



Briefing: Retrofitting Montgomery County to Better Accommodate Stormwater, Pedestrians and Bicycles



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DESCRIPTION

In FY 2010, SvR Design Company was contracted to provide professional services to facilitate a better understanding of how to accommodate people and bikes, as well as address environmental concerns in our urban areas. Peg Staeheli, the company president, is a recognized expert in dealing with the complex issues and agency responsibilities that affect the success of redevelopment efforts. Over the past two years, we have been using this small contract, coordinated with Ms. Staeheli's travels, to bring together the relevant agencies to discuss how to consistently design and construct capital improvements in the right-of-way to accommodate all anticipated users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, motorists, and freight vehicles.

Ms. Staeheli has completed her work and is presenting her findings and recommendations to the Planning Board. All of her work products are available at:

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/environment/streetscapes.shtml>

Attachments include:

- Summary slides
- Consultant recommendations

SUMMARY

We recommend that the Planning Board endorse the recommendations presented by the consultant and send a letter to the County Executive requesting that a working group be formed to meet periodically to advocate and track appropriate agency or Executive actions to achieve the results of the recommendations, including:

- Implementing Code Revisions to Encourage Environmental Site Design (ESD)
- Including ESD in Road Code Standards
- Performing Corridor Speed Analysis to determine where speed limits should be reduced
- Developing Aesthetic Guidelines for ESD installations
- Providing Maintenance Standards for ESD installations

In addition, we recommend that the Planning Board direct our staff to work with the County Council to adopt appropriate legislation to establish Sustainable Complete Streets as the standard for Montgomery County.

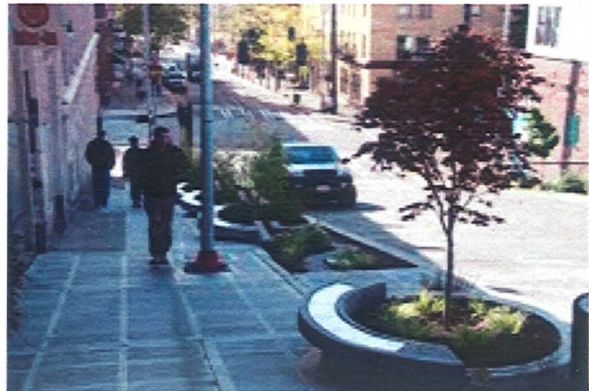
Background

In the course of her work, Ms. Staeheli met individually with the Montgomery County Departments of Transportation, Environmental Protection and Permitting Services to discuss their responsibilities with respect to design and construction in public rights-of-way as well as standards and requirements for vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, street trees, utilities and stormwater management.



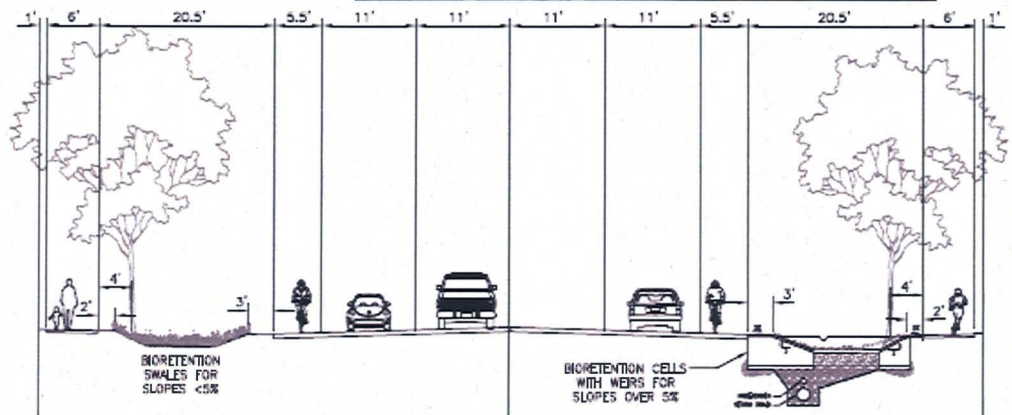
She then held two workshops to illustrate the issues, practices and experiences of other jurisdictions, and facilitate discussions among the agencies about how best to approach the integration of all the uses in the right-of-way. As part of this effort, she modified six of the road code road standards to show how all the elements could be accommodated. Agency representatives discussed these proposals and further refined these modified standards. All who attended appreciated the wealth of information presented as well as the opportunity to discuss their concerns and ideas in a neutral setting. The following representatives attended one or both sessions:

Rick Brush, Department of Permitting Services; Department of Environmental Protection staff including Dan Harper, Amy Stevens, Ann English, and Steve Shofar; Department of Transportation staff including Bruce Johnston, Bob Simpson, and Greg Leck; Shirlene Cleveland, State Highway Administration; Marie La Baw, Fire and Rescue; and Planning Department staff including Mary Dolan, Mark Symborski, Michael Brown, John Marcolin, Larry Cole, Sandra Pereira, Tina Schneider and Amy Lindsey.



Following these workshops, Ms. Staeheli prepared a detailed analysis of two lengths of road to show how the concepts would play out given different topographic conditions and contexts.

She also produced image libraries that are available for all agencies to use showing different conditions and approaches for accommodating pedestrians, bicyclists, and environmental enhancements. While these



ESD SECTION - WIDER SIDEWALKS, ADD BIORETENTION
 BASED ON: SUBURBAN ARTERIAL ROAD (DRAFT MC-2004.14)
 OPEN SECTION: 4 LANES W/BIKE LANES

discussions were a great beginning, many issues remain and the state of the art for materials and methods are evolving rapidly. With each new development proposal and each new public project submitted or constructed under the new County stormwater ordinance and regulations, we learn more about the opportunities and challenges.

