

**DATE:** October 13, 2023

**TO:** Planning Commission

**FROM:** Environmental Sustainability Council, prepared by Joseph Schiarizzi, Chair

**SUBJECT:** Quinn and Homestretch Development Special Exception Application

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Members of the Environmental Sustainability Council (ESC), the ESC's Energy Transition Subcommittee, and the ESC's Habitat Restoration Task Group have reviewed the [Quinn and Homestretch Development](#) Special Exception application and Comprehensive Plan Amendment submission materials received by the City on June 9, 2023.

We are encouraged by the initial application and the plan to "achieve status of LEED Gold" on the project. However, we would like to see specific commitment to LEED Gold as a minimum, not just ideas that are "likely to yield" it.

In all elements of design, we urge the Planning Commission to ensure the project supports the goals of our community, as stated in Chapter 5 "Environment for Everyone" of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Each section of the chapter outlines strategies that can be followed to support the goals:

- **Climate, Air and Energy:** Enhance livability, sustainability and resilience. Protect the community from air pollution and the effects of climate change, while reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in the City.
- **Stormwater, Streams and Natural Springs:** Protect the water resources of the City and the Chesapeake Bay from the effects of pollution and climate change, reduce flooding, and improve water quality.
- **Urban Forest and Biodiversity:** Protect and enhance the network of trees, green spaces and naturalized land on public and private property throughout the City, and the plants and wildlife it supports.
- **Consumption and Waste:** Avoid waste generation and reduce the harmful pollution and financial costs of waste management and disposal.
- **Community:** Inform, educate, and engage the community in environmental action.

#### **ESC Member Recommendations, Comments and Questions for Quinn and Homestretch**

The ESC has not had the opportunity to meet to discuss the project in detail, or agree on specific recommendations. However, members have commented individually, as summarized below:

#### **Green Building Rating Certification**

The Applicant should commit to LEED Gold or higher. The ESC asks that the Applicant specify whether LEED certification only applies to the residential areas of the building or also to the mixed use / commercial parts of it. The Applicant wants to build square footage equivalent to 75-100 single family homes. Yet their Green Building offerings do not commit to being any more efficient than what is required by the building code.

The VCs are missing a commitment to a minimum 20% improvement in the proposed building's performance compared with the LEED v4 baseline building performance of ASHRAE 90.1–2010. Note that the Applicant's June 9, 2023 statement of justification says, "The Applicant will commit to attaining LEED Gold certification with ***a minimum 20 percent improvement in energy performance.***"

The building should also pursue ENERGY STAR certification in addition to LEED Gold.

### **Electrification**

We're glad to see there will be no gas appliances in residential units. This keeps this building from locking-in the use of certain fossil fuels for decades.

In the Founders Row project, the developer committed to running conduit for future electric car chargers to 50% of parking spaces. The Quinn project Applicant should strive to match this and "future-proof" more parking for potential electric chargers.

The Applicant should investigate if solar can be placed on the roof above HVAC equipment on the south side of the building and should point out which surfaces and how much might practically be available for solar.

VCs state, "All in-unit appliances within the Continuing Care Facility (Human Care) units will be electric powered." Note that Applicant's SOJ states "All appliances will be electric; natural gas will be used only for the commercial kitchen, the emergency backup generator, and hot water heater." The VCs seem to be written narrower on this all-important issue of electrification. And I would encourage the Applicant to investigate using electric heat pump water heater(s) vs fossil gas.

Voluntary concessions #29 - Project should follow the DOE Zero Energy Ready Homes checklist for solar readiness.

### **Rainwater Runoff**

The commitment to reducing runoff from a 10-year storm event by 20% is a strong step, and the Applicant should also consider capturing rainwater in rain barrels or through other means.

### **Outdoor Lighting**

Outdoor lighting should be considerate of color temperature of lights which can adversely affect the survivability of insects.

To limit light pollution that affects native wildlife, the 10 pm and 11 pm limits on rooftop activity should be amended to ensure that non-emergency rooftop lighting will be off no later than 10:30 and 11:30 pm, respectively.

### **Transportation**

Further reductions in parking requirements should be considered by the planning commission, to encourage the use of alternative transportation such as transit, ride-sharing, bicycling and walking. The Applicant should consider providing shuttles to residents between metro stops and the project, or working with major project owners to do so.

The Applicant should consider Car-sharing parking spot in the garage for a contracted company such as ButterflyMX

As one of the Applicant's stated goals is pedestrian mobility, better walking and connectivity at nearby intersections should be supported. Sidewalk upgrades should be more specific in the plan.

### **Urban Forest and Biodiversity**

Street tree planters should have protective raised edges. Minimize bird strike risk through architectural design and use of bird-friendly materials. Proposal tree canopy coverage should be a minimum target and the Applicant could investigate whether additional native trees can be placed along the proposed promenade then currently planned.

### **Consumption and Waste**

LEED points should be sought in Construction Waste Management. Composting, recycling, and glass recycling should be provided.

### **Building Policy**

Office and Commercial space should be constructed in a way that allows for it to be converted into residential use in the future.

The Applicant should consider construction materials and timber mass instead of concrete on top floors if possible, and encourage their design team to identify opportunities to decrease embodied carbon in the construction materials and process.

Project should follow the EPA Indoor Air Plus checklist to promote resident health.