



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

May 10, 2010

MCPB
Item # 3
5/13/10

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Rollin Stanley, Planning Director

FROM: John A. Carter, Chief
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SUBJECT: Hearing, Worksession and Action: Twinbrook Urban Design Guidelines

Staff Recommendation

Review the public comments and approve the Twinbrook Urban Design Guidelines

Discussion

As a distinct set of information, the Urban Design Guidelines are a new tool intended to implement Plan recommendations and complement the legal requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, Road Code, and other regulations.

They will be used by developers to shape project applications and by staff to encourage fulfillment of the design and sustainability goals particular to a community. By distinguishing between requirements and guidelines, staff, applicants, community members and agencies can have an effective review. By focusing the guidelines on localized design problems, effective solutions can be developed.

The discussion of streets in the guidelines addresses the areas beyond the purview of the Road Code – namely the space between curb and building. The discussion of open spaces makes size, location, and performance suggestions for both Plan-designated open space and for the zoning-required public open space. The building discussion focuses on the design issues in Twinbrook—including reuse of existing large and small buildings to serve advanced technology customers.

Guidelines for other planning areas will take the same approach, addressing specific sites, open space and streets, with the goal of creating distinct and usable places. Issues in Germantown, White Flint, Kensington and others will vary from creating density at transit to transforming an automobile-scale community into a walkable place.

While the attached set of guidelines are printed, all the guidelines are ultimately intended to appear online, allowing them to be easily updated and enabling applicants to “click through” directly to the information they want.

The Planning Board has reviewed the staff draft of Twinbrook Urban Design Guidelines and heard public comment. This worksession provides the Board an opportunity to discuss those comments and how they are reflected in the guidelines, as well as finalize the document for publication.

Scope of the Urban Design Guidelines

The guidelines begin with description of the master plan goals for the area and the design objectives that will meet those goals. They continue with more specific recommendations for streets, open spaces, and buildings, and finally, even more specific recommendations for each of Twinbrook's three districts.

- Street guidelines address area outside the purview of the Road Code, that is, the public space between curb and building.
- Open Space guidelines specify how required public open space should be located and how it should function, as well as the attributes of the plan-designated open spaces.
- Building guidelines focus on adaptive re-use, particular to Twinbrook's Light Industrial Area and the Parklawn Building.

Outreach

Staff met with the following groups:

- Twinbrook residents and property owners
- City of Rockville
- County Executive staff
- MCDOT

Urban design staff also worked with development review and planning staff to ensure the guidelines reflect Plan goals and will be a useful development review tool.

Next Steps

- Approve the Twinbrook Urban Design Guidelines for final publication and posting online.

Public Comment Summary

On March 18, 2010, the Planning Board heard public comment on the Twinbrook Urban Design Guidelines.

Speaker, Affiliation, Issue

Comments

MCDOT

Utility location

Use a 10-foot wide, grass, and minimally landscaped PUE (public utility easement) along all Twinbrook Streets.

MCDOT

approval of development in the right-of-way

Clarify that MCDOT has final approval of anything in the public right-of-way.

Clarify differences between the guidelines and the Plan recommendations.

DEP

Stan Edwards, Chief

No comments

Somerset Development

Wilkins Avenue extended

Clarify that the final route of Wilkins Avenue extended is flexible and will be determined through development review.

Somerset Development

Parklawn Building

Modify the guidelines to clarify that though the Parklawn Building is non-conforming, renovation will be permitted and encouraged.

JBG Companies

Retail location

Concerned that building guidelines will become mandates over time.

JBG Companies

Building guidelines

Clarify the location of retail. Concerned that retail will be required along the Parklawn Building's frontage.

MCDOT

- The request for a 10-foot, grass utility easement is inconsistent with the Plan's recommendations for a dense, urban street profile.
- The document clarifies the distinction between regulations and guidelines for development in the public right-of-way.

Somerset

- The route of Wilkins Avenue extended and other road extensions is flexible and will be finalized through development review.
- The Parklawn Building's nonconformance with current status is addressed in the Zoning Ordinance; it is not a guidelines issue. The guidelines make specific recommendations for renovation of the Parklawn Building.

JBG

- Priority retail streets are addressed in the guidelines.
- Language clarifies that building design recommendations are guidelines, not mandates.

The attached guidelines also address issues raised by the Planning Board.

- Aspirations instead of Mandates
By noting the difference between legal requirements, plan recommendations, and guidelines, the document clarifies what issues are to be discussed and negotiated.
- Washington Avenue
The Board was concerned that extending Washington Avenue would require removing a building. The approved and adopted Plan recognized that the existing building would need to be removed.
- Website
A demonstration of how the guidelines will be displayed online will be presented at the Board's May 13 meeting.