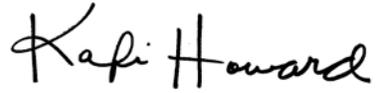
**Notes:**

1. The Town of Blacksburg Town has implemented a stormwater utility fee based on total impervious lot coverage. The rezoned area of this parcel would generate a stormwater fee of

**\$318.18 dollars per month** for this site. For more information on the details of the Stormwater Utility fee, please go to: <http://www.blacksburg.gov/stormwaterfund>.

Please contact Kafi Howard with the Engineering Department at (540) 443-1354 or via email [khoward@blacksburg.gov](mailto:khoward@blacksburg.gov), if you have questions or concern regarding this review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kafi Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kafi Howard, Town Engineer – Stormwater, (540) 443-1354

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Kinsey O'Shea, Development Administrator

FROM: Randy Formica, Director, Engineering and GIS  
Joshua Middleton, Town Engineer

DATE: April 11, 2019

SUBJECT: Landmark's The Standard – Transportation Comments

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**Overview**

As indicated by the traffic impact analysis, the proposed development will add a significant amount of vehicular traffic to the existing road network. The trip generation data indicates the total number of vehicle trips generated by the site to be 4,620 trips per day, with AM Peak Hour volumes of 193 trips and PM Peak Hour volumes of 368 trips. The existing traffic volumes, obtained as part of the analysis, indicate that North Main Street currently operates at approximately 16,000 ADT (average daily traffic) with AM Peak hour volumes of 959 vehicles and PM Peak Hour volumes of 1367 vehicles, as measured adjacent to the proposed new site access entrance. The increases to the existing volumes presented by these figures represent a 20 – 30% increase in volumes. As expected these increases will have varying degrees of impacts on the road network and intersections that have been summarized in the following sections.

**Level of Service / Queuing Analysis**

A review of the Level of Service and Queuing Analysis provided in the traffic study indicates that the intersections most impacted by the proposed development are the intersections of North Main Street/Progress Street, North Main Street/Montgomery Street, North Main Street/New Site & YMCA Access and North Main Street/Patrick Henry Drive. The greatest impacts occur during the PM Peak Hour time frame and are summarized as follows;

➤ **North Main Street/Progress Street**

The Level of Service, at this signalized intersection, should remain at LOS B with an increase in delay of approximately 2.5 seconds per vehicle due to the proposed development. This Level of Service meets the requirement of Section 5-307 of the Subdivision Ordinance by not decreasing the level of service to LOS D.

The Queuing Analysis indicates an increase of 155 to 165 feet for northbound traffic, due to the proposed development, that would have the potential to backup traffic along North Main Street to the Kabrich Street intersection. There is also an increase to queue lengths of southbound traffic along North Main Street which could create backups to the Montgomery Street intersection, particularly during the PM Peak Hour. This is further discussed in the North Main/Montgomery Street intersection due to compounding issues it could create.

Lesser queuing increases of 15 to 25 feet are indicated along Progress Street and McDonald Street during the PM Peak Hour. Along Progress Street, there may be backups up to Winston Avenue and along McDonald Street, there may be backups approaching Virginia Street.

➤ **North Main Street/Montgomery Street**

**Special Note:** The traffic study has excluded a northbound left turn lane, contrary to the warrants provided in the analysis. This is further discussed in the Turn Lane Warrant section of this memo.

The Level of Service, at this un-signalized intersection would change from A/B/C to A/C/C upon development, with an increase in delay for all legs of the intersection. The greatest delay/s are experienced on the stop controlled approaches with a maximum average delay increase of 6.5 seconds per vehicle. This represents a significant (40%) increase in delay, however, it meets the requirements Section 5-307 of the Subdivision Ordinance.

The Queuing Analysis indicates an increase of 70 feet for northbound traffic and would have the potential to backup traffic along North Main Street. Additionally, there is the potential for southbound traffic along North Main Street to backup and block the Montgomery Street intersection, during PM Peak Hour, as indicated by the North Main and Progress Street impacts identified previously in this memo. This could further increase the potential queuing of traffic trying to enter Montgomery Street from the northbound lane.

➤ **North Main Street/New Site Access**

**Special Note:** The traffic study has excluded a northbound left turn lane, contrary to the warrants provided in the analysis. This is further discussed in the Turn Lane Warrant section of this memo.

The Level of Service, at this un-signalized intersection would change from A/C to A/F/D upon development, with an increase in delay for all existing legs of the intersection and significant delays for the new entrance. The greatest delay/s are experienced on the stop controlled approaches from the new proposed site access and the YMCA access. The maximum average delay for the proposed site access would be over 60 seconds and function at a LOS of F, and the YMCA access would increase by 9 seconds and function at LOS D. The requirements of Section 5-307 of the Subdivision Ordinance only apply to the public street and not the private accesses. As the Level of Service along North Main Street would remain LOS A, both northbound and southbound, the requirements of Section 5-307 are met. However, the anticipated LOS and delay, for the site entrance, is particularly excessive and could potentially lead to unanticipated issues within the development and road network. Additional considerations are warranted to determine how the site layout and entrance design could be revised to mitigate the impacts and provide a more reasonable LOS.

The Queuing Analysis indicates an increase of 110 feet for northbound traffic and would have the potential to backup traffic along North Main Street. Additionally, there may be times during the PM Peak Hour when traffic along southbound North Main Street will be blocking the site access, further increasing potential queuing of northbound traffic trying to enter the site.

➤ **North Main Street/Patrick Henry Drive**

The Level of Service, at this signalized intersection, should remain at LOS C with an overall increase in delay of approximately 1.3 seconds per vehicle due to the proposed development. This Level of Service meets the requirement of Section 5-307 of the Subdivision Ordinance.

The Queuing Analysis indicates a maximum increase of 45 - 55 feet for northbound through traffic along Main Street and eastbound traffic on Patrick Henry Drive, due to the proposed development. Lesser queuing increases of 15 to 20 feet are indicated along most other legs of North Main Street.

### **Turn Lane Warrant Analysis**

As indicated previously, the traffic study, as well as the master plan for the development, has excluded left turn lanes at the intersections of North Main/Montgomery Street as well as North Main/New Site Access. This is contrary to the Access Management Turn Lane Warrant analysis provided in the study. Justification for the exclusion has been provided in the study, suggesting that the combination of minor movement delays and acceptable queuing lengths (See LOS and Queuing Analysis section) would refute the need for infrastructure improvements. Additionally, the study identifies that by not including the turn lanes it will provide for "a straightforward conversion if North Main Street was ever converted to a road diet." Though aspects of this thought process are understandable it does not provide sufficient justification for the exclusion of the turn lanes and these improvements should be included as part of the traffic study and implemented as part of the master plan. This will likely require widening along North Main Street and/or changes to the proposed site layout.

The current configuration of North Main Street does not provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian and bicycle environment. The Town's future vision encourages enhanced facilities for these modes, which includes concepts such as a road diet. Adding turn lanes, although making vehicular movements safer, does not facilitate this long term vision. To this end, widening may seem counterintuitive. However, this concept is long-term and no immediate plans for improvements are in place for this corridor. Therefore, the development should move forward providing reasonable infrastructure improvements and/or considerations that will safeguard the existing road network.

### **Entrance Design & Layout**

As noted earlier the proposed new site access, adjacent to the YMCA entrance, is expected to operate at a Level of Service (LOS) F, with an average delay of over 60 seconds per vehicle, in the PM Peak Hour. A delay of this nature, though impacting most notably the development, could promote an unsafe condition. Understandably, with delays of this magnitude, drivers tend to attempt movements they would not otherwise, under normal delay. This has the potential to disrupt the flow of traffic, create confusion, frustration, and in some instances create safety issues. Additional considerations are needed to mitigate this concern. These considerations could include restricting one or more movements from the entrance, moving the more significant delays from this entrance to the intersection of North Main & Montgomery Street. Additionally, adding infrastructure improvements such as a dedicated right turn lane could greatly improve the delay as nearly half the traffic is projected to be making this movement.

It is assumed that the delay of the new site entrance has an impact on the YMCA entrance as well. As a significant increase in delay has been indicated by the study, consideration for mitigating the impact is warranted. If additional considerations can be properly implemented, with regard to the new site entrance, it is likely the adjacent YMCA entrance will benefit greatly in addition.

