

Save Gibraltar & Preserve the Highlands Neighbors' Meeting
Sunday 27 February 2022 3 – 4:30 PM
The Highlands School – Gymnasium
Maggie Mesinger, Michael Melloy, and Gary Linarducci

Over the past four and a half months, what started as a meeting on a porch with a few neighbors has developed into a growing group of neighbors and preservation-minded people alarmed by a dense housing development project being labeled as a “Gibraltar development plan.” It was curious that the negligent owners of Gibraltar – “Gibraltar Preservation Group, LLC” (with Drake Cattermole and David Carpenter as principals) – who are experienced real estate developers, had hired/partnered with 9SDC (9th Street Development Corporation) a young development firm. Through another LLC, BDK Brinckle, the owners had acquired two properties immediately to the north of Gibraltar, 1600 Brinckle Avenue and 1601 Greenhill Avenue. Separating these two properties from Gibraltar is a closed one-block section of W. 16th Street (350.5 Feet long x 60 foot wide=21,030 square foot).

The May 2021 Housing Development Proposal was for 18 new construction houses on Gibraltar, the closed section of W. 16th Street, 1600 Brinckle Avenue and 1601 Greenhill Avenue properties. The historic 1600 Brinckle residence, the second highest valued home in the Highlands was to be torn down to make way for two 2-story, 4,000 s.f. houses. The plan also included 16,500 s.f. of new residential construction *on the Gibraltar property*, which clearly violated the terms of the Conservation Easement for Gibraltar. Notably, there was no two-lane, two-way entrance/exit to Gibraltar or any new parking spaces, undermining the credibility of a claim this was a plan for a “boutique hotel with retail.”

We organized a Petition to oppose the subdivision of the 1600 Brinckle Avenue property and the teardown of the 1600 Brinckle residence. We sent many e-mails and letters to elected officials and Timothy Slavin, Director of Delaware’s Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, which is the Grantee of the Conservation Easement. We urged Mr. Slavin to use the Enforcement Powers defined in the Easement and to order a Mothballing of the Gibraltar buildings. In fact, he did initiate the 30-day “Notice and Cure” enforcement process, even sending a letter to Mr. Cattermole ordering a Mothballing. However, in early January, Mr. Slavin reversed course a bit, permitting the owners/developers to board up windows and tarp the roofs of two of the five buildings. The Greenhouse/garage building, which has NO ROOF, and open and broken windows, did not have any protective actions taken. Mr. Slavin wrote: “

On 15 January 2022, Mr. Snowberger with 9SDC circulated the latest draft plan for the Housing Development (a copy and closeup is in this document). It continued to present the false choice – Highlands homeowners need to accept a new dense housing development to “subsidize the cost” of a restoration of Gibraltar. Homeowners and neighbors do not need to accept this false choice. **We strongly support the restoration of Gibraltar and also strongly oppose the new dense housing development.**

While there may be substantial changes to 9SDCs draft plan, which they will present tomorrow night, we wanted to present our analysis with detailed maps and drawings so neighbors are well-informed on the key issues. **Specifically, there are five pieces of land covered in the 9SDC/Cattermole and Carpenter Housing Development:**

1. The 4.58 Acre Gibraltar property, with the main residence, the Pool House, the Greenhouse/Garage, the Apartment/Garage, and the Tool Shed. Owned by Gibraltar Preservation Group, LLC. Supposedly to be converted to a boutique hotel with retail, focused on meetings and weddings.
2. The 200’ long x 60’ wide section of W. 16th Street between Gibraltar and 1600 Brinckle Avenue. Currently, the owners of 1600 Brinckle Avenue are encroaching on this closed city street. Are the owners expecting the City to grant them ownership for free or below market value?
3. The 150.5’ long x 60’ wide section of W. 16th Street between Gibraltar and 1601 Greenhill Avenue. The 2008 Subdivision Plan approved by the City had this section used for the main commercial entrance to Gibraltar. Both 9SDC proposals permanently prevent this option by building houses here.
4. The 1600 Brinckle Avenue property (150.0F x 200.0D=30,000 SF. Owned by BDK Brinckle, LLC.
5. The 1601 Greenhill Avenue property (145.5F x 150.5D=21,898 SF. Owned by BDK Brinckle, LLC. The 9SDC January Plan is for a new intersection on Greenhill Avenue to access 14 new houses.

