



## Hickory Ridge Community Association

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### Planning Board Testimony ZB-1119M January 4, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the proposed redevelopment of the Hickory Ridge Village Center by Kimco Realty Corporation. Hickory Ridge Community Association has been receiving comments and opinions from our residents regarding this plan for over two years. The Hickory Ridge Community Association requests that you recommend denial of the amendment to the NT PDP for a Major Village Center Redevelopment of the Hickory Ridge Village Center.

As part of the County process, the community has been afforded an opportunity to convey its vision for the future of the Village Center as well as its concerns about the Redevelopment Plan via the Village Center Community Plan (VCCP) and the Community Response Statement (CRS). Howard County Zoning Regulations (HCZR) require the Petitioner and County staff to consider the VCCP and the CRS. It is disappointing that both Kimco and the Technical Staff Report (TSR) either ignore or dismiss, often without sufficient explanation, the elements of the Redevelopment Plan that are not in harmony with the HCZR and the VCCP. Specifically:

- **MASS AND DENSITY:** The addition of a 254,636 SF, four-story, high-density apartment building consisting of 230 individual housing units will overwhelm the 105,100 SF of retail usage and become the primary purpose of the Village Center. The residential use will comprise 71% of all use after redevelopment.
- **BUILDING HEIGHT:** The proposed apartment building exceeds the height limit of the Village Center Community Plan by up to 19 feet (36 feet vs. 55 feet). It severely limits the visibility of the Retail Core from Cedar Lane. In addition, the building limits access to and visibility of the proposed CA community park on the adjacent parcel.
- **SURROUNDING COMMUNITY:** The high-density nature of the proposed apartment building is not compatible with the surrounding community of low-density single-family homes.
- **ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN:** The urban-style architecture proposed for both the residential apartment building and retail structures conflicts with the suburban stylings of the existing buildings and surrounding community.
- **COMMUNITY INTERACTION:** The layout and configuration of the proposed Village Green is separated from much of the merchant frontage. This community gathering space is exposed to both an internal traffic-bearing road and a parking lot, limiting the opportunity for safe, pedestrian-friendly community interaction.

## A. RESPONSE TO EVALUATIONS AND CONCLUSION

- **Mass and Density**

The HCZR allow residential uses “to the extent appropriate to support and enhance, *but not overwhelm*, other uses in the village.” Under the proposed Redevelopment Plan, the 254,636 SF apartment building overwhelms the 105,100 SF retail component and becomes the predominant use of the center. An apartment building as proposed might be appropriate in a village where multi-family housing already exists immediately adjacent to the Village Center. However, because there is no high-density housing in or around the Hickory Ridge Village Center, and because the surrounding NT neighborhood of Clemens Crossing is entirely single-family homes, the introduction of a dense concentration of 230 apartments to the area is not in keeping with the original planned community. The Redevelopment Plan with the proposed large apartment building overwhelms other uses, blocks views of retail from Cedar Lane, the primary access road, and changes the character of the existing neighborhood. It does not conform to the definition of a village center in the planned NT zone.

The TSR views the “neighborhood” for the village center as primarily the Cedar Lane corridor. The report claims that adding multi-family housing to the single-family neighborhood fosters orderly growth. Hickory Ridge Community Association considers the “neighborhood” for this village center as the residential housing within the Clemens Crossing neighborhood. It is a mischaracterization of the community’s identity to include the institutional buildings and multi-family dwellings along the Cedar Lane corridor.

The TSR states there is no institutional or community building space proposed, and that these uses presently do not exist in the current Village Center. This is not accurate. A three-acre parcel owned by CA within the boundaries of the Village Center has been designated for a community park, and the Redevelopment Plan hinders access to the park and limits nearby parking. This park was under design prior to Petitioner’s initial discussions about redevelopment of the Village Center. The Redevelopment Plan overlooks the lack of parking and easy pedestrian access for the proposed CA Park.

The modifications made to the residential building in response to DAP comments attempt to reduce the appearance of the building’s mass, but do not change the fact that the 254,636 SF apartment building clearly overwhelms the 105,100 SF retail component in the Village Center.

- **Surrounding Community**

The typical NT District village center is situated in the center of a village. The Hickory Ridge Village Center is located on the edge of village boundaries and is adjacent to exclusively NT-zoned low-density single-family homes. Our Village Center is also unique in that it is surrounded by parcels having five zoning classifications other than NT District. Each parcel is allowed differing uses and none of the parcels is subject to the orderly redevelopment specifications of the NT zone.

It is alarming that Kimco and the TSR would justify the proposal of redevelopment of the Village Center as fostering orderly growth by using parcels that were not required to follow the orderly growth specifications of the NT process.

- **Traffic and Parking**

A common concern of Hickory Ridge residents is the impact the proposed apartments will have on the existing roads and throughout the Village Center. The CRS specifically requests a detailed review of the proposed layout to ensure the most efficient and safe traffic circulation for all vehicles.

