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Preliminary Consultation
MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address: 17810 Meeting House Road, Sandy Spring
Meeting Date: 6/23/2021

Resource: Non-Contributing Resource
Sandy Spring Historic District
Report Date: 6/16/2021

Applicant: Sandy Spring Village, LP
Public Notice: 6/9/2021

Review: Preliminary Consultation
Staff: Dan Bruechert

PROPOSAL: Site Redevelopment

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the applicant make any revisions based on HPC feedback and return for a HAWP.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Non-Contributing Resource within the Sandy Spring Historic District
STYLE: Colonial Revival
DATE: c.1904 and 1976/7

Figure 1: The Proposed redevelopment site includes two buildings, 17810 Meeting House Rd. and 900 Olney-Sandy Spring Rd.
PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to convert the existing site from commercial use to senior residential. Proposed changes on the site include:

- New windows and doors;
- Site improvements; and
- Hardscaping alterations

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Sandy Spring Historic District several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the Approved and Adopted Sandy Spring and Ashton Master Plan (Master Plan), Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (Chapter 24A), and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards). The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

Approved & Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Sandy Spring Historic District

“Sandy Spring, settled in 1727 by the Quaker James Brooke, is one of the oldest settlements in the County with a fine collection of religious, financial and educational buildings.

- The inclusion of the Montgomery Mutual Insurance Company property was not intended to preclude new development on the site or restrict the allowable density of development. Rather, the intention was and continues to be, to assure that the high standards of sensitive design which have been established by the 1977 Montgomery Mutual building be carried on in the construction of other new buildings on the site. The inclusion of a portion of Meeting House Road within the district is intended to preserve the rural character of the roadway including its width, design and landscaping.”

Montgomery County Code; Chapter 24A-8

(b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to ensure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:

(1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or

(2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter; or

(c) In the case of an application for work on an historic resource located within an historic district, the commission shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for structures of little historical or design significance or for plans involving new construction, unless such plans would seriously impair the historic or architectural value of surrounding historic resources or would impair the character of the historic district. (Ord. No. 9-4, § 1; Ord. No. 11-59.)

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation:

The Secretary of the Interior defines rehabilitation as “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features, which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.” The Standards are as follows:
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**STAFF DISCUSSION**

The subject property consists of two buildings, a 1904 Colonial Revival building at 900 Olney-Sandy Spring Rd. and a 1977 building at 17810 Meeting House Rd. Both buildings were constructed as commercial office space for the Mutual Fire Insurance Company. The proposal before the HPC would redevelop the site and convert its use to senior housing. The proposed changes include alterations to the 1977 building, site improvements, and hardscape alterations. An additional topic for discussion includes road improvements along Meeting House Road, which will be discussed before the Planning Board at an upcoming meeting. As outlined in the Statement of Justification (attached) the work proposed includes:

**Exterior Building Improvements**
- Power wash building exteriors;
- Repoint at existing brick wall exteriors and brick stairs as needed;
- Re-open window weep holes;
- Provide replacement slate roof tiles and flashing for missing or damaged areas;
- Recondition repair and paint balconies, dormers and wood panels as needed;
- Repair and seal gutters and provide soffits where missing. Provide rain leaders to match existing where damaged. Snake existing rain leaders and remove obstructions if found;
- Provide caps for dormer roofs;
- Remove masonry infill and provide matching wood windows on West Elevation;
- On the East Bridge Elevation: replace center windows with a door to match existing doors on opposite side of bridge, extend sidewalk to door; and
- Provide Dormer Caps as needed.

**Site Improvements**
- Eliminate the nine parking spaces located directly in front of the Meeting House Road Buildings to provide for fire department vehicular access;
- Various modifications are proposed to the site hardscaping to provide improved ADA access and pedestrian circulation; and
- Minor modifications to the landscaping and site design within the courtyard on Meeting House Road and just south of the buildings, to provide enhanced outdoor amenities for the community and future residents.

**Exterior Building Alterations**
Most of the proposed changes to the buildings are maintenance and/or repair. Much of this work is eligible for the County Historic Preservation Tax Credit. The work that is subject to HPC review and approval includes installing windows to blanking openings on the west elevation of the 1977 building and removing a pair of windows and installing a pair of doors in the ‘bridge’ between the sections of the 1977 building.

