

## **What's Next at Westwood I and II?**

By Marnie Shaul, Council President, Town of Somerset, Prepared for the Somerset Town Journal

As fall approaches, it appears that development on Westbard Avenue at Westwood I and II is coming closer to starting.

You may recall that last year after a hearing, the Montgomery County Planning Board approved a Preliminary Plan submitted by Regency Centers (previously Equity One) for most of the commercial area on both sides of Westbard Avenue, and then approved a Site Plan for construction to start on the large parcel where the Giant grocery store is located, known as Westwood I. As part of the project, Ridgefield Road is scheduled to be realigned, so that Westbard Avenue will curve directly past the Giant to River Road, and Ridgefield will terminate into the current extension of Westbard Avenue. The new road will go through Westwood II, the two-story curved brick building that currently houses Westwood Cleaners. Here is an update:

### **Westwood I**

The site plan called for demolition of the bank and drug store in the Westwood Shopping Center, followed first by a commercial building with a new Giant and restaurants, to be constructed along Westbard Avenue while the old Giant remains open. According to county staff who review construction permitting,

*“Regency is actively going through the permitting process for the new Giant, retail shops and multifamily building on Westwood I, albeit at a slightly slower pace than originally expected, given the impacts of COVID-19. ... they are also actively pursuing the plans and permits for the realignment (of Ridgefield Road), while Kensington is securing its site plan. All of that said, Regency won't be able to provide a detailed timeframe for construction starts until they see how reemergence efforts {from the pandemic} pan out going forward.*

In addition to the new commercial building, Regency and its partners eventually plan to build a multi-family apartment building—also along Westbard—with an open plaza between the new Giant and the multifamily building, as well as a park with a playground on the Springfield end of the site near the current Anglo-Dutch toy store. There will also be about 70 townhouses along the back of the parking lot

### **Westwood II**

For the Westwood II project, Regency is working with Kensington Senior Development LLC to construct a 155-bed residential care facility on the parcel of land remaining after the road realignment. Kensington submitted a Site Plan and revised a Preliminary Plan for this project in the beginning of the summer, and recently submitted revised plans in response to comments from staff at the Planning Board (the permitting body for the new development). Although not easy to read, the August 5<sup>th</sup> submitted documents can be found at:

- Preliminary Plan Amendment 12017017A –  
<https://eplans.montgomeryplanning.org/daiclinks/pdoxlinks.aspx?apno=12017017A&projname=Westwood%20Shopping%20Center>
- Site Plan 8202000200 –  
<https://eplans.montgomeryplanning.org/daiclinks/pdoxlinks.aspx?apno=820200200&projname=Kensington%20of%20Bethesda>

The Westwood II site is the primary gateway from River Road into Westbard and is at the beginning of the proposed Willett Branch Greenway. This area is planned to be a park with trails along what is envisioned to become a naturalized stream. Many residents in the area, the Little Falls Watershed Alliance, and the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH) have strongly supported the creation of the park and naturalizing the stream. The Parks Department is in the process of assembling parcels for the park, but creation of the park is likely to be far in the future. Meanwhile, Regency/Kensington will be dedicating land for the park on the Westwood II site. Many members of the community would like to see Regency provide further financial support for the park as well.

Currently, the key dates for the Kensington project include: a final submission by Kensington by the end of August, a planning Board staff report by mid-October and a Planning Board hearing on October 29<sup>th</sup>. A public hearing must also be held in order to realign Ridgefield Road. No date has been set yet.

The CCCFH website will be updated to reflect key dates, including the Planning Board hearing and the hearing about the road realignment.