



Kensington Sector Plan Draft Design Guidelines

- Michael Brown, Urban Designer, Area 2 Planning Division, Michael.Brown@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4566
 - Khalid Afzal, Planning Supervisor, Area 2 Planning Division, Khalid.Afzal@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4650
 - Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Area 2 Planning Division, Glenn.Kreger@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4653
-

description

- Draft Design Guidelines for the Draft Kensington Sector Plan

summary

- Review and approve the draft Design Guidelines for transmittal to the County Council.

On October 13, 2011, staff presented the Draft Design Guidelines to the Planning Board and received comments and direction to revise the document for general distribution. The attached draft reflects the comments from the Planning Board and consultant, Arun Jain. The draft guidelines will be available to the public and the County Council during the Council's review of the Planning Board Draft Kensington Sector Plan. Upon approval of the final Kensington Sector Plan by the Council, this document will be revisited to incorporate any changes stemming from the Council review and approval of the Sector Plan.

Staff recommends approval of the attached Draft Design Guidelines for transmittal to the County Council.

November 2011

kensington sector plan design guidelines

Draft



Montgomery County Planning Department
M-NCPPC
MontgomeryPlanning.org

November 2011

Draft Design Guidelines
Draft Kensington Sector Plan

Montgomery County Planning Department
M-NCPPC
MontgomeryPlanning.org

Abstract

These guidelines are intended to provide direction in meeting the goals of the *Kensington Sector Plan*. They are approved by the Planning Board for staff use in reviewing development proposals. They should be used as well by developers in shaping their projects and by citizens interested in the pattern and character of development in their community.

Source of Copies

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Online at MontgomeryPlanning.org/community/kensington

introduction	4
context	5
guidelines	8
kensington character	9
pedestrian connections	13
pedestrian-oriented buildings	26
transitions	31
resources	35

introduction

The Kensington Design Guidelines represent the County's, Town's and the community's design aspirations for the future of Kensington. They should be used as a resource by all stakeholders while exploring ways to enhance the quality of urban design in Kensington.

Urban design is concerned with the physical characteristics of an area, and these Guidelines consider the design implications of planning decisions in the public realm. An urban design strategy should serve as an integrating tool to coordinate how various development proposals will affect the city physically, with a principal focus on the public realm: the public faces of buildings, spaces for public use, and the streets, sidewalks, parks and plazas that provide the outdoor public venue for everyday activities.

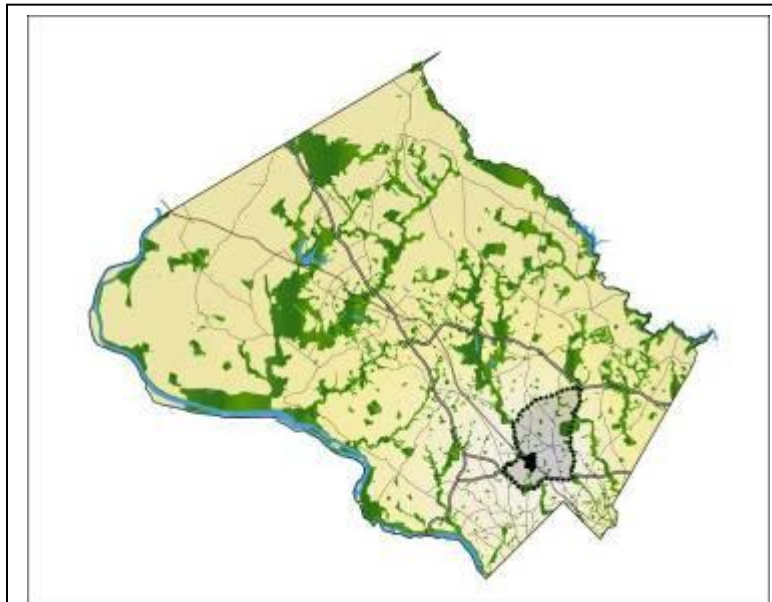
The Guidelines assist in the implementation of recommendations in approved and adopted master plans or sector plans by encouraging better building design in properties considering redevelopment, and by promoting the creation of safe pedestrian environments and attractive gathering places defined by buildings.

The Guidelines are approved by the Planning Board for use by property owners and Planning Staff. Their intent is to illustrate how plan recommendations might be met, to inform applicants of design expectations and possible resources to accomplish them, and to provide staff with a framework for project review and a tool for obtaining enhanced design and related amenities. Guidelines do not set architectural styles, are only applicable during discretionary reviews, and will be revised and updated as necessary.

