

Illustrative Master Plan: Collegiate District

# Collegiate District

## 4-C: East End “Collegiate District”

*The Borough and Neighborhood Coalition should support and encourage additional downtown student housing, particularly in the East End, and allow for increased density/ FAR in targeted areas, in exchange for high quality design and other incentives.*

*Implementation: Borough of State College, Downtown Improvement District, Downtown Businesses, Property Owners, Local Housing Organizations, Developers, Redevelopment Authority, Neighborhood Associations, Planning Commission*

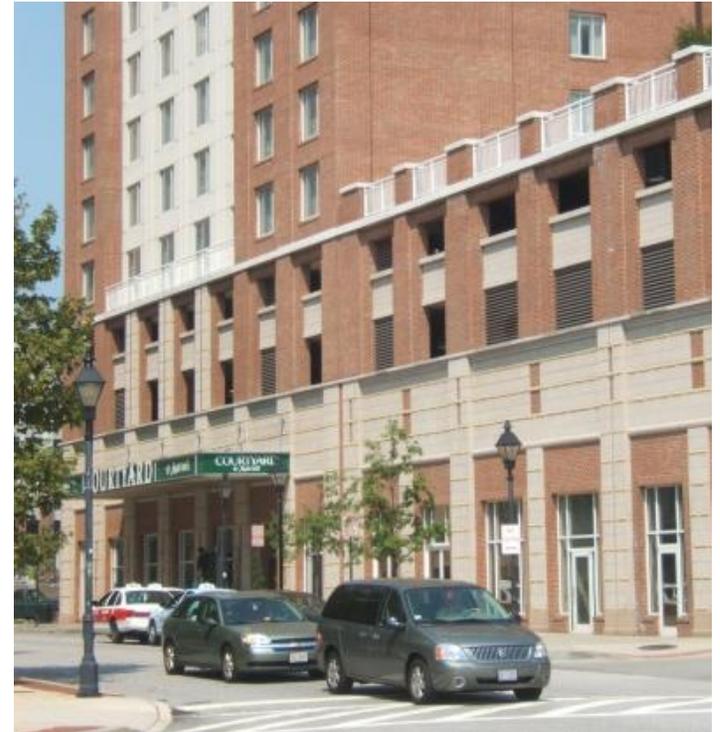
The East End “Collegiate District” is notable because of its concentration of mid-rise, densely developed student housing that, by the nature of its construction, is likely to remain in place for many years to come. This area is also adjacent to significant on-campus student housing at South Halls and Eastview Terrace. However, the University and this area do not interact well and the influence of dense student housing spills over into adjacent neighborhoods.

The State College Borough Sustainable Neighborhood Report 2012 identified as one of Council’s Objectives to “develop more student housing in downtown.” This recommendation has merit in that it will help to take pressure of rental conversions within the neighborhoods and provide more living options close to campus. The Collegiate District at the east end of downtown makes the most sense for student housing as this location is not desirable for non-student housing.

The area does not have to develop exclusively for student housing however. There are institutional uses including Churches, the proposed PSU Hillel Center and the proposed LDS Worship/ Gospel Study Center planned for the area, existing restaurants and cafes, and a small but important selection of retail. Perhaps most uniquely, the area is indeed home to a handful of owner-occupied residents. As is the

*Examples of how active ground floor uses can be maintained with parking developed above.*

*Top: Baltimore, MD  
Bottom: Arlington, VA*



case with the rest of downtown, a mixture of uses should be considered within the following parameters:

- New student housing development should strive to incorporate retail space when applicable or, at a minimum focus student amenities such as gathering areas, workout facilities, and meeting areas on the ground floors facing major streets.
- Mixed-use development including potential hotel space could work in this district as the market continues to evolve.
- The area has a chance to “reclaim” some of the streetscape and connect uses within the district as new developments replace existing surface parking lots.
- While new single family detached housing is unlikely within the area, the edges of this area should be developed in a way that adjacent single family housing is preserved and new development transitions accordingly.

Some of the specific opportunity sites are described below.

