

**City of Greensboro Planning Department  
Zoning Staff Report and  
Plan Amendment Evaluation  
November 13, 2006 Public Hearing**

*The information provided in this staff report has been included for the purpose of reviewing proposed zoning changes. Since the zoning process does not require a site plan, there may be additional requirements placed on the property through the Technical Review Committee process to address subdivision and development regulations.*

**Item:** E  
**Location:** South side of East Washington Street and north side of McConnell Road between South Benbow Road and South Booker Street

**Applicant:** Center 175, LLC  
**Owner:** Center 175, LLC

**GFLUM**  
**From:** Low Residential  
**To:** Mixed Use Residential

**Zoning**  
**From:** GO-M & RM-18  
**To:** CD-PDI

- Conditions:**
- 1) Uses limited to multifamily dwellings and office.
  - 2) There shall be no more than 120 residential multifamily units on the subject property.
  - 3) The exterior of the residential multifamily buildings shall be primarily brick.

<b>SITE INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Maximum Developable Units</b>	120
<b>Net Density</b>	23.8 dwelling units per acre
<b>Existing Land Use</b>	Single Family Dwelling / Undeveloped (existing structures in process of removal and site being prepared for new construction)
<b>Acreage</b>	5.036
<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<i>Topography:</i> Rolling <i>Vegetation:</i> Mature trees <i>Other:</i> N/A
<b>Overlay Districts</b>	N/A
<b>Historic District/Resources</b>	N/A
<b>Generalized Future Land Use</b>	Low Residential
<b>Other</b>	N/A

<b>SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USE</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Zoning</b>
<i>North</i>	Office / Single Family Residential	CD-LO / RS-7
<i>South</i>	L. Richardson Memorial Hospital Building / Apartments / Single Family Residential / Duplexes	CD-GO-H / GO-M / RM-18
<i>East</i>	Single Family Residential / Duplexes	RM-18
<i>West</i>	McConnell Rd., Benbow Rd., and Washington St. rights-of-way	RM-18

<b>ZONING HISTORY</b>		
<b>Case #</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Request Summary</b>
		This property has been zoned GO-M and RM-18 since July 1, 1992. Prior to the implementation of the UDO, it was zoned Institutional 100 and Residential 75, respectively.

<b>DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GO-M &amp; RM-18 (EXISTING) AND CD-PDI (PROPOSED) ZONING DISTRICTS</b>
<b>GO-M:</b> Primarily intended to accommodate moderate intensity office and institutional uses, moderate density residential uses at a density of 12.0 units per acre or less, and supporting service uses.
<b>RM-18:</b> Primarily intended to accommodate multifamily uses at a density of 18.0 units per acre or less.
<b>CD-PDI:</b> Intended to accommodate residential, commercial, office, and neighborhood business uses developed on small tracts of land as infill development within currently built up areas in accordance with a Unified Development Plan.

<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	
<b>Street Classification</b>	McConnel Road - Minor Thoroughfare, S. Booker Street – Collector Street.
<b>Site Access</b>	One proposed per street frontage. All commercial driveways must be designed and built to the City of Greensboro standards.
<b>Traffic Counts</b>	McConnel Road ADT = 6,162.
<b>Trip Generation</b>	N/A.
<b>Sidewalks</b>	Sidewalks are a requirement of the Development Ordinance. 6' sidewalk with a 4' grass strip is required along both sides of thoroughfares. 5' sidewalk with a 3' grass strip is required along one side (at a minimum, collectors may require sidewalk on both sides) of all other street types.
<b>Transit</b>	Yes.
<b>Traffic Impact Study</b>	Not required per TIS Ordinance.
<b>Street Connectivity</b>	N/A.
<b>Other</b>	N/A.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW	
<b>Water Supply Watershed</b>	No, 90% of site drains to South Buffalo & 10% to North Buffalo
<b>Floodplains</b>	N/A
<b>Streams</b>	N/A
<b>Other</b>	N/A

LANDSCAPING REQUIREMENTS	
Location	Required Planting Yard Type and Rate
<i>North</i>	Determined by TRC approved Unified Development Plan
<i>South</i>	
<i>East</i>	
<i>West</i>	

**CONNECTIONS 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN POLICIES**

**Connections 2025 Written Policies:**

Reinvestment/Infill Goal: Promote sound investment in Greensboro’s urban areas, including Center City, commercial and industrial areas, and neighborhoods.

POLICY 4C: Promote new patterns and intensities of use to increase economic competitiveness and enhance quality of life in urban areas.

POLICY 4C.1: Establish standards for and promote new forms of compact development.

Housing and Neighborhoods Goal: Meet the needs of present and future Greensboro citizens for a choice of decent, affordable housing in stable, livable neighborhoods that offer security, quality of life, and the necessary array of services and facilities.

