MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief
      Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Sue Edwards, Team Leader, I-270 Corridor
       Community-Based Planning Division (301-495-4518)

       Karen Kumm Morris, Planner Coordinator
       Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Germantown Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This staff report covers Germantown Master Plan activities since the October 26, 2007 worksession with the Planning Board. Since that date, staff analyzed the transportation, school, and community facility impacts of the likely Master Plan build-out and the three alternatives.

Alternative 2, with modifications (Housing on the West Side), provides a balance of housing and mixed-use development at the future Corridor Cities Transitway stations. This land use alternative strengthens and expands the Germantown Town Center and contributes to noting Germantown as the center of cultural activities in the UpCounty. This alternative provides a complete network of transportation options consistent with Montgomery County policies for an adequate transportation system. Modifications to Alternative 2 (Housing on the West Side) may be necessary if the alignment for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) is altered.

Alternative 2, with modifications, provides housing primarily within the Seneca Valley High School cluster which is best able to absorb future residential development without the need for an additional school site. Facilities for parks, recreation, public safety and community centers can be provided for the development levels contained in Alternative 2. Staff recommends proceeding with Alternative 2, with modifications, to prepare the Germantown Master Plan Staff Draft.
INTRODUCTION

On October 26, 2007, the Planning Board held its first worksession on the Germantown Master Plan. This worksession covered the role of Germantown in the MD 355/I-270 Corridor, the three development alternatives proposed, and community outreach activities.

During the last worksession, the Planning Board expressed an interest in the following issues:

- Land use character
- Community form and building heights
- Transit station development
- Community outreach

The Planning Board worksession will begin on Monday, December 17, 2007, at 7:30 p.m. at Black Rock Center for the Arts, 12901 Town Commons Drive, Germantown. Members of the Germantown Master Plan Community Advisory Committee (CAC), property owners, and the general public are invited to participate in the Planning Board discussion.

Overview of Activities to Date

In December 2006, the Montgomery County Planning Board appointed a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) comprised of 15 community members, and property owners. The first of subsequent monthly meetings began on January 9, 2007 through December 11, 2007. Other outreach includes meeting with English for Speakers of Second Languages (ESOL) classes, with property owners to discuss zoning issues, and possible alignment shifts for the Corridor Cities Transitway.

Prior to beginning the Master Plan in June 2006, the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce engaged property owners, government officials and community leaders in an Advisory Services Panel Report by the Urban Land Institute. This report introduced mixed-use as an approach to bring forward more employment as was recommended in the 1989 Germantown Master Plan. The Urban Land Institute Report also requested an expedited master plan schedule for the Germantown Employment Corridor.

Staff presented the purpose and boundaries of the Germantown Master Plan to the Planning Board on April 9, 2007 and the proposed land use alternatives and outreach activities on October 26, 2007.
LAND USE CHARACTER

Current Land Use

The study area for the Germantown Master Plan encompasses approximately 2,450 acres of the overall 11,000 acre planning area (Attachment A, Study Area Boundary). The focus of the master plan for this limited area will be: (1) addressing the need for more jobs in Germantown; (2) creating mixed-use projects to be served by the future Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT); (3) expanding and strengthening the Town Center; (4) celebrating Germantown’s historic character; and (5) linking parks, open space and public amenities of existing and new mixed-use centers to recreation and historic destinations.

The existing Germantown Master Plan, adopted and approved in 1989, created a Town Center identified in the Plan as the TC analysis area bounded by Locbury Drive to the north, Aircraft Drive to the east, MD 118 to the south, and the rail lines to the west (Attachment B, Community Concept Plan). The focus of the Town Center was to be the Black Rock Center for the Arts and Town Commons with an urban park designated for the wetland area.

The Town Center was envisioned as the major activity center for the Germantown community and was to contain a mix of cultural, retail, residential, and community offices such that it would be a lively center and not principally an office center. A future Corridor Cities Transitway station was designated for the eastern portion of the Town Center. The Town Center was also intended to link to the MARC commuter rail station to the west.

The Master Plan also included an Employment Corridor (EC analysis area) spanning both east and west sides of I-270 from Black Hill Regional Park and the North Germantown Greenway to the north and south to Middlebrook Road.