Planning staff recommends that a working group be formed to follow up on the consultant's recommendations and that staff assist the County Council in preparing appropriate legislation.

Attachments

Letter from Peg Staeheli to Mary Dolan

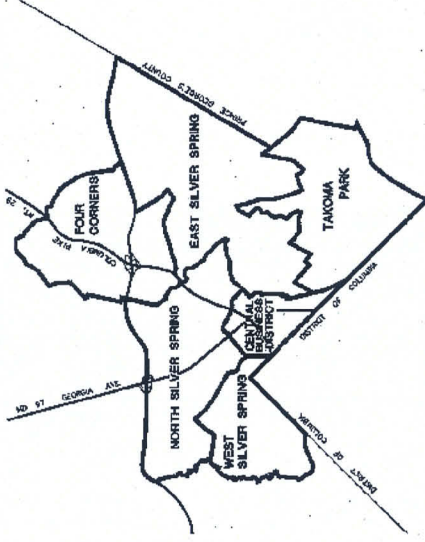
Summary Slides

Montgomery County Planning Board

M-NCPPC



Map 1 Silver Spring/Takoma Park Community-Based Planning Area



October 20, 2011

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Topic Areas

— Residential Streets



— Urban Streets



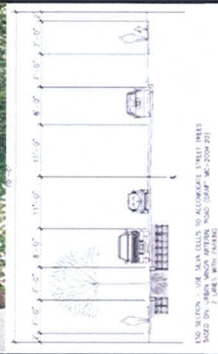
— Public Realm on Private Property

— Transition Zones

— ESD

— Trees in ROW

— Typical Street Sections



— Recommendations





Recommendations

- Convene Interagency Group to Continue Discussion
- Implement Code Revisions
- Include ESD in Road Standards
- Perform Corridor Speed Analysis
- Develop ESD Aesthetic Guidelines
- Provide Maintenance Standards for ESD



DESIGN COMPANY

June 15, 2011

Mary G. Dolan, Supervisor
Functional and Policy Planning Division
Montgomery County Planning Department
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Final Recommendations- Next Steps
Montgomery County Streetscape/Urban ESD
SvR Project No. 10015

Dear Mary:

First of all, Amalia and I want to thank you, your co-workers and the other agency participants for their input and energy as we reviewed best practices to integrate environmental site design (ESD) into streetscapes, urban sites and public space. In reviewing the various meeting and workshop notes, the group discussion covered a wide range of issues including: large scale private developments, the various road sections, design speed, pedestrian scale improvements, ESD feasibility, ESD maintenance, urban forest canopy goals, ESD construction details and street tree planting details. The common element was the desire to provide planning and implementation advice both internally to the agency staff and externally to the development and design community.

Through the initial meetings, site visits and the workshops we were able to provide a general background on best practices for ESD policies, design standards and implementation. Based on input we provided examples of site based implementation and then focused on specific concerns for right of way implementation. We provided image libraries that tied concept ESD graphics to standard details and constructed applications. Finally we tested ESD applications in two county road corridors, indicating the modifications that could be made to integrate ESD without acquiring additional right of way or employing more expensive traditional stormwater management systems.

We identified barriers and gaps that will cause difficulty in moving forward the ESD implementation requirements that support the overall goals of the Commission for improved streetscape and site design in your urban areas. The various participants from MNCPPC, DEP, DPS, DOT, Fire and SHA were forthright in discussing specific issues limiting ESD implementation. Based on these discussions, we believe the following points highlight next steps:

1. Establish an interagency group (two members each from MNCPPC, DEP, DPS, DOT, Fire and SHA) that continues to facilitate ESD implementation. We recommend this group be jointly supported by the Commission and the County.
2. Implement the recommendations of the Dec. 14, 2010 Report: *Implementing Environmental Site Design in Montgomery County*, prepared for MC Department of Environmental Protection. Specifically see Section 4.0 for suggested code revisions.

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3. Revise the Department of Transportation road standard cross sections to include ESD or provide a direct reference to acceptable ESD details and design guidelines for roadway applications. *(Note – we fully recognize that considerable effort has been made to update the road code. However it is clear in our discussions with staff and in our interactions with developers and designers that “DOT acceptable” ESD locations and details for roadway applications are needed to facilitate ESD implementation.)*
4. County wide analysis of options to reduce target speeds on arterials and residential streets. *In our analysis of ESD implementation within the various road/street cross sections it is clear that for most road sections the ability to incorporate a reduced lane width will facilitate ESD implementation. Generally the urban rights of ways do not have space to accommodate ESD and maintain travel lane widths in excess of 12 feet. Reductions to 35mph and below will improve ESD feasibility as well as improve options for locating street trees.*
5. Improve the aesthetics of ESD. We recommend identifying best examples of ESD installations within the County encouraging treatments that respond to urban applications. Use ESD as an urban amenity – less reliance on gravel and increased used of vegetation and trees as ESD amenities.
6. Develop maintenance standards for public ESD applications and guidelines for private ESD installations. Determining appropriate level of service and corresponding maintenance procedures is important for public works maintenance program planning.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist the staff in moving forward the goals of the Commission to improve the environmental impact of development. We are interested and available to assist the Commission and Montgomery County DOT with development of additional ESD applications for the applicable road standard cross sections. We can also provide assistance to DEP staff with maintenance standards. If desired, we are available to summarize these efforts in a presentation for the Commission.

Sincerely,
SvR Design Company

Peg

Peg Staeheli, ASLA, LEED® AP
Principal