### **Additional Considerations**

- 1) Though not specifically identified within Town Code, the Traffic Impact Analysis should be professionally certified, upon submission, as it contains engineering judgement that should be adequately validated.
- 2) The Traffic Impact Analysis was prepared during the rezoning process for the 1222 Patrick Henry Drive parcel. This rezoning has recently been approved. As such the traffic impact analysis should be updated to include the projected traffic volumes associated with this development.



## **An Advisory Memo for the Town of Blacksburg** on Best Practices for Multi-Family Development and a Critique of Landmark’s The Standard Project

Prepared for  
**The Town of Blacksburg**

*Updated 4/11/2019*

# INTRODUCTION

The Patrick Henry corridor presents numerous strategic and logistical opportunities and challenges for Blacksburg. With coordination and clear objectives, a combination of market-based development and public-private/institutional partnerships could be harnessed to the benefit of the Town, residents, developers, and Virginia Tech.

Located on the northern end of Blacksburg, the Patrick Henry corridor consists of roughly 14 separate student housing developments bordering Patrick Henry Drive and University City Boulevard, between North Main Street and Glade Road (see map below). These properties were built primarily in the 1970s and 1980s as a means of meeting considerable off-campus student housing demand. Currently these properties are the single greatest concentration of off-campus student housing in Blacksburg, together accounting for approximately 6,500 beds.

Unfortunately, the regulatory environment of that era encouraged uncoordinated single use development on large tracts of land. The result has been large developments built on superblocks (blocks of 800 feet in length or more) with poor street grid connections, near

complete auto-dependence due to a lack of commercial services, traffic congestion due to a combination of high density and a limited street network, and development design where most buildings face internal courtyards and do not address the street in a meaningful way. Such development has not created a pleasant and attractive public realm, and hinders the sense of neighborhood community.

## GOALS

Recently, there has been an increase in demand for student housing, as Virginia Tech plans to expand their enrollment. At the same time, quality expectations for off-campus student housing units have increased. The marketplace has responded, and a number of proposed student housing redevelopment projects are under review within the Town, including Terrace View and The View within the Patrick Henry Corridor, and Stadium View outside the corridor.

The Town has had an informal policy of encouraging redevelopment in areas of existing student housing and recently, the Town Council adopted an official policy by resolution. Town staff has updated the multi-family housing data so that Planning Commission and Town Council can have an accurate assessment of the number of

Existing Apartment Communities



multi-family bedrooms already constructed, approved but not yet constructed, and under review.

The goals for the Town, when evaluating redevelopment proposals, should be to seek ways to improve, enhance, and retrofit development design and transportation networks in ways that address these primary issues:

- Increase the density and supply of student housing to take pressure off other areas, such as Downtown, that are strategically important for developing non-student housing, employment, and other uses.
- Improve the architectural quality of the community through better building materials, massing, and articulation.
- Improve the relationship of buildings to the street to make the public realm more inviting.
- Encourage a mix of uses to place more services where residents live, alleviating some demand for vehicular traffic.
- Encourage bicycle and pedestrian transportation through high-quality public facilities and thoughtfully designed private properties that safely take a user all the way from their door to the street and ultimately, their final destination.
- Improve connectivity through the reduction of superblocks via the addition of more street connections through properties.
- Reduce vehicle miles and traffic, as well as the need for parking, through increased transit service and more and varied bike and pedestrian facilities.
- Improve the sustainability of residential communities through the thoughtful design of buildings and stormwater management facilities in ways that promote energy and water savings.

## CHALLENGES

Accomplishing these goals through redevelopment is not without challenges. Achieving these goals will be costly, not just to developers but to the Town as well. This is particularly true of improvements to the transportation network, which will provide town-wide benefits, and require partnerships between the public, private, and institutional sectors in order to be successfully implemented.

The cost of encouraging better design will require reasonable architectural and environmental standards that balance aesthetics, functionality, and cost. In particular, allowing developers to build at greater densities will help to offset the costs of higher building standards. At the same time, the town should encourage mixed-use development that brings commercial uses into the neighborhood. This will better serve an increasing population and help reduce auto-dependency.

Finally, as developers seek to upgrade their units to meet higher quality expectations, prices for units will rise. Over time this has the potential to “price out” many students who can only afford midscale-priced housing and will push them out of town (which increases traffic), or into single family residences (which leads to building deterioration). Therefore, it is not advisable to redevelop every community in the corridor. The Town will need to work with property owners and managers to identify properties best suited for redevelopment and those that better positioned to continue to serve the midscale market, and will need to provide appropriate support and, if necessary, incentives to maintain a healthy balance.

## BEST PRACTICES & CRITIQUES

The first chapter of this memo provides recommended best practices for the Town to consider in approaching redevelopment in the Patrick Henry corridor, and the community as a whole. While these recommendations are not exhaustive, and will require continual review as conditions change, they offer a first step towards ensuring that future development in the corridor is done strategically and approached comprehensively—with larger town impacts in mind.

The remainder of the memo includes reviews of the development proposals for Terrace View, The View, and Stadium View apartment complexes. These critiques will help the Town understand which desirable elements are being addressed by developers and which will require a more active role by the Town in order to be considered and implemented.

# BEST PRACTICES

## ARCHITECTURE & SITE DESIGN

Improving the design of the corridor’s communities as they are redeveloped will contribute to a public realm that is attractive, walkable, and sustainable.

### ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS

The primary goal in recommending architectural standards for redevelopment in the corridor is to move away from the inward-facing building design, which results in a wall of monolithic building facades addressing the street. This makes for an unpleasant walking environment and detracts from attempts to create a neighborhood feel that encourages non-vehicular mobility.

Some design standards that can address this issue include:

- Use of insets in building facades.
- Variation in roof elements/designs.
- Courtyards and pocket parks between buildings.
- Appropriately-placed variation in materials – specifically, at inside corners of vertical façade elements (e.g. recesses and projections in the elevation) rather than on a flat plane of the façade.
- Use of “heavier” masonry material along ground floor/foundation, and use of siding and other “lighter” materials on upper floors.
- Application of foundation landscaping consistently applied along all non-active ground floor facades.

All of the above standards help to mitigate the massing of the buildings, and create more visual interest from the street level.

## PARKING DESIGN

As redevelopment occurs in the corridor, higher quality projects can be encouraged by focusing on two main strategies in regards to parking: reducing demand and minimizing appearance.

The first strategy involves reducing the need for parking by making it easier for residents to use alternative forms of transportation to get where they need to go. This will be addressed in the transportation network and commercial nodes sections.

The second strategy is to minimize the appearance of parking garages and lots. As with architectural standards, this will lead to improvements in the public realm. The primary way to minimize the appearance of parking is through the use of building-wrapped structured parking and interior courtyard surface parking—which also maximizes site efficiency.

The Town should also encourage, where economically feasible, the development of parking garages rather than surface lots. This will minimize the overall footprint needed for parking, leaving room for denser development and more open space. It’s important to note that while parking garages will help create higher quality, pedestrian-friendly developments, considerable expenses are involved. The typical cost of construction for a parking space in a 3+ story garage is \$15,000-\$30,000, far more expensive than the same space in a surface parking lot.

### Estimated Parking Construction Cost per Space

*Does NOT include value of the land*

Subsurface or 3+ Story Parking Garage	\$15,000-\$30,000
2-Story Parking Garage	\$10,000-\$15,000
Surface Lot	\$1,000-\$4,000

*Source: CBB Transportation*

## SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

Blacksburg is committed to being a sustainable community. This commitment includes seeking ways to encourage smart and efficient energy and water use, particularly in the built environment. Requiring and encouraging sustainable features in redeveloped buildings will help the Town meet this commitment.

A baseline for energy efficiency and sustainability is provided by the 2012 Virginia Building Code (VBC) and the 2012 Virginia Energy Conservation Code (VECC). Both of these codes are based on the standard International Code Council (ICC) versions, although the State did make some modifications. Adoption of the VECC was a large step forward for the State of Virginia as it mandated a level of energy efficiency far beyond previous expectations. As an example, the 2012 edition of the International Energy Conservation Code is expected to improve commercial and residential building efficiency by 30% compared to those built under the 2006 edition, and 17% more than those constructed under the 2009 edition.<sup>1</sup> Blacksburg staff fully enforces these requirements, some of which are listed below:

- Programmable thermostats
- Energy efficient appliances

- Low-flow plumbing fixtures
- 50% of lighting to meet energy efficiency requirements
- Blower door tests to ensure building is properly sealed
- R-38 insulation in the ceiling
- Sealed duct work

Building codes are a good standard, but represent the minimum requirements a builder must conform to. However, many paths exist to go above and beyond building code requirements. Third party verification systems such as LEED, National Green Building Standard, Passive House Institute, or Green Globe provide some of the best standardized, yet flexible methods of ensuring sustainable building practices are followed and can verify techniques (such as recycling of building materials) that are above and beyond what is possible for municipal staff. Of course, the cost of these services is an important consideration, despite the fact that high efficiency buildings save property owners money in the long term.

