



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB  
Item # 11  
3/04/10

February 26, 2010

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

**VIA:** John A. Carter, Chief *JAC*  
Urban Design and Preservation Division

**FROM:** Luis Estrada, Project Planner/Urban Designer *LE*  
Urban Design and Preservation Division

Anthony Pins, Urban Designer *AP*  
Urban Design and Preservation Division

**SUBJECT:** Urban Design Guidelines for the Twinbrook Sector Plan Area

---

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approval to publish the Design Guidelines for the Twinbrook Sector Plan area, and to set a hearing date for April 8, 2010.

## URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Urban Design Guidelines are intended to inspire design excellence in community building in Montgomery County. The guidelines are part of a new and creative initiative by the Planning Department to assist in implementing the recommendations in approved and adopted master plans or sector plans. The structure of the planning process for the department follows:

- **Master Plans and Sector Plans** - Provide the vision for a specific area
- **Zoning Ordinance** - Establishes the regulations and implementation tools
- **Design Guidelines** - Provides the inspiration and provides a graphic picture of the vision

### Organization of the Design Guidelines

Each chapter begins with a “side bar” that identifies the relationship and continuity between the Twinbrook Sector Plan and the Design Guidelines. In all cases, the Design Guidelines provide guidance in accordance with the recommendations in the Approved and Adopted Twinbrook Sector Plan. The structure of the Design Guidelines follows:

- **Principles** - Identifies the overarching urban design principles in accordance with the vision established in the approved and adopted master plan or sector plan

- **Conceptual Framework** - Establishes a design framework specific for each area (e.g. Twinbrook Sector Plan area)
- **Case Studies** - Identifies in graphic form, “real world” examples of projects that provide inspiration and illustrate the conceptual framework
- **Building Blocks of the Community:**
  - **Districts:** Identifies in text and graphic form the design characteristics of each district that implements the vision of the master plan
  - **Elements:** Provides design guidance for the streets, open spaces and buildings

### **Goals of the Design Guidelines**

The design guidelines implement the recommendations in an approved and adopted sector plan or master plan. The design guidelines are intended to accomplish the following:

- **Foster Design Excellence** - Build a community in accordance with the approved and adopted master plan or sector plan
- **Clarify the Master Plan Vision** - Establish design guidelines for each district, and for the streets, open spaces and buildings in accordance with the recommendations for physical form in a master plan or sector plan
- **Establish Flexibility** - Provide guidance in accordance with a master plan or sector plan that recognizes the need for flexibility and for creative solutions in community building

The graphics and text included in the guidelines are intended to provide a visualization of the recommendations in the Twinbrook Sector Plan. The guidelines will assist the Planning Board, staff, property owners, County Council, and others during the review of Project Plans, Site Plans and Mandatory Referrals. For the Twinbrook area, the combination of a comprehensive sector plan with the Urban Design Guidelines will provide a unique planning tool for Montgomery County. This new planning tool is necessary in the Twinbrook area as density increases, the mix of land uses becomes more complex, and transitions to the existing neighborhoods, including the City of Rockville, need to be compatible.

The Planning Board has already reviewed the Staff Draft of the Germantown Design Guidelines and held the first hearing. The worksessions for Germantown will begin in February. The Urban Design Guidelines for the Twinbrook area will be followed by guidelines for the White Flint and Gaithersburg West areas. A similar format will be used for each of these documents.

### **How to Use the Urban Design Guidelines**

The Design Guidelines provide general design guidance and inspiration. Elements such as streets and designated open spaces recommended in the Approved and Adopted Twinbrook Sector Plan will be required. Elements not specified in the Sector Plan such as building form and locations, non-designated open spaces, and local streets are considered illustrations of design principles and are not mandated. Applicants and public agencies are encouraged to be creative and work closely with the Planning Department in early conceptual stages to achieve the outstanding design of public and private development during the review process.

## **OUTREACH AND COORDINATION**

The Draft Design Guidelines were prepared in accordance with the County Council's unanimous approval of the Twinbrook Sector Plan. Staff coordinated initial meetings with the following groups:

- Meetings with representatives of the Twinbrook area including the City of Rockville
- General meetings and comments from the County Executive
- Follow-up meetings with the MCDOT
- Meetings with all the divisions in the Planning Department
- Meeting with the Montgomery County Civic Federation

Continued coordination with MCDOT, property owners, developers and other County agencies is ongoing, and the Planning Board will hear their comments in March.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Publish the Draft Urban Design Guidelines for the Twinbrook Sector Plan area
- Hold a hearing to receive comments on the Draft Urban Design Guidelines
- Hold worksessions, and revise the Design Guidelines as directed by the Planning Board
- Adopt the Twinbrook Urban Design Guidelines by the Planning Board

The final products will include:

- Printed document
- Useful "interactive, web design resource" to be located on the M-NCPPC web site.

**Attachment:** Draft Urban Design Guidelines for the Twinbrook Sector Plan