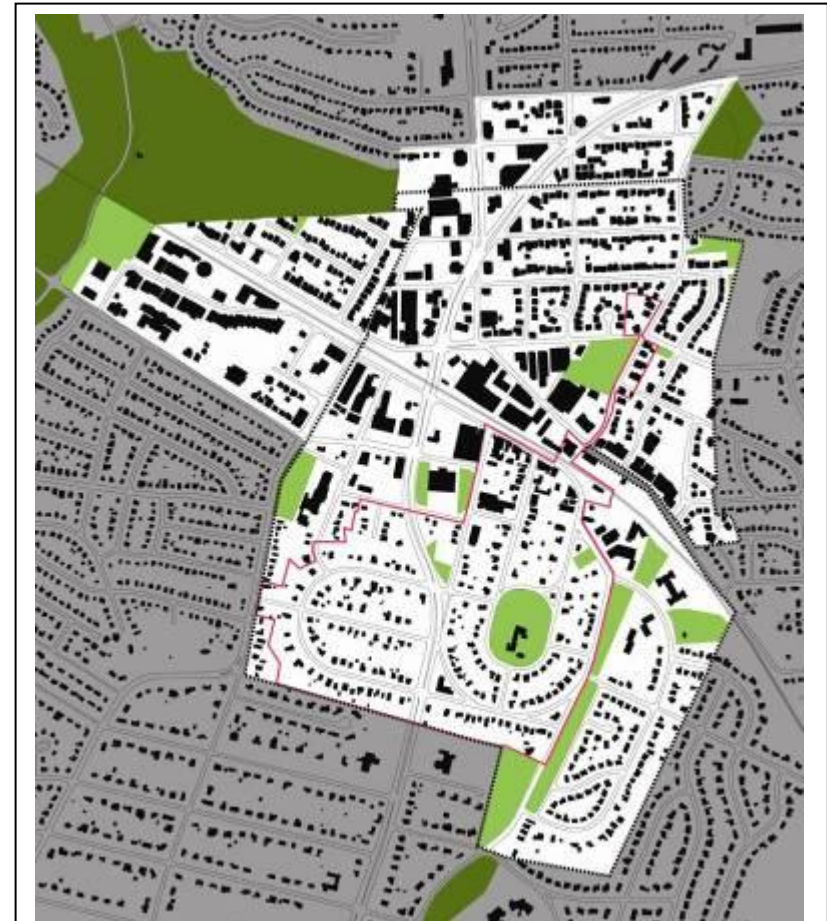
context

The Kensington Sector Plan’s vision is “To promote a mixed-use Town Center with pedestrian-friendly connections to the vibrant neighborhoods that define Kensington.” The Plan sees the Town Center as “a lively and active place with streets that are welcoming and comfortable for residents, workers, and visitors.” (Page 1)

The Plan goes on to describe this vision in more detail, encouraging connectivity that will “create new pathways for townspeople to move car free throughout the Town, enjoying a healthier, more sustainable community.” Through design, the Plan encourages “redefining public spaces for people and creating activity along sidewalks through smart design of buildings and the spaces around them.” It also seeks to define “new public spaces that will exemplify the unique scale and character of Kensington.”



Kensington-Wheaton Planning Area



Kensington Sector Plan Area

The Plan's recommendations seek to protect the environment by "promoting sustainable infill and reuse, with a goal of creating a neighborhood with the lowest feasible carbon footprint," and by "implementing effective environmental practices that will inspire current residents and future generations to become stewards of the environment."

Finally, the Plan seeks to create diversity in "an active Town Center with new residential uses," and to promote "the community's heritage through its buildings, spaces, and people."

To fulfill the Plan's vision, the guidelines promote design that encourages building designed with pedestrians in mind and the creation of attractive gathering places.



Buildings

- Activate the pedestrian realm
- Create consistent street walls
- Promote concealed parking



Open Space

- Create networks of open spaces
- Create activated gathering spaces
- Promote consolidation of small spaces



Streets

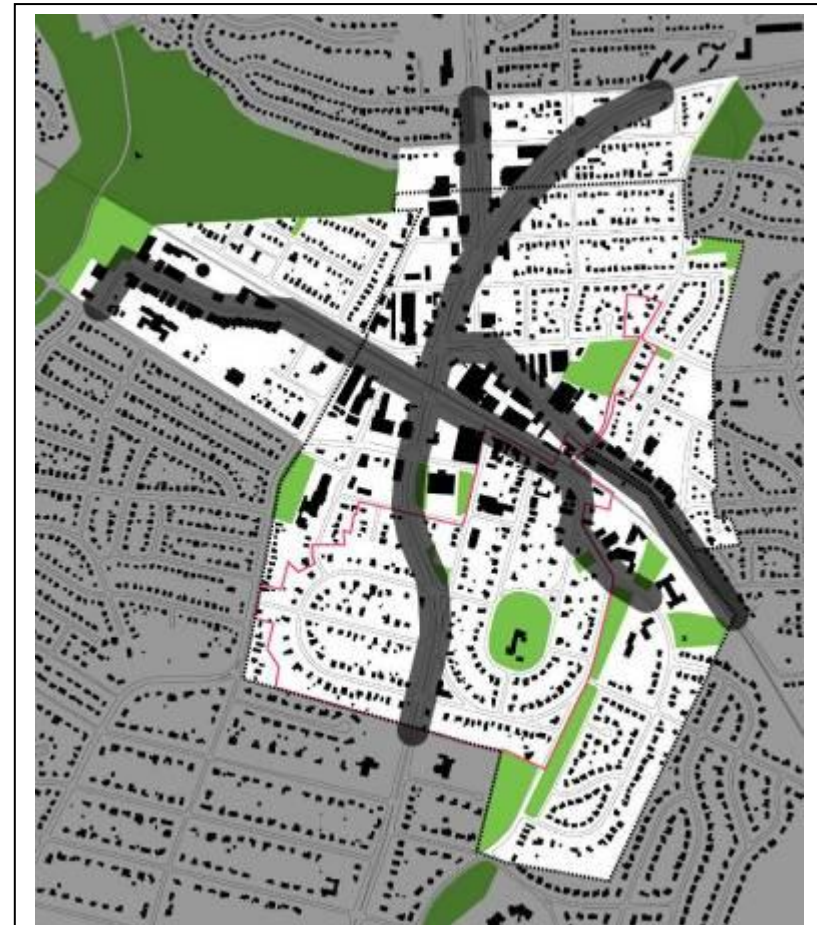
- Create active pedestrian environments
- Promote pedestrian safety
- Encourage undergrounding of utilities

The Plan also has some specific design goals:

Enhance Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard to provide better safety and function for all modes of transportation. (page 18)

Develop Howard Avenue as a continuous, active, pedestrian street on both side of Connecticut Avenue. (page 19)

Create a mixed residential and commercial thoroughfare with a distinct pedestrian orientation on both sides of Metropolitan Avenue. (page 23)

