

GERMANTOWN – HOMEWOOD
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
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27 January 2017

Thomas Smith
Cynthia Gudenius
City of Annapolis, Dept. of Planning & Zoning
145 Gorman Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Annapolis Regional Library

Dear Mr. Smith and Ms. Gudenius,

First, I thank you for including us in what has been thus far a quite successful collaboration. The revised plans include many, indeed most, of the suggestions we proffered and the plan is in our eyes significantly improved. We hope in yours, too.

However, the landscaping planting plans could still use some improvement. What follows are our suggestions on that score.

The buffers which we suggested be designed and planted to become truly forested consist instead of primarily understory, smaller, shrubby trees rather than the species which will become truly large and truly forested, even in the relatively narrow lanes allocated for “landscaping.” We suggest substituting truly large tree species. Hence, substituting large species would complete this vision.

The bio retention beds fail to take the opportunity to become truly successful either as open wet areas or as part of the ultimate forests which were envisioned. They are engineered rather than conceived as flourishing spaces. We are concerned that wet species are proposed for areas that actually will be primarily dry. Plant more trees within, not beside, these features. Grade and shape them as soft landscape features which will better integrate them into the landscape design rather than as engineered spots. Again, substitution of species – rather simple and inexpensive – will complete the vision.

The new area of parking close to the building should be graded to slope into the planting island and then move the inlets into this planting space. Grade the planting

space as a swale and raise the inlets 6" above the swale grade so that the first flush of water flows into the soil rather than directly into the inlet. Plant large canopy trees in this island.

More trees that mature into large canopy trees are needed. If the budget cannot sustain more trees, then replace the understory trees in the plan with species that provide mature canopy. This should be able to be done with no increase in cost. We suggest considering taking advantage of the trees the Milkshake Lane project has to replant and use them here, in this public space. A win-win.

The handicapped spaces are drawn at maximum size when minimum size would suffice. There could in the end be less paving with the smaller size. The ADA code does not require all the spaces be "van size" and the ADA also allows car accessible spaces to share 5' wide (rather than 8' wide as shown) vehicle exiting spaces rather than have one on each side of every car space as shown.

The plaza area is now proposed as a large and undifferentiated and unshaded space. There is no seating proposed and there are not the one or few large species which would make this space inviting and thereby useful. Perhaps a few large trees with circular benches around the trees might meet the goal of useful and inviting. The plaza needs study and attention.

The new configuration of the West Street sidewalk is certainly improved. However, it is too close to the streetside, too narrow at 4' at what should be 6', and should be separated from the curb with a significantly wider planting strip of 10' rather than the insufficient 4'. Again, minor modifications which will enhance the pedestrian experience.

We, by the way, applaud the proposed crossing at mid-block between McKendree and South Cherry Grove Avenues consistent with the SHA comment. Towards the end of making that crossing safe, we will be pursuing the installation of a set of pedestrian-activated rapidly flashing beacons. This is not something expected from the library but their support on our crusade will be welcomed.

The soils plan, such as it is, needs modification and the following suggestions could actually save money. There needs to be a plan that identifies all soil areas that must be modified -- not just tree planting spaces and planting beds. First, importing planting mix or soil is not only not necessary but also not advisable. The existing soil at the site is generally reasonable quality requiring only loosening of compaction and adding small amounts of compost. Composted sewage material has fairly high pH, while

regular yard waste compost is cheaper and will do the job better. Merely loosening the existing soils to 12” deep followed by tilling in 2-3” of compost into the top 6” of all soil areas (except, of course, in the tree root preservation zones) will be sufficient. For trees and shrubs with root balls deeper than 12” merely digging the soil to the needed root ball depth will do the job. The tree root protection zones and the soil treatments, if any, in these zones need to be identified and treated in a way appropriate to preserve tree roots. Not a difficult task and not expensive but priceless in the long run. In areas where paving or building footprint is changing to planting or lawn, soils details are needed. Except in existing lawn areas that are not now compacted or likely to become compacted, soil should be treated as a continuous 12’ deep loosened existing soil zone where tree roots can reach out into the lawn and bed areas.

We are certainly close to a truly successful project and we encourage everyone to go these extra distances with these simple modifications to get us over the finish line. I hope I have not mixed metaphors in my enthusiasm.

We hope you will pass along this letter and we remain committed to assisting and facilitating in any way we can. Thank you again for your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Robert H. Waldman, Chairman

Cc: Jim Urban, FASLA
Maia Hurley, Will Dax, Library Committee of GHCA