Man-made Environment Goal: Preserve and enhance the character and visual quality of Greensboro’s built environment, including historic resources, private developments, and public landscapes.

POLICY 5D: Preserve and promote Greensboro’s historic resources and heritage.

POLICY 6A.2: Promote mixed-income neighborhoods.

POLICY 6C: Promote the diversification of new housing stock to meet the needs of all citizens for suitable, affordable housing.

**Connections 2025 Map Policies:**

*The area requested for rezoning lies within the following map classifications:*

**Existing:**

*Low Residential (3-5 d.u./acre):* This category includes the City's predominantly single-family neighborhoods as well as other compatible housing types that can be accommodated within this density range. Although there are some existing residential areas in the City developed on lots greater than 1/3 acre, future residential developments and "conventional" subdivisions should generally maintain a gross density of no less than three dwellings per acre, except where environmental constraints (e.g., the Watershed Critical Area) prevent such densities from being achieved. Compact developments that include clustered, small lots with substantial retained open space are encouraged.

**Proposed:**

*Mixed Use Residential:* This designation applies to neighborhoods or districts where the predominant use is residential and where substantial, compatible local-serving nonresidential uses may be introduced. Such use mixes are typically found in older, in-town neighborhoods that accommodate "corner stores" and other local services, as well as in newly developed traditional neighborhood developments (TNDs). This district is also applied in areas suited to a diverse mix of housing types and densities. Ensuring that buildings are of the appropriate scale and intensity is critical.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT HISTORY		
Case #	Date	Request Summary
		There have not been any map amendments in the immediate vicinity of this case.

**APPLICANT STATED REASONS FOR REQUEST**

**Explain in detail why the change is needed and a justification for such a change:**

Changing the land use designation to Mixed Use Residential will permit development that is consistent with surrounding uses, while adhering to infill design techniques and satisfying the growing need for attractive and safe student housing for NC A&T University and Bennett College.

**Explain in detail the conditions that you think may warrant a Plan Amendment (i.e. unforeseen circumstances or the emergence of new information, unanticipated changes in development pattern, rezonings, transportation improvements, economic opportunities, changes in socioeconomic conditions, etc.):**

Recent enrollment increases at NC A&T and Bennett College have increased the need for student housing opportunities within close proximity to these schools. This change will also encourage further redevelopment in a problematic area, while supporting existing redevelopment activities. The unique configuration of this site calls for greater flexibility in land uses to adhere to infill design principals.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANALYSIS

### **Need for the Proposed Change:**

The applicant is interested in developing higher density student housing on this site that is not consistent with the existing Low Residential designation. The large and fairly steady growth of enrollment at NC A&T and Bennett College in recent years has created additional demand for quality and affordable housing in close proximity to campus for persons attending classes or taking advantage of supporting uses around the two campuses.

Given the existence of areas of Mixed Use Residential directly to the north and further to the east, an expansion of this land use classification appears reasonable. This site is surrounded by a mixture of single family (mostly rental) and multi-family residential uses. Encouraging higher residential densities in this area would create a greater mixture of housing types that would allow students in these new residential units to walk, bike, or take public transit to attend class, easing pressure for additional on-campus parking facilities. A bus route currently runs along the McConnell Road portion of the site and some sidewalks exist to promote pedestrian traffic. Higher density development could allow greater design flexibility and limit potential impacts on several historical landmarks (Dr. Sebastian home, Richardson Hospital, Grace Lutheran Church, Greensboro Medical Museum) in the area, by concentrating new residential development on a smaller site than if developed as individual single family lots typically found with the Low Residential designation.

Additionally, several surrounding residential buildings are in general disrepair or have been closed by the City. New investment from this proposed development could further spur reinvestment in this section of Greensboro, from the East Market Street corridor south. This request is also supported by Policy 5D of the Comprehensive Plan in that the applicant has agreed to incorporate the existing Dr. Sebastian historic home with the redevelopment of this site.

### **Effect of the proposed Change on the Need for City Services and Facilities (e.g. roadway level of service, traffic counts, planned road improvements, transit, accidents statistics, and environmental constraints such as; location within a Water Supply Watershed, floodplain, streams):**

As an infill and redevelopment site, this development should not substantially impact any existing city facilities and services and could ease anticipated needs for added parking facilities as residents would have opportunities to walk, bike and use public transportation to various area destinations. This is a good infill opportunity that will utilize existing city infrastructure.

### **Implications, if any, the Amendment may have for Other Parts of the Plan:**

This land use change furthers efforts to create a variety of housing opportunities in close proximity to jobs, services, recreation and other destination points such as NC A&T and Bennett College.