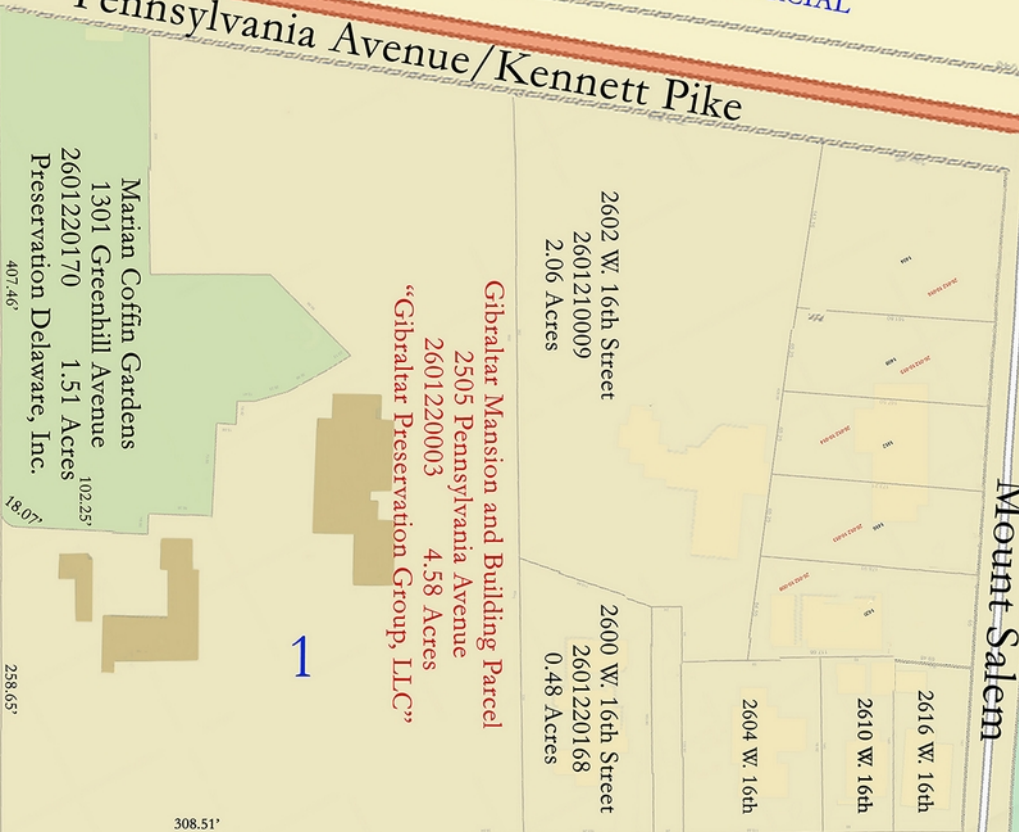
8 Greenhill Avenue
0703320003 6.5 Acres
University of Delaware
EXEMPT RESIDENTIAL

2700, 2800, 2900 Pennsylvania Ave.
0703320002 22.42 Acres
University of Delaware
EXEMPT COMMERCIAL