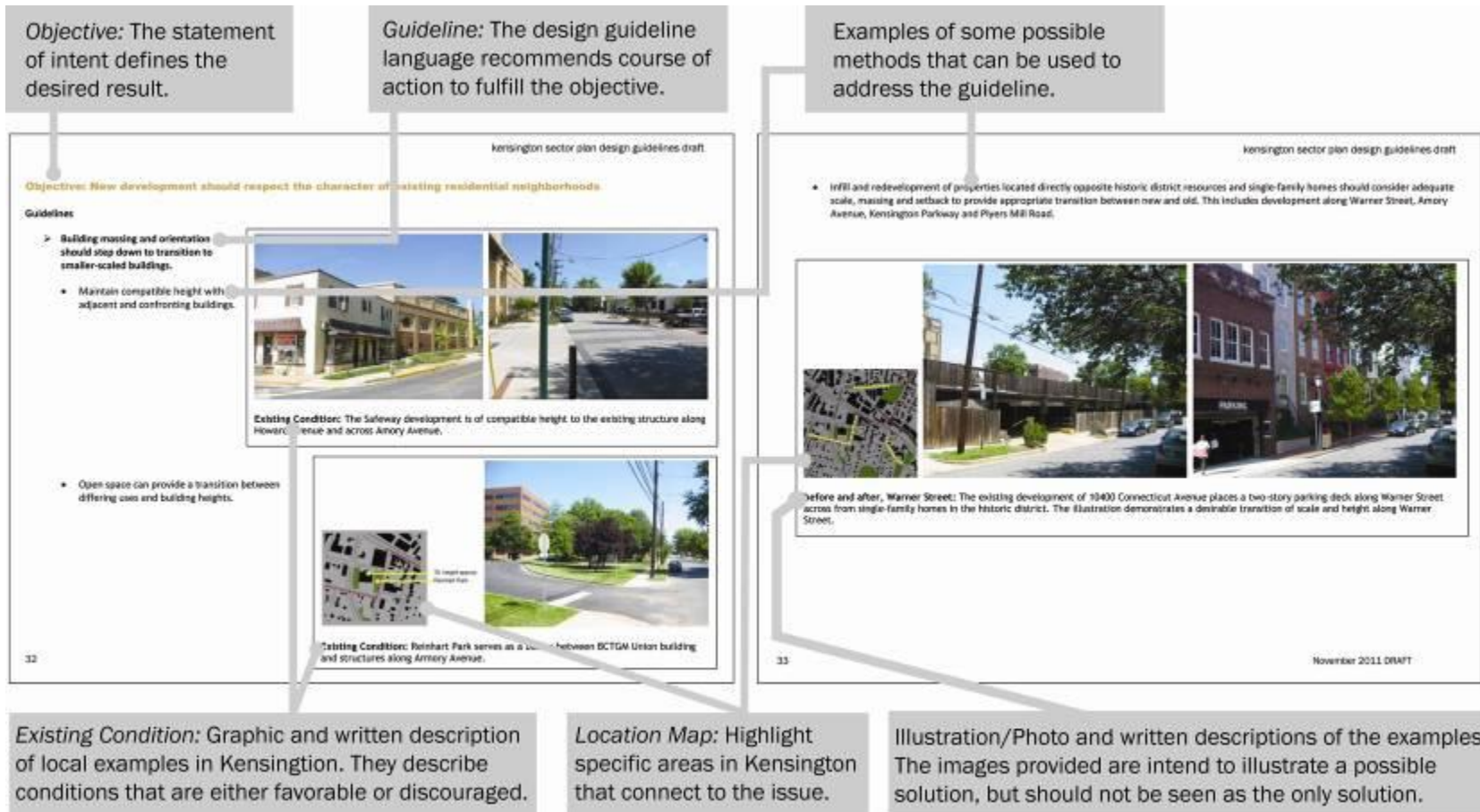


Development along Connecticut Avenue, University Boulevard, Howard Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue will define the center of Kensington. The design concepts of the Sector Plan focus on development along these thoroughfares.

guidelines

The guidelines are organized under the following headings: Kensington character, pedestrian connections, pedestrian-oriented development, and transitions.

Each objective describes a single intent and has the same structural components:



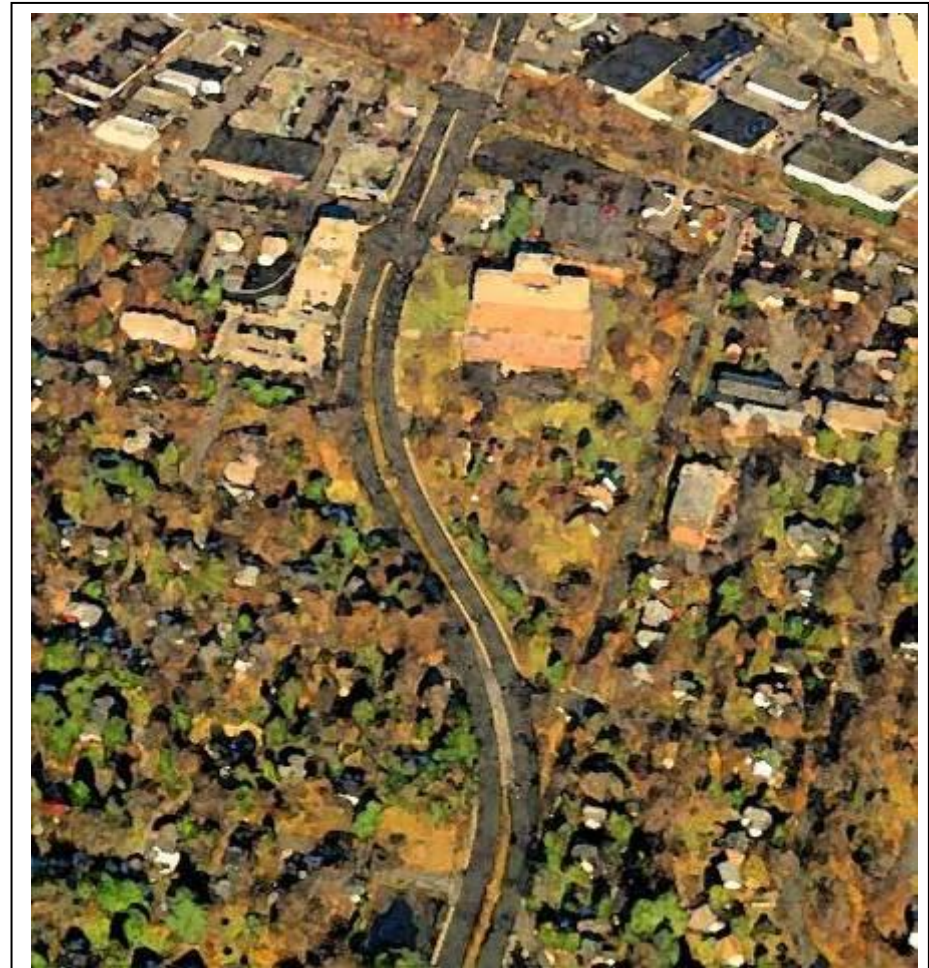
kensington character

From its inception in 1873 as a railroad community, Kensington has developed a unique identity in Montgomery County. With turn-of-the-century Victorian era residences, curvilinear streets, and a well-preserved commercial area, the Kensington Historic District was designated in 1986 to preserve that unique identity. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Kensington Historic District is one of the County's largest with approximately 180 buildings.