Material specifications were not provided for either of these alterations, however, Staff recommends that the replacement features match the dimensions, design, and materials of the existing windows and doors.
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on the building. Because this building is not historic, Staff finds matching the existing features will not run afoul of Standard 9. Staff also notes, the Master Plan specifically calls out the “high standard of sensitive design” for the 1977 Mutual Insurance building, so any visible alterations should utilize the same high standards.

Site Improvements
Staff identified three primary areas of site improvements. They are a new paved area in front of 900 Olney-Silver Spring (Stabler Building), areas of café tables and chairs adjacent to 17801 Meeting House Road, and a new walk at the south end of the building site.

The front of the Stabler building currently has a lawn, a pair of trees, and shrubs. Staff finds that the front of commercial buildings in the surrounding area includes both lawns and pavement. Staff requests feedback from the HPC on the appropriateness of paving large sections in front of the Stabler building. Based on the drawings, it appears that the trees will need to be removed. Mitigation measures may be necessary to address the loss of the street trees.

Staff finds the other two site improvements will not have a significant visual impact on the character of the site or surrounding district. The café tables are likely movable and are adjacent to a proposed pedestrian path (discussed below). The path around the retention pond at the south side of the site will have a low impact on the site because it is on grade and is set back from Meeting House Road. Staff requests HPC feedback on the site improvements.

Hardscape Alterations
The last changes proposed on the site are alterations to the existing hardscaping. The proposal will eliminate a number of parking spaces along Meeting House Road, ADA improvements around the site, and the construction of a courtyard between the sections of the 1977 building.

Staff finds these changes will not have a significant impact on the site; and that removing the parking spaces along meeting house road will improve the character of the adjacent designated rustic road. Staff requests feedback from the HPC on these elements.

Other Considerations
The materials submitted for the Preliminary Consultation did not include details regarding any tree removal. Based on the improvements at the front of the Stabler Building, it appears that at least two trees will need to be removed. Staff’s review of the plans did not identify any other trees that would be removed. Any tree that exceeds 6” d.b.h. (six inches diameter breast height) may not be removed without a HAWP.

The other issue Staff would like to raise for comment is potential changes along Meeting House Road. Meeting House Road is an Exceptional Rustic Road, a designation given to rustic roads that provide a “significant contribution to the land character,” have “unusual features,” and “would be negatively affected by changes.” The proposal under consideration for this Preliminary Consultation is also coming before the Planning Board for its Site Plan approval. In the Development Review Committee discussions, some County agencies support bringing the section of Meeting House Road adjacent to the project area up to current standards for the County’s Vision Zero Action Plan, to eliminate traffic fatalities in the County, that includes the requirement that roads in developed areas of the county have sidewalks. Staff notes that no traffic studies have been conducted at the project site, nor is the applicant required to produce a study for Site Plan Approval. The goals of The Rustic Roads Master Plan and Vision Zero appear to conflict in this instance. Designated rustic roads are established to preserve the County’s agricultural features and rural origins. Staff finds that requiring a sidewalk along Meeting House Road would negatively impact the character of the road and would be contrary to the road and the surrounding district. Staff requests
feedback from the HPC on the potential impact to the Meeting House Road, which will be integrated into the Staff Report for the Site Plan before the Planning Board.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the applicant make any changes to the proposal based on the feedback from the HPC and return for a HAWP.
Statement in Support
Historic Preservation Commission – Preliminary Consultation
17810 Meeting House Road, 900 Olney-Sandy Spring Road,
Sandy Spring, Maryland

Sandy Spring Village, LP, an affiliate of KCG Development (the “Applicant”), is submitting this request for a Preliminary Consultation with the Historic Preservation Commission. The Applicant is the contract purchaser of the property located at 17810 Meeting House Road and 900 Olney-Sandy Spring Road in Sandy Spring, Maryland (the “Property”). As discussed below, the Applicant is proposing to convert the existing office use on the Property into an age-restricted, income-restricted, 100% affordable multi-family development (the “Project”). Exterior building and site modifications are limited to those changes required to accommodate the proposed residential use, provide ADA and fire department access to the buildings, improved pedestrian connectivity, and enhanced residential outdoor amenities.

I. Property Background

The Property is located in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Olney-Sandy Spring Road and Meeting House Road, in Sandy Spring. The Property is more particularly known as Parcel A in the “Sandy Spring” subdivision, as shown on Plat No. 17648. The Property has a net lot area of 116,389 square feet and is currently zoned CRN-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.5 H-45’. The Property is located within the Sandy Spring Historic District.