As an alternative, a municipality can convene a stakeholder group made of local builders, concerned citizens, and municipal staff to help determine the sustainability goals of the community. Defining the priorities of the community will be helpful in deciding which standards above and beyond the building code should be pursued. For example, if energy conservation (and the associated lower utility

### Stormwater Best Practice Example



<sup>1</sup> [www.ecmweb.com/content/step-closer-net-zero](http://www.ecmweb.com/content/step-closer-net-zero)

costs) and encouraging non-vehicular transportation are priorities, regulations that would help achieve those goals could include:

- Lowered parking requirements in exchange for the provision of car-sharing services, bike sharing services, enhanced bicycle parking, and/or improved connectivity in multi-family properties.
- Preferred parking and charging stations for electric vehicles
- Use of solar power for water heating or electricity
- Increasing the percentage of lighting fixtures that must be energy efficient
- Increasing insulation requirements

Additionally, while water conservation may not appear to be a major priority for the community initially, stormwater management elements are important both for water and energy conservation, and for overall community appearance. In general, drainage basins, catchment areas and conveyance channels, where located within or adjacent to open space/landscape areas, should be designed to intentionally integrate with the landscape design through use of stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPS), such as rain gardens, bioswales, curb notching, stormwater planters, permeable pavement, etc. (see image on the previous page for an example).

## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM & CONNECTIVITY

Given the town’s challenges with traffic, development in the Patrick Henry corridor should be designed to encourage the use of alternative transportation options—specifically, walking, bicycling, and transit. Additionally, opportunities for creating new north-south corridors connecting Patrick Henry Drive to Virginia Tech’s campus and Downtown should be explored, so as to take traffic pressure off of existing corridors.

### BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

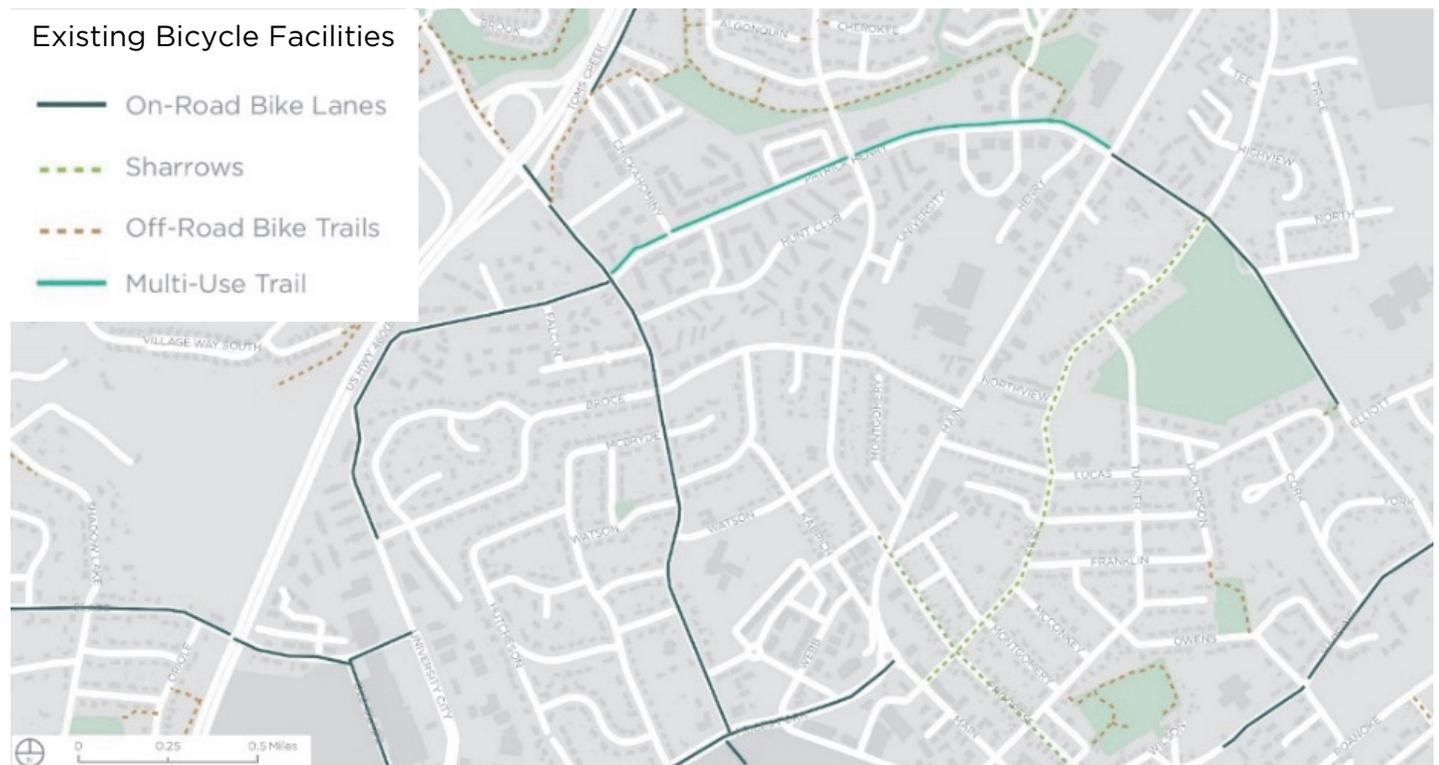
Not all bicyclists have the same level of comfort interacting with vehicular traffic in the public right-of-way. While more experienced cyclists may have no issue using heavily-trafficked or high-speed roads, most casual cyclists will avoid a difficult route or not cycle at all if conditions are perceived to be dangerous or otherwise unappealing. Various types of bicycle facilities can improve safety and make cycling a more attractive alternative. Generally speaking, the more separation from vehicular traffic provided, the more users will feel comfortable taking advantage of the facility.

An example of a treatment that provides little to no separation is shared lane markings, also known as sharrows. This low cost alternative is typically only used

when there is not enough roadway width for a full-size bike lane. This system of pavement markings and signs primarily serves to alert motorists that cyclists may be present and help show cyclists the appropriate position in the roadway. In this situation, bicyclists may use the full lane, as there is not enough room for a bicycle and car to travel side-by-side. The next major option, which provides moderately more separation distance, is a striped bike lane. Again, this system relies on pavement markings and signage, but provides a dedicated space, allowing bicycles to operate more safely.

Above and beyond those two options, bicycle facilities strive for physical separation through the use of barriers which can consist of planters, curbs, parked cars, or posts. These protected bike lanes (sometimes called cycle tracks) represent the highest level of protection and safety for users and are typically preferred by the majority of riders. The appropriate facility for any particular road is determined based on road conditions, available right-of-way, and budget constraints.

It's also important for all new development to consider the way bicyclists and pedestrians will travel from the right-of-way to the door of the facility. Thoughtful design can minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic, ensure accessible paths are available, and provide ample bicycle parking in convenient locations. This parking should be required at



both multi-family properties and destinations throughout the community. Inverted u-type racks are considered the “gold standard”, but other options may be utilized if necessary.

Along with adequate bicycle parking, a well-connected street network allows more cautious riders to use residential side-streets to reach their desired destinations, without the need for costly infrastructure projects. Often all that is required in these circumstances is safety education and a little encouragement for both bicyclists and drivers.

It is also recommended that all municipalities have an overarching plan that guides the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities over time. The Town of Blacksburg has a Bicycle Master Plan that should be consulted with all proposed developments or other changes to the right-of-way. Any missed opportunities could result in a significant gap in the bicyclist/pedestrian system that will likely persist for many years. The Bicycle Master Plan should be reviewed periodically and the Town should continually assess the best use of available right-of-way in the corridor.