2500 Pennsylvania Avenue
2601220005 1.21 Acres
University of Delaware
EXEMPT COMMERCIAL

2700 Pennsylvania Avenue
2601210010 3.61 Acres
University of Delaware
EXEMPT COMMERCIAL

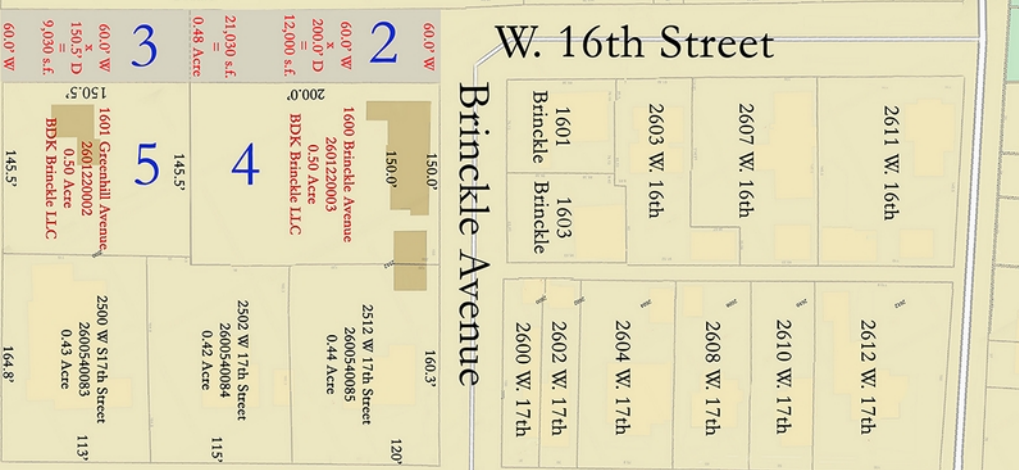
Greenhill Avenue/Kennett Pike



Greenhill Avenue

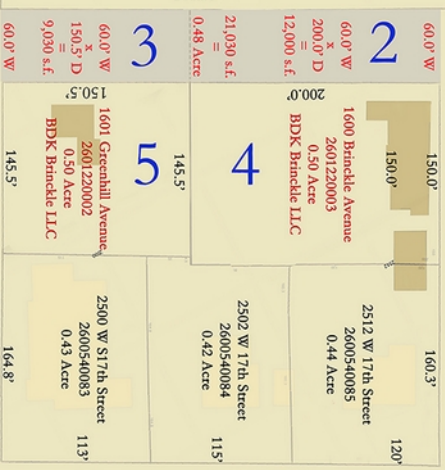
Mount Salem

