

Commercial Real Estate

Camden USA seeking to develop Rockville site

Premium content from Washington Business Journal by Daniel J. Sernovitz, Staff Reporter

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A Texas developer plans to build a 470-unit apartment building at the Danac Stiles Corporate Campus in Rockville, where it is hoping to tie into Montgomery County's efforts to court science and tech businesses to the so-called Great Seneca Science Corridor.

Houston-based Camden USA Inc. is seeking county approvals to build Camden Shady Grove, a five-story apartment building at Diamondback Drive and Key West Avenue.

The developer needs the site's zoning to be changed from commercial use to residential before it can move ahead with the project.

Camden wants to construct the apartments and a separate four-story parking garage on about a quarter of the 30-acre business park.

Representatives from Camden USA, which has a contract to buy the lot from Bethesda's Danac Corp. for an undisclosed price, could not be reached for comment.

But attorney [Timothy Dugan](#), who is representing Camden, said the project fits in with the county's goals for the Great Seneca Science Corridor because Camden Shady Grove will create a live-work environment, not just another business park that shuts down after business hours.

Dugan, an attorney with **Shulman, Rogers, Gandal, Pordy & Ecker PA**, also said the project's apartments would help the county court life science companies by easing the shortage of residential options for employees who want to live and work in the same neighborhood.

Montgomery County's development review committee is slated to consider the project March 19.

Camden isn't the only developer honing in on the Great Seneca area.

Companies such as the Hanover Cos. and Woodfield Investment are also working on multifamily projects.

But the largest project is a controversial plan by **Johns Hopkins University** to develop a 138-acre mixed-use campus dubbed Science City, which has become tangled in litigation over how much and what should be built in the area.

Several relatives of the late [Elizabeth Beall Banks](#), who agreed to give the land to Johns Hopkins, have sued the university and are claiming that the development plans far exceed the scope of the agreement with Banks when she turned over the property.

On March 9, a Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge dismissed a motion by the university to have the suit thrown out.

Camden, a publicly traded real estate investment trust, has several residential communities in the area, including Camden Falls Grove in Rockville, Camden Russett in Laurel and Camden Grand Parc in the District.

Montgomery County Councilwoman [Nancy Floreen](#) said she is encouraged by the interest that developers have shown for residential projects in the Great Seneca area but also noted the concept is not going to transform that part of the county overnight.

"We anticipated that there would be some significant residential presence there because we wanted to make it a walkable, livable community," Floreen said. "This is a 30-year plan, and no one ever thought it would be done by today."

Daniel J. Sernovitz covers commercial real estate.