### TRANSIT CAPACITY AND ROUTES

Like the use of bicycles, transit use by residents living in the Patrick Henry corridor will mitigate traffic and improve overall sustainability. The corridor is currently served by three Blacksburg Transit (BT) bus routes—the Progress Street, University City Boulevard, and Toms Creek lines. All three provide access to the Virginia Tech campus, two provide access to the University Mall, and one provides access to Main Street in Downtown.

Providing access to and from campus is a critical role of transit services in the Patrick Henry corridor. The three lines in the corridor have the highest ridership of all BT’s lines, due in part to the many students in the area who commute to and from campus. Common complaints heard from students are that there is not enough capacity, particularly along these lines, and that buses are often full before they have completed their route. Opportunities to expand transit capacity in the corridor, particularly as redevelopment brings more residents, will need to be explored.

Redevelopment of existing properties should include elements that encourage transit ridership among residents. Such elements may include adding bus stops, if they do not already exist, at key access points to the properties, and

improving the quality of those stops—for example, by installing bus shelters.

In addition to providing campus connections, it is also important for transit services to connect residents to retail and recreational amenities. Residents of the corridor currently have two lines—Toms Creek and University City Boulevard—that provide evening and weekend service to University Mall and Downtown Main Street. The Town and BT should continue to track the use of the lines at these times, and survey riders if possible, to determine any adjustments to schedule or route that may encourage increased ridership for non-school-related activities.

Reduction in travel times and improved reliability of service can be achieved through bus prioritization strategies which include dedicated bus-only lanes, transit signal prioritization, or rapid bus transit. Dedicated bus lanes are a potential solution where the right-of-way will allow for such a space. Based on the relatively low recorded traffic volumes (less than 10,000 AADT in 2016) the current configuration of four vehicular travel lanes on Patrick Henry Drive between Toms Creek Road and Main Street could potentially be reconfigured for a bus-only lane. Further improvements to reliability of service can be made through signal prioritization, in which slight adjustments can be made to signal timing in order to



accommodate an approaching bus. Generally speaking, bus rapid transit is a combination of dedicated lanes, signal prioritization, and high quality bus stops, which together make the bus similar to a light rail system in regards to quality and predictability. Further assessment of the right-of-way and reconfiguration options would be necessary to fully assess these opportunities.

In regards to other best practices, BT already provides bike racks on their busses. However, continual outreach to encourage students to use the bus, or a combination of bus and bicycle, to reach their destination is warranted. Each year there is a significant turnover in the population of Blacksburg, so these types of outreach campaigns will need to be repeated regularly. BT should also continue to upgrade the BT4U app, which is poorly rated in the iTunes store. Users appreciate such apps, which allow them to track bus locations in “real time.” The increased predictability helps foster confidence in the system and encourage regular ridership. The university may also want to consider increasing the annual “resident student” parking fee (currently \$399) as a way to deter more students from driving, particularly those who live nearby and have many other options.

**STREET GRID**

As discussed in the introduction and seen in the map below, the properties along the Patrick Henry corridor were generally constructed on “superblocks”—blocks that are more than 800 feet in length before hitting an intersection. Superblocks detract from the pedestrian experience, as they can feel long and uninviting, especially when lined by the backs of buildings. They also have a negative impact on vehicular and bicycle access, as people have to drive or bike a farther distance to find an access point to a property. Shorter blocks also calm traffic, especially if they include crosswalks at each intersection.

Through redevelopment, consideration should be made to establishing a street grid within the neighborhood. This would include finding places to add streets through properties, particularly where they might meet up with existing streets on the other side. In addition to the benefits described above, linking existing streets will provide more routes through the neighborhood. These new corridors could either be for cars, mitigating traffic, or for pedestrians and cyclists, making for a more comfortable non-automobile experience off of major roads. Either way, they can take pressure off the major corridors of Patrick Henry Drive, University City Boulevard, Toms Creek Road, and Progress Street.

Superblocks Along Corridor



## COMMERCIAL NODES

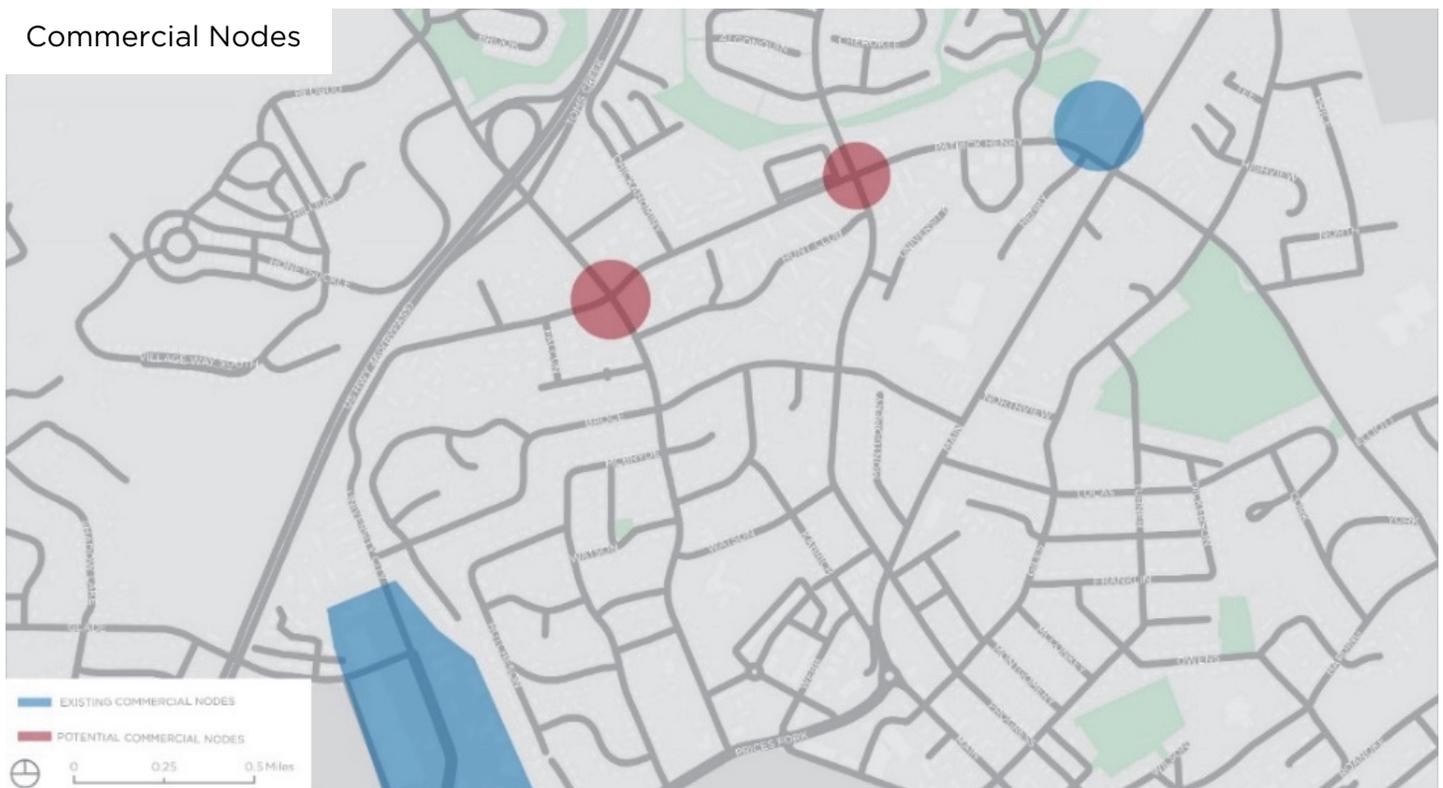
A final set of recommendations that would serve the goals of creating a better neighborhood feel, encouraging non-vehicular mobility, and improving overall access for residents involves the development of non-residential uses in and near the corridor. Today, the major commercial amenities closest to residents are the Patrick Henry Centre, including a Food Lion, at the corner of Patrick Henry Drive and North Main Street; and the various centers clustered around University City Boulevard and Prices Fork Road, including University Mall and Kroger. These centers are approximately a mile from the middle of the corridor, right around Terrace View. At this distance, they are fairly accessible by bicycle, transit, and car, but too far for comfortable pedestrian access. The neighborhood is also served by two gas station convenience stores at the southwest corner of Patrick Henry Drive and Toms Creek Road.