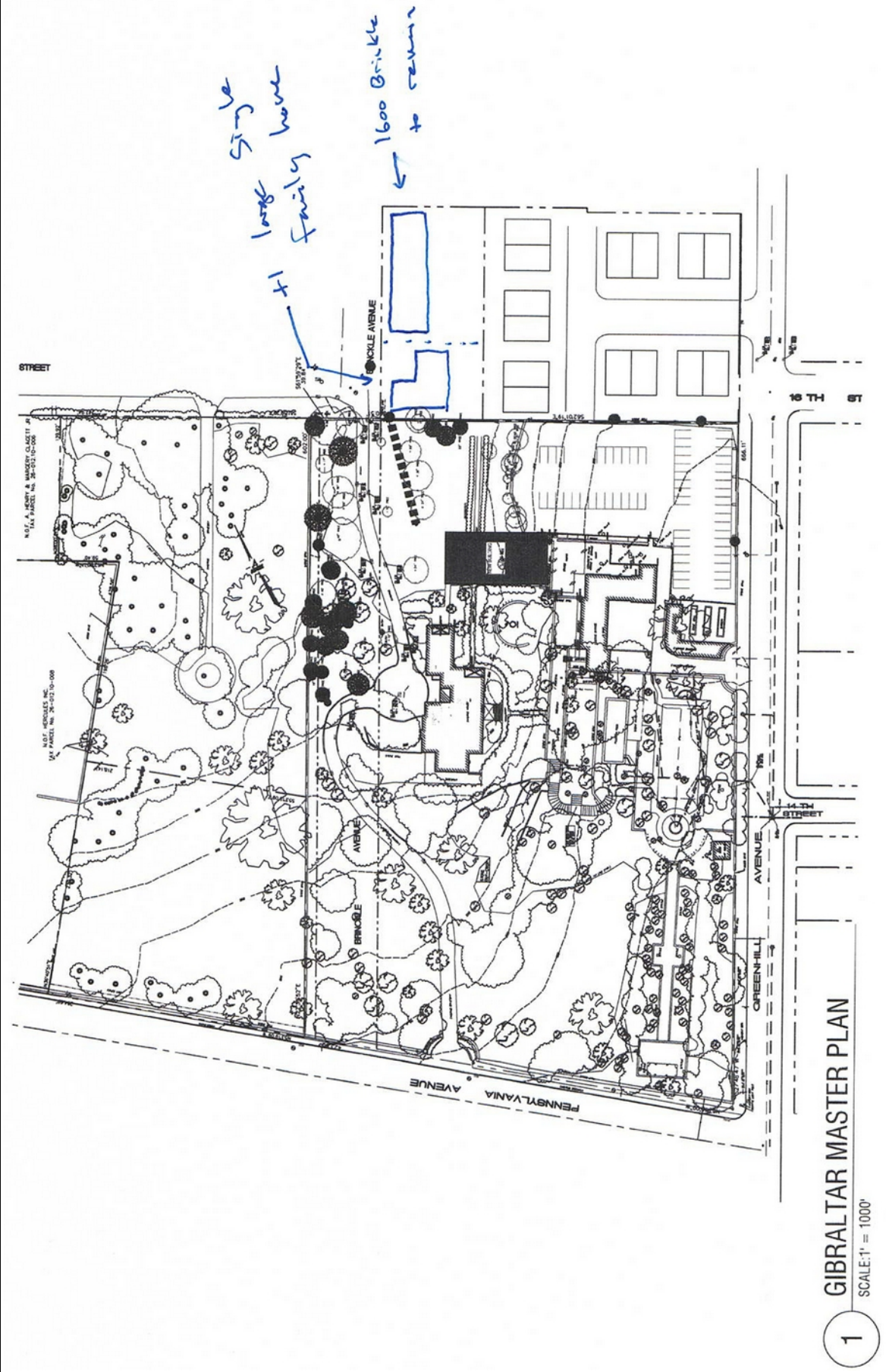
W. 16th Street



Brinckle Avenue

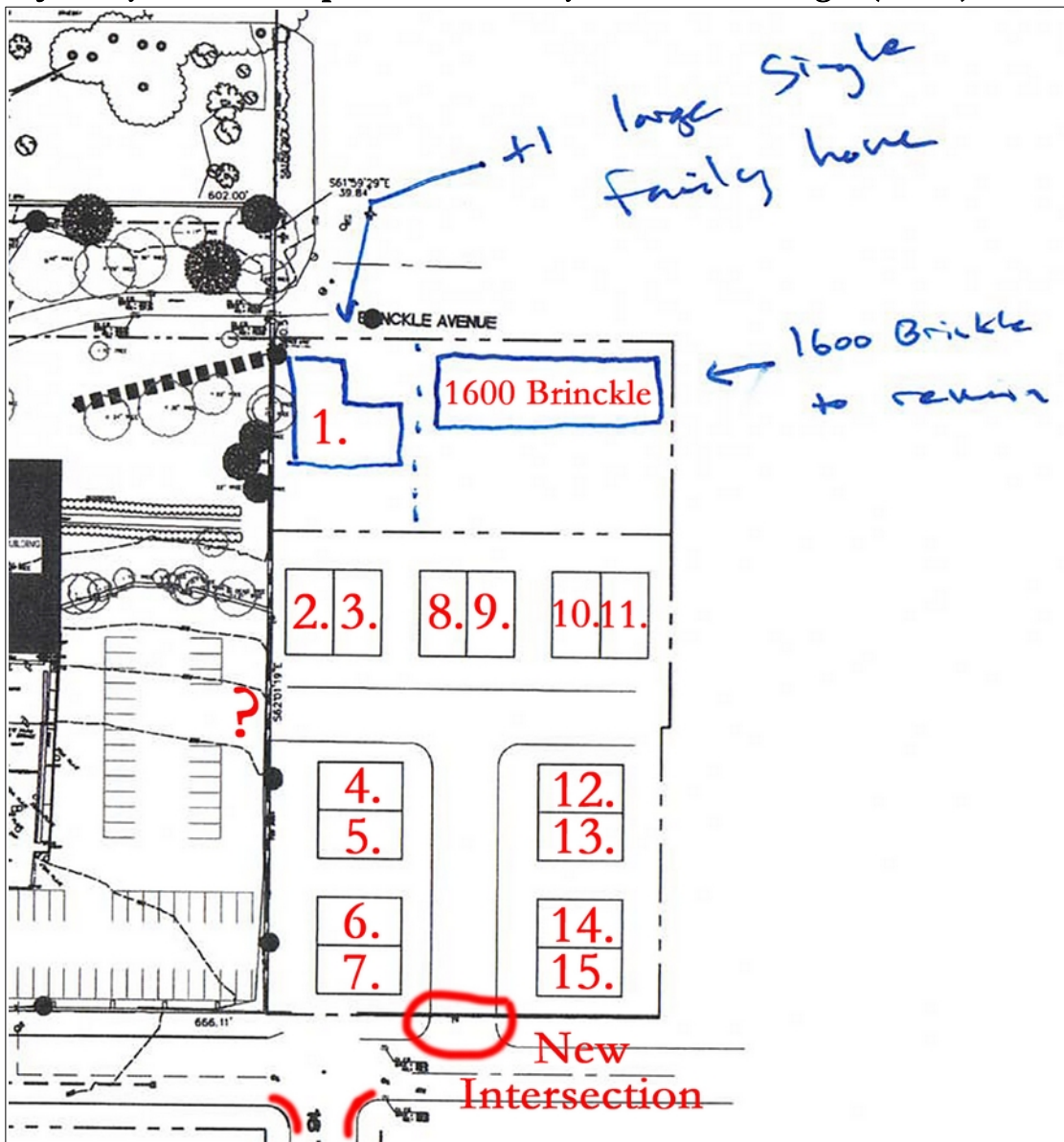
W. 17th Street





1 GIBRALTAR MASTER PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 1000'

15 January 2021 Closeup of Draft Plan by Robert Snowberger (9SDC)



Seven new houses are proposed for the closed section of W. 16th Street.