### Garner Center South 15

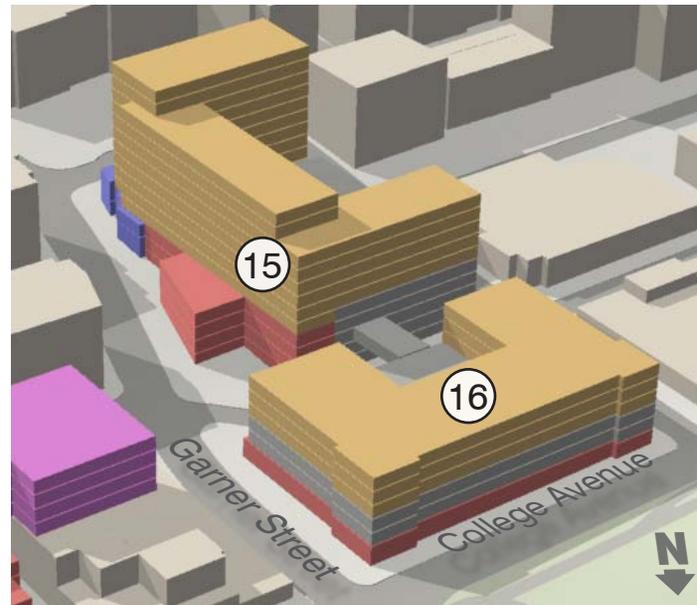
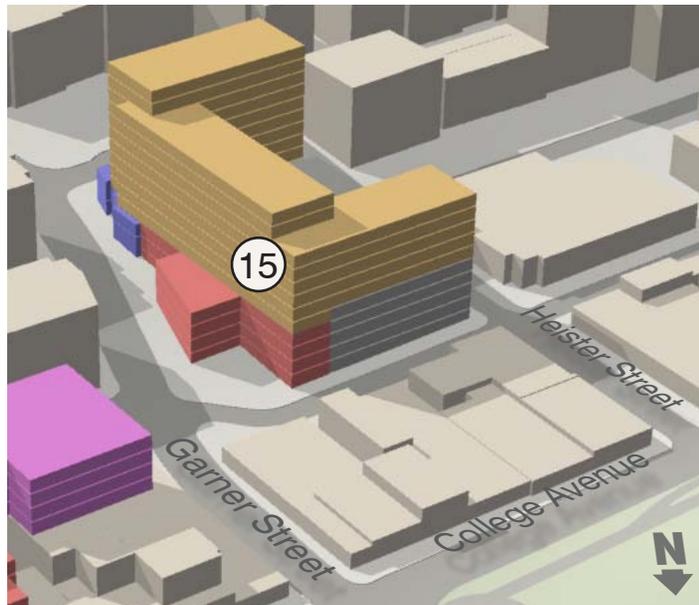
This site is one of the most significant mixed-use development opportunities in downtown and is comprised of three separate properties. The property facing Beaver Avenue is being developed as the Hillel Student Center and will provide a variety of student functions. There is an opportunity to plan and integrate this center into a larger development project that includes the adjacent properties (existing surface parking lots). Planned and designed carefully, this could allow for the development of the air rights over the Hillel facility while still distinguishing Hillel’s identity. The Center could also function as a “book end” to the Fraser Center, several blocks to the west.

Because of the site’s location in the East End Collegiate District, non-student housing would likely not be feasible, however, this would be an appropriate location for additional student housing. Important considerations for this site include:

*Far Left: Model view illustrates redevelopment potential for “Garner Street South” that incorporates the PSU Hillel Center into a coordinated development.*

*Left: Model view illustrates long-term redevelopment of the one-story buildings along College Avenue into a mixed use development (“Garner Street North”) that should be coordinated with Garner Street South.*

*Opposite Page: Perspective sketch showing how these two developments at the corner of College and Garner Streets. Incentives should be considered to allow for greater setbacks and the addition of bike lanes along Garner Street.*



