

**APPLICATION FOR MINOR MASTER**  
**PLAN AMENDMENT**  
**CONSIDERATION**



**POOKS HILL MARRIOTT PROPERTY**

**MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL**  
**PROPOSAL**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The addition of high rise multi-family residential uses on under-utilized surface parking areas at the Pooks Hill Marriott property is a perfect example of how Montgomery County can create more housing, in close proximity to employment opportunities, consumer services and transportation nodes, without disrupting the character of the surrounding area. The following information will demonstrate that the Pooks Hill area would be a perfect candidate for a Minor Master Plan Amendment in order to accomplish numerous public goals.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Pooks Hill Marriott Hotel property contains 780,552 square feet of land area (17.9 acres) and has been zoned in the H-M (Hotel-Motel) classification since 1973 (Case No. F-883). The property is improved with a fifteen story hotel building containing 407 guest rooms, a restaurant and several meeting and conference rooms. The hotel contains approximately 267,000 square feet of gross building area and has a lot coverage of approximately 117,593 square feet of area (15% of lot area). Floor area ratio in the H-M zone is 1.0, providing a potential of 780,500 square feet of total building area. With approximately 267,000 square feet of building area already existing. The Subject Property can therefore be further developed without rezoning, but with site plan review, with an additional 513,500 square feet of building area.

One of the most prominent features of the property is the substantial terraced surface parking lots located in front of, west and to the southwest of the hotel building (See Figure 1). Required parking for the hotel is less than the 600 spaces that are provided on the site. But, because of the operational characteristics of the hotel, much of the parking lots are underutilized and are often vacant except in rare instances when there are large private functions at the hotel



simultaneous with heavy hotel bookings. For the most part, there is substantial unused parking on the site, a situation that warrants consideration of reuse of this asset.

FIGURE 1  
AERIAL PHOTO



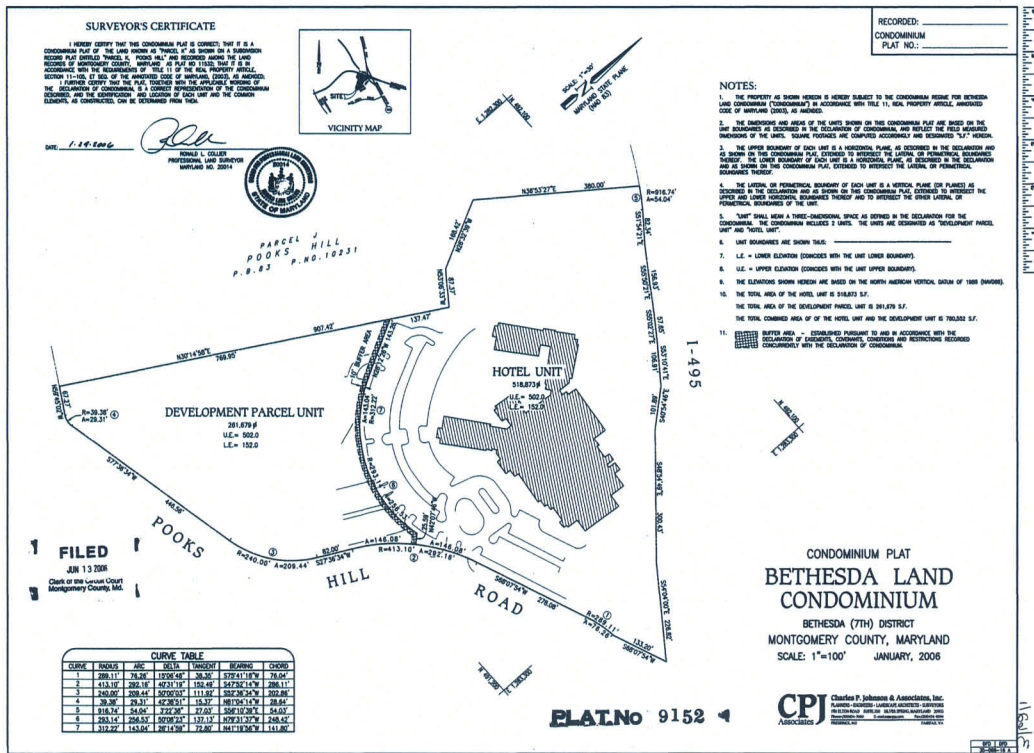
## PAST EFFORTS TO REDEVELOP THE POOKS HILL MARRIOTT PROPERTY

The H-M zone was created in 1972 (ZTA No. F-798) specifically for use on the Pooks Hill property. It is a zone that has been underutilized by the County. Only one other property has been designated H-M. The H-M zone is very limited in the uses permitted, the primary ones being guest rooms, eating and drinking establishments and retail sales and personal services for hotel patrons.