Four new semi-detached houses are proposed for the backyard of 1600 Brinckle Avenue.

This 1601 Greenhill property is currently zoned R-1, single family dwelling. The current home was bought for cash by BDK Brinckle, LLC and quickly made it onto Wilmington's Vacant Property List where it remains. Apparently, the plan for the owners was always to tear down the home and subdivide the property. This would require a Rezoning.

Before thinking about the amount of traffic into this 14 unit new housing development – presumably with two parking spaces per home, and the Amazon/UPS.USBS and other delivery and service vehicles, consider the disruption that this construction project would cause.

Also, the drawing doesn't show an entrance from this new roadway into Gibraltar, but does have the roadway aligned as if it could cross into Gibraltar and the proposed new parking lot.

32 Large Parcels in the Highlands Subject to the Cattermole & Carpenter/ 9SDC Precedent for "Subdivide and Pack"



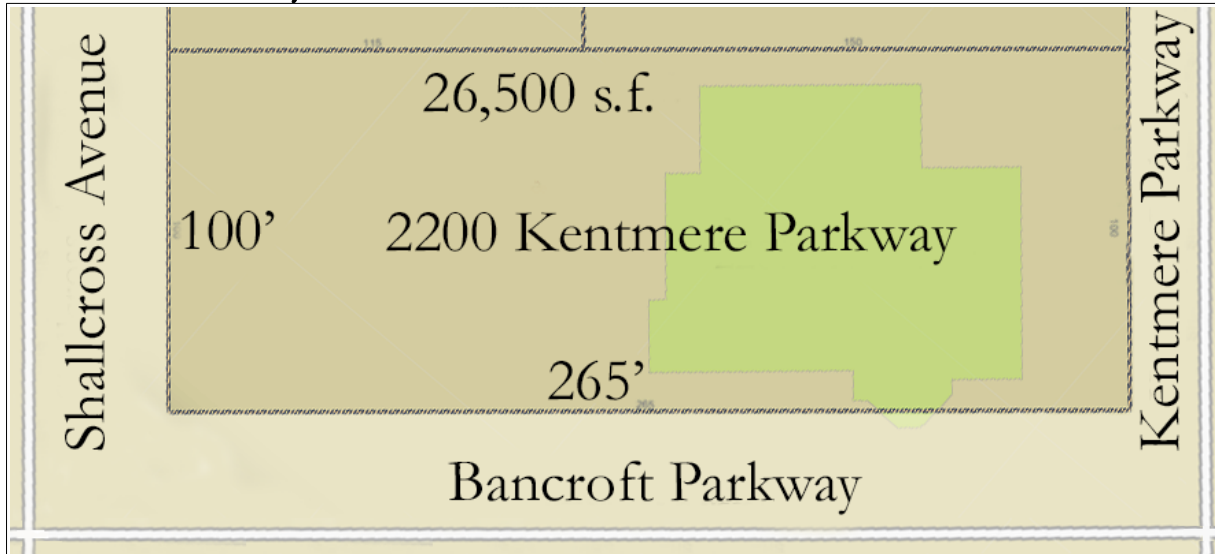
- 1. 2602 W. 16th Street
2.0 Acres
- 2. 2512 W. 17th Street
0.44 Acres - 120'F x 160.37'D
- 3. 2502 W. 17th Street
0.42 Acres - 115'F x 164.8'D
- 4. 2507 W. 17th Street
0.60 Acres - 175'F x 150'D
- 5. 1701 Greenhill Avenue
0.60 Acres - 150'F x 175.5'D
- 6. 2402 W. 17th Street
0.50 Acres - 145'F x 150'D
- 7. 2506 Willard Street
0.50 Acres - 100'F x 206.7'D
- 8. 13 Red Oak Road
0.44 Acres - 206.7'F x 100'D
- 9. 12 Red Oak Road
0.35 Acres - 273.5'F x 205'D
- 10. 11 Red Oak Road
0.43 Acres - 91'F x 210'D
- 11. 2501 Willard Street
0.43 Acres - 91'F x 210'D
- 12. 8 Red Oak Road
0.68 Acres - 135'F x 218.8'D
- 13. 7 Red Oak Road
0.47 Acres - 165'F x 128.8'D
- 14. 3 Red Oak Road
0.60 Acres - 203.47'F x 128.79'D
- 15. 1 Red Oak Road
1.15 Acres - 360'F x 218'D
- 16. 2300 Willard Street
0.60 Acres - 234.20'F x 112.70'D
- 17. 2200 Kentmere Parkway
0.61 Acres - 100.0'F x 265.0'D
- 18. 2205 Kentmere Parkway
0.66 Acres - 131.7'F x 216.7'D
- 19. 2203 Kentmere Parkway
0.62 Acres - 268.5'F x 123'D
- 20. 2201 Kentmere Parkway
0.74 Acres - 268.5'F x 123'D
- 21. 2203 N. Grant Avenue
1.24 Acres - 302.9'F x 200'D
- 22. Kentmere Parkway (0.36 Acres - 96'F x 165'D)
0.36 Acres - 165'F x 105'D
- 23. 1 Wood Road
0.87 Acres - 160.2'F x 241.3'D
- 24. 22 Wood Road
0.73 Acres
- 25. 21 Wood Road
0.65 Acres - 242.7'F x 175.5'D
- 26. 14 Wood Road
1.55 Acres - 243'F x 331.60'D
- 27. 8 Wood Road
0.71 Acres - 143.50'F x 215'D
- 28. 5 Wood Road
0.81 Acres - 71.80'F x 210.5'D
- 29. 2305 N. Grant Avenue
0.71 Acres - 230.9'F x 238.7'D
- 30. 2301 N. Grant Avenue
0.71 Acres - 214.4'F x 248.2'D
- 31. 2400 N. Grant Avenue
1.02 Acres
- 32. 1301 N. Bancroft Parkway
0.68 Acres - 168'F x 170'D



