

Mount Airy Crossing Pre-Concept Plan Public Hearing Responses

Town Planning + Approval Process

What is the process for Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) review + approval of this project?

There are two phases to the Concept Plan process – the Pre-Concept Sketch Plan and the Concept Plan. The first phase is Pre-Concept Sketch Plan and sets the maximum allowable density. The second phase is the Concept Plan and Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) approval based upon the maximum allowable density approved in the first phase. The Town Council has requested the developer provide an “APFO Assessment” during the first phase Pre-Concept Sketch Plan, which the developer has provided. The Pre-Concept Sketch Plan sets the maximum density allowable, but APFO must still be proven during the second phase Concept Plan review; adjusting final density as required but never exceeding the maximum density allowable. The APFO is required to be tested at the second phase Concept Plan, as that is when the total residential and commercial density is known. APFO is an evaluation by the Planning Commission and not the Town Council. During Concept Plan phase, the Pre-Concept Sketch plan is refined for various design elements, but the general layout of the plan will be maintained, and the number of units and density may not increase.

Project Design

How does the Pre-Concept Sketch Plan meet the objectives of the MXD Zone?

These are the stated objectives of the Town of Mount Airy Mixed Use Development zoning ordinances, followed by the ways in which the Mount Airy Crossing Pre-Concept Sketch Plan meets those goals:

- ***OBJECTIVE 1: Provide a more attractive residential and nonresidential environment than would be possible through the strict application of conventional zoning district requirements:***

The open space proposed for Mount Airy Crossing includes larger areas, as well as neighborhood-scaled open space, including residential greens and nonresidential plazas.

- ***OBJECTIVE 2: Encourage harmonious and coordinated development of sites that is consistent with the existing natural features, bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular circulation and compatibility with surrounding uses.***

Street layout and vehicular circulation has been coordinated with the surrounding environmental features and as required by the Mount Airy Master Plan. Pedestrian connectivity will be standard throughout, for enhanced walkability to open spaces and businesses.

- ***OBJECTIVE 3: Encourage development that is of excellent design and architecture with a mix of uses that will create synergy, efficiency of design, and an increase in walkability.***

Mount Airy Crossing is designed as a traditional neighborhood community as envisioned by the Town Vision Plan. Excellence of design and architecture are being proposed by utilizing local compatible styles and materials. Mount Airy Crossing will also include walking and bicycle trails to foster a more walkable, accessible community.

- ***OBJECTIVE 4: Create a mixture of office, retail, cultural, art, recreational, and residential uses, along with restaurants, eateries and cafes, where all related structures, parking, and open spaces are designed to establish and maintain a cohesive community while protecting the character of surrounding neighborhoods and the overall natural environment.***

A total of 476 housing units are planned – including 333 deed-restricted senior housing units. The homes will be designed with a variety of styles – including villas, single family and multifamily homes. There will also be commercial space on both sides of Route 27, comprising a total of 135,200 square feet for shopping, restaurant and commercial services. Both passive and active open spaces have been designed throughout the site to provide cultural, art and recreational opportunities.

- ***OBJECTIVE 5: Expand the opportunity to support diversified housing options within an integrated site design of varying land uses.***

Mount Airy Crossing is planned as a quaint neighborhood with homes for families and seniors alike, small shops and local dining options, and 31.9 acres of green space (35.9%). The homes will be designed with a variety of diversified housing options – including first time homebuyers, active adult/senior, single family and multifamily homes.

- ***OBJECTIVE 6: Encourage development of sites that promote and support a diverse artistic and if possible cultural entertainment area and that creates a community with live-work space for artists.***

Multiple residential and nonresidential spaces have been designed throughout the site to promote a diversity of entertainment and creative opportunities.

How does Mount Airy Crossing meet the needs of the Town and the intent of the Vision Plan?

