

## Planners approve 210 condominium units at historic building

Board and neighbors concerned about parking, access at National Institute of Dryers and Cleaners on Georgia Avenue

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by Meredith Hooker

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While 210 condominium units are being constructed at the former National Institute of Dryers and Cleaners site on Georgia Avenue, developers must ensure nearby businesses aren't negatively affected.

The Montgomery County Planning Board on Thursday approved plans for the project, but asked that developer Cypress Realty Investments LLC accommodate local businesses if their parking is affected, as well as discuss alternate routes for Ride On buses and extension of the VanGo shuttle, a free bus service in the downtown, to ensure that portion of Silver Spring is accessible to public transportation.

Businesses in south Silver Spring are already being negatively affected by construction of condominiums, said Brenda Smoak, owner of Alchemy, an art store.

"Stoddard Place is not adequate to accommodate all of the traffic that would be flowing into and out of this complex," she said, adding that the five parking spaces she and three other south Silver Spring businesses share could be affected by construction. "... How will my customers, my artists and my class participants be able to be accommodated? If I don't have parking, I cannot get customers to me, and that obviously is going to negatively impact my business."

Anything Cypress Realty could do to minimize negative affects on Alchemy and other business would be critical, said Planning Board Chairman Derick P. Berlage. Board members don't want a situation in which "the small individual business is getting the short end of the stick."

Those parking spaces are on Stoddard Place in a public right of way, said Doug Cooper, senior vice president of Union Realty Partners, which encompasses Cypress Realty. Union Realty does not plan to take those spaces during construction.

The National Institute of Dryers and Cleaners consists of several buildings on a 1.88-acre site. Cypress Realty will preserve the entire building at Georgia and Burlington avenues and parts of the structure at Georgia Avenue and Stoddard Place, said Robert Kronenberg of Park and Planning. There will be 200 parking spaces.

The institute is listed on the Montgomery County Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites, which protects it from being torn down. Designed in 1926, it features a Spanish-tile roof and was created by architect Arthur Heaton.

"We are very grateful for the support of the historical society to this particular project," said Stephen Kauffman of Linowes and Blocher, the law firm representing Cypress Realty.

"This is a wonderful example of adaptive reuse," said Wayne Goldstein, president of Montgomery Preservation Inc.

The site will be accessed via Stoddard Place, Kronenberg said. Cypress Realty had also considered putting a right-turn only driveway from Burlington Avenue. However, such a driveway isn't entirely compliant with State Highway Administration design standards, and Park and Planning staff recommended eliminating that entrance.

However, Planning Board members were concerned about the site solely being accessed from Stoddard Place and asked Cypress Realty and Park and Planning staff to take a closer look as to how the site could be accessed from Burlington Avenue. The board will take a closer look when the project returns for site plan review.

Commissioner Wendy C. Perdue said with the amount of traffic that would be coming onto the site, she didn't understand why having an entrance on Burlington Avenue was a bad idea, and Commissioner Meredith K. Wellington agreed.

From Cypress Realty's perspective, Kauffman said, it's a good idea. However, from Park and Planning's perspective, it will affect the streetscape, as well as pedestrian traffic. "There's no question that having access from Burlington would be a significant improvement."