#### Building Use

- Commercial
- Residential
- Office
- Hotel



Garner Center South

- Consider working with the Borough to provide some public parking as part of the mixed-use project rather than just providing for parking that only meets the needs of the uses on site. With coordinated development, an efficient parking deck layout can be achieved.
- Provide retail/active uses along Garner Street and Calder Way frontages, in addition to that being provided by the Hillel Center. For frontages that may be difficult to accommodate retail, consider incubator/co-working space.
- Take advantage of the prominent site and architecturally address the corner of Beaver and Garner, the corner of Calder Way and Garner and the corner of Calder Way and Heister.
- Provide an open plaza area at Calder Way to create a gathering area and reinforce an east gateway for Calder Way.
- Consider providing additional development incentives if expanded setback is provided to allow for expansion of Garner Street and addition of bike lanes to extend the existing bike lanes to Calder Way. This will need to be evaluated with the program of the development and required site dimensions. A minimum of 10' would be needed to allow for a 5' bike lane in each direction along Garner Street.
- Consider options for utilizing green walls and green roofs.

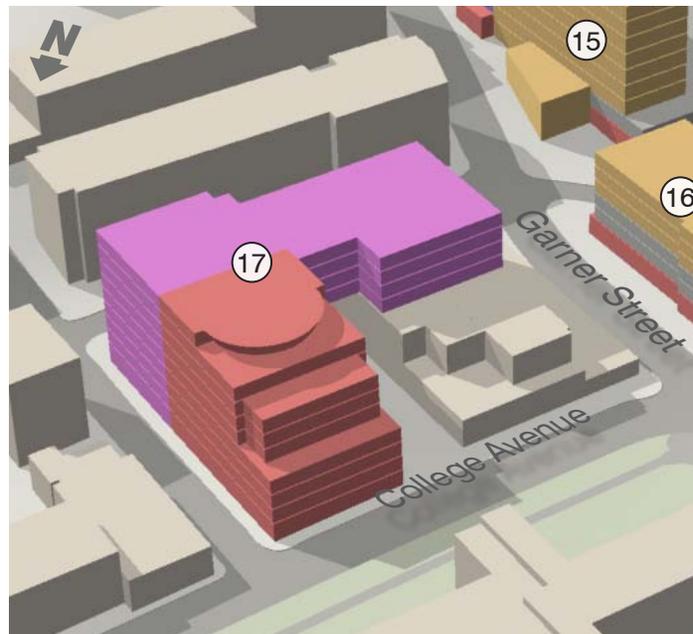
### Garner Center North ⑩

This site includes the properties between Garner and Heister Streets and between College Avenue and Calder Way. These properties are all under the same ownership and, when considered together, provide appropriate dimensions for structured parking. While the properties are currently occupied by viable businesses, the buildings are all one-story and do not represent the highest and best use for the site in the long-term. Should the property owner wish to redevelop, there is a tremendous opportunity to develop a significant mixed-use building at this prominent intersection. Important considerations for the site include:

- Even if developed at a separate time from Garner Center (described above), consideration should be given to how



Left: Model views showing long-term development potential in the vicinity of Garner Street at College and Beaver Avenues.



#### Building Use

<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Commercial
<span style="color: gold;">■</span>	Residential
<span style="color: blue;">■</span>	Office
<span style="color: purple;">■</span>	Hotel

the two sites might be coordinated. From a functional standpoint, there may be the opportunity to connect upper floor parking with parking in Garner Center to avoid ramping at the retail level. This may require (and encourage) undergrounding the Calder Way utilities in this section.

- This block of Calder Way is activated by a variety of uses and any new development should incorporate uses that activate both Calder Way (particularly at the corners with Heister and Garner) and College Avenue as well as the Garner and Heister Street frontages.
- Similar to Garner Center, consider providing additional development incentives if an expanded setback is provided to allow for the expansion of Garner Street and continuation of bike lanes to College Avenue and the Bike Route along Shortlidge Drive.

#### Sowers at College 17

This site is located between Garner and Sowers Street and presents an additional opportunity for significant mixed-use development along College Avenue with retail uses and student housing. The property owner has conceptual plans developed for the property.

#### Gateway East 18

The existing property at the southwest corner of High Street and College Avenue is a highly visible site at the eastern gateway to downtown along College Avenue. While currently occupied by a viable business, the site is developed with a one-story building setback behind surface parking. A multi-floor building oriented to the street edge would be a higher and better use for this site. Additionally, new development oriented to the street would reinforce the pedestrian environment along High Street and new crossing of College Avenue as described in Theme 3.

