



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item #5
4/23/09

April 16, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief *GK*
Vision Division

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Move Division

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SUBJECT: White Flint I Sector Plan Worksession #7: Wrap up Land Use and Zoning
and Select Sites for Public Facilities

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. Review Staff Summary and Recommendations Regarding Density, Building Heights and Other Redevelopment Issues Presented by Property Owners and Community Members
2. Public Facilities:
 - o Evaluate and Select a School Site
 - o Evaluate and Select a MARC Station Site

CURRENT APRIL-MAY WORKSESSION SCHEDULE

April 30	Worksession #8 Public Facilities: Parks Environment and Sustainability Transportation and Mobility
May 7	Worksession #9 Design Guidelines Status of Fiscal Analysis and Implementation
May 21	Worksession #10 Zoning Staging Implementation

PURPOSE OF THIS WORKSESSION

This worksession has two purposes: (1) to review staff summary and recommendations regarding the presentations from the Planning Board worksessions; and (2) select sites for an elementary school site and a MARC station within the Sector Plan area.

1. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND STAFF RESPONSE

During the March 9, 19, 30th, and April 13 worksessions, the Planning Board discussed the economics, community building, and density aspects of redevelopment with affected property owners as well as seven residential communities living in and adjacent to the Sector Plan area. Staff prepared a checklist for each property discussed comparing existing conditions, the 1992 Plan recommendations, the Draft Plan recommendations and the property owners' proposals. Staff is still completing the checklists. Staff reviewed the worksession discussions and organized the information based on the issues raised during the discussion.

OPTIMAL FAR

In the Draft Plan, staff recommended an allocation of density based on proximity to transit services. Proximity to the Metro station had the highest priority, as was the case in previous sector plans for White Flint. The MARC station had the second highest priority and bus service along Rockville Pike, third. This concept was depicted in the Concentric Rings Concept (Attachment 2). The Plan recommended a transfer of density along Rockville Pike, but not increasing the overall density (Attachment 3). The Plan recommends a density range of 2.0-4.0 FAR.

Based on the discussions during the four worksessions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Vacant properties or those containing only parking lots appear to be able to redevelop with a density of between 2.0 and 2.5 FAR.
- Owners of improved properties stated that they need at least 2.5 FAR as an incentive to redevelop and provide the public facilities, public amenities and affordable housing recommended in the Draft Plan. Most of these properties were located at the edges of the Sector Plan area.
- All but four presentations emphasized that more density than recommended in the Draft Plan is necessary to spur development *and accomplish the public benefit goals of the Draft Plan, such as affordable housing, public use space, etc.*
- Commercial property owners stated that land with frontage along Rockville Pike has a higher premium than in the interior; therefore, density along Rockville Pike must be greater to encourage redevelopment.
- No property owner requested an FAR greater than 4.0.

Staff Analysis and Recommendation:

Staff has stated in previous worksessions before the issuance of the Public Hearing Draft Plan that the redevelopment threshold probably needs to be close to the 2.2-2.4 FAR recommended in the 1992 Plan for the TSR/TSM zones. A 4.0 FAR is reasonable as the highest density.

- Staff continues to recommend the density range between 2.0-4.0 FAR as contained the Draft Plan.

DENSITY TRANSFER

- Property owners with more than one property in the Sector Plan area supported transferring density and some needed that option to make the project feasible.
- Property owners teaming with other property owners think transfer of density is a good idea and should be allowed anywhere within the Sector Plan area.
- Property owners believe that the Draft Plan recommendation transferring density from the interior to properties along Rockville Pike adds to the cost of redevelopment, since the density would have to be purchased.
- Property owners with land fronting Rockville Pike did not support the transfer of density to Rockville Pike because they would have to purchase the density and that would increase the cost of redevelopment.

Staff Analysis and Recommendation:

Staff studied the higher land value argument for properties along Rockville Pike. Figure 1 indicates that there is no particular pattern to land values as determined by the Tax Assessor's office. Staff does not think that proximity to Rockville Pike is a factor affecting the assessed value of land for improved properties within the Sector Plan area. On the other hand, staff acknowledges the fact that market land values along Rockville Pike may not support the use of density transfers.

- Staff no longer recommends the increase in density along Rockville Pike through a density transfer.
- Staff supports transfer of density between and among willing properties anywhere in the Sector Plan area because the option may result in better plans and neighborhood connectivity.

DENSITY ALLOCATION, PROXIMITY TO TRANSIT, AND WALKABILITY

- There was public hearing testimony regarding walkable distance. The Planning Board, property owners and community members discussed walkable distances during the worksessions. Some of the public hearing testimony disagreed with language in the Draft Plan stating that ¾ of a mile is walkable. During the worksessions, Federal Realty Investment Trust (F.R.I.T.) showed a display that indicated that much of the Sector Plan area is within a ten-minute walk of Metro (Figure 2).
- The Collaborative prepared an alternate proposal based on the concentric ring concept but in an elongated ellipse that emphasized the "Rockville Pike" effect related to higher land values associated with Rockville Pike frontage and walkability (Figures 3A and 3B).