Approximately two miles separate the two major commercial centers. Given the density of residents sandwiched between them, there is market opportunity for additional small-scale commercial development towards the middle of the corridor. These “inner” locations in the

corridor would be best served by uses that residents patronize on a daily basis—convenience stores, coffee shops, restaurants—as opposed to the more occasional uses, such as supermarkets, that are present within the larger commercial centers. Reducing the need for residents to drive out of the neighborhood to find these uses will mitigate traffic, encourage walking and cycling, and create a more vibrant neighborhood environment.

Identifying the most strategic locations for new commercial development will be critical to its success. The locations must be visible and accessible if they are to be patronized. Recommendations for key commercial nodes are shown on the map below. In general, development at the intersection of two major streets and accessible from residential properties is ideal. Since the existing gas station convenience stores at the southwest corner of Patrick Henry Drive and Toms Creek Road meet all of the criteria mentioned above, focusing on their redevelopment could be beneficial to the Town. These aging properties should be redesigned to be more pedestrian friendly and aesthetically pleasing and their offerings can be expanded to better meet the daily needs of nearby residents.

Commercial Nodes



# THE STANDARD CRITIQUE

## THE STANDARD PROPOSAL

### SITE DESCRIPTION

Unlike most development proposals reviewed up to this point, the proposed project is not in an area with a prevalent amount of student housing, as is the case along the Patrick Henry corridor or within the Houston Harrel neighborhood. The site is a 5-acre tract of land at the southwest corner of North Main Street & Broce Drive. The site consists of fifteen individual parcels and currently contains a gas station and service center, laundromat, metal-sided commercial building, and single family homes (some of which have been converted to commercial uses.) The existing structures are relatively modest and low-density. The subject property is surrounded by a wide variety of uses, which are summarized in the table below:

Surrounding Uses	
North	Builders Association offices, a few single family homes, suburban-style apartment complex, Moog facility
South	Abby's restaurant, Domino's Pizza, Preston Row apartments (new upscale), gas station, thrift shop
East	A few single family homes (some converted to office use), 1-story office building, auto repair shop
West	Primarily single family homes, Park Place apartments (older suburban-style)

The topography of the site poses extra challenges to development, in terms of design and construction costs. The site slopes upward from North Main Street and much of the frontage along that road has steep slopes starting at the edge of the sidewalk.

In this area, North Main Street feels like a thoroughfare and is not pedestrian friendly. Good urban form is lacking and the corridor also has major issues with the quality and condition of the buildings along it. The street has an incongruous feeling due to the hodgepodge of uses and multitude of driveways/curb cuts.

The area is well-served by Blacksburg Transit, with bus lines running on North Main Street and nearby Progress Street. The site is approximately one-half mile from several destinations such as the Virginia Tech campus, downtown commercial district, Blacksburg Community Center, and the shopping center at North Main Street & Patrick Henry Drive which contains a grocery store, convenience stores, and a pharmacy.

Neighborhood Map



**DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

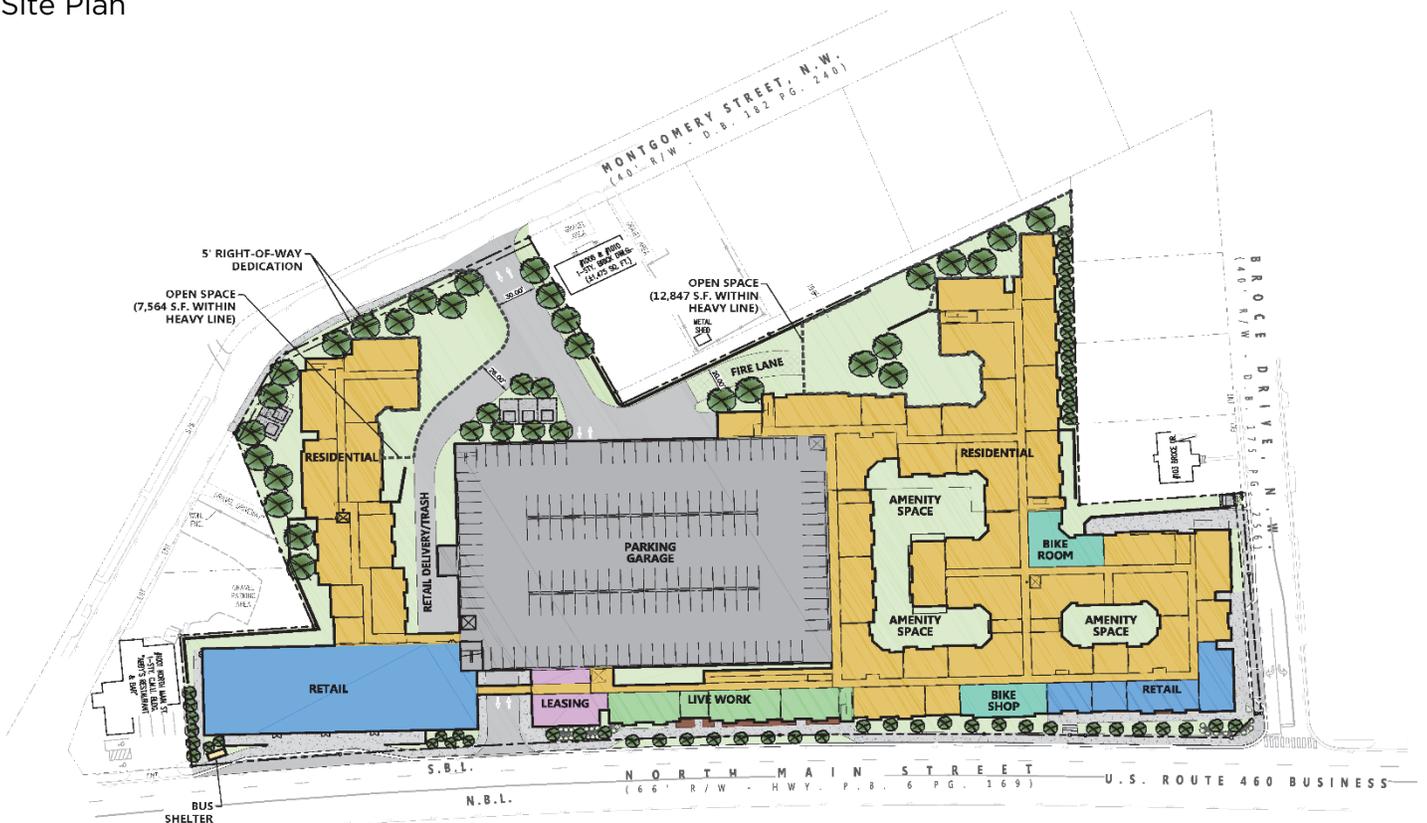
Fifteen parcels of land are being assembled to create a 5-acre site for The Standard mixed-use project. The developer plans to demolish all of the structures contained therein and construct a large mixed-use project which consists of a maximum of 825 bedrooms and 17,800 square feet of commercial space wrapped around a multi-story parking garage.

Most of the commercial space is in one large 13,800 square foot tenant space on the south corner of the site. The space is designed for a single user and the owner lists possible tenants as a small grocer or soft good retailer. The rest of the commercial space is on the opposite corner of the building and is separated into approximately four smaller leasable spaces. The remainder of the North Main Street frontage is filled with the leasing office, live-work space, and residential uses.