In the short-term, streetscape enhancements should be considered as part of the High Street intersection improvement that would include a low hedge or ornamental fence to define the edge of the surface parking lot, until redevelopment occurs.

*Right: Model view showing long-term potential for infill development at the corner of High Street and College Avenue, showing potential for this important gateway site currently occupied by a one-story building with parking in front.*

This site could be developed as a potential partnership between the Borough, Penn State and the property owner. At a minimum, the Borough and Penn State should partner on the intersection and streetscape improvements described earlier.

#### 4-D: Bulk Regulation Flexibility

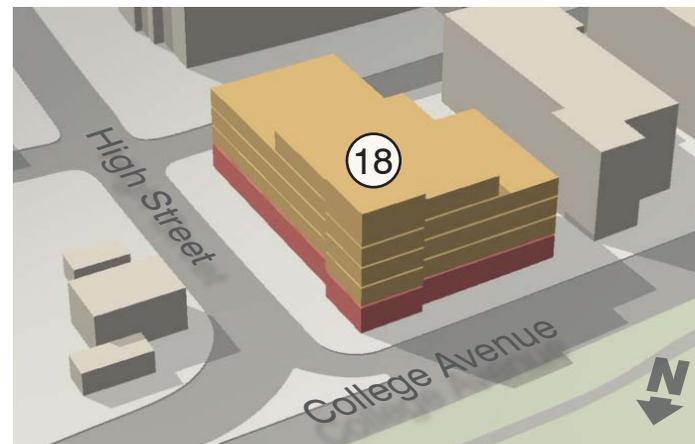
*Consider more flexibility in bulk regulations to allow for appropriately-scaled first floor retail space, higher quality architectural design and more functional parking.*

**Implementation: Borough of State College, Planning Commission, Design Review Board**

#### Building Heights

Building heights are not consistently described in the ordinance. In some instances they are described in terms of “stories”, in others in terms of “feet” and others in terms of both. It will be important to identify maximum number of floors to discourage construction of “low” first floors to allow “squeezing in” an upper floor.

While it is important to provide a limit on the number of floors, there should be limits on number of feet, however, with more flexibility in the actual height to allow for specific design treatments with appropriately scaled floors (particularly the first level which should be 14-20’ floor to floor) and to allow



for parapet walls. A well designed 6 story building that is technically taller than a poorly designed 6 story building will make a more positive contribution to the downtown.

### *General Changes to Consider*

Define height maximums in terms of “floors.” Also define in terms of “feet” but allow for some variance in the number of feet depending upon use and design. Specifically, consider the following:

- First Floor/Commercial Use Floor Height: 14’ minimum to 20’ to allow for appropriately scaled retail and commercial level and comfortable scale to visually “support” upper floors.
- Upper Floor Residential Heights: 10’-11’
- Roof Articulation (non-inhabitable): 10’-20’ additional depending upon architectural treatment.

In relationship to maximum number of floors and assuming one level of retail uses with a 20’ height, the above measurements would translate to:

- 4 Floors: 44’-53’ - (plus roof articulation)
- 7 Floors: 74’-86’ (plus roof articulation)
- 9 Floors: 94’-108’ (plus roof articulation)
- 12 Floors: 124’-141’ (plus roof articulation)
- 14 Floors: 144’-163’ (plus roof articulation)

Some taller buildings may have multiple levels of commercial programming in which case allowances should be made to accommodate the additional number of feet in height for those commercial floors.

### *Potential Changes by District*

C District: 4 floors where currently identified as 45’. This will maintain the smaller, historic character of the central downtown core along the 100 block of Allen Street and along the core frontage of College Avenue. An exception to consider is the College Avenue block between Heister and Garner which should be allowed to increase to 7 floors with design incentives.



*Existing buildings in downtown State College:*

*Top left: Lower building heights and lower densities do not guarantee good design. This 4-story building awkwardly addresses the street.*

*Middle and bottom left: With no floor limits, it is possible to “squeeze” 7 floors into a 65’ height limit, resulting in uncomfortably short first floors.*



Top right: Existing building in Baltimore, MD shows a well-proportioned first floor.