The Property is currently improved with three masonry buildings totaling approximately 56,565 gross square feet. Located toward the rear of the Property are two, three-story, connected office buildings – the original “Bentley Building” contains approximately 29,072 square feet and the “Moore Building” addition contains approximately 22,005 square feet (collectively, referred to hereinafter as the “Meeting House Road Buildings”). Located directly at the intersection of Meeting House Road and Olney-Sandy Spring Road is a 2 ½ story, approximately 5,488 square foot structure devoted to office use (referred to hereinafter as the “Olney-Sandy Spring Structure”). (Collectively, the “Existing Buildings”).

The Olney-Sandy Spring Structure was originally constructed in 1904 as an office for the Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Montgomery County. The building is a great example of Colonial Revival architecture. The building is pulled up to the street and located directly at the intersection of Olney-Sandy Spring Road and Meeting House Road. The building has a double-door entry with transom light directly facing the street, which is covered by an elaborate porch with flat roof. The building façade has windows on all four sides.

1 Stabler 1848, LLC owns the Property and has authorized KCG Development to submit applications for the redevelopment of the Property.
The Meeting House Road Buildings are a great example of Georgian architecture, on a much larger scale. These buildings originally served as a more modern home of the Mutual Fire Insurance Company (later called the Montgomery Mutual Insurance Company). These larger buildings have hipped roofs with a gable front, and dormers. The original 1977 building (the “Bentley Building”), has several large chimneys and a decorative cupola tower situated in the middle of the roof. The approximately 22,005 square foot “Moore Building” was added in 1991 and was designed to blend seamlessly in with the existing three-story building.

II. Proposed Development

The Applicant is proposing up to provide up to 56 age-restricted, affordable dwelling units on the Property. The Project will provide affordable housing that will serve senior households earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income (“AMI”). 100% of the units will be affordable. Rents are set to achieve a range of affordability between 40-60% of AMI, with units at income levels substantially below those required by the Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (“MPDU”) program. As such, the Project will respond to the County’s need for affordable, senior housing and will allow seniors in the Ashton-Sandy Spring submarket, with fixed incomes, to age in place. The Project will be the first of its kind in Ashton-Sandy Spring and will greatly improve the diversity of the market’s housing stock, while preserving the existing buildings and historic character of the neighborhood.

As a part of continuity of the Property and its relation to the surroundings, the building footprint, height and overall square footage will remain unchanged. Given the elegant and timeless design of the Existing Buildings, the Applicant is proposing minimal exterior modifications. The exterior modifications are primarily limited to those required for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings, and code requirements for the proposed residential use. The Applicant recognizes the historical significance of the site within the community and endeavors to preserve the Property’s frontage along Meeting House Road – an Exceptional Rustic Road.

The Project will provide various opportunities for passive and active recreation and social gatherings that are specifically tailored to the residents’ lifestyles. For example the Project is anticipated to provide raised garden beds, space for recreation (e.g. chess, bocce ball, yoga, possible labyrinth), and opportunities for socialization and relaxation (e.g. events pavilion overlooking a “common green,” sensory garden and interior courtyard with grilling and outdoor seating/dining opportunities). Additionally, the Applicant is working with local Sandy Spring community members to establish an art installation in the courtyard. The art is intended to provide a community benefit, although it is not being provided as part of the public art program. The final design, location and specifications for the art will be determined at time of building permit.
III. Summary of Exterior Modifications

As previously mentioned, the exterior building and site modifications are limited to those changes required to facilitate the conversion of the Existing Buildings into an age-restricted, affordable residential development. Specifically, the Applicant is proposing the following modifications to ensure the buildings can meet their programmatic needs and importantly, provide efficient means of access for residents throughout the site:

- Exterior Building Improvements
  - Power wash building exteriors;
  - Repoint at existing brick wall exteriors and brick stairs as needed;
  - Re-open window weep holes;
  - Provide replacement slate roof tiles and flashing for missing or damaged areas;
  - Recondition repair and paint balconies, dormers and wood panels as needed;
  - Repair and seal gutters and provide soffits where missing. Provide rain leaders to match existing where damaged. Snake existing rain leaders and remove obstructions if found;
  - Provide caps for dormer roofs;
  - Remove masonry infill and provide matching wood windows on West Elevation;
  - On the East Bridge Elevation: replace center windows with a door to match existing doors on opposite side of bridge, extend sidewalk to door; and
  - Provide Dormer Caps as needed.

