



TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE

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Department of Planning and Development

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TO: Zoning Board Members

FROM: Paul Grygiel, AICP, PP, Township Planning Director

DATE: April 13, 2021

RE: **PB-21-03/Green Essex Partners Urban Renewal, LLC**
Block: 155; Lots: 40.02, 42.02 and portion of 42.01; Zone: Executive Drive
Multi-Family Residential (Executive Drive-Rooney Circle Redevelopment Plan)
100 and 200 Rooney Circle
Seeking preliminary and final major site plan approval to construct a multi-family
residential development

INTRODUCTION

The applicant is proposing to construct a 425-unit multifamily residential development on two properties currently developed with office buildings. The proposed development complies with the regulations of the Essex Green-Executive Drive Redevelopment Plan dated February 1, 2021 ("the Redevelopment Plan") which was adopted on February 9, 2021, including setting aside dwelling units for low- and moderate-income households. No variances are being requested to permit the proposal, as described below.

A nearly identical application was approved for the subject property in 2020, but as a new redevelopment plan was adopted for the subject property due to a legal challenge to the former redevelopment plan, this is considered a new application. The applicant has submitted a letter dated March 23, 2021 outlining changes on the currently proposed plans from those approved by the Planning Board in 2020. Given the similarities between the approved and currently proposed applications, and that a number of the proposed changes respond to issues raised in reviewing the



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prior application, it is my opinion review by the Site Plan Review Advisory Board is not necessary.

LAND USE

The subject property encompasses 18.31 acres. It consists of two lots currently developed with office buildings, which have a total floor area of 203,171 square feet. Other office buildings are located to the west at 300 Executive Drive and to the northeast at 10 Rooney Circle. A vacant parcel is located directly to the east followed by Essex Green shopping center. The Cambria and Courtyard hotels are also located to the east, along with other commercial and office uses. A PSE&G electric transmission right-of-way borders the subject property on the south. There are detached single-family homes located to the southwest and attached single-family homes located to the south across the PSE&G right-of-way. Site photos taken on March 26, 2021 are included at the end of this memorandum.

SUBMISSIONS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SIGNED BY</u>	<u>DATE/REVISION</u>
Site Plan (30 sheets)	Zachary E. Chaplin, P.E.	3/19/21
Architectural Plans (21 sheets)	Jack L. Raker, R.A.	3/19/21
Survey - 100 Executive Drive	Richard C. Matthews, P.L.S.	5/11/20
Survey - 200 Executive Drive	Richard C. Matthews, P.L.S.	5/11/20
Sustainability Memorandum	Zachary E. Chaplin, P.E.	5/8/20
Stormwater Management Report	Zachary E. Chaplin, P.E.	3/19/21
Environmental Impact Statement	Zachary E. Chaplin, P.E.	3/19/21
Fiscal Impact Summary	Richard B. Reading	3/22/21
Executive Drive Redevelopment Waste Management Plan	(Not signed)	3/15/21

VARIANCES REQUIRED

None. The following table outlines compliance with the applicable development regulations:

	Required	Provided
Minimum Lot Area	80,000 square feet	797,407 square feet
Minimum Setback to Block 155, Lot 26.01 (PSE&G Property)	15 feet	43.6 feet



Min. Setback to Block 155, Lot 40.03	15 feet	26.4 feet
Min. Setback to Block 155 Lot 40.04	75 feet	256.9 feet
Min. Setback to all other lots / rights-of-way	0 feet	7.1 feet
Maximum Building Height ¹	Four habitable stories ²	Four habitable stories
Maximum Residential Gross Density (Entire District)	24 units per acre	23.2 units per acre
Maximum Lot (Impervious) Coverage	65% ³	54.5%

¹ Parking structures and Garages are excluded from the calculation of habitable stories, but in no case may any parking structure exceed the height of the principal structure to which it is adjacent or attached

² Architectural features such as pitched roofs, gables, domes, steeples, etc. shall be permitted. Projections for roof equipment shall be permitted provided they are screened with a solid or decorative shield and do not exceed fifteen (15') feet in height above the roof deck.