The property was rezoned from the R-H (Multiple-family, high-rise planned residential) zone to the H-M zone in 1973. The Pooks Hill Marriott Hotel was constructed thereafter (1980) and has operated since that time exclusively providing guest rooms for transient visitors.

The Subject Property was purchased by its present owners in 2006. At that time the already platted property was made subject to a land condominium regime (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2





Two land condominium units were created. The unit including the hotel building and some parking lot area was designated the “Hotel Unit”. The second land condominium unit included underutilized parking areas, and vacant land, and was labeled the “Development Parcel Unit”. This portion of the total property contains 261,679 square feet (6.00 acres).

Since 2006, the owners have studied techniques by which the surplus parking areas and vacant land (the "Development Parcel Unit") can be developed with multi-family uses, an effort which has accelerated as the discussion within Montgomery County increased about treating surface parking lots in commercial zones as opportunities to increase housing with no adverse impacts. The scope of the owner’s investigation has included a master plan amendment, a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment and rezoning of the Development Parcel Unit back to its original R-H zoning. None of these options have yet been introduced let alone be successful.

Introduction of a “neighborhood plan” element in the Work Program for Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission provides an opportunity to solve the “limbo” in which the “Development Parcel Unit” is stuck while, simultaneously, providing the public sector with a straightforward and simple “test case” for the Minor Master Plan Amendment program.

Through the Minor Master Plan Amendment process, the Property Owner hopes to achieve a rezoning on the Subject Property (presumably a classification in the CR family of zones) that will allow the owner to construct three high rise (up to 20 stories) apartment buildings containing a total of approximately 780,500 square footage of building area devoted to residential uses, including a substantial number of moderate priced dwelling units. Such a project would result in a land use that is compatible with the existing hotel as well as with surrounding high rise residential uses on adjacent or nearby R-H zoned land and with the Bethesda Park apartments, also in the R-H zone located at the eastern entrance to the

recommended Study Area.

The remainder of this application is devoted to explaining how conducting a Minor Master Plan Amendment Plan for the Pooks Hill area of Montgomery County will achieve all of the goals intended for this planning technique and how the Pooks Hill subarea would be an excellent candidate for a special study under the Minor Master Plan Amendment program.

**1. Identify the nature of the amendment being requested and why an amendment is considered necessary in the context of the current master plan and zoning.**

The Subject Property is zoned in the H-M (Hotel-motel) zoning classification. The applicable area master plan covering the property – the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan of April, 1990 – recommends the property for the H-M zone. (See Zoning and Highway Plan, Figure 9, page 58 and Plan text, page 63.)

The H-M zone does not allow for multi-family residential use. The logical zone under which multi-family dwellings could be constructed on underutilized parking surfaces on the Subject Property would be the CR 1.5, C.5, R1.0, H200' within the family of Commercial-Residential zones (Section 59-C-15 of the Zoning Ordinance). But any CR zone can only be mapped on the Subject Property when specifically recommended by an approved and adopted master plan and only by sectional map amendment. Accordingly, a Minor Master Plan Amendment is required to provide the zoning tool to implement the Master Plan's recommendation in a manner consistent with current planning theory. In paragraph numbered 4, conformance and consistency with the Master Plan's goals will be discussed in more detail.

**2. Identify the area for which an amendment is being requested.**

- The address for the property sought to be the focus of the Minor Master

Plan Amendment is 5151 Pooks Hill Road, Bethesda, Maryland 20814 ("Subject Property").