Under the Mount Airy zoning ordinance, and consistent with the Downtown Vision Plan, Mount Airy Crossing is zoned for Mixed Use (MXD). This means the property must comply with MXD zoning requirements, which includes providing a mix of residential and commercial uses, providing a mix of housing types, and providing the required amount of designated open space. Mount Airy Crossing is exactly the kind of responsible development that promotes slow and smart growth to meet the needs of the Town – just as intended under the Vision Plan. Notably, the development will occur over an approximate 10-year period, equating to a population growth of about 1% per year. In addition, Mount Airy Crossing will be a gateway for the Town – offering a new, convenient extension of Center Street to Route 27, consistent with the Downtown Vision Plan and the current Master Plan that was developed and approved by the Town.

Why are so many houses planned for the Mount Airy Crossing plan?

The number of housing units for this project has already been reduced by 106 units from the initial pre-concept plan. The proposed density is 5.3 units per acre, which is 24% below what the zone allows. The MXD zone allows for 623 total housing units or 7 units per net developable acre on the property. The purpose of the MXD zone “is to facilitate the integrated and orderly development of residential uses and nonresidential uses where high-quality mixed-use developments can occur in harmony with surrounding land uses.” There are many other factors to balance along with density, such as being able to provide high quality public improvements and excellent design, among other benefits.

What are the types, styles and sizes of housing planned for Mount Airy Crossing?

There are a variety of home types proposed for this project, with homes ranging in size from 1,000+/- SF senior apartments up to and exceeding 3,000+/- SF single-family detached homes. The plan includes an appropriate mix of multifamily, single-family detached, and single-family attached housing. Prices will be determined by market demand. There will be entry-level townhomes that will be appropriate for first-time homebuyers and others looking for more affordable options. The MXD zone promotes a more compact, walkable neighborhood with smaller lots and a variety of open spaces within walking distance per Smart Growth and Town Planning Best Practices. Lot sizes will be similar to residential lots within the downtown and will be finalized in the Concept Plan phase of the design. Other details regarding home design will be included in the Pattern Book as part of the Concept Plan phase. Multifamily housing will be built at a lower elevation on the west side. Excellence in design promotes higher density closer to commercial for greater walkability. Additionally, the multifamily buildings will be required to comply with the maximum height limit of 40 feet and will likely include 3-to-4-story split buildings, due to the site's topography.

Senior Housing

What types of senior housing are planned for Mount Airy Crossing?

The project includes two types of single-family attached villas, two types of single-family detached homes and a variety of apartment sizes. Senior multifamily housing and villas had strong support during the charrette held in May. A professional management company will manage the apartment community, and the owner-occupied housing will have a homeowners' association which will oversee enforcement of all restrictions established by the developer. The senior housing will have appropriate amenities and commercial services within walking distance.

Will the designated senior housing change after the project is approved?

No. Age-restricted housing is governed by federal and state regulations. In addition, the homes will have deed-restricted covenants that may be more restrictive than federal and state provisions. Those covenants will be in place in perpetuity.

Will adult children be able to live in senior homes?

Most Active Adult Communities are 55+ but many of the buyers are well above 60 or 70. Senior housing communities do not attract families with adult children, and deed-restricted covenants will have restrictions not allowing school age children. Additionally, most age-restricted communities have occupancy limits in the covenants that limit how many residents can occupy the homes. Very few senior homes are likely to have adult children, since the vast majority of these homes are typically purchased by “empty nester” or “move down” singles and couples.

Will there be enough parking for the senior apartment housing?

There will be adequate parking for the senior apartments. The multifamily senior housing is planned with a parking ratio of 1.5 spaces per unit, which is higher than the typical senior housing demand of 1 space per unit.

Retail + Services

Why are there commercial spaces planned for this development?

The MXD Zone requires a minimum of 25% of the development be reserved for commercial uses. The commercial areas of Mount Airy Crossing are intended to be comparable to downtown Mount Airy. There are no shopping centers or big box stores planned for this development. There are no definitive plans for the type of commercial uses, but it is expected to include small shops, restaurants and services (such as a daycare and/or pharmacy) to support the neighborhood. All commercial buildings will be appropriately landscaped to mitigate any visual impact.

Open Space + Recreation

Is there adequate open space planned for Mount Airy Crossing?

