



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning

November 12, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: Marilyn Clemens, Project Planner and Urban Designer (301/495-4572),
Community-Based Planning Division *MC*

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Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Work Session No. 3: Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle
Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD

The purpose of this staff report and the next work session is to review the final recommendations for the Woodmont Triangle Amendment. The revisions discussed by the Planning Board in the previous work sessions have been incorporated into the enclosed Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the Planning Board recommendations discussed during the previous two work sessions, the staff recommends that the following be incorporated into the Planning Board Draft:

1. Change the list and description of Amenities and Facilities
2. Consolidate the guidelines for development into one section
3. Include recommendations that encourage the use of green building technology
4. Approve two additional zoning changes
5. Formulate Zoning Text Amendments to the CBD Zones to assist in the implementation of the Amendment

After the review, the staff recommends that the enclosed Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD with any required additions be transmitted to the County Executive and County Council.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS ACTIONS

The Staff Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment was based on discussions during six months of community workshops and meetings that framed the vision and recommendations for the revitalization of the Woodmont Triangle.

During Work Session No. 1, the Planning Board discussed housing, transportation, schools, retail, zoning, floor area ratio and building height. The need for housing, methods to preserve small-scale retail, and the adequacy of the schools and the transportation system were key features of the discussion. All changes resulting from this work session have been incorporated into the enclosed Amendment.

During Work Session No. 2, the Planning Board discussed the sections on amenities and facilities, general guidelines, and implementation for the Woodmont Triangle. The staff revised the list of amenities and facilities, consolidated the guidelines, and finalized the zoning recommendations. These revisions have also been incorporated into the enclosed Amendment.

SCHEDULE

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| • Completion of Staff Draft | April 2004 |
| • Planning Board Public Hearing | May 20, 2004 |
| • Work Session No. 1: Housing, Transportation, Schools, Retail, Zoning, FAR, and Building Height | July 29, 2004 |
| • Work Session No. 2: Public Amenities and Facilities, Urban Design Guidelines, and Implementation | September 30, 2004 |
| • Work Session No. 3: Final Recommendations and Transmit the Planning Board Draft to the County Executive and County Council | November 18, 2004 |

DISCUSSION

In response to the discussions with the Planning Board and correspondence, staff recommends incorporating the following into the Woodmont Triangle Amendment.

PUBLIC AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

Staff Recommendations:

- Revise the list of prioritized public amenities and facilities
- Eliminate specific references to the size of proposed facilities and to specific non-profit organizations

Discussion

A prioritized list of public amenities and facilities is included in the Amendment to support housing and revitalization. The public facilities and amenities already included in the existing projects represent a significant contribution to the vitality of the Woodmont Triangle. The prioritized list of public facilities and amenities will augment and expand opportunities in the Woodmont Triangle. Additional text and illustrations have been incorporated into the Amendment. The following discussion identifies the major amenities and facilities included in the Amendment.

Norfolk Avenue – Improving the streetscape of Norfolk Avenue is a primary goal. The initial pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements will be implemented by the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT). Each future project will be encouraged to augment these improvements. Projects located near Norfolk Avenue would be the prime candidates to provide the listed features as a major part of their package of amenities.

Streetscape Improvements on Other Streets in the Triangle – As projects along Cordell Avenue and other streets in the Woodmont Triangle are proposed, streetscape will be implemented. A minimum of 15 feet of sidewalk space should be provided in order to accommodate outdoor seating, street trees, streetlights and sidewalk space.

Battery Lane Urban Park – Battery Lane Urban Park is the major green space in the Woodmont Triangle. A future facility plan should include an improved entrance and a place for public gatherings and events. Additional land should be acquired near the entrance to this park to improve visibility and safety. A portion of the intersection of Rugby Avenue and Norfolk Avenue should be used to improve pedestrian and bicycle access, and strengthen the connection between this park and Norfolk Avenue. The existing bikeway should be improved as an important link between the Bethesda Trolley Trail and the Capital Crescent Trail.

Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections – The blocks between Fairmont and Auburn Avenues adjacent to Old Georgetown Road are approximately 450 feet long. Providing mid-block pedestrian connections will improve access for residents, clients and customers between these blocks. Shops, restaurants, residential entrances, and studios for artists could have entrances on these connections. The Betty Anne Krahnke Intermission Terrace is an example of a mid-block connection that provides access to the Imagination Stage. Development projects located in the blocks between Old Georgetown Road and Norfolk Avenue should construct the mid-block connections.

New Streets between Battery Lane and Rugby Avenue – Vehicular and pedestrian connections should be significantly improved between Battery Lane and Rugby Avenue through the addition of new, north-south streets. Redevelopment and renovation of the adjacent multiple family properties should provide these streets.