FIGURE 1: LAND VALUES IN THE WHITE FLINT SECTOR PLAN AREA

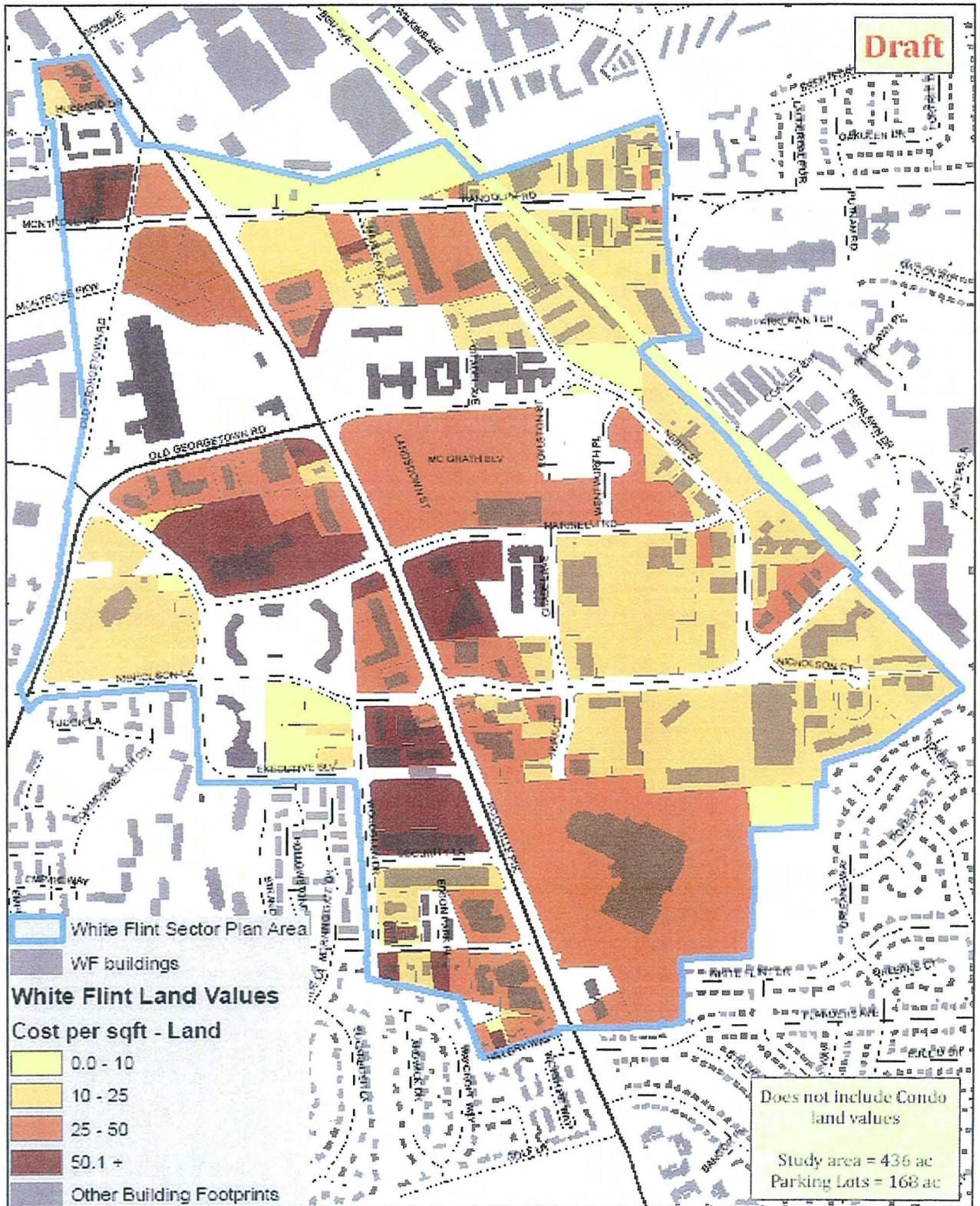


FIGURE 2: THE F.R.I.T. 10-MINUTE WALK

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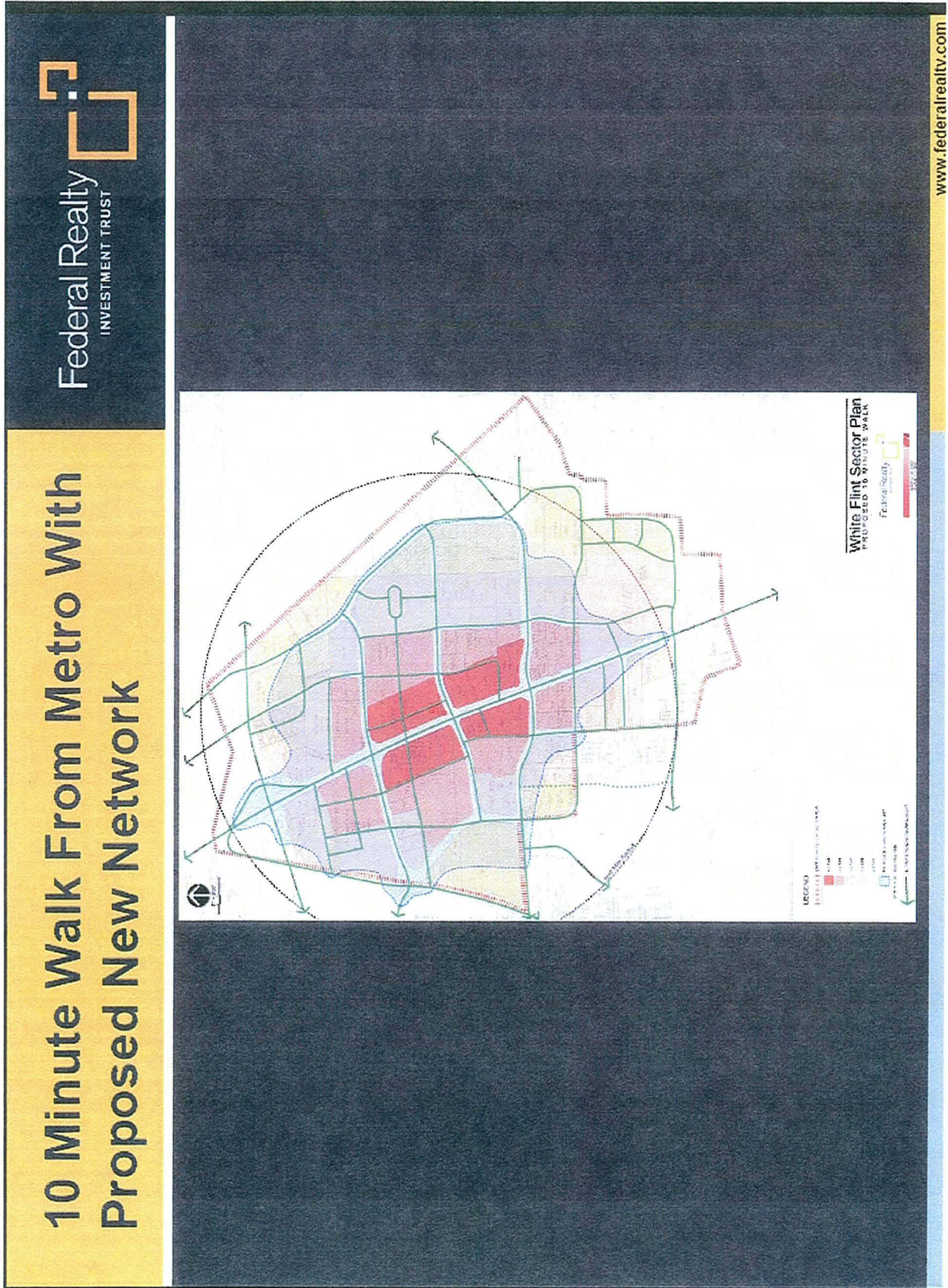