³ Where permeable paving systems are proposed, subject to the approval of the Township Engineer, the areas with permeable paving shall be calculated as 75% impervious. For instance, a parking area and plaza paved with a permeable paving system that equals 20% of the lot area shall be calculated as 15% impervious coverage for purposes of the maximum coverage calculation as it pertains to these district standards.

The proposal also complies with the Redevelopment Plan requirements for the minimum number of off-street parking spaces, as 816 spaces are required for the residential development and 817 spaces are provided, including garage spaces.

DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposal

As noted, the subject property is developed with two office buildings and other improvements. The existing office buildings are proposed to be demolished. Certain parking areas and an existing pond are proposed to remain. The property generally slopes downward from east to west.

The Redevelopment Plan regulates development on the subject property and other properties in the Essex Green-Executive Drive Redevelopment Area, and notes the following regarding the development regulations for the subject property:



The purpose of the Executive Drive Multi-Family Residential District is to permit the redevelopment of the existing office buildings at 100 and 200 Executive Drive into a multi-family residential development. The district is approximately 18.3 acres in area. The envisioned development will consist of one or more types of multi-family housing in multiple buildings with an affordable set-aside. The redevelopment is also intended to include the provision of a public dog park as an amenity for the neighborhood and community at large.

The proposed development includes 425 dwelling units in three buildings. Fifteen percent of the units (64 units) will be affordable to low- and moderate-income households, as required by the Redevelopment Plan. This site is part of the Township's proposed affordable housing compliance plan. The breakdown of units by bedroom type is as follows:

	Market-rate	Affordable	Total
One-bedroom	167	13	180
Two-bedroom	114	38	152
Two-bedroom plus den	80	0	80
Three-bedroom	0	13	13
TOTAL	361	64	425

Building A is the largest of the three buildings. It is located at the southern end of the site and contains 304 dwelling units. This building's height varies due to the topography. Buildings B and C are located in the northeast corner of the property. Building B has 59 dwelling units and Building C has 62 dwelling units.

Proposed building materials include manufactured stone veneer, cementitious panels, composite metal panels, composite wood panels, aluminum and concrete. Vinyl windows and shingle roofs are also proposed. Architectural mesh screens are proposed on the exterior of the parking garage adjacent to Building A. The buildings have both flat and pitched roofs.

A swimming pool and amenity area is proposed between two wings of Building A. Other exterior amenities include benches, seating areas and a fire table. Interior amenities in Building A include a club room, a game room, a fitness center, a media center, and a private dining room. In Building C, interior amenities include a club room, a game room, a fitness center, and a media center.

A total of 817 parking spaces are proposed for the residential portion of the development, while 816 spaces are required. A parking garage with 567 spaces is proposed adjacent to Building A. Surface parking spaces are proposed adjacent to and between Buildings B and C, and 21 garage parking spaces are proposed within each of these two buildings. The garage spaces are individual private garages with a parking space in front of each one in a tandem parking arrangement.



Sidewalks are located throughout the development, with a connection to Rooney Circle at its intersection with Executive Drive. A shuttle pickup area is provided at the front entrance to Building A.

A dog park is proposed at the northern end of the development, as required by the redevelopment plan. A separate parking lot with 57 spaces is provided for the dog park.

According to the Tree Removals Plan (Sheet C20), there are 255 trees proposed to be removed and 185 trees are proposed to remain. Of the trees to be removed, 142 are classified as “dead/dying due to emerald ash bore disease” and 20 are deer damaged. New plantings are proposed throughout the property, including 288 trees, 560 shrubs, and various grasses and other plantings.