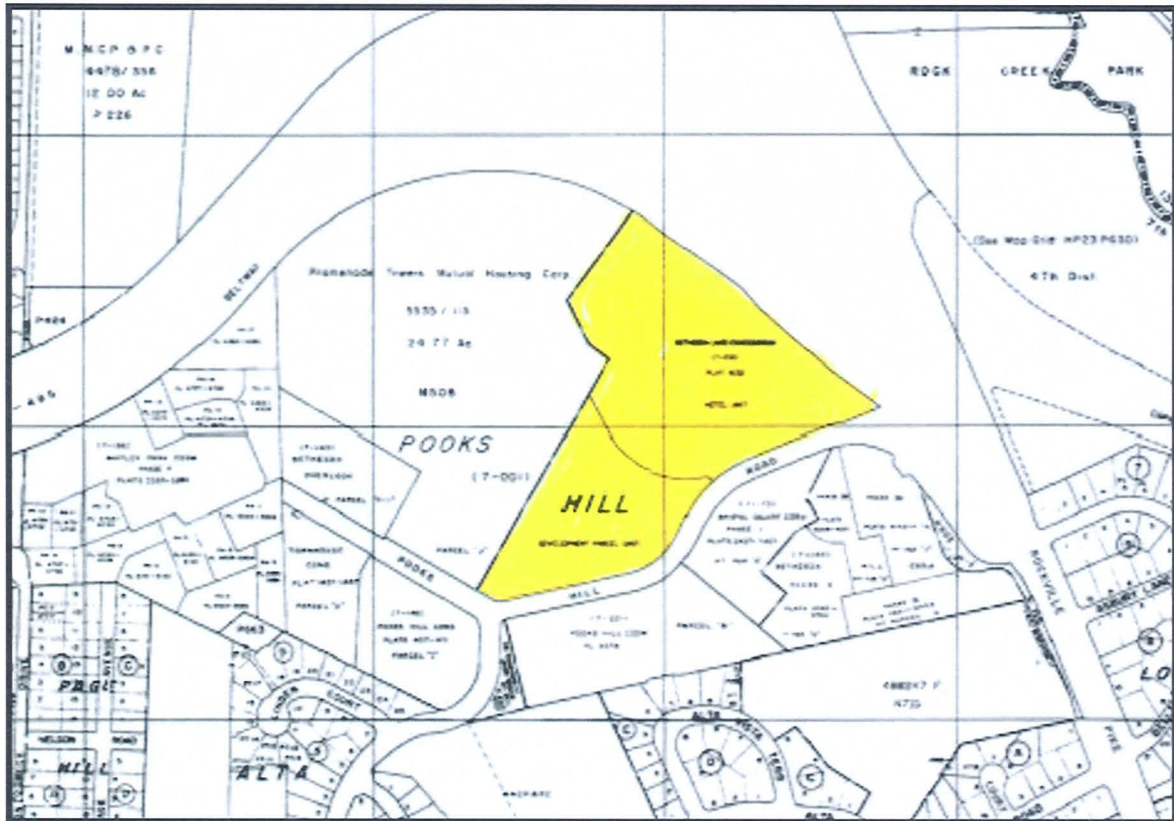
- The tax accounts for the property to be the focus of the Minor Master Plan Amendment procedure are: 07-03547343 (Hotel Condominium Unit; 07-03547354 (Development Parcel Unit).
- The applicable area Master Plan covering the Subject Property is the April, 1990 Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan. The Subject Property abuts the northern edge (I-495) and the eastern boundary (Wisconsin Avenue) of the planning area.

The attached graphic (Figure 3) depicts the zoning of the Subject Property (H-M) and zoning of surrounding and nearby properties (R-H, high rise multi-family residential, and R-30, multi-family, low density).

