

City green-lights Berwyn expansion

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Mayor's parking caveat off the table

By Matt Santoni

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The College Park City Council approved plans to renovate and expand Berwyn House Apartments at last night's meeting, though without Mayor Stephen Brayman's request to restrict the apartments' parking for students with campus parking permits.

Developer Rock Creek Properties LLC proposed renovating and expanding the student housing complex - located near the campus off Berwyn House Road - to include two new apartment buildings and a four-story parking garage. The council approved the plan by an 8-0 vote, but included a requirement that RCP make "a good-faith effort" to work with the university to reduce the number of campus parking permits issued to Berwyn House residents.

Generally, campus parking passes for students are issued based on credit level and commuter/non-commuter status.

The council has made parking for neighboring commuters its primary target in the battle to reduce traffic, requiring many new developers to negotiate with the university and work to deny campus parking permits to students who live and park in nearby neighborhoods.

District 4 Councilmember Joseline Pe—a-Melnyk hoped restricting campus parking for students living within a mile of the university would encourage use of alternative transportation and discourage students from adding traffic to Route 1.

"A little bit here, a little bit there ... Every little bit we can do can help," she said. "The university can't do it on their own."

Brayman asked RCP representative Jon Wallenstrom last week to consider a different strategy: deny parking at his apartment complex to residents who already have campus permits, forcing them to ride Shuttle-UM from university lots.

Wallenstrom said denying on-site parking to residents would put his company at a disadvantage in the increasingly competitive apartment market.

"We were vehemently opposed to that, but we were more than willing to work with any committee," said Michele La Rocca, a lawyer representing RCP. The developer also feared students denied parking at the apartments would park on the street and crowd the surrounding neighborhood.

After Wallenstrom refused to adopt the mayor's suggestion, Brayman did not push to bring it back, though District 3 Councilman Eric Olson mentioned it as part of plans to make the city more pedestrian-friendly and encourage development.

District 2 Councilman Jack Perry, whose backyard is adjacent to the apartment complex, spoke out against Brayman's suggestion. He said students may use their cars to commute between home, classes and work outside the city, not just for "crossing back and forth across Route 1."

RCP agreed to all the city's other conditions and the development was approved. It will pass to the

Prince George's County planning department, which makes final decisions on county construction.

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