Natelli's Two Builder Deals

A pair of upcounty residential jobs advanced by Natelli Communities both have builders in place now.

In the more recent deal of the two, CalAtlantic Group is the contract purchaser of 36 singles on Route 108 in Laytonsville. Before that, NVHomes had reached agreement to build at Manor Oaks, and is now advertising the community on its website.

The 36 lots on which CalAtlantic will build are called Laytonsville Grove, located off 108 at Maple Knoll Drive near a working nursery. Natelli bought the lots earlier this year in two separate purchases for $2.56 million and will transfer them in a bulk deal to CalAtlantic.

The deal gives CalAtlantic its largest inventory of singles here. Right now, it had some singles at Norbeck Overlook, just south of Olney, but it was primarily building towns and condos there. It likewise has condos at Crown.

Natelli is also the developer behind Manor Oaks, which it acquired from the Marian Fathers this spring. Natelli paid $4.9 million for that group of 35 singles and 19 towns, including eight MPDUs. It's off Georgia Avenue just south of Gold Mine Road and qualifies as a Brookville address. NVHomes says it is 'coming soon,' but has not affixed prices yet.

Another up-county group of lots is on the market, that at Dowden's Station. The Clarksburg project of 84 towns and 21 singles is out for offers.

Rich Samit, Bruce Winston and Aaron Lebovitz of Fraser Forbes Real Estate Serviced brokered both builder transactions at Manor Oaks and Laytonsville Grove. Fraser Forbes also has the Dowden's Station listing.

Teardown Surcharge Stymied

Teardown builders have an ally or two on their side in fending off a 'school surcharge fee.'

Both the County Executive and a Council committee have recommended that the Council not impose a school surcharge on teardowns and larger additions, as recommended by Council's own staff. The charge, recommended by staff at up to $6 per square foot, does have the support of the Montgomery County Public Schools.

But it will go to the full Council with a 'nay' beside it, as infill builders had hoped. Even so, there is little agreement on many aspects of the new Subdivision Staging Policy and any proposal could change directions faster than the Roadrunner avoiding falling rocks.

The surcharge idea was raised at a public hearing earlier this month and quickly gained some traction. The thinking was that teardowns and additions, which don't pay a School Impact fee, could be charged a surcharge now applied to new-builds of 3500 to 8500 square feet. That surcharge has been stuck a $2 per foot for a dozen years, while the Impact Tax has increased three-fold. Tripling the surcharge, commensurate with the Impact Fees, and applying it to teardowns over 3500 square feet, would raise additional revenue.

But the GO committee didn't bite. Instead, it sided with Ike Leggett's recommendation that the surcharge would 'impose a negative impact on housing.' "These new houses (teardowns) are adding to our tax base," said Councilmember Sidney Katz.

That of course is where the builders land. A trio of builders with 'Renewing Montgomery' blasted the surcharge as 'unwarranted and unfair.' Representatives from Chuck Sullivan Homes, Carter Inc. and Sandy Spring Builders said the fee could add up to $30,000 in some cases 'without adding any value.' Because the square footage calculation includes garages, decks and porches, those additions could incur the tax without adding a student to the school population, they argued.

Builder Laurence Cafritz took another tact: "There is absolutely no correlation between house square footage and number of kids," he argued. The builders will have to wait for the final vote by the full Council for the outcome.

A Matter of Parking

Adequate parking for Marriott employees, who have grown used to the easy availability of spaces at the Rock Spring headquarters, is a key part of the company's newly unveiled incentive package. The county agreed to provide the firm with 1200 spaces in yet undesignated places around Bethesda, at a cost of $2 million per year. The expectation is that Marriott's chosen developer would provide about 800 spaces on-site.

Gradually, while the great majority of Marriott employees would drive in the early going, it would be hoped that the 'transit' part of the Bethesda equation would rub off on the company, and reduce the number of spaces it needs.