Today, Kensington is home to a number of antiques and furnishings stores that attract visitors from throughout the metropolitan Washington region. Many of these businesses are located along Howard Avenue east of Connecticut Avenue in historic Antique Row. Other antique retailers have located among the warehouses and services west of Connecticut Avenue on West Howard Avenue.

There are people, things and places unique to Kensington that promote its identity and image. Railroad community; suburban garden; community founders Brainard Warner, George Knowles, Crosby Noyes; antique dealers; Victorian architecture; Silver and Rock Creeks are examples of Kensington themes. Development proposals should integrate elements that reinforce the town's identity and image.

The Town is rich with a variety of historic architecture. Without dictating architectural style, these guidelines encourage innovative design that is sensitive to the historic architecture, which can be achieved by incorporating characteristics and patterns of the existing architecture into new structures. The goal is not to imitate or duplicate historic buildings, but to enhance the diversity of architecture in Kensington by interpreting certain existing elements in a new way.



Connecticut Avenue in Kensington Sector Area

Objective: Highlight Kensington

Guidelines

- **Manage and protect elements that are important to Kensington's identity.**
 - Use unique architectural elements such as construction materials, windows, doors or façade ornamentation distinctive to Kensington.
 - Consider adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and restoration of buildings that contribute to the area's character.
 - Consider reuse of existing structures, materials and other building components to reduce construction waste. Green deconstruction practices are strongly encouraged.
 - Distinguish new development from historic resources to highlight historic resources. Imitating historic designs may diminish the singularity of the historic original.
 - Incorporate traditional façade elements in new building design.



Illustrations of building upgrade from the County's West Howard Avenue Urban Design Study.



Building reuse at 10412 Montgomery Avenue.

➤ **Provide new, predominantly green open spaces to reinforce the garden suburb theme in Kensington's layout.**

- Increase tree canopy along streets, within existing neighborhoods, commercial areas, and on parkland. (Kensington Sector Plan, page 15)
- Provide a natural complement to, and respite from, the built environment. Use trees, understory plantings, and above-ground plantings.



The space between these structures is enhanced by trees and understory plantings.



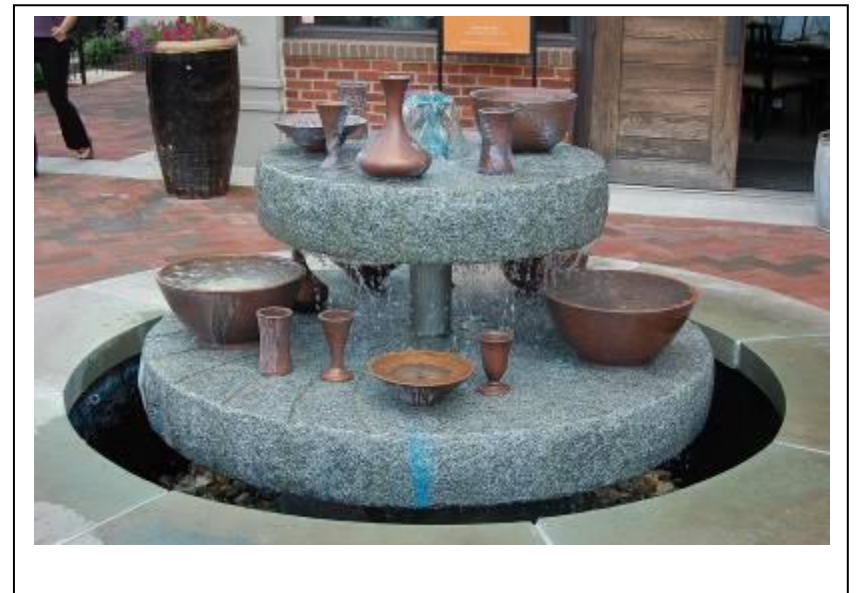
The walk-up automated bank teller along Montgomery Avenue is heavily landscaped.



Using a combination of trees, shrubs and understory planting, Howard Avenue Park represents a lush garden.

➤ **Express local history and identity through design elements and works of public art.**

- Incorporate new public art in building design and public use spaces with a visible street presence. Include the artist into the development team at the conceptual stage in new private projects.
- Include public art in major public infrastructure projects such as bridges, transit systems, railroads or roadways. Include artists, architects, landscape architects and other designers into the design team for major infrastructure projects early in the design process.



pedestrian connections

Objective: Create a high-quality pedestrian network system

Multiple transportation choices are vital to creating a vibrant Town Center. Successful streets accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles. Currently, auto travel is the overwhelmingly predominant mode in Kensington. Improvement to the sidewalks, crosswalks and trails is needed to encourage travel by foot and bicycle. The needs of pedestrians, children, cyclists and the disabled should be balanced with those of motorists and public transit users. An improved pedestrian network will create a healthy balance of transportation that supports a vibrant Town Center.

“The Sector Plan’s recommendations for better connections in Kensington will give pedestrians priority, especially in the Town Center. Physical and operational improvements can easily accommodate current traffic flows while giving pedestrians the ability to move safely and efficiently through Kensington.” (Kensington Sector Plan, page 8)

Streets within the boundaries of the Sector Plan are under varying jurisdiction. The Resource Section of this document provides a map outlining those jurisdictions. These guidelines support the existing street standards which are listed in the Resource Section.

