



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 16, 2004

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief
Countywide Planning Division
John Carter, Chief JAC
Community-Based Planning Division
Carlton Gilbert, Zoning Supervisor
Development Review Division

FROM: Mary Dolan, Environmental Planning
Countywide Planning
Fred Vernon Boyd, Community Planner FVB
Georgia Avenue Team
Greg Russ, Planner Coordinator GR

PURPOSE: To amend the Zoning Ordinance to create an Environmental Overlay Zone for the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area

TEXT AMENDMENT: Not applicable until introduced

REVIEW BASIS: Advisory to the County Council sitting as the District Council, Chapter 59, the Zoning Ordinance

INTRODUCED BY: N/A

INTRODUCED DATE: N/A

PLANNING BOARD REVIEW: July 22, 2004

PUBLIC HEARING: N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION Approval to transmit Zoning Text Amendment to District Council for Introduction

BACKGROUND

During the District Council review of the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan, the Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee and the full Council

extensively discussed the appropriate tools for the protection of stream quality in the Use III portion of the Upper Rock Creek watershed (north of Muncaster Mill Road). Although the Planning Board Draft reflected the Planning's Board's conclusion that low zoning densities would result in imperviousness levels sufficient to protect stream quality without Special Protection Area (SPA) designation, the Council recommended an SPA along with an imperviousness limit of 8 percent on properties with sewer service. This Zoning Text Amendment has been drafted to implement the District Council's decision with respect to the imperviousness cap (see Attachment 1 for the ZTA language and Attachment 2 for Special Protection Area and Overlay Zone coverage).

The Council's discussion and consideration of an overlay zone responded to concerns that, while the Planning Board staff's projections assumed levels of imperviousness based on existing subdivisions, an additional amount of imperviousness should be anticipated as landowners continue to improve their property over time and as remaining vacant parcels develop. Councilmember Praisner requested that the Committee recommend an 8 percent imperviousness cap to allow room for impervious surfaces that are added after new homeowners take possession of their properties.

ANALYSIS

Applicability

The PHED Committee and the Council debated the imposition of a cap and whether it should be 10 percent or 8 percent. The Council ultimately recommended the 8 percent cap. After this decision, the Council received comments from property owners of parcels zoned RE-1 and RE-2 in areas outside the sewer envelope that the 8 percent cap would represent a substantial reduction of their zoning yield. Their inability to cluster development on these properties due to zoning regulations (in the RE-2 zone) and to the standards for septic field design and location, would likely result in higher levels of imperviousness (6.8-12.5 percent) because of the long roads and driveways sometimes necessary to reach areas of the properties that can accommodate septic field percolation. The Council then amended its recommendation to limit the imperviousness cap to properties with public sewer service. The properties most likely to be affected by the 8 percent imperviousness cap would be those close to the edges of the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area (as indicated by the sewer envelope in Attachment 3). ***Staff recommends adding an applicability section to deal with the focus on properties served by sewer.***

Public Uses

The Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan includes a provision that public uses and road improvements not be precluded by the imperviousness cap. While some agency representatives argued for exempting these uses altogether, the Council felt

that not including these uses in the exemption would require them to keep imperviousness as low as possible. Under the proposed ZTA, waivers would be required if these uses exceed the 8 percent cap.

The County Council resolution designating the Special Protection Area in Upper Paint Branch includes this provision but the Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone does not include it in the zoning text. ***Staff recommends including wording in the applicability provisions for public uses in the Upper Rock Creek Overlay Zone.***

Catherine Fraley Property

The Council also asked that the Master Plan include a special provision for the Catherine Fraley property to exempt it from the overlay zone if the plans submitted included Moderately Priced Dwelling Units. A revised plan for this property, which includes MPDU's, is currently pending. ***Staff has included language in the overlay zone section on applicability to recognize the special conditions with respect to this property.***

If the Planning Board wishes, one option would be to change the boundary of the proposed overlay zone to exclude this property. However, the boundary is established in the master plan.

Concerns Not Discussed by District Council

The Council indicated that the overlay zone should be fashioned after the overlay used in the Upper Paint Branch. The District Council did not provide a comprehensive review of the Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone, and there are a few concerns that emerge:

1. **Industrial and Commercial Properties** - The Upper Rock Creek Planning Area has three currently undeveloped parcels of I-1 and I-4 zoning within a larger, industrially zoned area. In addition, a small amount of commercial zoning also exists at the intersection of Muncaster Mill Road and Muncaster/Redland Road (see proposed zoning map, Attachment 4). There are approximately 12 acres that are vacant in these zones. Unlike the residential zones in Upper Rock Creek these zones permit densities far in excess of the 8% impervious surface. Placing an imperviousness cap of 8 percent on these areas will likely substantially constrain the use of these properties. To a large degree, having these zones within a Special Protection Area is inconsistent with an 8% impervious cap. The text proposes an exemption for properties in these zones. Otherwise, they would have to apply for a waiver under the hardship provisions to develop uses allowed by the zone. This situation was not raised in the County Council's discussion on imposing an

impervious surface cap. **Staff has included an exemption for these zones.**

2. **Limitations on Permitted Uses** - The Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone (see Attachment 5) includes a list of uses that are permitted if they comply with certain requirements (organic certification, integrated pest management and soil and water conservation plans). These include landscape contractors, retail nurseries or garden centers, wholesale nursery or greenhouses, golf courses and country clubs and riding stables. Since the adoption of the Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay zone, these safeguards have been replaced by other zoning requirements, state regulations and standard industry practices. **Staff has not included this provision in the proposed Upper Rock Creek Environmental Overlay zone.**

3. **Prohibited Uses** - The Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone includes a list of uses that are prohibited, including heliports, helistops, automobile filling stations, automobile repair facilities, underground and above ground petroleum pipelines. The Upper Rock Creek SPA has many of these uses already and the industrial zones permit many uses that could have materials that, if improperly handled, would adversely affect water quality. It would be difficult to include the same list as the Paint Branch without prohibiting a large number of uses permitted in the industrial zones (see attached tables). **Staff has not included this provision in the proposed Upper Rock Creek Environmental Overlay zone.**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has prepared its adaptation of the Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone to the unique conditions of Upper Rock Creek and our understanding of the District Council's intent. Staff believes that the proposed overlay zone meets the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan's goal of protecting water quality in this watershed. As such, staff recommends that the proposed Zoning Text Amendment be transmitted to the County Council for introduction.

Attachments

1. Proposed ZTA for the Upper Rock Creek Environmental Overlay Zone
2. Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area Map
3. Upper Rock Creek Sewer Envelope Map
4. Upper Rock Creek Proposed Zoning Map
5. Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone
6. Tables of Permitted Uses in the I-1 and I-4 Zones