South of MD 27/Father Hurley Boulevard is the Milestone mixed-use project, identified in the 1989 Master Plan as the Neelsville analysis area. These properties were recommended for mixed-use including residential and retail resulting in the neighborhoods on Shakespeare Boulevard and the Milestone Center with an array of free-standing big box retailers and the Neelsville Village Center anchored by a grocery store.

South of MD 118 between I-270 and MD 355 are Montgomery College and Hughes Network Systems which were included as the Employment Corridor in the 1989 Plan. The properties adjoining Montgomery College along MD 355, (identified as the Middlebrook analysis area) were designated for residential development and protection of the Cider Barrel historic site.
South of Middlebrook Road on the east side of I-270 (Middlebrook analysis area) are a mix of commercial uses including drive-through restaurants, a car wash, small shopping center, and bank. Properties near the intersection of MD 355 and Middlebrook Road are included in the Fox Chapel Village Center. Outside of the Fox Chapel Village Center, properties along MD 355 are primarily residential with a limited number of commercial properties. An overlay of land uses produced by the 1989 Master Plan is shown by Attachment C, Existing Land Use.

The 1989 Germantown Master Plan designated the Germantown Historic District and additional historic sites on the Master Plan for Historic Resources. The area adjacent to the MARC commuter rail station was recommended for low-intensity commercial uses that create a “quiet, green, pedestrian-oriented enclave that provides relief from the intense development of the Town Center” (page 42). The Plan also recommended that when Relocated MD 118 is open to the public, the existing vehicular bridge would be closed and made available to pedestrians only.

Proposed Land Use

The proposed land use alternatives expand and strengthen the area of the Town Center identified in the 1989 Plan as shown in Attachment D, Proposed Land Use. This Plan will extend the character, mix of uses, and vitality of the Town Center eastward to I-270. This will enable the future Town Center CCT station to be the area with the most intense land uses and also enable redevelopment of portions of the existing Town Center with additional housing, retail, and commercial uses. The Town Center will also have the greatest diversity of outdoor gathering spaces linked by pedestrian and linear active recreation trails.

The Employment Corridor identified in the 1989 Plan will retain the concentration of jobs but also allow for a mix of residential, retail, hotel, and entertainment uses resulting in true mixed-use communities. Building heights of six, eight and 12 stories will be accommodated with the highest buildings designated for transit station locations on the west side of I-270. Each mixed-use neighborhood will contain a typology of urban open spaces to include a meeting space near the transit stop and also a family-oriented active play park.

The proposed land use alternatives do not address changes to the Milestone retail center or adjoining residential uses. The employment areas known as Seneca Meadows and Milestone Business Park will be considered for mixed-use development.

Land use alternatives for the Montgomery College and Hughes Network Systems area are mixed-use in character. The College will pursue both academic and training functions as well as developing a private business park and additional services.
The Middlebrook and Fox Chapel area land use alternatives include mixed-use options for the Fox Chapel Village Center and adjacent mobile home park.

Land use options for the study area adjacent to the MARC station respect the existing and proposed historic sites on Walter Johnson Road as well as the adjoining Germantown Historic District. The Trevion property at the corner of MD 118 and Middlebrook Road will be considered for mixed-use including residential units.

**JOBS: HOUSING DISCUSSION**

Montgomery County has long supported policies to encourage mixed-use development with transit access and a balance of jobs and housing at Metro stations. This policy is now being applied by revising master plans along the Corridor Cities Transitway, certain MARC commuter rail stations, and activity centers such as Germantown’s Town Center.

In 2000-2002, a community and property-owner panel developed the Transportation Policy Report (TPR) which established a set of transportation priorities for the entire County. One aspect of this work was to test an alternative distribution of jobs and housing in 2050 than was presently forecast. To help achieve the desired balance of jobs and housing and make more efficient use of transportation facilities, the report found that more jobs should be located in the eastern portion of the County and more housing in the I-270 Corridor where jobs are forecast.

The TPR work developed the concept of mixed-use communities that would place housing near jobs in patterns that could reduce commutes, provide employment and housing options in a more urban setting, and use existing or planned infrastructure. Individual master plans were to determine the appropriate balance, pattern, density, and mix of uses for each planning area.