Space for the Arts – The arts are an important part of the Woodmont Triangle District. Space for the arts can be provided through the development process as part of an amenity package. Dance studio space, an arts incubator, and performance space are some of the features on the recommended list of public facilities and amenities.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Staff Recommendations:

- Consolidate the guidelines for development in the Public Hearing Draft into the General Guidelines section
- Eliminate references to maximum building heights, except along Old Georgetown Road
- Clarify the distinction between off-site public use space and off-site amenity

Discussion

Projects in the Woodmont Triangle should be developed in accordance with the proposed General Guidelines. These guidelines describe setbacks for buildings along Norfolk Avenue. They also allow the Zoning Ordinance to establish the maximum building height except along Old Georgetown Road. The revised guidelines also provide a list of recommended off-site public use spaces and off-site amenities to be used in the review of Optional Method of Development projects.

THE ENVIRONMENT**Staff Recommendation:**

- Encourage the use of green building technology in the Woodmont Triangle

Discussion

Text has been added that is intended to encourage the use of green building technology in projects.

ZONING CHANGES**Staff Recommendations:**

- Increase the R-10/TDR area by moving the TDR line shown in the 1994 Sector Plan to coincide with the western boundary of lot 8.
- Provide an option for properties located along Old Georgetown Road, Glenbrook Road and Rugby Avenue, currently zoned R-60, to redevelop using the PD-44 Zone.

Discussion

Since the last work session, two changes to the proposed zoning have been included. Letters from property owners are enclosed. The zoning line separating the R-10 area from the R-10/TDR area should be moved west to coincide with the edge of lot 8. This will create a limited opportunity to provide additional TDRs without significantly increasing density. The property owners support the change.

Staff recommends a density of approximately 50 units per acre for properties located along Old Georgetown Road, Rugby Avenue and Glenbrook Road. The use of the PD-44 Zone is recommended to provide for this increase in density. The density allowed in the PD-44 Zone provides the opportunity to develop housing at a density similar to the adjacent properties in the R-10 Zone. This recommendation also provides an opportunity for the existing church, the Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, and adjacent parcels to redevelop. Housing for the elderly should be encouraged. The church would prefer the use of the R-10 Zone or the PD-88 Zone because of the reduced requirements for green space and the increase in density. The other properties in the R-60 Zone have not reviewed these recommended changes.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

Staff Recommendation:

Initiate zoning text amendments to assist in the implementation of the Amendment:

- Allow the required public use space in the Optional Method of Development to be located off-site
- Reduce the minimum lot size required in the Optional Method of Development to 18,000 square feet
- Allow the transfer of density between parcels on the same block throughout the Woodmont Triangle to encourage the retention of existing small businesses
- Eliminate the coverage limitation and reduce the green space requirements in the R-10 Zone to encourage the retention of affordable housing

Discussion

The following text amendments have been included, but they are not required to implement the Woodmont Triangle Amendment. These text amendments should be included as part of a more comprehensive examination of modifications to the CBD Zones.

Public Use Space - As an incentive to locate moderately priced dwelling units on-site, the staff supports flexibility in fulfilling the public use space requirement for the Optional Method of Development. Public use space may be provided off-site. One or more developers may build public use space together. The public use space must be tied to the construction and phasing of each project. This will also provide an opportunity for applicants to provide a variety of significant urban spaces where they are most needed.

Minimum Lot Size for the Optional Method of Development - The current minimum lot size for use of the Optional Method of Development is 22,000 square feet. This lot size is intended to encourage assembly of lots and the provision of significant amenities and facilities. The average lot size in the Woodmont Triangle is approximately 6,000 square feet. The minimum lot size could be reduced to 18,000 square feet to provide additional opportunities for the use of the Optional Method of Development. This reduced lot size would still encourage assembly of lots and provide significant public use space. An enclosed letter recommends a reduction of the lot size to 12,000 square feet. A text amendment regarding the minimum lot size will be part of the comprehensive review of the CBD zones.

Transfer of Density - This text amendment is intended to permit an existing business to transfer unused density to other sites located within the same block. This transfer of density offers a method to retain some of the character of the existing area and support existing businesses.

Multiple Family Zones – The Amendment recommends that the coverage requirement in the existing R-10 Zone be eliminated. The amendment also recommends that the requirement for green space in the R-10 Zone be reduced from 50 percent to 35 percent to match the requirement in the TS-R Zone. These revisions should be limited to areas within or adjacent to central business districts.

CONCLUSION

After review, the staff recommends that the enclosed Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD be transmitted to the County Executive and County Council.

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Attachments:

1. Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD
2. Staff Report: Work Session No. 1
3. Staff Report: Work Session No. 2
4. Summary of Public Testimony of the Public Hearing and Staff Response
5. Letters