FIGURE 3



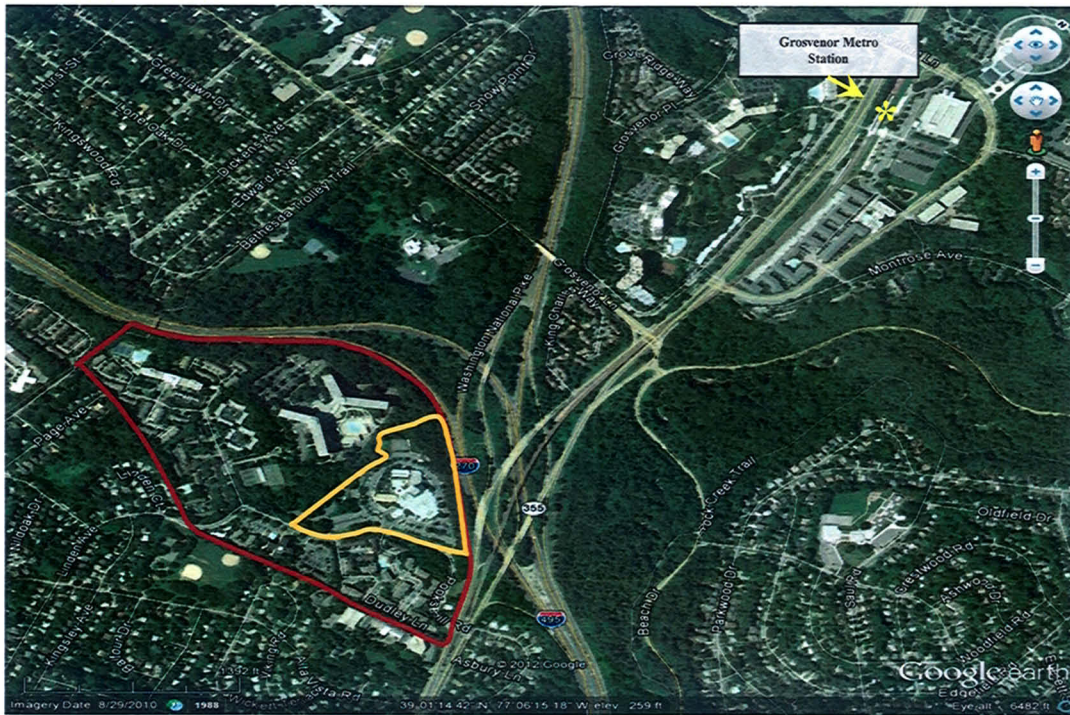
FIGURE 4



- The attached tax map (Figure 4) shows the location of the Subject Property relative to surrounding properties and transportation features.
- The attached aerial photograph (Figure 5) shows the Subject Property outlined in orange and a proposed Study Area outlined in red.



FIGURE 5



3. **Describe how the requested amendment benefits the public and what impacts might be anticipated as a result of this application.**

The property owner desires that its property be recommended for, and eventually rezoned to, an appropriate CR zone that would allow construction of three high rise residential buildings that would generate the following public benefits:

- A. Place housing in close proximity to the important Federal installations at the National Institutes of Health and the Walter Reed Medical Center.

Growth in these facilities have created a demand for housing so that employees can live close to their place of work.

- B. Generate a substantial number of moderately priced dwelling units in an area where little of such housing

presently exists.

Much of the development that has occurred in Pooks Hill predated the County's MPDU law, both the multi-family buildings that abound in Pooks Hill proper but, similarly, the surrounding single family detached "Maplewood" and "Alta Vista" neighborhoods. Delivery of new residential development will introduce a substantial number of affordable dwelling units to this area.

- C.     Redevelopment of underutilized surface parking lots will upgrade stormwater management measures with modern technology.

The surface parking lots that serve the Marriott hotel were constructed in the late 1970's using stormwater management techniques that are not consistent with current planning and environmental theory. Redevelopment will result in a more environmentally sensitive form of land use than the passive imperviousness that exists on the Subject Property today.

- D.     Place housing in close proximity to transit nodes, to transit corridors and to transportation options.

New development in Pooks Hill would be in close proximity to the Grosvenor METRO station and is served by public transit thus providing attractive options for residents to get to work without driving a private vehicle.

Similarly, the Subject Property is located at the junction of Wisconsin Avenue, Interstate 270 and Interstate 495 ("Beltway") with quick access to the adjacent Interstate Highway system.

All of the above cited benefits can be achieved with no adverse impacts to the

surrounding area and to the County as a whole. Compatibility of buildings and uses is assured by virtue of the existing form of similar development in the surrounding area. The proposed high rise residential buildings will be complementary to the existing hotel and will be compatible with surrounding existing high rise residential buildings. Traffic, which is so often a problem for new development, can be handled by the existing transportation system and with programs that will promote accessible transit usage as described in more detail in paragraph 7.

**4. Please identify the master or sector plan for which the amendment is requested and how the requested amendment advances current land use objectives, including but not limited to:**

The applicable master plan covering the Subject Property is the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan of April, 1990. The plan, therefore, is now twenty-two (22) years old without updating.

The applicant's proposal is consistent with the paramount planning principle expressed in the Plan:

"It is the juxtaposition of a single-family neighborhood, Maplewood, with the variety of relatively dense multi-family structures that makes Pooks Hill unique in Bethesda, Chevy Chase. While there is a mix of zoning types and land uses in Pooks Hill, this high density community has the appearance of internal compatibility.

This plan recommends the reconfirmation and the containment of the existing zoning on Pooks Hill, thereby maintaining the boundary between higher and lower density zoning, and recommends against the encroachment of higher density housing into the adjacent single-family neighborhood."

A Minor Master Plan Amendment exercise for the Pooks Hill area will strengthen the existing defined character of the Study Area by allowing reuse of existing, underutilized,



commercially zoned parking lots in accordance with the County's increasing encouragement of high rise, multi-family development on underutilized space in commercial zones.