Objective: Create a high-quality pedestrian network system

Guidelines

- **Provide direct and safe routes for pedestrian travel.**
 - Develop defined sidewalk zones: building frontage zone, movement zone, planting/street furniture zone, and curb.



Existing Condition: This pedestrian path is unsafe due to obstructions and its proximity to high speed vehicular traffic.



before and after, West Howard Avenue: Clearly- defined zones of vehicular and pedestrian traffic create a safe environment for pedestrians.

- Provide hardscape or landscape treatment between the vehicular zone on private property abutting the public right-of-way.
- Design intersections to provide safe crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.



With auto-oriented uses such as gas stations and car lots, landscaping can be used to create separation from the public right-of-way.



before and after, Metropolitan Avenue: Existing condition along Metropolitan Avenue places pedestrians between two vehicular zones.



The illustration (left) depicts landscaping between the private property and public right-of-way. The illustration (right) depicts the use of bollards with additional hardscape.

➤ **Use trees and plants to extend the pedestrian character of historic district.**

- Use trees, understory plantings, and above-ground plantings
- Increase tree canopy along streets and within medians, within existing neighborhoods, commercial areas, and on parkland. (Kensington Sector Plan, page 15)



Landscaping within the right-of-way provides a soft complement to the sidewalk and building façade, while providing an attractive buffer for pedestrians.



Existing Condition: The understory plantings at Howard Park also provide color and visual interest.

➤ **Incorporate amenities and attractions for pedestrians.**

- Locate street-activating uses along the principal streets. They are also encouraged along some adjacent streets.



Street-activating uses located along the blue lines will connect existing attractions and create a lively and active Town Center as envisioned in the Sector Plan. (Kensington Sector Plan, page 1)



Existing Conditions: The Safeway along Armory Avenue (the larger building on the left) does not provide street activity.



Temporary or mobile installations, such as this coffee stand, can create street activation in areas where the land use does not.

- Maintain a line of building facades and storefronts to define sidewalk edge. Avoid excessive setbacks.



Existing Condition: Lack of building facades with display windows or entrances along this sidewalk on the Safeway property creates a dead zone.



Active building frontage along the edge of a sidewalk helps create a more animated street environment.



Map of preferred build-to lines. Build-to Lines ensure buildings frame the streets and public spaces. Excessive setbacks should be avoided.

- Projections such as awnings and canopies provide weather protection for pedestrians, create variety, and strengthen the image of individual businesses.



Awnings and canopies are easy installations that add character to building facades.

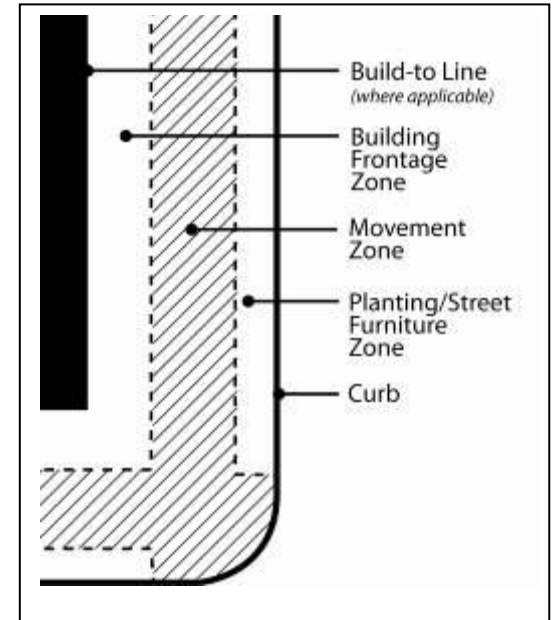
- Create permeability between the street and store activity. Where feasible, provide space to accommodate transition between street and storefront.



Existing Condition: Displaying goods for sale outside of a storefront is an excellent technique to add visual interest to the street.



Building frontage zone can be used for outdoor dining. Such spaces should be well defined with railing and/or planters.



Activity along sidewalk should be limited to the Building Frontage Zone and the Planting/Street Furniture Zone.

- Avoid creating blank walls on the façades along the CSX rail line, across from Antique Row.



Development with along the railroad tracks should avoid blank facades since it may be visible from Antique Row.



New development along the rail line can provide an inhabitable area that can enhance the view from along Antique Row across the railroad tracks.



before and after: The illustration (below) depicts the use of massing and façade articulation to create a visually viewed interesting façade from Antique Row.

pedestrian connections

Objective: Create public use space where neighbors socialize

A network of public use spaces should provide comfortable and attractive spaces that offer a range of experiences. The creation of such a system will provide for a healthier environment by mitigating the effects of pollution and providing opportunities for recreation, respite, and enjoyment. Public use spaces should incorporate features that engage all age groups from young children to the elderly.

The Sector Plan seeks to create a system of parks and open spaces linked by bikeways and sidewalks to meet the increasing demand for outdoor gathering space. In the Town Center, the location and design of urban open space should support social life, sense of place, and economic vitality. (Kensington Sector Plan, page 13)

Some spaces will be privately owned and maintained for public use. For small parcels, public use space may be combined to create a larger gathering space.

Objective: Create public use space where neighbors socialize

Guidelines

- **Public use space on private property should be assessable from the sidewalk.**
 - Walls and planting should not block or screen space from the sidewalk.
 - Space should be at grade with the sidewalk. Elevation changes can create barriers.



Existing Condition: Free of visual and physical barriers, Howard Avenue Park is inviting from the sidewalk



This retailer maximizes the use of this small space.

➤ **Locate space in areas of high visibility.**

- Public open space should be in highly visible locations that are animated by adjacent land uses. Location should provide opportunities for casual monitoring from its perimeter and abutting developments.
- Public open space is not preferred in areas continuously shaded by surrounding buildings.
- Lighting should be provided for visibility.



Existing Condition: Natural Surveillance is a principle of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)

➤ **Incorporate seating in public use space.**

- Incorporate seating in choice locations: near building entrances, in shade, in sun, toward street, near activity/amenity.
- A variety of seating types: single/couple/groups; fixed and moveable should be provided.
- Seating should be comfortable.