Issues and Comments

1. One potential outstanding issue relates to shuttle service. The Redevelopment Plan requires the redeveloper to “provide a supplemental public shuttle or similar service to connect the redevelopment project with the West Orange Jitney, Essex Green Shopping Center, NJ Transit Bus Service, the 10 Rooney Circle building and other nearby destinations.” (page 19) The applicant should provide additional information about coordination with the Township’s jitney service as well as its own shuttle proposal.
2. The Redevelopment Plan cites the Township’s Master Plan Circulation Plan Element, and in particular its amendments to incorporate “Complete Streets” principles, which promote the creation of a comprehensive, integrated, connected street network that safely accommodates all users. Specifically, the Redevelopment Plan states:

“Site circulation improvements shall include provision of sidewalks or similar pedestrian pathways, protections for pedestrians at crosswalks and sidewalks, bicycle paths and routes, bicycle racks, and other site circulation best practices for multi-family residential, commercial, and office sites.” (page 34)

The applicant is addressing pedestrian circulation on its property, but coordination with the Township and the property owners of nearby properties will be required to connect this development with others in the vicinity. The applicant’s engineer provided a May 8, 2020 letter to the Planning Board as part of the prior approved application for this property stating “(t)he applicant agrees to work with the Township and the owner of the Essex Green shopping center for the creation of a crosswalk from the west side of Rooney Circle at Executive Drive to the east side of Rooney Circle in the area of Shoprite.” The site plan for the current application shows a similar off-site connection to



the office building at 300 Executive Drive to allow its tenants and guests to connect to the proposed sidewalk network within the proposed development.

3. Sheet C-4 of the site plan includes a label for the parking garage of 570 spaces, while 567 spaces are indicated for the garage elsewhere in the application materials. The applicant should confirm the correct number and relabel accordingly.
4. The applicant has amended the plans to provide bicycle parking, including exterior bicycle parking facilities adjacent to Buildings B and C and interior bicycle parking in the garage adjacent to Building A.
5. Lighting previously proposed within the dog park has been removed in response to a comment on the prior proposal. It is noted the Redevelopment Plan requires the design of the dog park to “be reviewed and approved by the Planning Board and Township Council.”
6. The Redevelopment Plan requires a development applicant in the redevelopment area to submit a community impact statement at the time of site plan application. A “community impact statement” is not defined in the Redevelopment Plan. However, fiscal impacts are generally among the foremost concerns of a proposed development, including municipal service and public school district impacts. It is noted the proposed development is fully compliant with use and density regulations for the subject property, meaning that the Township Council considered the potential impacts of the redevelopment of the subject property and others in the Redevelopment Area when it adopted the Redevelopment Plan. In terms of the calculations and projections in the Fiscal Impact Summary, the document that is the source of the demographic multipliers is a Rutgers University document commonly utilized by planners and others for population projections, Who Lives in New Jersey Housing? This document was updated in November 2018 and provides relevant information to project the number of residents and public school children in the proposed development. I have reviewed the data and multipliers utilized in the report, which all appear to be correct.
7. The Waste Management Plan document describes proposed solid waste and recycling facilities and procedures for the proposed development. The assumptions in this document seem reasonable. There are two minor errors or discrepancies in this document. On page 3, the breakdown of units by type for Building B, 14 three-bedroom units are listed. There are no three-bedroom units in this building according to the architectural plans. Also, the tables on pages 2 through 4 list the name of the development as Valencia Gardens Estates.





Development exit to Rooney Circle



Looking south on Rooney Circle – location of suggested potential sidewalk and crosswalk



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Looking southwest from Executive Drive in the vicinity of proposed dog park



Looking northwest from existing parking lot towards 200 Executive Drive office building





One of the existing office buildings to be removed and pond next to it



Existing pond, which will remain





PSE&G electric transmission lines on Block 155, Lot 26.01



Looking west from near the southern property line





Front entrance of 100 Executive Drive



Stream below pond viewed from Executive Drive



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