FIGURE 3A: COLLABORATIVE ELLIPSE CONCEPT

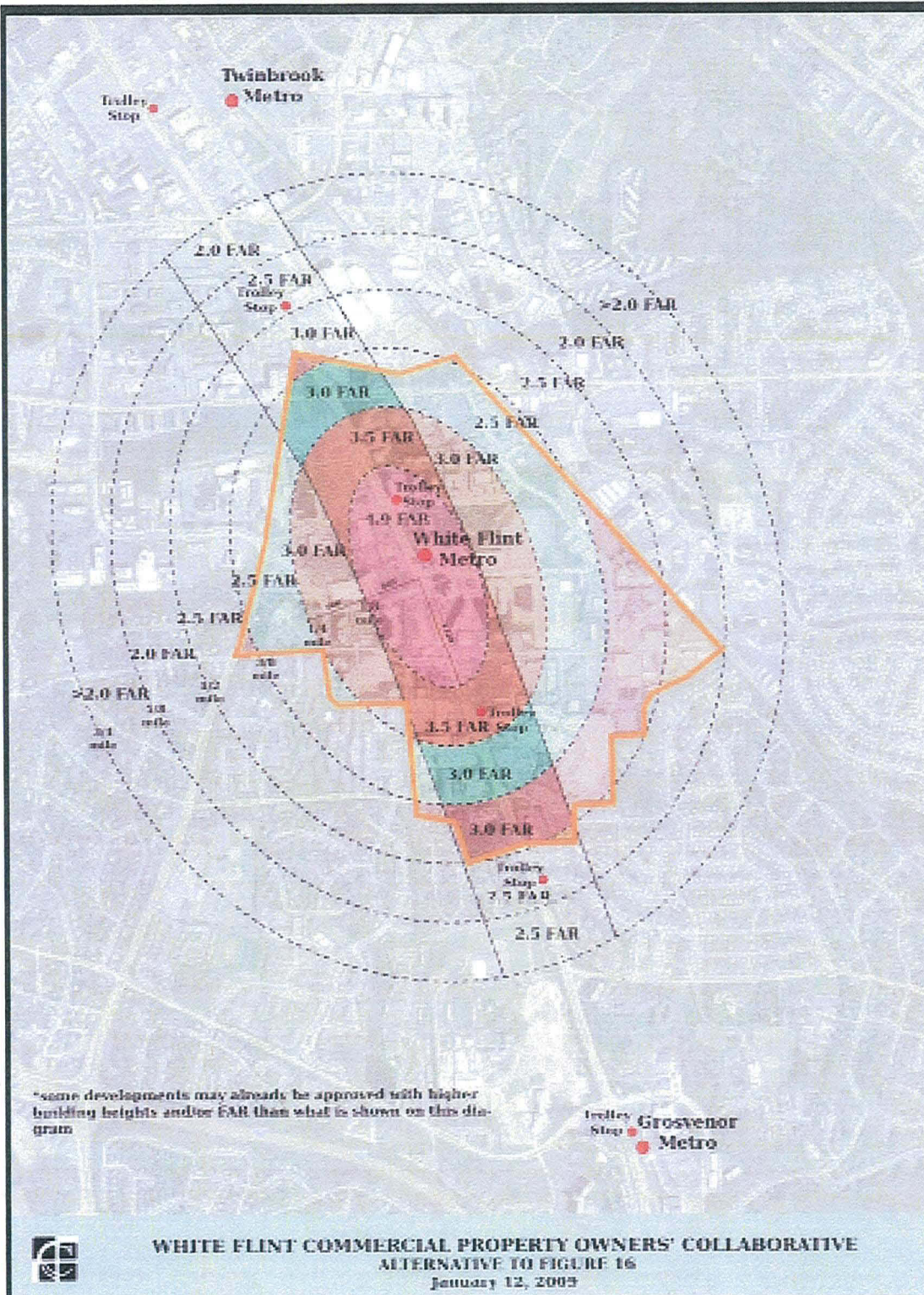
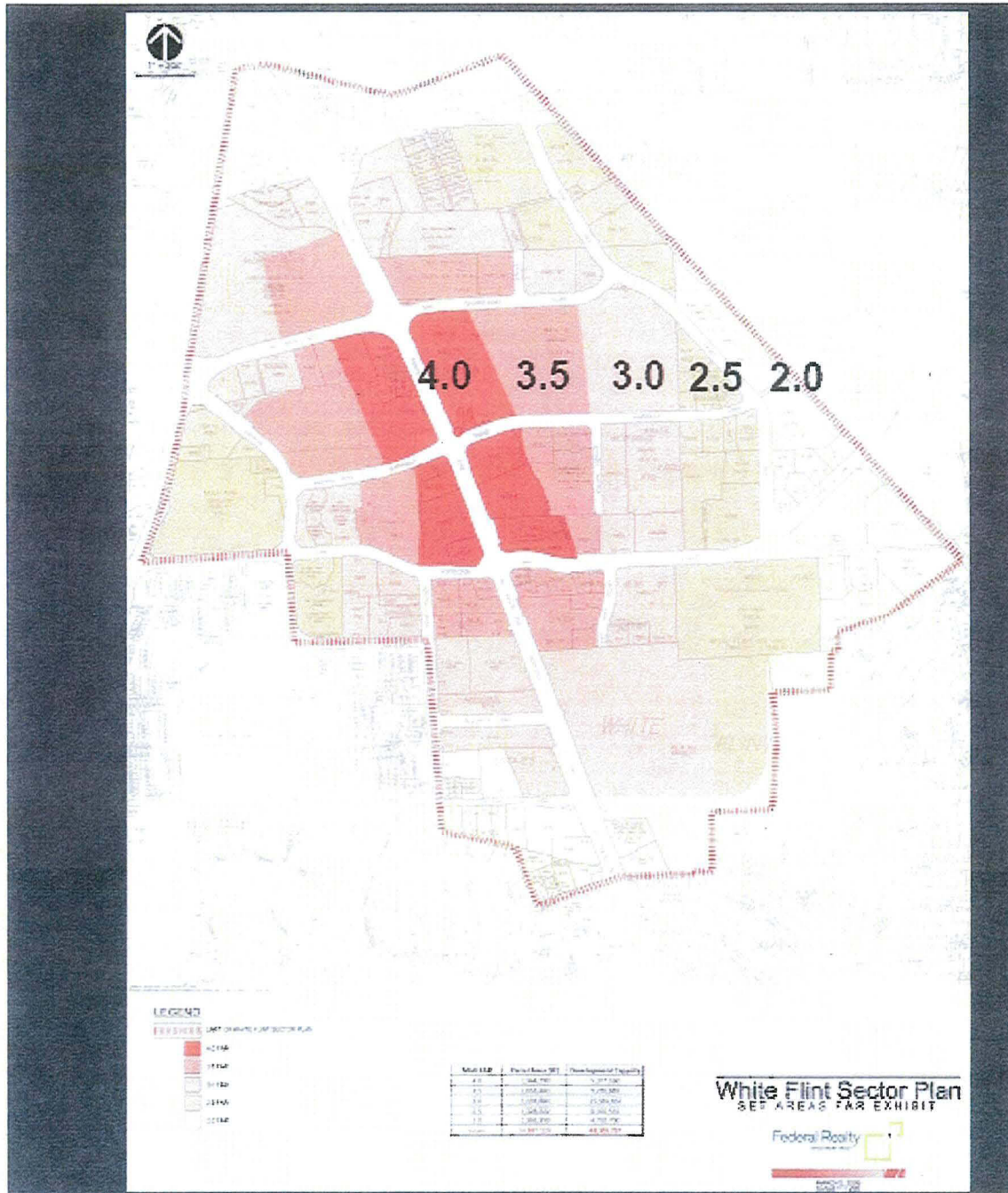


FIGURE 3B: COLLABORATIVE ELLIPTICAL DISTRIBUTION OF DENSITY

Distribution of Density

Fe



Staff Analysis and Recommendation:

On page 10, the Draft Plan states that the study area was expanded to 430 acres and "... even though the study area has doubled, it all lies within a ¾ mile radius of the Metro Station, which is a walkable distance." Staff intended the language to describe the compactness of the Sector Plan area, but the language has had the opposite effect of leading readers to believe that the Plan is redefining walkability and therefore implying that higher densities are appropriate over larger areas.