**Unforeseen Circumstances or the Emergence of New Information (e.g. significant economic opportunity in Tier 2 or 3):**

This proposal seeks to address identified needs for quality affordable housing (primarily for students) that can be well integrated into the surrounding area, while furthering redevelopment activities and addressing a problem area.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MONITORING COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Committee met on November 6, 2006, and made the following comments concerning this request:

- Committee supports this request as it is seen as a positive for the area and serves a legitimate need for more housing for students with increasing enrollments at NC A&T and Bennett College
- The applicant's desire to retain and preserve the Doctor Sebastian home on the site is a positive
- There is a good bit of Mixed Use Residential in the area adjacent to site so the change makes sense
- This is an additional investment in this area and is something that should be encouraged

**CONFORMITY WITH OTHER PLANS**

*The following aspects of relevant plans may be applicable in this case:*

**City Plans:** Over half of the project site is located within the Morningside Homes/Lincoln Grove Redevelopment Plan boundary, with one property on the Plan's acquisition list. A special meeting of the Redevelopment Commission was held on October 18, 2006 in the Willow Oaks Community Center to consider changes to the Morningside Homes/Lincoln Grove Redevelopment Plan. The developer requested that the Commission consider an amendment to the redevelopment plan as follows: Amend the Building Development Plan from single family designation on this block to multifamily; amend the Proposed Zoning map from RS-7 designation on this block to CU-PDI.

The Redevelopment Commission voted to amend the Redevelopment Plan as noted above and to remove all properties within the proposed project area from the acquisition list with the following conditions: Uses limited to multifamily dwellings and office; No more than 120 residential multifamily units on the subject property; The exterior of the multifamily buildings shall be predominantly brick. The Redevelopment Plan amendment will be considered by the Planning Board at their November 15th meeting, and if they vote to recommend adoption, a public hearing will be held at the November 21st regular City Council meeting.

**Other Plans:** N/A

**STAFF COMMENTS**

**Planning:** The applicant's Zoning Sketch Plan was approved by the Technical Review Committee on October 3, 2006. This plan indicates that the Sebastian house will remain as part of the development; and, the applicant is considering adding a zoning condition that would require the retention and renovation of this building. Although the applicant's sketch plan shows

the location of three conveniently spaced bike racks on site, staff would also encourage the applicant to consider adding a zoning condition requiring bicycle parking spaces and/or racks to accommodate the transportation needs of students living in such close proximity to North Carolina A&T State University.

The sketch plan shows eight (8) 3-story multifamily buildings. Two 24-unit and two 12-unit buildings face McConnell Road, two 12-unit buildings face South Booker Street, two 12-unit buildings face East Washington Street. The proposed minimum street setbacks are 10 feet along East Washington Street and 5 feet along South Booker Street and McConnell Road. The sketch plan includes the planting rates for street planting yards and interior parking lots. The property is accessed by one entrance/exit each on McConnell Road, South Booker Street, and East Washington Street.

The majority of this property is already zoned for high density multifamily use. The smaller tract is presently zoned for office use. Combining these tracts under a planned unit development classification simply allows the applicant some creative flexibility in developing the site, especially with regard to setbacks and spacing between buildings.

**GDOT:** This is a planned bicycle route. It will be signed along McConnel Road in the near future.

**Water Resources:** No additional comments

**Housing and Community Development:** Staff appreciates that the developer has made a significant investment in this neighborhood and has made every effort to enlist community support for the renewal and reuse of the Sebastian House as well as construction of the multifamily units, but the proposed development continues a specific land use type that has recently come to dominate the neighborhood. Staff would prefer to see a wider variety of uses in the neighborhood and densities transition down as projects move away from A&T into existing single family neighborhoods. Remaining single family homes to the north and south will be more difficult to maintain once this development is completed. Developing new ownership units may still be possible in the neighborhood, but the density of rental units will make this more difficult. Staff is concerned that a neighborhood that transitions to a single type of high density housing, particularly one that is dominated by rental units, may not be sustainable over the long term once the units have depreciated and other newer products are developed.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on all the information contained in this report, the Planning Department recommends approval of the Comprehensive Plan amendment to the Mixed Use Residential land use classification and approval of the rezoning to Conditional District – Planned Unit Development – Infill primarily due to:

- Mixed Use Residential is more in harmony with surrounding land uses and with the manner in which the property has been historically zoned.
- This request meets the Reinvestment/Infill Goal.
- The proposal meets the Housing and Neighborhoods Goal.
- It addresses policies such as promoting new forms of compact development, promoting mixed-income neighborhoods, and promoting the diversification of new housing stock.
- This proposal addresses the need for increased student housing opportunities within close proximity to NC A&T State University and Bennett College.