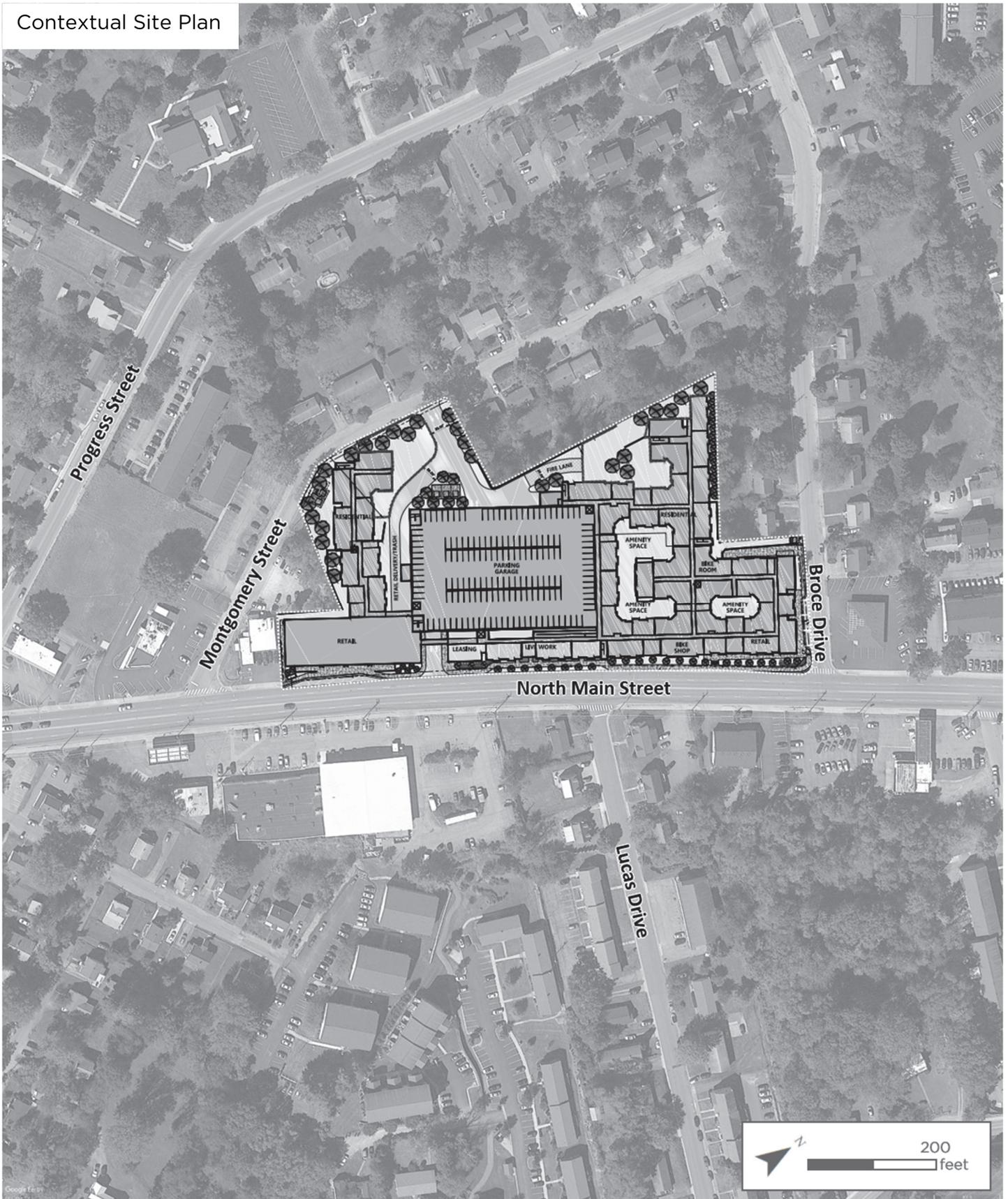
The Standard plans to target students, recent college graduates, young technology entrepreneurs, and artists to live in this new development. These tenants will benefit from amenities including a pool (on the roof of the garage), fitness center, study area, indoor bicycle parking, and outdoor recreation space. The live-work units bolster the commercial presence on North Main Street and provide a residential option that is not widely available elsewhere in Blacksburg.

The structure will be a maximum of 70 feet tall, although this number is a bit deceiving due to the topography of the site. The structure is generally 4-stories in most places, but there are some small areas with 3- or 5-stories.

Site Plan



Contextual Site Plan



## ZONING & LAND USE

A vast majority of the site is currently zoned General Commercial (GC). According to the Blacksburg Zoning Code, the intent of this district is to “provide for more intense commercial uses than the Downtown Commercial district, but in a manner which is consistent with the Town’s character. Modern “strip” commercial development is not in keeping with the small-town character of Blacksburg, and this district is intended to discourage such development. Instead, a vital and lively streetscape, created by commercial buildings with windows and entrances oriented to the street, is an important goal of this district.”

The site is within Urban Development Area C (UDA-C), one of eight UDA in the Town. These areas are intended to be used for redevelopment and infill projects at urban densities and serve as a focal point for residential and non-residential growth over the next 10 to 20 years. The Town’s UDA generally correspond with areas designated as mixed-use on the Future Land Use Map, as is the case with this site.

The developer is requesting Planned Residential District (PRD) zoning, which is primarily a residential zoning district that also allows for limited commercial uses and provides for greater flexibility than is generally possible under conventional zoning districts. The PRD district has been used for many of the new student housing projects recently approved.

The project appears to be in alignment with the goals of the UDA and the mixed-use zone indicated in the Future Land Use Map. One potential concern with rezoning may involve long-term considerations regarding future commercial growth in the Town. The community will want to ensure that there is adequate space provided for this valuable land use as the population grows. While The Standard does contain commercial space, it may not be the scale envisioned by the current General Commercial District. The Town may also be concerned about the residential density being proposed for this project.

This proposed development removes several obsolete land uses and introduces a new urban-styled product onto North Main Street. However, in order to determine if rezoning is appropriate, the Town will need to take several questions into consideration. Is this an appropriate use for the site? Is the residential density too high? What are the prospects for commercial uses in the future? Without

more detailed analysis, it can be difficult to answer these questions. In the absence of that analysis, the information below can be used to help guide the decision making process.

In its current state, this section of North Main Street is not a prime site for commercial development, particularly of the high-quality, pedestrian-oriented type desired by the community. This wide thoroughfare is unappealing, built solely for the movement of vehicles from one place to another. Narrow sidewalks are directly against the curb (adjacent to passing traffic), the walking path is continually interrupted with curb cuts, and there is no landscaping or other enhancements that inspire walking. The corridor is lined with automobile-oriented uses and low-quality buildings. In some areas, the topography is not conducive to retail users, who prefer to be at eye level with traffic that passes by.

With major improvements to the road, the corridor may be more suited to commercial development in the walkable style desired by the community. However, it is important to understand that retail users are likely to be a relatively minor component of this growth moving forward. The retail industry is evolving, driven partly by the growth of online sales and changing consumer preferences. Many retailers are focusing on “clicks to bricks” (in which a company fully integrates their online and offline presence) rather than expanding their physical footprints. So while the population of the Town of Blacksburg is increasing, the pace of retail growth will be much slower. It may be possible for office space and other users to help populate the corridor, but additional analysis is needed to more thoroughly evaluate potential demand.

A full analysis on development feasibility has not been completed as part of this review. However, along this corridor, assembling a site that would be suitable for high-quality pedestrian-oriented development will be expensive and challenging. In order to absorb this expense and pay for structured parking (an element which allows for the walkable urban environment desired by the Town), any new development will likely need to include lucrative student housing at a relatively high density. With that information in mind, the Town will need to determine which path is appropriate for the future of North Main Street:

1. If an urban walkable corridor is desired, higher density development with upscale rental units will likely be needed to make redevelopment feasible.

2. If the Town does not feel higher density housing is appropriate along this corridor, the site will remain in its current state or it may redevelop into low-density commercial uses if demand increases in the future. Feasibility issues will likely preclude the use of structured parking. Maximum setbacks and other design regulations can be used to control aesthetics and improve pedestrian access to some degree, but the presence of surface parking will be a limiting factor in creating a dense urban corridor.

Without further analysis, the density of residential units needed to support high-quality redevelopment cannot be determined. At 147 bedrooms per acre, the density of The Standard is substantially higher than other projects recently approved by the Town. The closest example is Terrace View, which is being developed at 114 bedrooms per acre. One major difference between the two projects is that as an existing apartment complex under single ownership, Terrace View did not have to assemble any property as part of the redevelopment process. Whereas the developer of The Standard had to assemble multiple parcels, including expensive commercial properties like a gas station, which has significant effects on the financial viability of a project. So while the residential density is rather high, it may be due to the costs associated with a challenging redevelopment project.

## ARCHITECTURE & SITE DESIGN

### ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

#### *Building Mass, Façade, and Site Layout*

Located on an 800-foot long block on North Main Street, the proposed four-to-five-story building will be noticeably larger and longer than any other development in Town. Ideally, a site of this size should be divided into more walkable, smaller blocks, so it is unfortunate those street connections have not been made in this case. Even so, the proposed design makes an effort to break up the large building mass along North Main Street into three distinct sections that provide visual interest and make it more compatible with a walkable environment. Additional building articulations and recessing portions of the façade would also help to reduce the mass of the building. An overview of the main façade, along with suggested improvements, is provided below.

#### Southern Section

The 200-foot long southern façade does an adequate job of creating visual interest along the road. The large corner retail space features sizeable windows and is accented with pilasters, a prominent overhang, and materials such as grey brick and black panels. The residential façade has several building articulations and benefits from the variety of materials which includes red brick and white, grey, and black panels.