Staff conducted a series of ten-minute walks in the Sector Plan area and concluded that a ten-minute walk covers about 2,400 feet, including waiting for signals. At larger intersections, such as Nicholson Lane, Marinelli Road and Executive Boulevard, the signal wait was 1.5 minutes.¹ Figure 4 shows the ½ mile radius and the distances walked. Figure 5 extrapolates a ten-minute walk to the proposed road network. Staff confirms that a ten-minute walk equals ½ mile. Most of the Sector Plan area lies within ½ mile radius of the Metro station. However, the eastern and southern portion of the White Flint Mall, Combined Properties and much of Nicholson Court are outside the ½ mile radius.

- Staff recommends that density within a ½ mile radius of the Metro station be divided into two tiers: the higher density in tier 1 to be within ¼ mile of Metro and tier 2, a lower density between the ¼ and ½ mile. The lowest density should be outside the ½ mile radius (Attachment 1).

BUILDING HEIGHT

- JBG Companies, White Flint Mall, Combined Properties and F.R.I.T. stated that building heights greater than 300 feet were necessary to accommodate 4.0 FAR along Rockville Pike. Other property owners, including Eisinger and the White Flint Mall, stated that recommended building heights would not accommodate their plans.

Staff Analysis and Recommendation:

Staff remains concerned about building heights. There is a relationship between FAR and building heights, but establishing a direct relationship applicable to all properties is difficult. The tallest buildings in the Bethesda Central Business District (CBD) are about 200 feet and have FARs between 2.0 and 8.0. For example, the Chevy Chase Building at the intersection of East-West Highway and Wisconsin Avenue in Bethesda is 200 feet tall with an FAR of at least 5.0. Two hundred feet was sufficient in that instance to achieve a greater FAR than the highest FAR recommended the White Flint Sector Plan.

¹ For data collection rigor, note that staff ranged in age from twenty something to fifty something, in height between 5 and 6 feet with bodies of different shapes and weights and some with knee problems.