Seating can add visual interest.

➤ **Design flexible spaces to accommodate a variety of activities.**

- Provide infrastructure to support events such as electrical outlets, water supply, and lighting.
- Provide amenities appropriate for size and program(s) such as water features, game tables, play equipment, kiosks, and tables.
- Consider providing drinking fountains and waste receptacles which are practical, essential amenities.
- Consider interactive public art as an effective tool to activate small spaces.



before and after, 10401 Connecticut Avenue: The plaza does not provide for any activity to encourage people to congregate there.

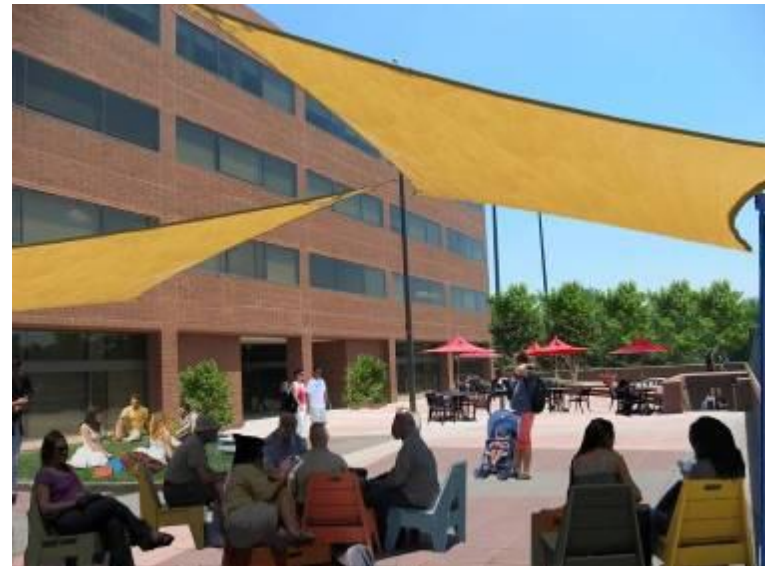


Illustration of the plaza accommodating a variety of activities.

pedestrian-oriented buildings

The orientation, height, massing, and facade of buildings shape the character of a place. These guidelines encourage building design that fulfills the functional needs of its use while reinforcing pedestrian activity. The goal is to produce private and public development that enhances the public realm and protects the environment.

Because of their inherent automobile-orientation, service stations, car lots, and auto repair shops present unique design challenges in pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use areas. These guidelines seek to enhance the character and quality of the public realm while balancing the needs of motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

The Sector Plan promotes safe, pedestrian-oriented environments that create an animated community life along the sidewalks. (Kensington Sector Plan, page 11) The following guidelines illustrate how buildings can be street-oriented.

Objective: Design structures that enhance the pedestrian experience

Guidelines

➤ **Orient buildings to face the sidewalk.**

- Provide the main entrance of buildings directly from the street. Entries can be articulated through the use of building massing, special architectural features, or changes in the roof line.
- Provide an entrance to portions of the building above the ground floor through a street level entrance.



Photos depict a variety of façade treatments that address the sidewalk.

- **For large development, vary building massing along sidewalk for visual interest.**
 - For scale and visual interest, break down building mass into a hierarchy of volumes. Avoid creating large, monolithic structures.



- Consider a building entry, additional or varied building massing, or distinctive architectural elements at corners.



➤ **Reduce the visual impact of auto-oriented uses: parking structures.**

- The use of underground parking and parking structures is preferred over surface parking lots.
- Locate parking facilities in the rear or side yard with vehicular access from side streets. Parking structures facing the street should have active ground level uses with pedestrian details.
- Incorporate vegetation through green roofs, rooftop gardens and green walls.



The punched window openings and planters create a traditional façade for this parking garage.



The design of this parking facility is appropriate for an industrial area, like West Howard Avenue.

➤ **Reduce the visual impact of auto-oriented uses: gas stations.**

- Locate gas station convenience store structures close to the street to help define the street edge. Provide an entrance with transparent windows and doors from street sidewalk.
- Avoid blank wall along active street frontage. If car wash facades line public streets, use clear windows with interior views into the car wash.
- Provide wide landscaped buffers to separate parking areas, driveways and stacking lanes from the sidewalk. Trees, shrubs, and low planting walls should be used to screen the visibility of cars.
- Provide ground mounted monumental signs which are preferred over signs on the station canopy.



The building design and site layout of this gas station support the pedestrian realm while accommodating vehicular traffic associated with its use.



This gas station convenience store provides an entrance from the sidewalk.

transitions

The existing single-family neighborhoods contribute to Kensington's overall vitality and they are an important part of creating an active community life. Preserving this residential character is paramount. The Plan recommends a cluster of taller buildings along Connecticut Avenue. "Buildings at the edges of the Town Center are recommended for lower height to ensure gradual transitions of buildings to the adjoining residential neighborhoods." (Kensington Sector Plan, page 18) The following guidelines offer further recommendations to develop new structures that are not intrusive to existing neighborhoods.

Objective: New development should respect the character of existing residential neighborhoods

Guidelines

- **Building massing should step down to transition to smaller-scaled buildings.**
 - Maintain compatible height with adjacent and confronting buildings.