Yes. The development will provide the 3 acres per 100 persons of open space as required, and at least 30% of the net tract area will be set aside as open space prior to the Pre-Concept Sketch Plan being considered for approval by the Town Council. The open space proposed by the developer includes larger areas as well as neighborhood scaled open space including greens and plazas. The Pre-Concept Sketch Plan includes a variety of parks and open spaces within a 5-minute walk of every home. Importantly, the proposed open space in the Pre-Concept Plan meets the Town's definition of Open Space, which does not include "land considered unbuildable, existing rights-of-way and utility easements, setbacks and lawns, storm water management (unless unique forms are used that preserve the area in a natural or forested condition) or roads and parking areas."

Why are there no athletic fields included in the Mount Airy Crossing plan?

Mount Airy Crossing includes a 3-acre parcel of open space that will be dedicated to the Town. Pre-charrette designs included an athletic field. However, as requested during the public charrette, that parcel's final and best use will be determined by the Town.

Water + Sewer

Is there enough water and sewer capacity for this development?

Final water and sewer capacity is determined by APFO testing during the second phase Concept Plan review. Due diligence testing indicates, and has been presented in the APFO Assessment, that there is adequate water and sewer capacity to support this development. The current Pre-Concept Sketch plan unit count requires approximately 105,000 gallons per day of water, which would be provided by new onsite wells. Any new well in the Town is required to be approved by the Town of Mount Airy and the Maryland Department of Environment through a process designed to protect the watershed's groundwater supply. Test wells have been drilled onsite, and preliminary results have shown sufficient water resources can be achieved onsite for this project. In addition, preliminary discussions with the Town engineer indicate there is adequate sewer treatment capacity for this project in the existing Town sewage treatment plant.

Roads + Traffic

How will this development affect traffic – particularly Route 27 at Center Street and Twin Arch Road?

Final traffic mitigation is determined by APFO testing during the second phase Concept Plan review. A due diligence traffic study was conducted for this development based upon current unit counts and types, in accordance with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Town of Mount Airy. Traffic impact mitigation is currently being proposed at the subject intersections as follows: (a) a new traffic signal at Route 27 and Center Street, along with associated turn lanes and appropriate technology improvements for pedestrian-safe crosswalks, (b) re-phasing and re-striping of existing turn lanes at Route 27 and Twin Arch Road. All intersections in the traffic study area will operate within the required Level of Service thresholds set by SHA and the Town.

How will this development affect the intersection of Main Street and Center Street?

Final traffic mitigation is determined by APFO testing during the second phase Concept Plan review. A due diligence traffic study, which included the intersection of Main Street and Center Street, was conducted for this development in accordance with the SHA and the Town of Mount Airy. This intersection was shown to operate at an acceptable level of service under both the Town and SHA's methodologies, even after changes associated with the development, which include the addition of development traffic as well as the Center Street extension.

Why does this development include the extension of Center Street to connect to Route 27?

The Town, through its 2013 Master Plan, has made extending Center Street to Route 27 a priority through numerous requirements. This project meets the Town’s requirements for that connection.

What impact does the senior housing component have on the projected traffic impact of this project?

Senior housing only generates approximately 59% of trips compared to non-senior housing units, according to the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Senior housing trips are also spread throughout the day, so there is less impact at morning and evening peak hour periods. As a result, this proposed development – which has approximately 70% of housing units dedicated to age-restricted senior housing – will have a considerably lower impact on traffic than what had been originally planned.

Schools

What impact will this project have on the local public schools?

Final school mitigation is determined by APFO testing during the second phase Concept Plan review, based upon the final non-age-restricted or market-rate housing units. The property is located in Carroll County and is required to follow the APFO Carroll County student yield requirements. The current projected school impact will be 60 students, based on the 140 proposed units of non-age restricted housing units. Current capacities are sufficient for all levels of Carroll County schools to absorb the projected student yield.

Police + Emergency Services

How will this development impact public safety, including Police, Fire and EMS services?

Safety services are mitigated via public impact fees based upon the final unit count approved for the development. This development will provide a boost in financial support to fire and police through these impact fees. Carroll County is also now providing additional paid fire and emergency response staff countywide helping to alleviate resource concerns in certain areas of the county, including Mount Airy. As part of this project, the Developer would pay \$1,700 per equivalent dwelling unit (EDU), or a total of \$868,700, in impact fees to the Town for public safety mitigation.