FIGURE 4: 10-MINUTE STAFF TEST WALK - EXISTING ROADS

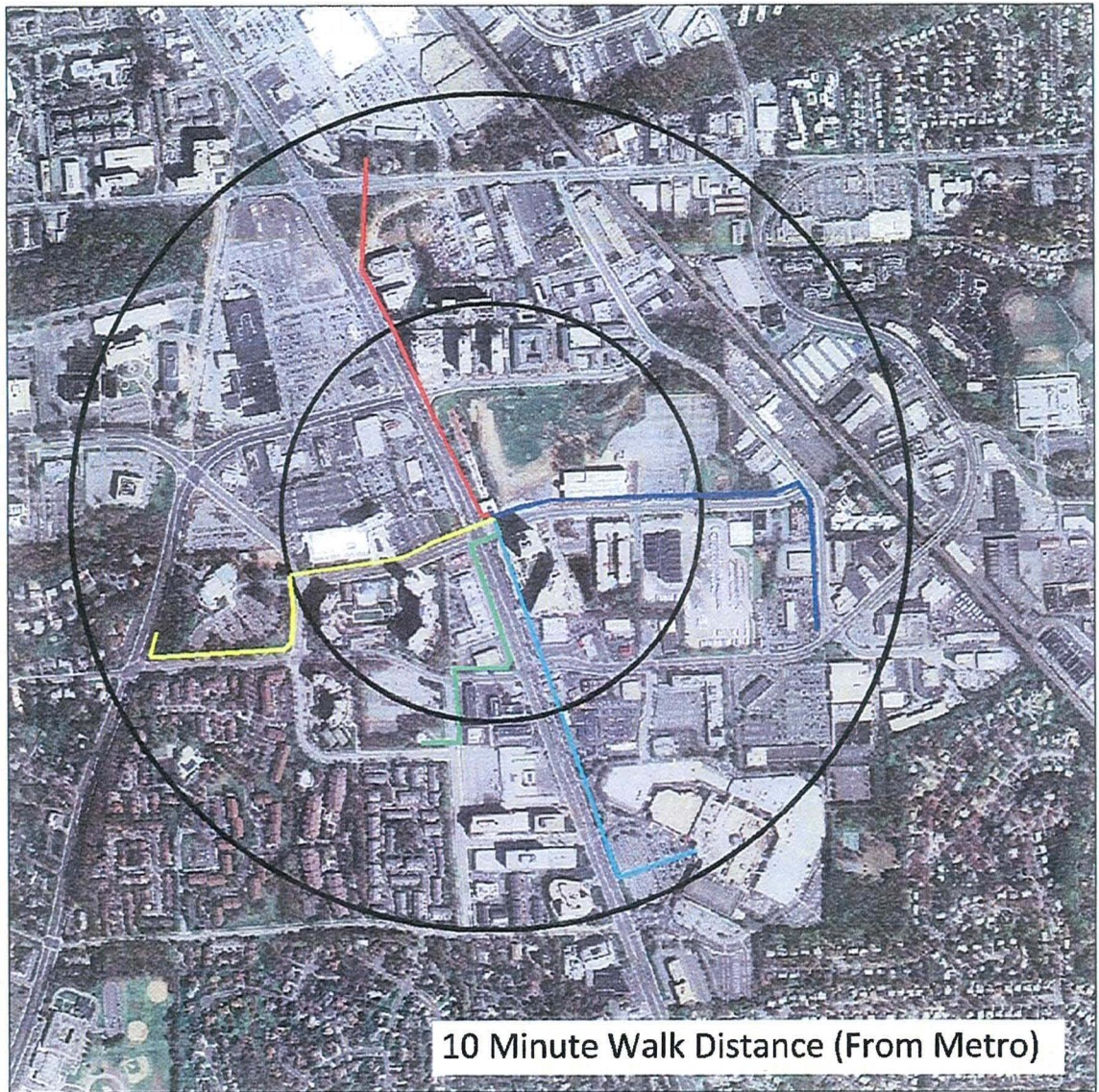
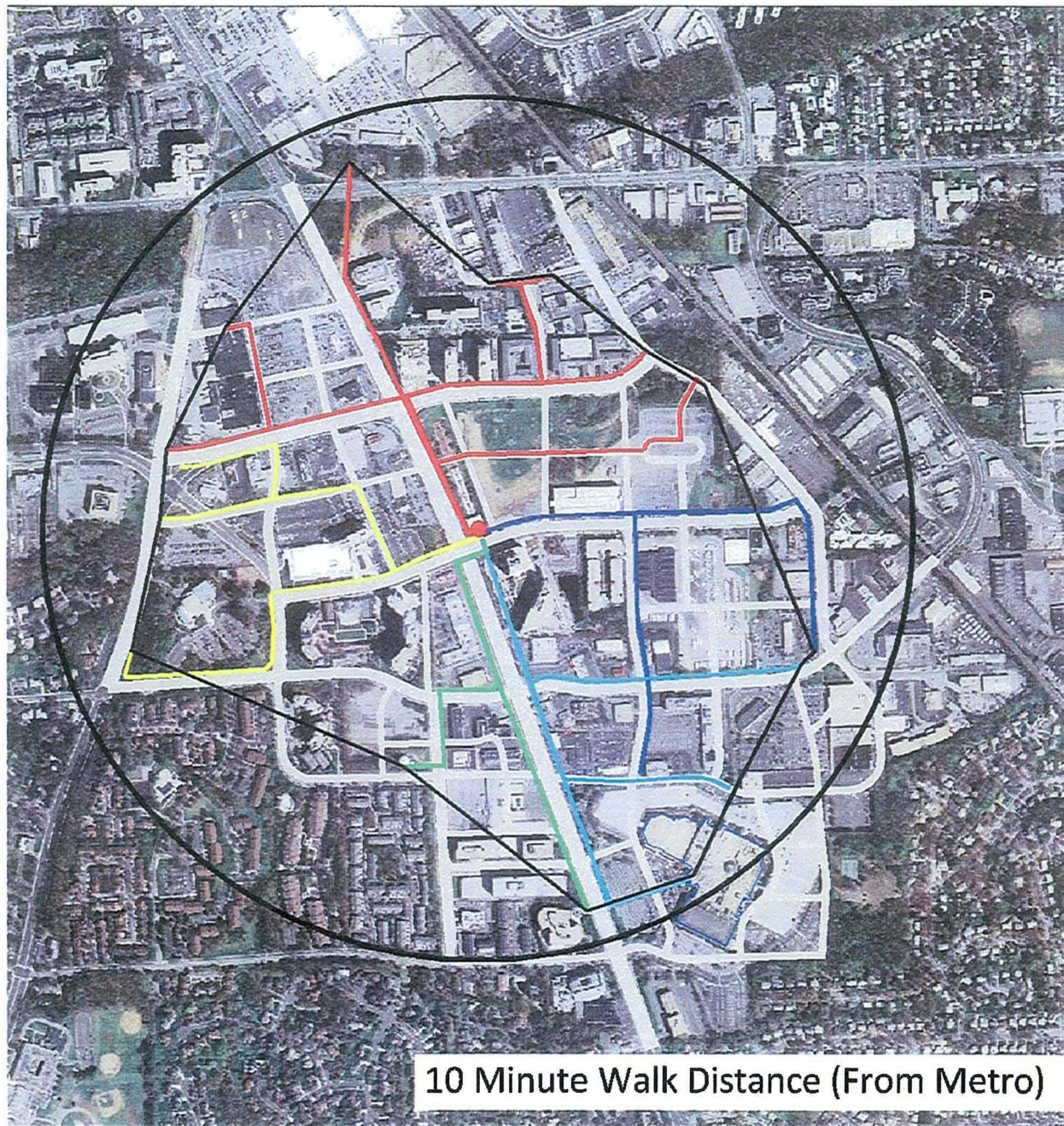


FIGURE 5: 10-MINUTE WALK ON PROPOSED ROAD NETWORK



The Sector Plan area already contains buildings that are taller than 250 feet. This is because the buildings are on land zoned TSM or TSR, zones that do not have a height maximum. Building heights are set through the local map amendment process and indicated on the development plan. Staff believes that a maximum building height of 300 feet is more than adequate and consistent with the existing context along Rockville Pike, but not elsewhere in the Sector Plan area. Heights elsewhere in the Sector Plan area must be compatible with surrounding development especially near single-family detached housing.

- Staff continues to recommend a tenting pattern for building heights and a 300-foot height limit at the core area. Building heights should taper down from the core and be 50 feet or less where adjacent to existing residential communities. Whether the height limit should be set in the zone or limited by the master plan should be discussed further, but staff believes that the existing heights should act as a guide for the maximum height in the core.

OTHER ISSUES

The following categories were used in the checklists to elicit comments from property owners.

60/40 Percent Residential/Non-residential Use Split

- Everyone accepts the goal for a 60 percent/40 percent residential/non-residential split to reduce traffic congestion and promote transit use. Some would like more flexibility, however. At least two property owners would like to provide 80 percent housing. One property owner would like to provide closer to 50 percent. One would like to provide 100 percent housing. There was discussion regarding the size of parcels and the ability to achieve mixed uses on every single property. There was discussion regarding the size of properties and the fact that a smaller property may not be able to achieve the desired mix of uses. Table 1 indicates the property sizes, number of properties, and acreage in size categories.