The TPR alternative forecasts for jobs and housing in 2050 within the study area included:
- Approximately 54,000 jobs
- Approximately 19,000 housing units

**LAND USE ALTERNATIVES**

**Discussion**

The October 26, 2007 staff presentation to the Planning Board outlines three land use alternatives for the Germantown Study Area as compared to the Most Likely Build-out of the 1989 Plan and Existing Conditions. Attachment D, Jobs and Housing Comparison of Alternatives, displays a bar graph of the following information:
Likely Build-out of the 1989 Master Plan

- Develops jobs primarily in the Employment Corridor and Town Center
- Two mixed-use centers are identified: Town Center and the West Urban Village north of Father Hurley Blvd along Crystal Rock Drive
- Locates approximately 58,000 jobs in the study area
- Includes approximately 6,900 dwelling units

Existing Development (23,000 jobs, 6,200 dwelling units)

- Locates 35,000 fewer jobs in study area than the Likely Build-out of the 1989 Master Plan
- Includes 600 fewer dwelling units than the Master Plan

Alternative 1: Shift to Housing (50,000 jobs, 9,500 housing)

- Maintains an equivalent level of overall development as the 1989 Master Plan
- Increases housing by 2,600 units over the 1989 Master Plan
- Reduces jobs by 8,000 from the 1989 Master Plan
- Creates 10-12 story buildings at each transit station

Alternative 2: Maintains Jobs with Housing on West Side (57,000 jobs, 12,000 dwelling units)

- Increases development along the west side of I-270
- Increases housing by 5,100 units from the 1989 Master Plan
- Maintains job level
- Expands Town Center toward I-270

Alternative 3: Increases Jobs and Housing (63,000 jobs, 15,000 dwelling units)

- Increases development levels along both sides of I-270
- Increases jobs by 6,000 over the 1989 Master Plan
- Increases housing by 8,100 units over the 1989 Master Plan

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM ANALYSIS

Staff Recommendation

The transportation recommendations for potential development in Germantown are intended to accommodate future land use by means of a complete network of transportation options consistent with Montgomery County policies for an adequate transportation system.

Results of the preliminary Policy Area Mobility Review (PAMR) indicate that all three policy areas in Germantown (Town Center, Germantown West, and Germantown East) are found to be adequate for future development forecast in the 2030 Council of Governments projections (Round 6.4) and for the most
intense land use alternative (Alternative 3: Increase Jobs and Housing) for the Germantown Study Area.

Analysis

The Germantown Master Plan PAMR analysis considered three (3) scenarios: (1) the year 2030 scenario reported in the recent Annual Growth Policy (AGP) analysis; (2) the "high-density land use" Alternative 3 scenario defined by CBP staff and; (3) the Adopted 1989 Master Plan. Both Germantown West and Germantown East, as well as the Town Center are found to be acceptable from an area-wide transportation perspective under any of the three scenarios considered.

Recently, property owners have been concerned about the near-term development implications in Germantown East based on the currently adopted Growth Policy that assumes a four year (2011) time horizon. As a result of the currently adopted AGP, development in Germantown East would require full mitigation in order to proceed. Based on the master plan analysis (year 2030 time horizon), area-wide transportation conditions in Germantown East are projected to improve as a result of the planned implementation of several key projects, including:

- Corridor Cities Transitway
- Widening of I-270
- M-83 Midcounty Highway

These improvements, if built, would ultimately allow development in Germantown East to proceed without any mitigation requirements.

Another item to consider is the "upstream/downstream" traffic implications of the master-plan development contemplated for Germantown. In this regard, the mobility implications of policy areas adjacent to Germantown must be considered (e.g., Clarksburg, Montgomery Village/Airpark, Gaithersburg City, and North Potomac). Montgomery Village/Airpark and North Potomac clearly remain in the acceptable category under any of the scenarios tested. Clarksburg fluctuates between acceptable and acceptable with partial mitigation under all three scenarios.

