

## ***'Gateway' Apts. Win Approval***

A group of 320 one and two-bedroom apartments are coming to Gateway Overlook in Elkridge.

The approval puts one complex on its way to development, with another two major multi-family projects in the hopper in Howard County. The county's Zoning Board gave its final approval for the rezoning that will allow the apartments, called the 'Paragon at Gateway Overlook.' Located at Lark Brown Road and Old Waterloo Roads, they'll be built on the 18.6 acres just behind the existing shopping center owned by WRIT.

Developer Chesapeake Realty Partners, based in Owings Mills, Md., has shepherded the application through the process in order to meet what it sees as a demand for rentals by young professionals and empty nesters.

Only Councilmember Greg Fox among the Board members registered any objection, but it wasn't specifically to the project. It was to a trend he sees - following the much larger rezoning on Coca Cola Road in Hanover for Oxford Square - that is turning commercial or industrial ground over to multi-family development. Fox said the reduction in tax base concerns him.

The other two big multi-family deals in the queue are the Howard Hughes Corporation's first plans for Downtown Columbia, and Kimco's proposal for the Wilde Lake Village Center.

Hughes' plan, submitted in late February (as PB-392), shows 817 multi-family units in all. The folks that rent there will either begin or turn into shopaholics, as the site straddles the mall entrance road off Broken Land Parkway. Working with multi-family developer Kettler Inc., Hughes shows a first phase of 390 units, 8000 square feet of retail and 6,000 feet of restaurant space.

For its part, Kimco's plan for 220 units at Wilde Lake - a bid to rejuvenate the center by introducing more residents - comes to the county Planning Board at the end of March.

## **Emerson, Maple Lawn Tops**

A virtual subdivision 'battle to the death' played out in the Laurel/Fulton area in 2011. Two communities went at it in a grueling stand-off for the title of 'Most Active Subdivision in Howard County.' Like modern day goliaths, Emerson and Maple Lawn Farm each sought the honors. And when it was over, they had - tied. Yup, 109 settlements were closed in each community.

Three builders shared the wealth in Emerson, including Williamsburg Homes, Miller & Smith and SK Homes. Williamsburg (including its affiliate Newport Homes) settled 57, got \$414,686 on average; Miller and Smith closed 20 houses in Emerson, getting \$432,592 on average, and SK closed the year with 32 settlements there, written at an average of \$397,377.

Four builders split the 109 sales in Maple Lawn, including Bozzuto, Miller & Smith, Mitchell and Best and NVR. Mitchell and Best wrote 24 of those, getting \$629,000 on average.

**Among the seven-figure subdivisions in Howard County,** Winchester's 'Riverwood' got the most closings, while Toll's 'Reserve' grabbed top price. Winchester averaged \$1.053 million across 17 settlements at its Homewood Road project in Ellicott City, including a top price of \$2.11 million. Toll wrote fewer settlements at the Reserve at Triadelphia Crossing - seven - but averaged \$1.45 million. (Walnut Grove had a good year, in Clarksville, but many of the sales there split the lot and house contracts, making them difficult to track).

**Maple Woods was the comeback story of the year.** Elm Street Development bought the estate community in Highland out of foreclosure in 2010, then cut a bulk sale deal for lots to Craftmark Homes and wrote a takedown schedule with NVHomes. By the end of 2011, the 32 lots were largely spoken for, either settled or under construction. Between them, NV and Craftmark closed 18 houses at an average price of \$937,000.

**With their elevator condo buildings for active adults, Ryan Homes and Beazer chased down similar buyers.** Beazer got the higher price of the two, closing 25 units in 2011 at the 'Gatherings at Jefferson Place' in Ellicott City at an average of \$256,000 per unit. But Ryan wrote more: it closed 31 units at 'Cherry Tree Crossing' in Laurel, getting \$210,000 with each settlement.

**Howard Square is probably the most affordable community in the county.** Ryan settled 39 units in the Route 1 community in Elkridge, getting \$257,000 on average. But nearby Elkridge Crossing was also a bargain, where Ryan settled 18 units at an average price of \$271,000.

**Did we say that NVR had the most settlements in 2011? It did, by a country mile.** Between its Ryan and NV affiliates, NVR closed 322 houses, or almost 40 percent of the total. Williamsburg sat down at the settlement table 86 times, while Bozzuto, buoyed by 53 settlements in Shipley's Grant, totaled 78 closings. All in all, builders settled 816 new homes in Howard County in 2011. Of that, 493 traded below \$500,000, and 323 traded above the half million mark.