Affordable Housing

- Most property owners stated that the amount of affordable housing required, a combination of workforce housing (10 percent) and MPDUs (12.5 percent) is a disincentive to redevelopment. They could provide either type of affordable housing, but not both.

Agricultural Preservation Building Lot Termination (BLT)

- There was general support for BLTs. Providing both BLTs and workforce housing most property owners considered untenable. One or the other was possible, but not both.

Sustainability Goals

- Most property owners stated that 20 percent pervious land cover may not be attainable, although everyone would provide storm water control that would be better than what exists.
- Most questioned the 30 percent tree canopy.
- Most questioned the feasibility of 20 percent on-site energy generation.

TABLE 1: PROPERTIES IN WHITE FLINT SECTOR PLAN AREA BY SIZE

Size Category	Number Of Properties	Acreage In Size Category
1 Acre Or Less	84	38
2 Acres	26	33
3 Acres	10	25
4 Acres	11	38
5 Acres	4	18
6 Acres	5	33
7-10 Acres	4	32
More Than 10 Acres	9	162
Total	153	379

- Nine properties contain almost half of the land area in the Sector Plan Area.
- Half of the properties are one acre or less.
- Two-thirds of the land area are in parcels of four acres or greater.
- Mixed-use development can be achieved on two acres, therefore, it is possible for most of the land area in the White Flint Sector Plan to redevelop in mixed uses.

Public Use Space

- Everyone is willing to provide 20 percent public use space.

Private Outdoor Space

- This exaction had a mixed response: some were willing to provide balconies, patios, etc.; others were not.

Streets, Rights-of-Way, Street Trees, Underground Utilities, Sidewalks

- Everyone is willing to dedicate needed road rights-of-way.
- There are issues with dedication along Rockville Pike. Property owners with frontage support an equal amount of dedication on the centerline. There is little support for moving the established centerline.
- There are road alignment issues between the Metro West Conference Center Block and Mid Pike Plaza and within the White Flint Mall District, especially adjacent to the Garrett Park/White Flint Estates community.

Parking

- All property owners accept the need for underground or structured parking. There is a keen interest in limiting the parking requirements and support for some sort of public parking district.

Staff Analysis and Recommendation:

The Planning Department is involved in a comprehensive Zoning Rewrite effort. Part of that effort involves the development of a mixed-use zone that uses bonus densities to encourage redevelopment. A draft of the Commercial Residential (CR) Zone was posted on the Zoning Rewrite Web site on March 18, 2009. During the March 19 and 30th White Flint worksessions, the Chairman asked property owners if there was any interest in applying the draft mixed-use zone in the White Flint Sector Plan. There was a favorable response with caveats regarding "the devil is in the details."

Staff concurs that the goals of the Sector Plan, such as BLTs, additional affordable housing, and sustainability would translate easily into a bonus density system. Property owners would have choices regarding what is more cost-effective for their particular redevelopment circumstances.

A review of literature from other cities and counties that have applied the bonus density concept clearly states that the base density must be set low enough to encourage the use of bonuses or there is little reason to use that tool. The base density should be at or close to the lowest FAR permitted under existing zoning, or to existing conditions. Table 2 indicates the existing commercial zones in the Sector Plan area and the corresponding maximum FAR, where applicable.

- Staff recommends that the Planning Board pursue a bonus density system that creates categories of bonuses, such as design, connectivity, diversity and sustainability, under which there are a number of options. The Sector Plan should prioritize the categories that best achieve the goals of the Plan and should be considered during the development process. For example, affordable housing and workforce housing, and community connectivity are critical in order to create the residential communities envisioned in the Plan.
- Staff recommends that the base density be set low enough to encourage use of the bonus densities. Staff recommends that the base FAR be set close to the existing FAR or .5. FAR for existing zones is shown in Table 2. Properties subject to an approved development plan should be grandfathered for that density. Any more density would be subject to bonus density requirements. Staff notes that the amount of development that can be approved is still controlled by the Staging Plan.
- Staff recommends that the proposed bonus system for the Sector Plan be organized as follows:
 - All properties within the Sector Plan area should be able to request a bonus FAR.
 - Land area within 1/4 mile of the Metro or the MARC station would be entitled to request a greater density bonus as follows:
 - Metro – 2.0 FAR (Maximum 4.0 FAR)
 - MARC station – 0.5 FAR (Maximum 2.5 FAR)
 - Land area between ¼ and ½ mile of a Metro is entitled to a bonus up to 1.0 FAR (Maximum 3.0 FAR).
 - All other properties could request up to a 2.0-2.5 FAR maximum.

TABLE 2: EXISTING ZONING AND MAXIMUM FAR

Zone	Maximum FAR	Description	Acreage of Zone in Sector Plan Area
C-2	1.5	General Commercial	138
C-0	3.0	Commercial Office	8
CT	0.5	Commercial Transitional	7
I-1	NA	Light Industrial	21
I-4	1.0	Low Intensity Light Industrial	49
*TS-R	2.5	Transit Station Residential	42
**TS-M	3.0	Transit Station Mixed	57
OM	1.5	Office Building Moderate	9
*The density was limited in the 1992 Plan to 2.4 FAR with a 50/50 residential non-residential split			
**The density was limited in the 1992 Plan to 70 DUs/acre			

Table 3 indicates the existing and approved FARs for properties presented to the Planning Board. If the Planning Board supports the concept of bonus density, then staff will bring an analysis of how that approach would work on the properties in the Sector Plan area.

