

**CONCEPT SITE PLAN REPORT**  
**to the**  
**Carroll County Planning and Zoning Commission**  
**June 20, 2023**

**Prepared by**  
**David Becraft, Bureau of Development Review**

**SUBJECT:** S-20-0030, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) Bachman Valley

**LOCATION:** 2239 Bachman Valley Road, Manchester, MD 21102; E.D. 6

**OWNER:** Tesfaye Mekoya Assegid, 2239 Bachman Valley Road, Manchester, MD 21102

**DEVELOPER:** Same as owner

**ENGINEER:** ZTigers Consult, 5120 Willet Bridge Road, Bethesda, MD 20816

**ZONING:** Agriculture

**ACREAGE:** 25.45 acres

**WATERSHED:** Double Pipe Creek

**FIRE DISTRICT:** Manchester

**MASTER PLAN:** Agriculture –2014 Carroll County Master Plan, 2019 Amended

**PRIORITY**

**FUNDING AREA:** Outside

**DESIGNATED**

**GROWTH AREA:** Outside

❖ **Action Required:**

The plan is before the Planning and Zoning Commission per Chapter 155 of the Code of Public Local Laws and Ordinances of Carroll County for consideration of a concept site plan. **No action is required.**

The Planning Commission may consider delegating approval of the final site plan to the Planning Commission Chair

❖ **Existing Conditions:**

The subject property consists of 25.45 acres and hosts a religious establishment. The property is currently fixed with three buildings; an archive and prayer/holy water immersion building, an assembly hall, and a residence used by/for the priest before and after church service. The site is accessed from Bachman Valley Road (MD 496) by way of an existing drive which is utilized by two other properties and terminates at a gravel area. An access easement is in place for the portion of drive which is on neighboring private properties.

A stream crosses the western portion of the property with a wooded riparian zone. There are

no 100-year floodplain designations on site. A pond lies between the stream and the existing improvements.

All adjoining properties are zoned Agriculture and either host farmland or private residences. The adjoining properties to the northwest, east, and south are encompassed by a MALPF agricultural preservation easement. All properties in this area are served by private well and septic systems.

❖ **Plan Review:**

A concept plan of the development proposal was submitted to Development Review on January 1, 2021 after it was determined the site was in violation of operating without an approved site plan. The plan identifies the construction of new buildings as well as improvements to existing buildings. New construction consists of a 10,000 square-foot church and an estimated 6,600 square-foot holy-water immersion building. Expansion is proposed for the existing assembly hall building and existing archive and prayer building. There are no changes proposed to the existing priest house.

Religious Establishments are principal permitted uses in the Agricultural zoning district. The bulk requirements for a religious establishment are as follows:

**§ 158.070 A AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT.**

(H) **Bulk requirements.** The following minimum requirements shall apply, except as hereinafter modified in § [158.130](#):

(1) **Dwellings, schools, and the like.**

<i>Use</i>	<i>Lot Area</i>	<i>Lot Width (feet)</i>	<i>Front Yard Depth (feet)</i>	<i>Side Yard (Width Each Side Yard) (feet)</i>	<i>Rear Yard Depth (feet)</i>
Religious establishments	2 acres	200	100	50	50

Zoning has granted approval of the plan as presented, with the above bulk requirements being met.

Access to the site will be via the existing access to Bachman Valley Road (MD 496). To ensure compliance with Code, the existing drive will be enlarged to 22' wide pavement. As the improvements and associated stormwater management practices exceed the physical boundaries of the existing access easement, a revised easement will be required. A free-standing sign is proposed at the entrance to the site from Bachman Valley Road within the new access easement. The detail of this sign is shown on sheet fifteen and provides a measurement of a 4-foot high by 20-foot-wide board on two stilts. The overall height of the sign is shown as being 30-foot maximum.

Based on the projected trip generations, a traffic study is required. However, as access is to a State Highway Administration (SHA) roadway and SHA is not requiring a traffic impact study, the Carroll County Department of Public Works has waived this requirement. The developer will be required to provide access improvements as outlined in the State Highway Administration Access Manual. SHA has approved the concept plan.

Chapter 155 of the Carroll County Code states that parking requirements for religious establishments are "1 for every 4 persons, based on the maximum capacity of the sanctuary". The parking tabulation identifies the maximum capacity for the uses on site is 500 people and thus would require 125 spaces; the plan proposes 126 parking spaces. Of the 126 proposed

parking spaces, 10 of which are to be reserved for handicapped parking. Concrete pathways ranging from 5-feet wide to 7-feet wide are proposed to connect the proposed parking areas to the new/improved buildings. Site Compliance has granted concept approval of the plan and is requiring additional details for the review of the final plan.

Along with their normal service, the church also organizes 2-3 special events annually which can yield thousands of participants. To help mitigate traffic with the most recent event, the Carroll County sheriff's office was hired.

The development is to be served by private well and septic systems. The developer proposes the installation of additional septic drainage fields north of the proposed church building that will work in conjunction with the existing septic field nearby. The well and septic plan can be found on sheet 30 in the plan set. This site is located within the No Planned Water Service Area and the No Planned Sewer Service Area, per the Carroll County Water and Sewer Master Plan. The Carroll County Health Department will require additional details for the review of the final plan.

The building materials and colors vary between buildings. These materials comprise of metal, exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS), and siding. The colors range from brown, white/beige, and gold. Architectural elevations are provided on sheets 33-43 within the plan set.

A 5-foot-high retaining wall is proposed near the multi-purpose hall (former assembly hall). A dumpster enclosure is also proposed near the multi-purpose hall. Details, including height, materials, and colors of the retaining wall and dumpster enclosure will need to be provided on the final plan set.

Forest Conservation for the site is to be addressed by an easement over the wooded area surrounding the stream along with areas of afforestation. A variance was granted to allow for the removal of specimen trees. Landscaping is proposed throughout the proposed parking area. Water Resources will require an easement surrounding the stream crossing the western portion of the property with additional details to be provided during the review of the final plan. Floodplain Management has granted concept approval of the plan with an easement being required.

Stormwater management will be provided through the construction of multiple micro-bioretenion facilities throughout the site. Stormwater management has granted concept approval of the plan.

The concept site plan was subject to citizen involvement at the February 22, 2021 virtual meeting of the Technical Review Committee with no citizens present. After the meeting, an email was received from an adjoining property owner which outlined concerns for safety along with questions relating to the proposed development (email attached). A phone call was also received after the meeting from another adjoining property owner who did not pose opposition to the development but had concerns of traffic.

The concept site plan for the subject property was reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission on December 13, 2022 (minutes attached). During this meeting, questions regarding the use of the house, parking, noise, lighting, and sign were brought up by the Commission; however, without a representative of the owner, developer, or engineer present, these questions remained unanswered. With that, the Commission requested a follow-up meeting to further discuss before the plan was brought back for final approval. After review of the minutes by the developer, a written explanation has been provided (attached). After the

meeting, various phone calls and emails were received regarding concerns of noise, traffic, water and sewer usage, site access, and the use of the site (written correspondence attached).

On October 11, 2022, the Design and Architectural Review Committee (DARC), an advisory group, met to review the project. Comments and suggestions include:

1. Has an ornate architecture and appears to be upgrading the looks of the existing buildings
2. Roadside sign is approximately as large as a highway billboard – may want to consider a more modest size

The final site plan will be tested and reviewed for adequacy of public facilities in accordance with Chapter 155 of the Code of Public Laws and Ordinances of Carroll County Maryland.