This requested Minor Master Plan Amendment proposes not to so much "amend" the Plan but, rather, to update the zoning of the Subject Property in order to provide a zoning tool to implement the Master Plan's recommendations in a manner that fulfills both the Plan's vision for Pooks Hill while simultaneously achieving present land use objectives of Montgomery County such as:

- locating housing on underutilized commercially zoned parcels of ground
- placing housing in close proximity to accessible transit nodes (METRO) and bus transit
- placing housing close to critically important federal institutions and employment centers
- creating affordable housing units in an area where such units are needed.

**5. What zoning changes are necessary to implement the amendment being requested?**

The applicant requests that the Subject Property be recommended for reclassification to a CR zone that will reflect the desired multi-family development proposal with opportunities for some local service commercial include in the proposed buildings. Rezoning to the CR1.5, C.5, R1.0, H200' classification is recommended.

**6. Identify interested parties relevant to your application?**

The working agreements between the owners of the Pooks Hill Marriott property

and the hotel operator provides for participation and cooperation by the hotel operator in the owner's effort to develop the "Development Parcel Unit."

To date, the applicant's efforts in investigating the feasibility of its proposal to build multi-family residential uses on the Subject Property have been focused on conversations with County planners and have not reached the point of a dialogue with surrounding property owners or area citizens or homeowners associations.

During the Minor Master Plan Amendment process, the applicant expects to be an active participant in educating the general public about the multiple benefits of its proposal as described elsewhere in this application.

**7. Do you consider traffic volumes or transit patterns to be a major consideration in your application and if so, how do you propose to address those concerns?**

A Minor Master Plan Amendment for the Pooks Hill area will not trigger a major transportation review or any heavy traffic modeling to assess the transportation related features of the proposal. One of the interesting features of the Pooks Hill area is that it is bisected by a single street – Pooks Hill Road – that has a major intersection at its eastern end with Wisconsin Avenue and which has limited points of access (two) into the single family residential neighborhoods that surround the Master Plan defined Pooks Hill planning area.

In particular, the proposed Study Area has only three linkage points with the surrounding transportation network, and two of those points (Pooks Hill Road at the western end of the Study Area, and the intersection of Pooks Hill Road and Linden Lane), have posted access controls to discourage "cut-through" vehicular traffic into residential neighborhoods to the west and the south. (On the north and east, the Study Area is circumscribed by the Beltway (I-495)

and Wisconsin Avenue (Route 355).

The intersection of Pooks Hill Road and Wisconsin Avenue, immediately south of the junction with I-270 and the Beltway ((I-495), is the one intersection deserving attention in a Minor Master Plan Amendment covering Pooks Hill. Today, the existing H-M zoning would allow development of up to 780,500 square feet of hotel guest rooms and related hotel services (dining, bar(s), conference and meeting rooms). By comparison, the property owner desires to construct the same amount of building area in three high rise multi-family residential buildings. The trip generation for the desired residential use will be less than the trips associated with the hotel uses that exist or that can be constructed on the property.

To ensure that there is adequate capacity at the intersection of Pooks Hill Road and Wisconsin Avenue, the property owner commissioned the preparation of a study to determine the impact of new traffic that would be added to this critical intersection. The conclusion of that study was that the intersection of Pooks Hill Road and Wisconsin Avenue will continue to operate at acceptable levels of service with traffic added from the new proposed residential buildings.

Finally, during whatever process becomes involved in implementing multi-family development on the Pooks Hill property, the property owner/applicant wishes to work with Staff of M-NCPPC and MCDOT to develop an alternative program or programs to facilitate access to the nearby Grosvenor (identified with a yellow asterisk on the attached Study Area Map, Figure 5) and the Medical Center METRO stations and/or the Medical Center employment centers to reduce vehicular traffic on the surrounding transportation network.

In summary, because of the absence of any need for a detailed traffic analysis, the Pooks Hill property is an outstanding candidate for a Major Master Plan Amendment effort



beginning in July, 2012.

**8. Has your request been the subject of a previous master plan amendment, rezoning, zoning text amendment, or similar application.**

No.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Pooks Hill Marriott property, located in a discrete, geographically well-defined area where it is surrounded by high and mid-rise multi-family developments, with close proximity to transit and access to the area highway network, represents a unique model for implementation of the County's Minor Master Plan Amendment program. Initiation of a Minor Plan Amendment covering the Pooks Hill property will solve a planning dilemma that the property presently suffers and will do so in a manner that will generate substantial public benefits consistent with currently planning advocacy and will result in a more compatible, and more valuable, form of development than would continue benign usage under the existing zoning.