A second level of travel demand analysis, the local model yielding intersection and cordon line information, is currently in preparation. The results of this analysis will be used to evaluate the more detailed land use and transportation options within the study area. Cordon line analysis draws a line at the study area boundary to track trips entering and leaving the Germantown Master Plan area. Intersection analysis identifies the level of congestion at intersections within the Plan boundary.
SCHOOL CAPACITY

Staff Recommendation

Student generation computations for the three land use alternatives for the Germantown Study Area, at this time, do not exceed the threshold of 50 percent of the capacity of a new school of 640 students, or 320 students. Alternative 2, Housing on the West Side, generates a total of 238 students in grades K-5 which is below the MCPS threshold needed for a new elementary school.

As refinements are made to the number and type of residential units for this Plan, staff and MCPS should continue to analyze the need and potential location for an elementary school site.

Table 1: Germantown Master Plan Housing Alternatives and Student Generation
November 26, 2007

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Analysis

The Germantown Master Plan area overlaps portions of three MCPS school clusters: Clarksburg, Northwest, and Seneca Valley. The following is a listing MCPS cluster areas and the Germantown analysis areas that fall within these clusters. In cases where an analysis area overlaps two clusters it has been placed in the cluster where future residential development is planned within the analysis area. See Table 1, Students Generated by Germantown Master Plan Land Use Alternatives, for estimates of the number of students generated in each cluster, under each land use alternative.

Clarksburg Cluster: Milestone North, Milestone Center, Shakespeare, Montgomery College, Employment Center East, Fox Chapel East, and Fox Chapel West.

Northwest Cluster: MARC Station and Seneca Valley

Seneca Valley Cluster: Town Center, West Town Center, Employment Center West, Far North, Gateway, The Colony, and Waring Station.

Most of the new residential development foreseen in master plan alternatives falls within the Seneca Valley cluster of schools. Of the three MCPS clusters serving the Germantown Master Plan area, the Seneca Valley cluster is best able to absorb future residential development. At the elementary school level, two of the four elementary schools are projected to exceed their capacity for the six-year period of 2008-09 to 2013-14. On the other hand, the other two elementary schools in this cluster are projected to have space available for the six-year forecast period. At the middle school and high school level space is available for the six-year forecast period.

In the case of the Clarksburg cluster, enrollment will continue to exceed school capacities as schools in this cluster continue to absorb development of the Clarksburg community. Elementary, middle, and high school enrollments are all projected to exceed the capacity of cluster schools throughout the six-year forecast period.

In the case of the Northwest cluster, recent development of numerous subdivisions has left most schools in this cluster over capacity. This is in spite of the opening of Spark Matsunaga Elementary School in 2001, Great Seneca Creek Elementary School in 2006, Lakelands Park Middle School in 2005, and a 30 room addition to Northwest High School in 2006. All elementary schools in the cluster, except Diamond and Germantown elementary schools, are projected to exceed capacity for the six-year forecast period. At the middle school level, space is currently available at the three middle schools that serve the area (Roberto Clemente, Kingsview, and Lakelands Park middle schools.) However, by the end of the six-year forecast period Kingsview Middle School is projected to
exceed capacity. At the high school level, Northwest High School is within capacity for the next three years, but exceeds capacity beginning in 2011.

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Staff Recommendation

The urban design framework for the study area proposes to expand and strengthen the “Main Street” presence of Century Boulevard and to concentrate the most intense new development at the future Corridor Cities Transitway station at Century Boulevard/MD 118 at Aircraft Drive.

Staff recommends a concentration of mixed land uses into distinct neighborhoods along the Corridor Cities Transitway. At the “heart” of each mixed-use neighborhood will be the transit station and facilities along with urban open spaces and public amenities, augmented by other play and recreation areas. See Attachment F, Urban Framework.

A linear open space or greenway along Crystal Rock Drive will connect the residential, entertainment, and commercial uses of the Town Center and transit station neighborhoods with Black Hill Regional Park.

Staff recommends the Plan reclassify specific roadways such as Crystal Rock Drive to accommodate a linear urban open space with trails and pathways and extensive landscaping treatment of the public realm. A new local street will span I-270 along the Corridor Cities Transitway bridge to expand connection between the west and east sides of I-270.