#### Northern Section

The northern façade also employs a variety of materials, engages the street edge with commercial storefronts, and highlights the street corner with a large mural and overhang. However, at 280 feet long, it still feels a bit oversized.

#### Central Section

The central façade has the most room for improvement. The first floor façade is rather plain compared to the other sections and the materials chosen for the upper floors are two similar shades of gray. This long façade would benefit from a greater variety of materials, more articulations, and a more obvious separation between the central and northern sections of the façade. The incorporation of an architectural centerpiece, potentially where the leasing agency is located, would further breakdown this long stretch of the building.

### Building Rendering



*Community Amenities and Unit Design*

Amenities proposed include bike rooms, study rooms, two courtyards, a clubroom, an exercise room, and a pool. However, the size of the courtyards is concerning as they will feel somewhat cramped and provide poor access to natural light. At only 25 feet in width in some places, the courtyards may be a bit small, particularly since they will be surrounded by structures that are approximately forty feet tall. Several residential units in the southern wing of the property will face a similar issue, as they face a tall parking garage that is only a short distance away. Further consideration should be given to expanding the minimum width of the courtyards or possibly combining the two separate courtyards into one continuous open space.

Building Elevations



**PARKING & SITE DESIGN**

*Access & Parking*

In line with best practices, vehicular parking for The Standard is being provided in a multi-story parking structure that is hidden from view on North Main Street. This design keeps the façade of the building the focus of the project and helps create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Parking is being provided at a ratio of 0.80 spaces per bedroom and 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet of leasable commercial space. The spaces will be a mixture of standard (9' x 18') and compact spaces (8' x 16').

In an urban environment, where a majority of parking is provided in a garage or in the rear of a property, retail users almost universally want to have short-term parking spots in front of the property, as is typical in most downtown environments. In this case, the proposed development has attempted to provide for this with three parallel spaces along Broce Drive. The larger retail space on the south end of the site does not have on-street parking, but with adjacent access to the parking garage, it may be less of an issue. If North Main Street is redesigned in the future, and more walkable retail development is desired, the Town will need to carefully balance on-street retail parking needs with facilities and amenities for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Standard has two access points. Ground level access to the parking garage will be provided on Main Street, while Montgomery Street will provide direct access to the third level of the garage. The developer anticipates that most residents and deliveries will use the Montgomery Street access point. This development will consolidate seven to eight existing entrances along Main Street into one, greatly improving the pedestrian environment.

*Open Space*

The applicant states that the site plan meets or exceeds the Town's requirement for 20% open space, including at least 5,000 square feet for passive or active recreation activities. Most of this space is within the enclosed courtyards of the residential buildings and the rest seems to be left over space around the edges of the project. With the information provided, it's unclear if the intent of the code is being met in this case.

*Buffers*

Buffers between adjacent single-family homes and the proposed development are inadequate. While some areas have somewhat dense landscape treatments, others are strangely bare. In addition to landscaping, a durable privacy fence is also appropriate. With thoughtful design and buffers, the project can be compatible with adjacent low-density residential zoning.

Recommended Buffer Improvements



**SUSTAINABILITY FEATURES**

The proposed project must have a high level of energy efficiency in order to meet the standard specifications provided for in the 2012 Virginia Building Code (VBC) and the 2012 Virginia Energy Conservation Code (VECC). These standards are applied to all new construction projects. Above and beyond those code requirements, the applicant's narrative states that they will seek bronze level certification through the National Green Building Standard (NGBS).

The site does not include best practice stormwater features such as rain gardens, curb notching, or permeable pavement. However, it does include an underground detention system that will help prevent adverse impacts, such as channel erosion, flooding, and/or increased pollutant loads, to downstream properties. The use of underground detention eliminates the need for detention/retention ponds and allows for greater flexibility in site design and potentially, more usable open space. Nutrient credits will be used to address other stormwater requirements.

The Standard also promotes sustainability by better utilizing a site in a developed area that already has the required infrastructure. Additionally, the project promotes alternative transportation with a greatly improved bus stop in front of the property, at least six electric vehicle charging stations, and indoor bicycle parking.

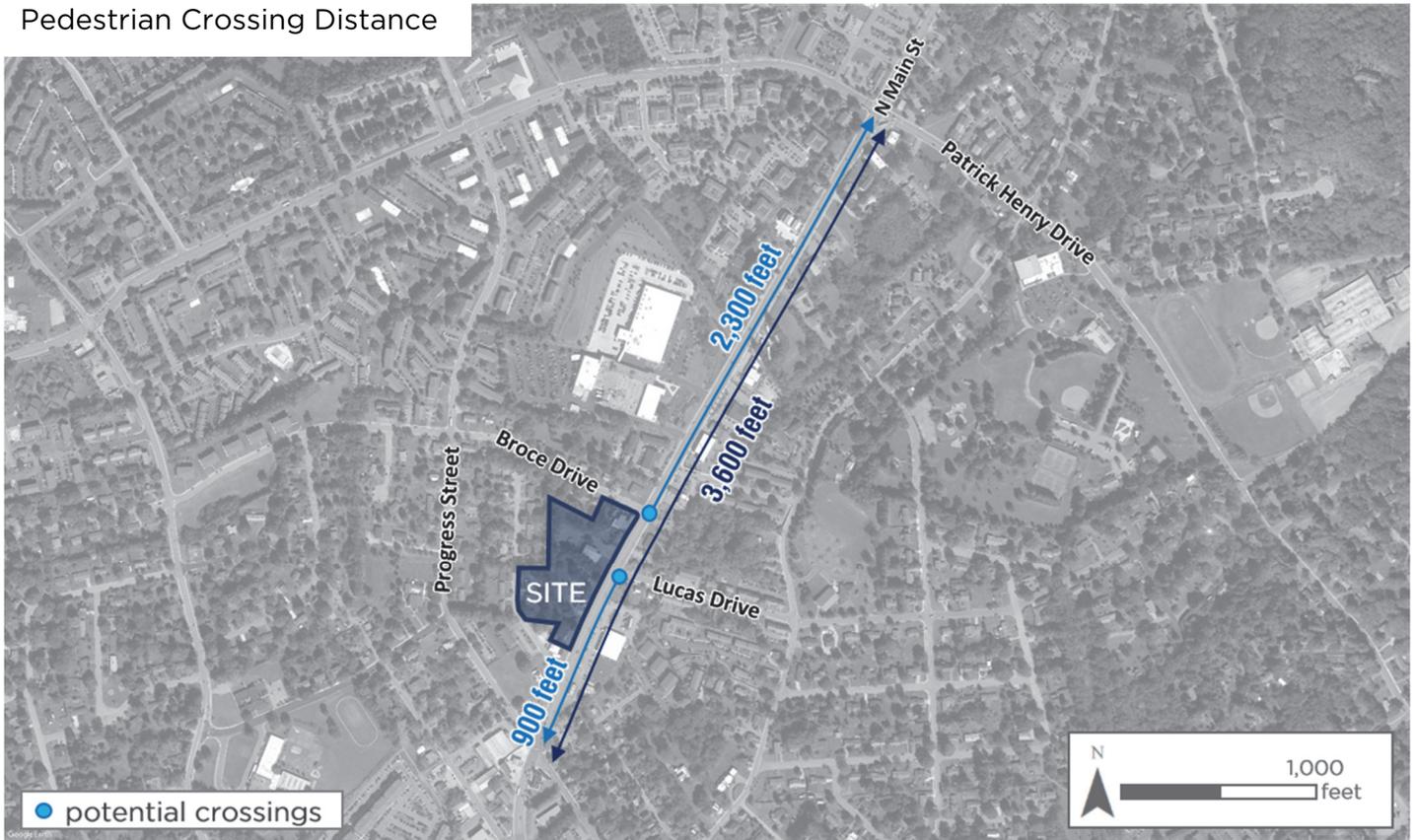
## TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM & CONNECTIVITY

### BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

At a minimum, the developer will need to ensure that the site is ADA accessible, which may be somewhat more challenging than usual due to topography. Beyond the boundaries of the site, there are major walkability issues. Even though there are destinations within one-half mile and North Main Street has sidewalks, the road is not pedestrian-friendly. It is four lanes wide, with a narrow sidewalk directly adjacent to traffic. There are no amenities or landscaping to encourage walking and safe locations to cross are few and far between. The developer has proposed “expanded sidewalks” along North Main Street and will be burying overhead utility lines, both of which will improve aesthetics and walkability. Wider sidewalks with a generous planting strip would be a welcome addition. However, a greater effort is needed on behalf of the Town to begin planning for improvements and incorporating the anticipated expenses into the long-term capital improvement program. If a walkable mixed-use corridor is desired, major infrastructure investments will need to be made.