- Site Improvements
  - Eliminate the nine parking spaces located directly in front of the Meeting House Road Buildings to provide for fire department vehicular access;
  - Various modifications are proposed to the site hardscaping to provide improved ADA access and pedestrian circulation; and
  - Minor modifications to the landscaping and site design within the courtyard on Meeting House Road and just south of the buildings, to provide enhanced outdoor amenities for the community and future residents.
No changes are proposed to vehicular access. Vehicular access to the Overall Property will continue to be provided through existing curb cuts. Importantly, the Applicant is not proposing modifications to Meeting House Road, which is an Exceptional Rustic Road.

IV. Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

The modifications proposed to the Existing Buildings will be in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

As mentioned above, the Existing Buildings will be converted into age-restricted housing, a use allowed by-right within the existing zoning. The Project will not change any defining characteristics of the buildings, site and surrounding environment. The exterior modifications are primarily limited to those required for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings, and code requirements for the proposed residential use. The Property will continue to contribute to the historic setting and character of the neighborhood.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

The historic character of the Property will be retained and preserved. As discussed above, the Applicant is proposing only modest exterior improvements to the Existing Buildings and site. None of the changes proposed will result in alterations to the features that characterize these buildings. Importantly, no changes are proposed to Meeting House Road, which is included in the Sandy Spring Historic District and is classified as an Exceptional Rustic Road. Through the development review process, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (“DOT”) has requested additional right-of-way dedication along Meeting House Road, which would also require the Public Utility Easement to be relocated farther into the Property. Given the restrictions on physical improvements within the right-of-way, this additional dedication would adversely impact many of the existing and proposed site elements that positively contribute to the character of the Historic District and this Exceptional Rustic Road. Additionally, DOT has requested the construction of a new 6’ sidewalk along Meeting House Road – this improvement is completely contradictory with the Exceptional Rustic Road classification. The criteria for Exceptional Rustic Roads include, among other things, a finding that the road “would be more negatively affected by improvements or modifications to the physical characteristics of the road than would other roads in the Rustic Road Program.” As such, the Applicant is not proposing to provide additional dedication or make any improvements to Meeting House Road.
3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

Any exterior improvements to the Property will complement, and not compete with, the historic structure. The exterior modifications to the Existing Buildings are limited to those required for the maintenance and upkeep of the buildings (e.g. repointing brick, replace roof tiles and flashing, add dormer caps etc.), and code requirements for the proposed residential use (e.g. adding windows on west elevation of the Moore Building).

4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

Although the Existing Buildings are not designated historic resources, the Property is located within the Sandy Spring Historic District. The architecture of the Existing Buildings and the site, with its many mature trees, contribute to the historic character of the area and will be retained and preserved.

5. *Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

As discussed above, limited exterior modifications are proposed. The building features, finishes, and construction techniques that characterize the Existing Buildings will be preserved.

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

The Existing Buildings are in relatively good repair. The scope of the exterior work primarily includes repairs and general maintenance of the existing materials and building elements. The Applicant intends to use like-kind materials for any necessary replacements and alterations.
7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

In cleaning and preserving the exterior of the Property and Existing Buildings, the Applicant will take precautions to ensure that any surface cleaning required does not damage the integrity of the building elements.

8. *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*

There are no known archeological resources on the Property that will be affected by the Applicant’s proposed adaptive re-use of the Property.

9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

No new additions are proposed by the Project. The proposed exterior alterations (e.g. new doors and windows required to accommodate the residential use) will be designed to complement the existing architecture, and will not destroy any historic materials that characterize the Property. The Project will maintain and enhance the historic integrity of the Existing Buildings and Sandy Spring Historic District.

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

As mentioned above, no new additions or new construction is proposed by the Project.

**V. Conclusion**

The Applicant is seeking preliminary guidance from the Historic Preservation Commission on the Project and overall modifications described in this Statement. Thereafter, the Applicant will submit for Historic Area Work Permit review and approval.

We look forward to getting your feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need more information.
Sincerely,

William Kominers

Elizabeth C. Rogers