Analysis

Germantown’s existing framework forms a coherent basis for future growth. The existing framework creates a Town Center surrounded by a series of neighborhoods and employment areas divided by I-270. The Town Center, considered the core district, is one of two areas of Germantown today where mixed-uses were envisioned by the 1989 Master Plan. Building upon the existing framework, the new framework strengthens the mixed-use character of the Town Center and introduces mixed-uses at transit stations along the I-270 Employment Corridor. This transforms Germantown’s center into more of a mixed-use, pedestrian oriented place. The major changes (Attachment G, Town Center Transit Station Development) to the existing framework are:

- Expanding the Town Center,
- Creating several mixed-use “urban villages” around the transit stations of the Corridor Cities Transitway,
- Forming an urban open space network,
- Strengthening stream valley open space, and
- Emphasizing the pedestrian oriented environment.
Town Center

Currently, the Town Center provides a focus for community life with such uses as the Germantown Library, Black Rock Performing Arts Center, the UpCounty Government Service Center, and movie theaters. These cultural and entertainment destinations are located along Century Boulevard, the community’s “Main Street”, and have begun to establish Germantown’s role as the UpCounty cultural center. Urban design recommendations should strengthen this emerging vibrant and lively center by guiding pedestrian-oriented development along “Main Street” and introducing more housing close to transit and jobs (Attachment H, Town Center Main Street).

Density will be concentrated at the Town Center Transit Station allowing buildings up to 15 stories in height with garage parking for transit users and mixed-use. A series of urban open spaces along Main Street/Century Boulevard will provide entertainment and opportunities for social gathering.

New Mixed-use Neighborhoods

The new housing, jobs and services embodied in each of the three land use alternatives should be arranged into distinct neighborhoods each with its own unique identity. These communities will be urban in character with tall buildings, street level retail, and parking hidden from view within the blocks or below street grade. A sense of place and community can be achieved by creating compact development with urban open spaces, retail services, and wide sidewalks promoting a walkable environment at each transit station. The mix of uses including housing, offices and street level retail served by a network of new local streets and short blocks will create a lively neighborhood, each with a tie or name to a historical feature or community place.

Urban Open Space

Urban open spaces are important community building elements that strengthen the sense of place and identity for a community. They are integral to the urban framework because their location along with other activating uses such as retail can support transit, provide civic space for social gathering, provide flexible open space for a variety of activities, and enliven street life. These places offer green relief from the built environment and a place to meet neighbors. The Town Center and each new urban neighborhood should have a combination of public and private outdoor space carefully located for visibility, accessibility, security, and accommodation of recreation needs. Such a network of urban open spaces is part of a healthy community. Specific public park recommendations will be discussed in the Parks and Trails Chapter of the Staff Draft.
Stream Valley Open Space

The existing stream valley buffers should be considered as part of the urban framework in that they form natural borders between districts. Many of the existing stream valleys within Germantown have seen development occur within the stream valley buffers. The Plan will recommend strengthening and restoring the existing stream valleys in order to improve environmental benefits and link the stream valleys in a system of natural open spaces.

Roadways

Existing roadways form a substantial portion of the urban framework in Germantown. These roadways are primarily a series of highways, such as Father Hurley Boulevard, Middlebrook Road, Crystal Rock Drive, and MD 118, with some arterials providing connections to serve the central area of Germantown. The proposed transformation from an auto-oriented place to a more compact, urban Town Center and mixed-use urban neighborhoods will require a greater emphasis upon local serving streets, pedestrian access, and safety. This approach revises thinking of roadway classification for several highways to slow down travel speeds that are more compatible with an urban destination and a walkable environment. There are also opportunities to build a network of local streets and create a linear open space in the excess right-of-way.

OPEN SPACE CONCEPT

Staff Recommendation

The Urban Framework for the Germantown Master Plan (Attachment F) establishes distinct neighborhoods centered at the CCT transit stations, each with a meeting place and family-oriented play area in close proximity to each station. A defined pedestrian network is proposed for the Germantown area that will support a walkable, interconnected system of neighborhoods. Borders to these neighborhoods are created by stream valley open space.