Within the confines of the site, the developer is working to promote cycling. Bicycle parking is being provided at a ratio of one per bedroom, with a minimum of 80% of spaces being covered. They have also expressed interest in becoming a hub for the local bicycle sharing program. Even so, cycling will be challenging for residents of this property. It is not near any multi-use trails, there are no on-street facilities on Main Street, and Montgomery Street cannot be utilized as it does not connect to any other roads. It may be possible to use Broce Drive as a lower traffic volume alternative, but topography and the lack of designated facilities will make this somewhat difficult as well.

Pedestrian Crossing Distance



## TRANSIT CAPACITY AND ROUTES

The new multi-use building will have excellent transit access, with a brand new covered bus shelter (with full pull-off) directly in front of the property. This amenity will greatly reduce parking demand and traffic generated from the project. Property owners can work with Blacksburg Transit to develop an annual program to get new residents familiar with the system and increase the likelihood that they will take advantage of it. According to a statement provided by the applicant, the project will be paying “no more than” \$15,000 to Blacksburg Transit to subsidize additional service. The property owner may also want to consider coordinating some type of car share options, allowing residents to have occasional access to a vehicle when necessary, but otherwise relying on transit, cycling, or walking on a regular basis.

One area of concern is that residents traveling back from campus will be picked up or dropped off on the east side of the road, requiring a potentially dangerous street crossing without any kind of assistance, such as a crosswalk, nearby. Town staff should continue to work with the developer and Blacksburg Transit to determine if improvements need to be made. These improvements could involve one or more of the following:

- Some type of controlled intersection at Lucas or Broce drive
- Mid-block crossing with a flashing beacon or in-street signage
- Incorporation of a median refuge island to reduce crossing distances

Any of these treatments would be an initial step towards transforming North Main Street from a vehicular thoroughfare into a walkable corridor.

## STREET GRID

The street grid is not well-established along this corridor. The distance between Progress Street and Patrick Henry Drive is nearly three quarters of a mile. Along that entire distance, Broce Drive, Lucas Drive, and Northview Drive are the only intersecting streets that provide usable connections. All of these streets are in close proximity, leaving most of the corridor as large “superblocks”— blocks that are more than 800 feet in length before hitting an intersection. These long stretches of road are not conducive to walking and also make vehicular and cycling difficult as people have to travel out of their way to gain access to particular areas.

The frontage of the site for The Standard is almost 800 feet in length. Ideally, an intersecting street would have been introduced into this project early in the planning process, providing a connection from Main Street to Montgomery that could eventually be continued west to Progress Street. This missed opportunity need not be repeated in the future. As the corridor begins to redevelop, the street grid can be improved if Blacksburg takes proactive steps to plan. Locations for future roads need to be indicated on official documents, such as the Future Land Use Map. Once this has been completed, staff will need to carefully enforce these requirements and ensure that expectations are clearly laid out in preliminary meetings with potential developers.

RZN19-0001-“The Standard” Neighborhood Meeting at 1009 North Main Street  
Wednesday, March 27, 2019 5:30 pm

Meeting began at 5:32 pm.

Kinsey O’Shea began the meeting by explaining the Town of Blacksburg’s role in reviewing and processing the application and the timeline and meetings proposed to discuss and decide on the application. She also showed all those in attendance were to find the application, all documents and the meeting schedule on the Town of Blacksburg website.

Mr. Andrew Costas of Landmark Properties introduced the team members involved in the project.

John Neel gave a presentation and description of the proposed project and then opened the meeting to any questions.

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- A citizen asked what would be the tallest point of the structure, and what the view would be of the tallest point of the building.
  - A citizen asked if there would be more Blacksburg Transit (BT) buses on Main Street to serve the development.
  - An attendee asked if this project was definitely targeted to students.
  - A citizen asked what the parking ratio would be for the development.
  - An attendee mentioned that the loss of the existing laundromat should the project go forward would be a big blow to the neighborhood. The citizen asked if there were plans to replace the laundromat in the proposed development.
  - A citizen asked how the building would be screened along the back yards of the homes along Montgomery Street and Broce Drive.
  - As a follow up question, a citizen asked if there would be windows facing the homes on Montgomery Street and Broce Drive? The citizen also expressed concerns that overflow parking would occur.
  - An attendee expressed concern that when new projects are started where parking is occurring on both sides of the road, parking and navigating the street become very difficult. The neighborhood streets are already tight and more visitors and traffic will be a big problem.
  - An attendee asked if there are plans to add a traffic signal to the intersection of Broce and North Main Street.
  - A citizen asked what the total number of by-right bedroom is allowed under the current zoning and the total number proposed in this new project.
  - An attendee asked what the rental rate would be for the residential units.
  - A citizen asked how many parking spaces there will be allocated for retail and residential.
  - An attendee asked what the total impervious area would be.
  - A citizen expressed concern that there is already water standing on Broce Drive when it rains and is concerned that the development will exacerbate this condition with greater stormwater runoff.
  - An attendee asked if the developer will be installing larger storm drains in the road. The citizen indicated that there is already flooding on Progress Street. If there is a problem, the citizen wondered whose responsibility it would be for maintenance—the applicant or the Town. The citizen wanted to

know how the development will accommodate additional sewage needs and infrastructure. The citizen was concerned that the additional residents would lead to utility system trouble in the future.

- A citizen pointed out that the application shows bike rooms and bike parking spaces but had questions about what other bike facilities are proposed, such as bike lanes. The citizen wanted to know if bikes would be allowed on the sidewalks, and whether there was consideration given to bikes on the sidewalk interacting with commercial doors.
- A citizen mentioned that he believed there have been some inadequacies in the sewer system capacity with other projects and wondered if the inadequacies in the system also affected this project.
- An attendee asked what would be the ideal timeline for the project and how long the construction would last.
- A citizen asked if the sidewalk in the area would be closed and for how long.
- A citizen pointed out that there is a wide sidewalk proposed around the project section but it will be too narrow. There are already problems along this section with bikers and pedestrians and too small a space. The citizen fears there will be a bottleneck issue with too many people trying to occupy the same space. The citizen also mentioned that it is difficult to cross Main Street to catch a northbound bus, because a lot of times the southbound busses are at capacity and won't accept more riders. The citizen asked if there would be additional bus service provided.
- A citizen asked about the location of trash and recycling areas.
- A neighbor who lives on Montgomery Street asked if the greenspace behind his home would be developed. He also asked if there would be any changes to internet or cell service.
- A citizen asked how much commercial space existed on the site currently.
- A citizen noted that the increased bike/ped and vehicle traffic, as well as increased need for bus service, may necessitate crosswalks or speed limits in this area.
- A citizen asked if it would be possible to get a crosswalk at Broce and North Main Street.
- A citizen asked when the traffic study was done and what intersections were involved. The same citizen asked if there are any proposed changes by Town or applicant to Montgomery Street due to impact associated with the development. The citizen also asked about the interior floor plans for the units.
- The owner of Abby's restaurant noted that Abby's and the existing laundromat have an access area between the two buildings. He wondered if the access would be cut off by the new development, or if there is a possibility to maintain or improve this connection. He also noted the lack of sidewalk along Montgomery Street adjacent to the restaurant due to the location of the building and its proximity to the right-of-way. He also reiterated that parking along Montgomery Street may be an issue.
- An attendee asked again when the applicant performed the traffic study.
- An attendee asked if parking would be restricted to residents.
- A citizen asked how many parking spaces are included in proposed project.
- An attendee mentioned that it seemed inequitable that residents of the proposed project could park on Montgomery Street but Montgomery Street residents can't park in the project's parking areas.
- A citizen asked about the development's proposed lighting in regards to light pollution.
- An attendee asked if there will be restricted noise hours for construction and resident noise and behavior.
- A citizen mentioned that the applicant should reconsider the parking ratio because it does not appear to be adequate given that residents tend to bring vehicles, and given the consideration for visitor parking as well.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:49 pm.**