Bottom right: 14-floor building in Baltimore illustrates how design incentives can be used to articulate taller buildings.

CID District: 7 floors where currently identified as 65' and 9 floors where currently identified as 95' (allowable with incentives). For the Signature Development Area, Increase up to 12 floors with incentives with the ability to increase to 14 floors with additional incentives.

Urban Village District: 3 floors south of Clay Lane; 4 floors north of Clay Lane (with incentives) and 7 floors in areas currently identified as 65'.

Refer to *Exhibit 22: Potential Maximum Building Heights* (page 192).

### ***Increased Building Height Incentives***

In order to increase building heights as described above, the following incentives should be considered (the appropriate incentive mix and number of incentives will need to be determined as part of the zoning update):

- Additional design consideration including use of higher quality materials such as brick and excluding lower quality materials such as Dryvit; articulation of the architecture where it corresponds to parapet height of adjacent buildings; articulated building corners and use of tower elements; articulated rooflines, etc.
- Additional setback area along sidewalk, provided the general "build-to" plane is maintained for the street or an appropriate transition is accommodated.
- Increased window area and percentage of windows/display areas on first floor.
- Enhanced streetscape amenities along frontage.
- Clear and creative articulation of building "base", "middle" and "top" through materials, colors, increased setbacks, etc.
- Incorporation of green roofs, green walls, and other green technologies.

### ***Lot Size for Signature Development***

Signature Development is restricted to minimum lot sizes of 30,000 SF. There should be more flexibility to allow

for signature development on smaller lots if the bulk requirements can be adequately addressed and incentives provided. Incentives could be design related similar to those described for building heights.

### **Density**

Residential Density  
Commercial Density

### **Residential FAR's and Percentages for Key Locations**

The practice of limiting residential FAR's is a good one to encourage more mixed-use density within the downtown and to encourage more owner occupied housing. These limitations are not always realistic, however, and discourage higher density development in some parts of downtown where significant amounts of other uses are not feasible. The Borough should consider more flexibility in increasing residential FAR's for both rental and owner occupied projects if tied to design incentives.

### **Potential FAR Changes by District**

Maintain the residential FAR limits as they currently exist, however, use design incentives to allow for increased residential FAR's as described below:

C District: Increase to 3.0 with incentives in areas currently designated as 2.0 and 2.5 FAR; Increase to 3.5 with incentives in areas currently designated as 3.0 FAR.

CID District: Increase to 3.0 with incentives. For the Signature Development Area, increase to 4.0 with incentives and up to 6.0 with additional incentives. Additionally, reduce requirements that Signature Development must maintain 40% non-residential uses to a minimum of 20% for projects with an FAR up to 4.0. Increase the non-residential requirement incrementally (up to 40%) for projects with residential densities between 4.0 and 6.0.

Urban Village District: Establish residential FAR of 2.0 for the district with increases up to 3.0 with incentives for areas north of Clay Lane.

### **Increased Residential Incentives**

In order to increase residential densities as described above, the following incentives should be considered (the appropriate incentive mix and number of incentives will need to be determined as part of the zoning update):

- Provisions for owner-occupied housing.
- Provisions for/contributions toward workforce housing.
- Provisions for/contributions toward shared parking resources.
- Provisions for/contributions toward public realm improvements within the downtown area.
- Design incentives as described for increased building heights.

Refer to *Exhibit 23: Potential Residential Development Densities* (page 193).

### **Parking Requirements**

The Borough is considering a reduction of on-site parking requirements for downtown housing to 1 space/800 SF. Further reduction or elimination of on-site parking requirements for both residential and commercial development should be considered, provided that the parking can be accommodated elsewhere in downtown using the techniques recommended for the parking study as described under Theme 2. Reduction of the on-site requirement is important, particularly considering the small block sizes and narrow parcel configurations which don't always allow for on-site parking.

### **4-E: Zoning Code Update**

*Perform a stakeholder-based update to the existing zoning code to provide for incentive-based design, to better accommodate appropriate redevelopment and to provide for a more user-friendly document.*

**Implementation: Borough of State College, Planning Commission, Design Review Board**