The Urban Open Space and Trails Concept (Attachment: I) illustrates a pedestrian connection from the Germantown Historic District and MARC commuter rail station, extending along Century Boulevard from the Town Center to the future transit station northward to a link into Black Hills Regional Park. This same path system would link to pedestrian paths on the east side of I-270 providing access to the Germantown Bog, an urban green in the Seneca Meadows project and to a town green in the Milestone Business Park. This defined pedestrian connection places parks and open space in close proximity to mixed-use communities proposed for the Germantown study area. A Recreation Center will be recommended to serve the eastern side of I-270.
A major feature of the Urban Open Space Concept is a linear path from the Town Center transit station to an existing connection to the Black Hill Regional Park trail system. This linear greenway would use existing right-of-way for Crystal Rock Drive and incorporate improved stormwater treatment as well as stations for exercise and fitness. The Urban Open Space Concept also depicts a Bicycle Beltway to link Germantown to other community destinations outside the study area boundary.

Analysis

The Urban Open Space Concept reflects the need for more parks and open space in the “downtown” parts of Germantown. Urban open spaces are a critical feature in higher density neighborhoods; these spaces support the vitality of urban areas by providing meeting spaces for residents, workers, and patrons of Germantown cultural and community facilities.

Staff is preparing more detailed recommendations for parks, open space, trails, and community recreation by using a typology of facilities. This typology addresses outdoor gathering spaces linked by a linear pedestrian street for the Town Center and for each mixed-use transit neighborhood.

For the Town Center, these gathering spaces include:
- A park near the UpCounty Regional Services Center
- The Black Rock town commons
- The Germantown Town Center Urban Park
- A family-oriented play park of approximately ½ acre
- A teen activity space
- An entertainment district meeting space near the cinemas

Each mixed-use transit neighborhood will contain:
- A meeting space
- A family-oriented active play park

The trail and pathways concept is intended to link the study area to nature, parks, community destinations, and historic and interpretive features. The trail system will also link to regional trail systems including the Bicycle Beltway and MD 355 Footsteps in the Corridor trail.

Interpretive themes will be developed for trail destinations including:

- **A Native American Hunting Ground (10,000 B.C. – 1600 A.D.)**
- **Waters Family**
- **Industries Along the Waterways: Mills and Mines**
CONCLUSION

In 10-15 years, Germantown will be a different place than today. This Master Plan provides recommendations to expand and strengthen the Town Center with more housing, retail, and employment. The Master Plan will guide CCT station development by creating lively and functional mixed-use neighborhoods linked to each other, to the Town Center, and to community destinations. A modified CCT alignment may be needed to achieve federal funding which provides opportunities for locating development in this Master Plan.

Among the three land use alternatives tested, Alternative 2, with modifications (Housing on the West Side), provides the preferred type, density and location for new development within the Germantown Master Plan study area.

This alternative provides a complete network of transportation options consistent with Montgomery County policies for an adequate transportation system and sites housing primarily within the Seneca Valley high school cluster which is best able to absorb future residential development without the need for an additional school site. A future Recreation Center will be located to serve patrons on the east side of I-270.

Direction from the Planning Board will enable staff to proceed with preparing the Germantown Master Plan Staff Draft.

Attachments:

A  Germantown Master Plan Study Area Boundary
B  Community Concept Plan
C  Existing Land Use aerial
D  Proposed Land Use aerial
E  Jobs and Housing Comparison of Alternatives
F  Urban Framework
G  Town Center Transit Station Development
H  Town Center Main Street
I  Urban Open Spaces and Trails

Tables:

Table 1.         Students Generated by Germantown Master Plan Land Use Alternatives  [page 8]

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**Jobs and Housing Comparison of Alternatives**

Likely Build Out, Existing, and Land Use Alternatives in the Germantown Study Area

- Jobs (per job)
- Housing (per DU) with density bonus
Jobs and Housing Comparison of Alternatives
Likely Build Out, Existing, and Land Use Alternatives in the Germantown Study Area

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Develop Town Center with highest density and buildings.
Extend Main Street with seating, amenities and streetscape improvements
Concentrate development and tallest buildings at transit stations
Use Stream Valley Open Space as natural borders defining neighborhoods