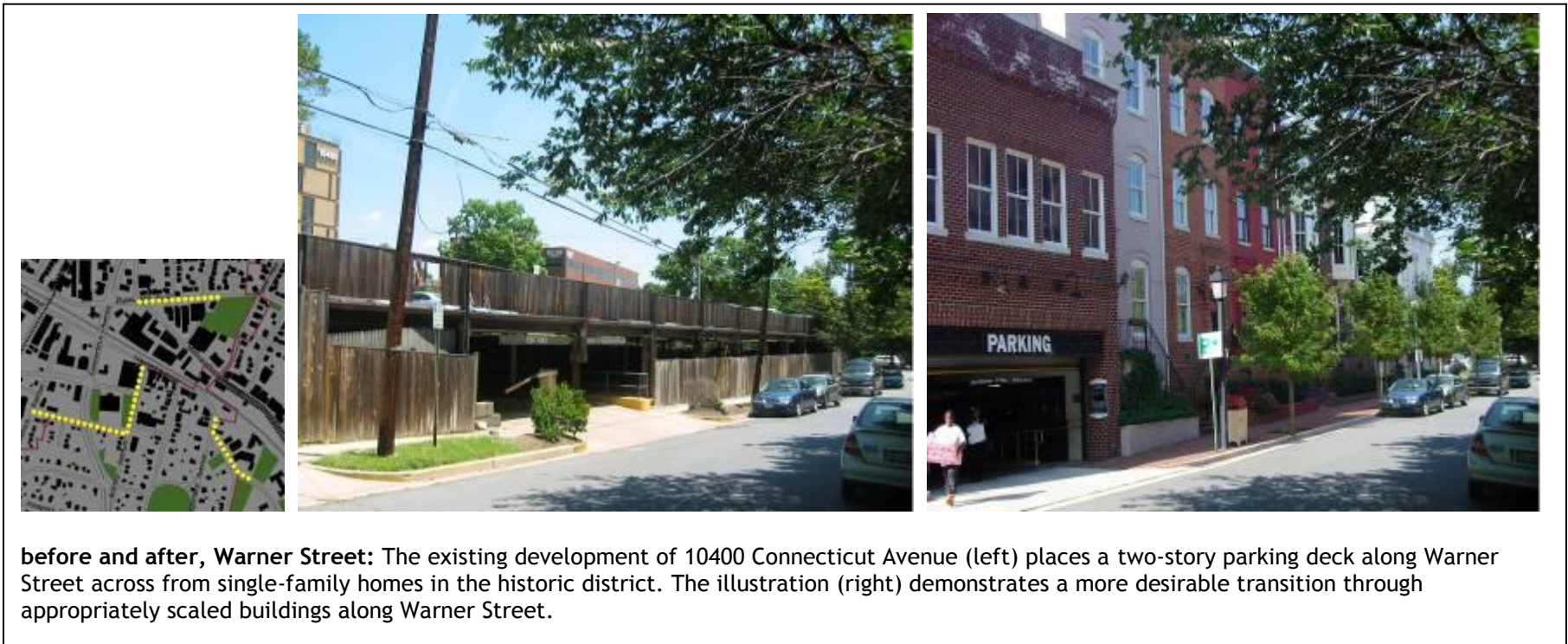
Existing Condition: The Safeway development is of compatible height to the existing structure along Howard Avenue and across Armory Avenue.

- Open space can provide a transition between differing uses and building heights.

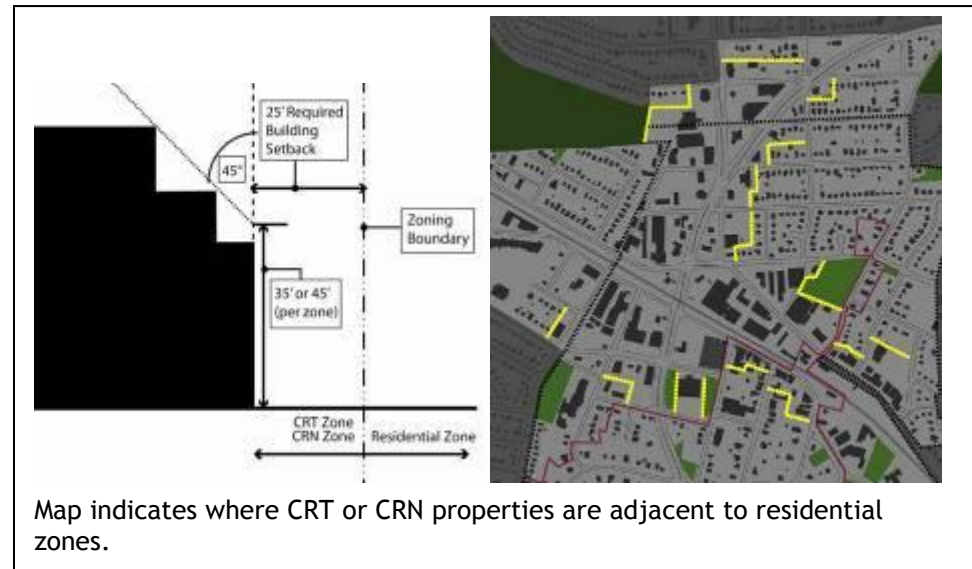


Existing Condition: Reinhart Park serves as a buffer between BCTGM Union building and structures along Armory Avenue.

- Infill and redevelopment of properties located directly opposite historic district resources and single-family homes should consider adequate scale, massing and setback to provide appropriate transition between new and old. This includes development along Warner Street, Amory Avenue, Kensington Parkway and Plyers Mill Road.



- Per the CR Zones requirements, “Where a property is adjacent to a lot or parcel in an applicable residential zone, any building: must have a minimum setback of 25 feet or the setback required by the adjacent property, whichever is greater; and must not project beyond a 45 degree angular plane 45 feet in CRT zones or 35 feet in CRN zones” 59-C-15.72, Setbacks.