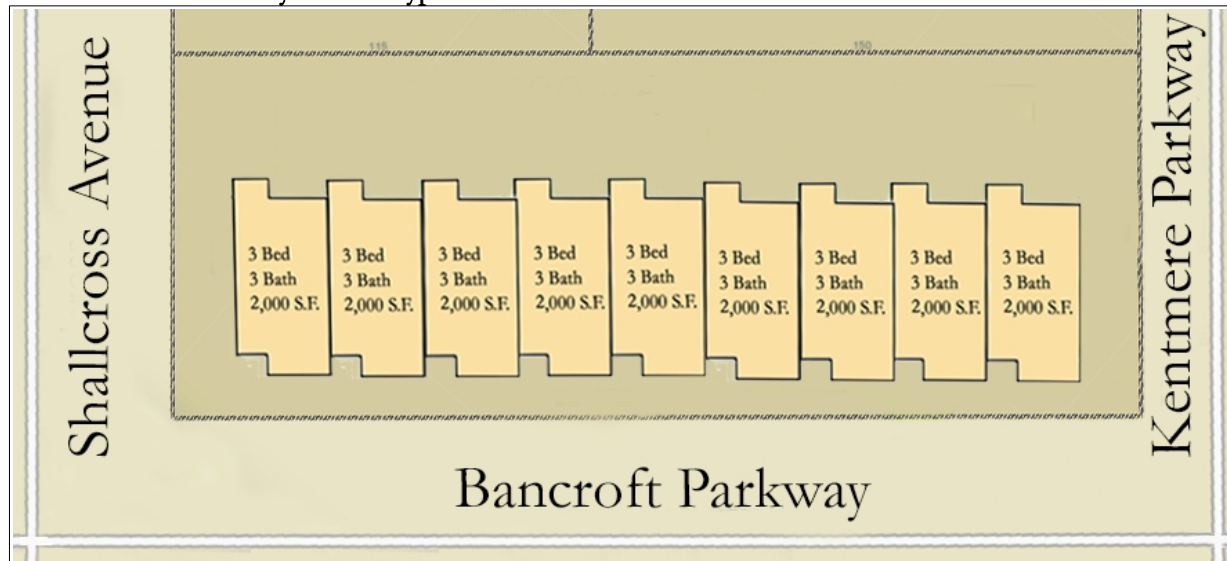
The greatest threat of this Housing Development plan is that a precedent will be set for developers to target the large parcels with single family homes in the Highlands, acquiring the property, then either neglecting them until the buildings are condemned, or just citing the Cattermole and Carpenter/9SDC Precedent and subdividing and densely packing the land with new construction houses.