Neither Kimco nor the TSR address the Village concerns about the internal road layout regarding traffic flow, pedestrian safety, and on-street parking. The TSR makes no comment about whether the proposed amount of parking is adequate as well as properly located to serve the reconfigured retail uses and the addition of 230 residential apartments. Although the TSR indicates that the addition of a slip lane onto northbound Cedar Lane will be safe, there is no recognition by either Kimco or county staff of the fact that most residents of the apartment building will have to exit through the drive aisles of the commercial area to reach nearby roads.

It strains credulity to believe that adding 230 more housing units to the mix, all of whom will be directed to Quarterstaff and/or Freetown to access major commuter routes, will not have a significant impact on Level of Service at this intersection as well as the intersection of Freetown Road and Cedar Lane.

The TSR notes that the parking ratio requirements will be determined at Comprehensive Sketch or Site Development stage. However, we would like to reiterate that careful attention must be paid to the quantity of parking needed, the types of parking being provided, and the location of the parking related to demand. Convenient parking must be provided for the Columbia Association park site.

## **B. PLANHOWARD 2030**

Kimco and the TSR suggest that the proposed redevelopment of the Hickory Ridge Village Center is in harmony with several *PlanHoward 2030* policies. Prior to the initial proposal for the redevelopment of the Hickory Ridge Village Center, the center was full, active and thriving. During the prolonged process to add residential uses to this village center, several stores have gone dark as merchants have been unable to renew leases and plan for future business needs. In this case, *PlanHoward 2030* has been a detriment to the well-being of the village center. The proposed design of the center which includes a massive, 230-unit apartment building with six level parking garage, overfills the site and reduces the amount of light and air in the surrounding community. Rather than retaining and enhancing the established neighborhood, as indicated in the TSR, the Redevelopment Plan's urban design changes the entire character of the suburban Clemens Crossing neighborhood.

Chapter 10-Community Design of *PlanHoward2030* "reviews the way neighborhoods and communities are developed and how design and community services affect the ways people use, enjoy, and impact the built and natural environments." The chapter also notes that any changes to established communities "need to be carefully considered so the community's best characteristics are preserved and promoted to strengthen community identity. Character defining elements can include dominant development patterns such as architectural style, block layout, and connections to nearby areas."

- **Policy 10.2** encourages the development of Community Plans as they would be "helpful in assessing how to promote livability by maintaining and enhancing established communities." The policy goes on to say that "community plans can foster more complete communities, while reinforcing the identity of each." Hickory Ridge Community Association took great effort and time in creating its VCCP with the assumption that any future proposed redevelopment would consider the criteria. Kimco's Redevelopment Plan and

the TSR appear to gloss over items such as building height limits and residential only as a secondary use. **Why does Howard County Government encourage Community Plans when developers ignore them while creating redevelopment plans, and DPZ ignores them while reviewing proposals for development within the plan areas?**

- **Policy 10.5** notes that “the appearance of commercial centers and their relation to adjacent communities are important community enhancement issues.” The design of the proposed buildings at the Village Center is attractive. However, the elements of the design are not in keeping with the architectural style of homes and businesses in the surrounding area. Although the updated design of the Giant building attempts to blend the more contemporary style of the new construction with the existing traditional homes in the surrounding neighborhood, the overall design, with its residential above commercial and interior garage space, is urban and not suburban.
- **Policy 10.6** states that standards should be adopted to “require commercial structures to be in scale with adjacent residences and to enhance design by articulating facades and rooflines.” The massive, 254,636 SF four-story, 230-unit apartment structure is out of scale with the community.

#### **C. COMMUNITY RESPONSE STATEMENT**

The Hickory Ridge Community Association asks that the Planning Board carefully read our Community Response Statement, particularly Part II: Specific Approval Criteria Related for Zoning Board Consideration. We are disheartened that the recommendations in the VCCP have been dismissed by Kimco as well as in the Technical Staff Report. Specifically:

- The Redevelopment Plan does not limit residential use to a secondary role at the Village Center.
- The Redevelopment Plan does not recognize that retail should be the central use at the Village Center.
- The Redevelopment Plan ignores the specific three-story (36 foot) height limit created in the VCCP.
- The VCCP also noted that pad sites draw people away from the retail core. Yet, the Redevelopment Plan includes a remotely located bank structure as well as multiple separate buildings throughout the site.

#### **D. CLOSING STATEMENT**

The Petitioner has the right to ask for the amendment to the PDP, but there is no requirement that the request be granted. The Petitioner has the burden to establish the need for change and has failed to do so. The Redevelopment Plan imposes an urban design and massive residential building that is not in keeping with the identity of the community. The Petitioner chose to discount resident feedback and the VCCP, opting to move forward with a plan not supported by Hickory Ridge Community Association.

The Association wants a vibrant Village Center at its core, but one that is in line with the community’s vision. The Technical Staff Report included several of our requests to further enhance the design and functionality of the proposed plan. Ultimately, however, any plan that includes such a significant number of residential apartments in a large structure within the current retail core of the property is incompatible with our Village Center Community Plan. The Hickory Ridge Community Association requests that you recommend denial of the amendment to the NT PDP for a Major Village Center Redevelopment of the Hickory Ridge Village Center.