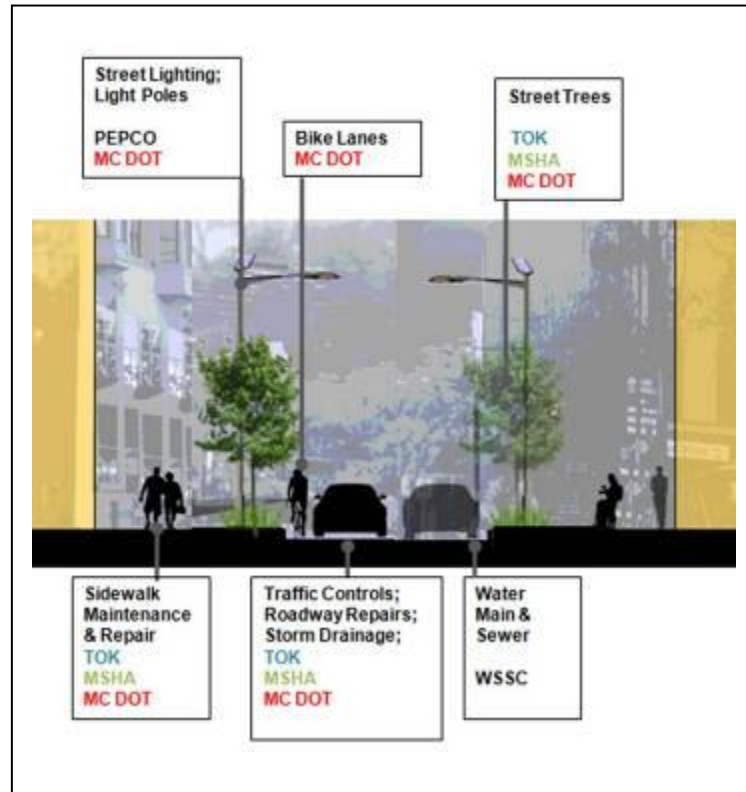
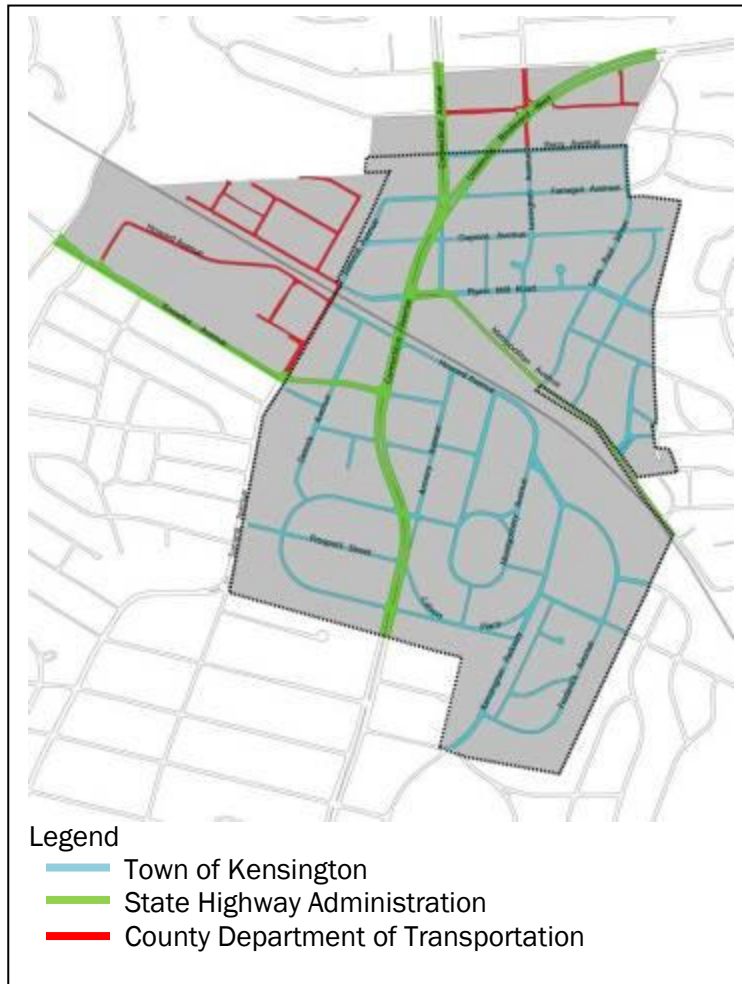


- **Shadows and lighting glare should be mitigated on neighboring residential buildings.**
 - Provide trees and hedges to screen and create separation between commercial and residential uses.
 - Use lighting fixtures with shields.



resources

The streets within the boundaries of the sector Plan area are under varying jurisdiction. Right-of-ways within the Town of Kensington boundaries are under the purview of the Town. Right-of-ways outside the Town boundaries are under County’s purview. Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard are under the purview of the State Highway Administration.



The Town of Kensington has a list of approved streetscape furniture for roads under their jurisdiction.



The following list is provided as a reference tool, is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to be exhaustive.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance

Chapter 59 http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery_county_md/

Montgomery County Code

http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery_county_md/

Chapter 19 Erosions, Sediment Control and Stormwater Management

Chapter 22A Forest Conservation-Trees

Chapter 24A Historic Preservation Ordinance

Chapter 47 Vendors

Chapter 49 Streets and Roads

Chapter 50 Subdivision

DHCA West Howard Avenue Urban Design Study

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/dhca/West_Howard/west_howard_avenue_book_final_100609_low_res_landscape.pdf

DPS Outdoor Café Seating Guide

<http://permittingservices.montgomerycountymd.gov/permitting/pdf/OutdoorCafeSeating.pdf>

DPS Sidewalk Vendor Operation and License

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/SCANNED_DOCS/20070227_16-61.pdf

DPS Building Construction – Building Codes & Standards

<http://permittingservices.montgomerycountymd.gov/dpstmpl.asp?url=/permitting/bc/nfbldc.asp>

DOT Pedestrian Safety

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dottmpl.asp?url=/Content/dot/dir/pedsafety/index.asp>

Town of Kensington

Forms, Permits & Fees

<http://www.tok.md.gov/c/257/permits-regulations>

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

M-NCPPC Kensington Sector Plan

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/kensington/index.shtm>

M-NCPPC County Bikeways Functional Master Plan

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/bikeways/A_A/contents.shtm

M-NCPPC Development Manual

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/development_manual/index.shtm

M-NCPPC Commercial Residential Zone Overview

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/com_res_zones.shtm

M-NCPPC Historic Preservation Office

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/>

Others

Disability Rights Legislation and Accessibility Guidelines and Standards in the United States

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalks/contents.htm>

Chapter 2: Characteristic of Pedestrians

Chapter 4: Sidewalk Design Guidelines and Existing Practices

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design

http://www.cptedsecurity.com/cpted_design_guidelines.htm

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

<http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/>

November 2011

kensington sector plan design guidelines

Draft



Montgomery County Planning Department
M-NCPPC

MontgomeryPlanning.org



1011000031