Here are two examples of what could happen to some of the larger parcels in the Highlands.

2200 Kentmere Parkway



2200 Kentmere Parkway After a hypothetical “Tear Down and Pack the Parcel”

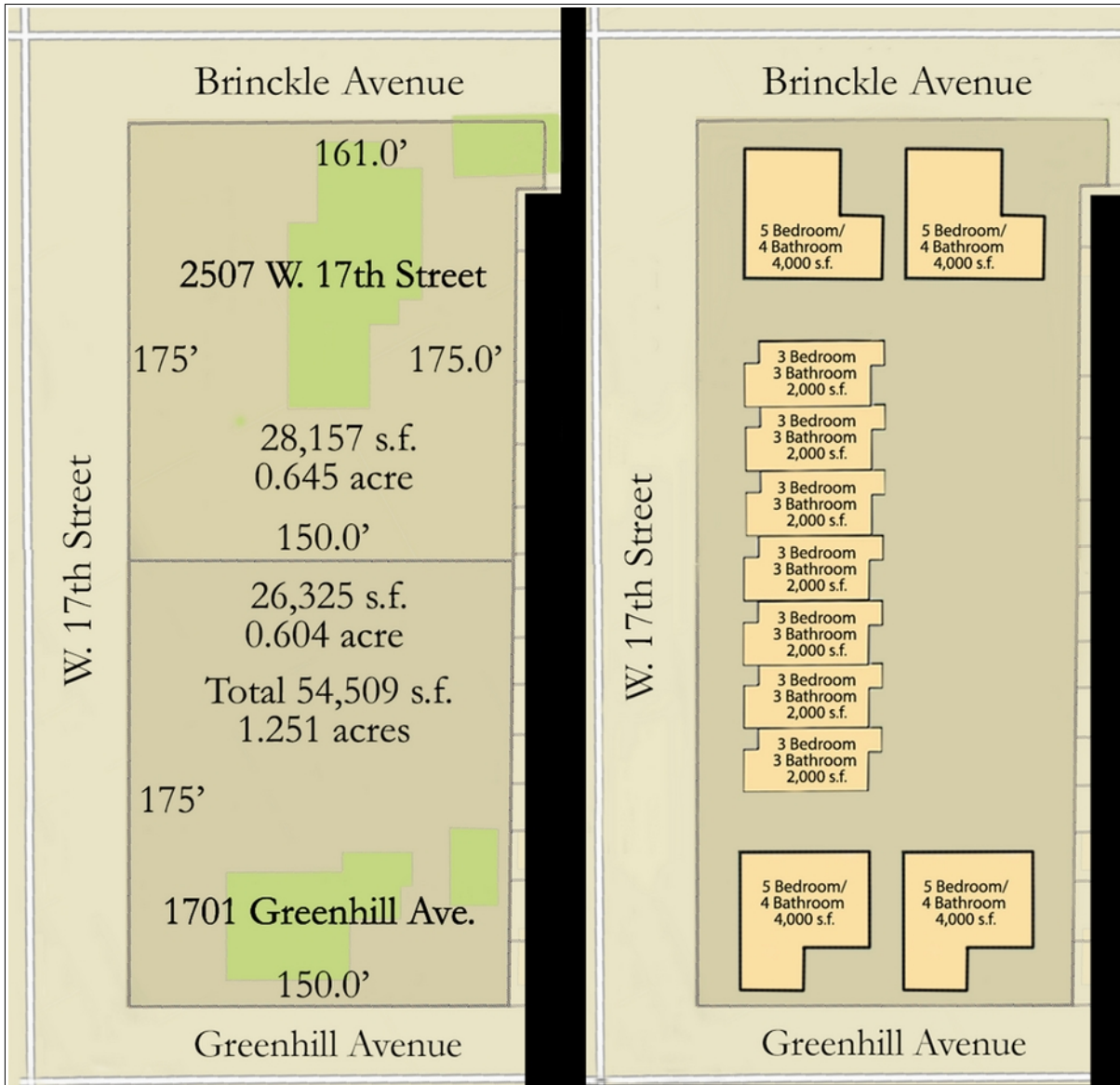


One single family home – 2200 Kentmere Parkway – could be torn down and replaced with nine 3 Bedroom/3 Bathroom 2,000 s.f. cookie cutter new houses.