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF EXISTING FAR, DRAFT PLAN FAR, REQUESTED FAR and BONUS FAR

DISTRICT	PROPERTY OWNER	ACRES	EXIST or APPROVED FAR	DRAFT PLAN FAR	REQUESTED FAR	MAXIMUM FAR BONUS CONCEPT
METRO WEST	GABLES	3.09	0	2.5	2.5	3.0
NEBEL	MONTOURI	2.5	0	2.5	2.5	3.0
NOBE	JBG – LUTRELL	5.3	0	2.5	2.5	3.0
NRC	FITZGERALD	4.08	0.07	2.5	3.0	3.0
WFMALL	FITZGERALD	4.22	0.16	2.5	4.0	3.0
METRO WEST	NISSAN VOB	2.96	0.20	3.0	3.0	3.0-4.0
WFMALL	NICHOLSON COURT PROP	16.5	0.22	2.0- 2.5	2.5	2.5
NRC	JBG - EATZIE'S	1.8	0.29	3.0	4.0	4.0
WFMALL	COMBINED PROPERTIES	15.0	0.29	2.0- 2.5	2.5	2.5-3.0
MIDPIKE	F.R.I.T.	20.0	0.38	2.5-3.0	3.3	3.0-4.0
WFMALL	EISINGER	4.42	0.51	2.5	4.0	3.0
WFMALL	WHITE FLINT MALL	43.27	0.53	2.0- 2.5	2.8	2.5-3.0
MAPLE/NEB	W.R.I.T.	9.71	0.54	2.5	2.5	3.0
METRO EAST	JOLLES	0.45	0.59	2.5	2.5	3.0
METRO WEST	JBG - CONFERENCE CENTER	11.81	0.61	4.0	4.0	4.0
NRC	HOC	4.45	1.00	1.0	3.0	4.0
NOBE	JBG - CHILI'S	3.85	1.16	2.5	3.5	3.0
METRO EAST	NORTH BETHESDA CTR.	32.0	2.00	2.5- 4	none	3.0-4.0
NRC	WHITE FLINT VIEW	1.86	2.20	2.5	3.0	3.0
METRO WEST	HOLLADAY	4.48	2.29	3.0	4.0	4.0
NOBE	JBG - NORTH BETHESDA MKT.	5.91	2.29	3	3.22	3.0
NOBE	JBG – ROCKWALL	2.46	3.11	2.5	3.0	Add. 10,000 SF

Community Connectivity: Putting it all Together

One issue that the Planning Board has discussed at length is how the Sector Plan will direct the mechanics for community building and community connectivity. How will the different districts or neighborhoods mesh to create the walkable transit served communities espoused in the Plan?

Staff created a composite of all the proposed designs shown to the Planning Board in the property owners' PowerPoint presentations. By reviewing the composite plan at a larger scale in the context of the master plan recommendations, staff was able to identify in better detail the "trouble spots" between properties as well as those areas where the additional information uncovered issues staff had not contemplated. Staff believes that the Design Guidelines, in conjunction with the density bonus options, should provide guidance to resolving connectivity issues during the development process. This will be the topic of Worksession #9.

2. PUBLIC FACILITIES

Evaluate and Select a School Site

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the White Flint Mall/White Flint Plaza property as the best location for a new elementary school. The new street network will create public access to the site off busy through streets. The school is a walkable designation and can function as a transition area between new development and existing residential community. Furthermore, it is adjacent to an existing park, White Flint Neighborhood Park, which adds to the civic presence. The White Flint Mall District, as the largest district in the Plan area, has the potential to gain the highest amount of new residential development and therefore an appropriate location for a school site. If the property owners do not develop in a timely fashion, MCPS will have to consider land acquisition.

In the alternative, the Plan recommends use of a former school site in the Walter Johnson Cluster; redistricting to accommodate projected student demand with the understanding that MCPS has responsibility for those discussions; or using a former school site in the adjoining Einstein cluster.

Sector Plan Background

The Public Hearing Draft Plan identifies a new elementary school to meet the projected elementary school demand from the proposed 9,800 dwelling units. Using the Countywide student generation rates, approximately 410 new elementary students would result from the recommended residential density. It is assumed that a majority of new development will be high-density residential, which has a lower student yield than other kinds of residential development (see Table 4). Projected new students cannot be accommodated within the existing elementary schools. Current utilization rates at all the elementary schools exceed 100 percent. Enrollment projections indicate that future students could be accommodated at the existing high school and middle school facilities.

A new school within the Sector Plan area will establish a civic presence and should be a walkable designation for parents and students. The surrounding community will benefit from a new public facility in close proximity. The Public Hearing Draft recommends five to six acres of the White Flint Mall and White Flint Plaza be set aside for a future elementary school. The staging plan recommends that at phase 2, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) must evaluate the need for a new school within the cluster and determine if a school site is necessary within the Plan area.

Existing Schools

The Sector Plan area is within the Walter Johnson School Cluster. Garrett Park, Luxmanor, Ashburton, Farmland, Kensington-Parkwood and Wyngate are the elementary schools in the cluster. Tilden Middle School and North Bethesda Middle School are the middle schools and Walter Johnson High School is the high school in the cluster (see Figure 6).