Following the logic of BDK, Brinckle, LLC and 9SDC’s “Tear Down and Pack the Parcel” strategy – buying two contiguous parcels, tearing down existing home and then jamming in new cookie cutter residential houses – developers could look only one block north of 1600 Brinckle and employ the same strategy to 1701 Greenhill Avenue and 2507 W. 17th Street. Two beautiful homes could be razed to make way for four 5 bedroom/4 bathroom, 4,000 s.f. houses and a row of seven 3 bed-room, 3 bathroom, 2,000 s.f. houses. Developers could point to the precedent set by 9SDC one block away and would have a very strong case.

1701 Greenhill Avenue and 2507 W. 17th Street
October 2021

1701 Greenhill Avenue and 2507 W. 17th Street
After a hypothetical "Tear Down and Pack the Parcel"



Setting a precedent for "Tear Down and Pack the Parcel" with new construction will adversely impact the character of the Highlands and cause irreparable economic harm to all homeowners with subsequent property value declines.

There is no economic hardship to justify this "subdivide and pack the parcel" strategy. The actions of Gibraltar Preservation Group, LLC/ BDK Brinckle, LLC make it abundantly clear that there is no case of economic hardship.

Instead of investing a modest amount to stabilize and secure the Gibraltar buildings, the Gibraltar Preservation Group, LLC/BDK Brinckle, LLC principals bought two parcels adjacent to Gibraltar: 1600 Brinckle Avenue and 1601 Greenhill Avenue.

Finally, the 9SDC "subdivide and pack the parcel" plan would not generate sufficient income to restore the Gibraltar mansion and buildings and convert those buildings to a viable boutique hotel.

What's Next?

The developers have stated that if they can not build their housing development, then their plan for the event- and wedding-based boutique hotel is not economically viable. That's great news. Defeating the dense housing development combined with the State conducting a detailed Condition Assessment of the buildings to assess the cost of damages caused by the owners and to order should be the next steps. Then Director Slavin could order, or conduct, the repairs with costs borne by the owners, solving the safety, security and blight problems while the neighbors and preservation and horticultural communities could be directly involved in a restoration plan. The Delaware Historical and Cultural Affairs could acquire while a new business/non-profit entity develops a Master Plan and then assumes the management of the property.

Call-To-Action

- (1) We support a Mothballing of the Gibraltar property, as defined in Preservation Brief #31, which Mr. Slavin sent to the owners of Gibraltar in December. This should begin with a detailed Condition Assessment, where restoration experts inspect the buildings and compare to the 1998 Baseline Documentation and then determine the extent and cost of repairs. The cost of such repairs is to be borne by the owners, so no taxpayer dollars will be spent to repair damages caused by owner neglect.
- (2) We oppose the City of Wilmington conveying or selling at below-market cost the closed 200' long x 60' wide section of W. 16th Street between Gibraltar and 1600 Brinckle Avenue.
- (3) We call for the City of Wilmington to immediately serve notice to BDK Brinckle, LLC, the owners of 1600 Brinckle Avenue, that they are encroaching on this closed city street, and need to remove the fence and gate blocking access to this land. They City should survey the land and mark the legal boundaries of this land. Ideally, this should be public space, similar to Bancroft Parkway, for neighbors to enjoy.
- (4) We oppose any new residential construction on the 150.5' long x 60' wide section of W. 16th Street between Gibraltar and 1601 Greenhill Avenue. This should be reserved for a future two-lane, two-way main commercial entrance to Gibraltar.
- (5) We oppose the subdivision/Rezoning of the 1600 Brinckle Avenue property. We already have a Petition signed by neighbors within 100 feet, a sufficient number to require a 3/4 vote by City Council. That Petition already has 43 neighbors opposing the subdivision, including other residents of the Highlands, the Devon and Wawaset Park.
- (6) We oppose building a new intersection on Greenhill Avenue to provide street access that proposed new housing development. That land might better be subdivided, with part of that land to augment the Gibraltar property for parking, more open space and even a greenhouse to support the Gardens.

Contact Information

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If you would like to be on our e-mail list, please request to be included on our list by e-mailing us at PreserveGibraltar@gmail.com. with "Please add to list" in the Subject heading. We provide regular updates and also send out historical background on Gibraltar. Thank you.