



December 9, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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

John A. Carter, Chief *JAC*
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Work Session No. 4: Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle
Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD

The purpose of this staff report is to incorporate the Planning Board's comments from the last work session and the recently approved Zoning Text Amendments concerning moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) into the Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the following items be included in the Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment:

1. Guidelines for Building Height - Provide additional recommendations for building height including a table of guidelines
2. List of Amenities and Facilities – Revise the list of Amenities and Facilities
3. Zoning Text Amendments - Incorporate the recently approved Zoning Text Amendments for moderately priced dwelling units into the Implementation Chapter

After review and approval of any modifications, the staff recommends that the Planning Board Draft with modifications be transmitted to the County Council and County Executive before the end of 2004.

PURPOSE OF THE WOODMONT TRIANGLE AMENDMENT

Three work sessions have been held over the last several months to discuss the Amendment. The following paragraphs summarize the purpose of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment.

The 1994 Approved and Adopted Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD divides the Woodmont Triangle area into four separate districts. These districts include the Woodmont Triangle District located south of Rugby Avenue, the Battery Lane District located north of Rugby Avenue, the blocks along the east side of Old Georgetown Road, and the blocks along the west side of Wisconsin Avenue.

Since the Sector Plan was approved in 1994, the following development activity has occurred:

- Battery Lane District - Only one dwelling unit has been constructed
- Woodmont Triangle District - One high-rise housing project that exceeds the guidelines for building height in the Sector Plan has been completed, and one high-rise housing project has been approved. A parking structure has been completed including the Imagination Stage.
- Wisconsin Avenue and Old Georgetown Road areas - No projects have been constructed or approved
- An Arts and Entertainment District has been established
- New standards and guidelines have been established by the County Council for moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs).

This purpose of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment is to provide a combined plan for all the districts. The Amendment provides the opportunity to establish a unique mixed-use neighborhood within the Bethesda CBD. The Amendment is intended to address the concerns identified in a series of community charrettes that were not covered in the existing Sector Plan. These concerns include the need to improve opportunities for providing a variety of housing types, the need to address retail revitalization, the lack of pedestrian and vehicular connection between areas, and the need to build on the existing number of highly desirable amenities and facilities that have been constructed since the Sector Plan was approved.

Establish a Variety of Housing Types - The Amendment improves opportunities for housing by increasing the building heights for housing projects, increasing the density for housing, encouraging elderly housing in the Battery Lane area, and encouraging the renovation and retention of older low-rise housing. This Amendment and the recently established Zoning Text Amendments will strongly encourage the construction of moderately priced dwelling units on-site within the Woodmont Triangle instead of encouraging buyouts.

Support Retail Revitalization - The Amendment improves the opportunities for retail by requiring retail space to be located along the Norfolk Avenue Spine and Cordell Avenue as part of the Optional Method of Development. The Plan also proposes a Zoning Text Amendment that allows retail owners to transfer unused density and take advantage of the provisions in the Optional Method of Development. The proposed housing will also increase the demand for retail.

Improve Connections Between Areas - The amendment identifies two new streets to connect the housing resources in the Battery Lane District to other areas in the Woodmont Triangle and the Metro Station, encourages pedestrian connections in the long blocks located between Old Georgetown Road and Norfolk Avenue, and supports the bikeway along Norfolk Avenue. Improving the safety and attractiveness of all streets continues to be a primary goal in the Woodmont Triangle.

Augment the Existing Amenities and Facilities - The Amendment proposes a list of amenities and facilities that range from establishing Norfolk Avenue as an active central spine, improving the street lighting, improving Battery Lane Urban Park, establishing small urban open spaces, and providing indoor facilities to support the arts. The proposed amenities and facilities are designed to support the goals of the recently established Arts and Entertainment District.

In summary, the purpose of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment is to establish a highly desirable, urban neighborhood within the Bethesda CBD. Although the Amendment increases the potential building height and density, the development is not intended to overburden the existing schools or transportation system. The impact on the schools and transportation system were identified in the earlier work sessions. Any additional building height is located away from the nearby neighborhoods of single-family detached homes.

1. DISCUSSION

In response to the requests from the Planning Board at the previous work sessions and correspondence, staff recommends incorporating the following into the Planning Board Draft.

GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING HEIGHT

Staff Recommendations:

- Include a table of recommended building heights
- Incorporate the recently established changes in the Zoning Ordinance for building height if moderately priced dwelling units are provided on-site
- Provide building height guidelines for the Battery Lane District
- Provide additional language to describe the "step back" for buildings along Norfolk Avenue and adjacent to Veterans Park

Discussion:

Recently approved text amendments allow additional building height for the provision of moderately priced dwelling units on-site. The text amendments do not increase the building height permitted in the applicable zones. In response to the request from the Planning Board, the above items have been incorporated into the Amendment. The following text replaces the paragraphs on page 9, Building Height Limits. Additions are identified by underline, and deletions are indicated by strikethrough.

BUILDING HEIGHT LIMITS

The guidelines for building heights in the 1994 Sector Plan were designed to protect the neighborhoods on the edge of the CBD and to concentrate building height near the Metro station. This amendment continues to support the “step down” of building heights from the Metro station area to the edges of the Central Business District.

Along Norfolk Avenue, buildings will be required to “step back” to provide adequate sunlight onto the sidewalks to promote an active pedestrian environment. The section located on the last page of the Amendment provides an illustration of the “step back” of buildings along Norfolk Avenue. Maintaining adequate sunlight for Veterans Park located at the intersection of Norfolk Avenue and Woodmont Avenue is also an important goal to support active use of this park.

The building height limits shown on page 39 of the existing Sector Plan will be changed for the Woodmont Triangle Study Area. The underlying zones will determine the maximum building height limits, except for properties along Old Georgetown Road, north of St. Elmo Avenue and in accordance with the following table.

Guidelines for Maximum Building Height in Selected Zones within the Woodmont Triangle Area

<u>Guidelines for Maximum Building Height</u>	<u>CBD-2</u>	<u>CBD-R2</u>	<u>CBD-1</u>	<u>R-10</u>	<u>PD-44 and 75</u>
<u>Standard Method</u>	<u>60'</u>	<u>60'</u>	<u>60'</u>	<u>NA**</u>	<u>NA**</u>
<u>Optional Method</u>	<u>143' *</u>	<u>143'</u>	<u>60'-90'</u>	<u>NA**</u>	<u>NA**</u>

Note: *In cases where the provision of on-site MPDUs would otherwise be financially infeasible, this height limit may be increased.

**The building height limits must be compatible with the 3 -10 story heights of the existing buildings in the Battery Lane District.

The modifications to the height limits in the existing Sector Plan are as follows:

- Parcels in the CBD-1, CBD-2 and CBD-R2 zones could ~~will~~ be permitted to develop to the maximum height allowed in the zone, if MPDU's are included on site, in accord with the urban design guidelines.
- Two blocks of the Wisconsin Avenue North Corridor District (existing Sector Plan pages 102-107) were limited to 122 feet by the 1994 Plan. The properties are zoned CBD-1 and CBD-R2; they could ~~will~~ be allowed to develop to the allowable heights of their respective zones.

- The building height limit is removed from several properties in the Battery Lane District (see existing Sector Plan pages 90-94). These properties are zoned PD-75 and R-10/TDR. The older, existing buildings range in height from 3 to 10 stories.
- The maximum building height along Old Georgetown Road will remain 50 feet, except for the two blocks south of St. Elmo Avenue and west of Norfolk Avenue.

2. LIST OF AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

Staff Recommendations:

- Improve the description of the public facilities and amenities.
- Indicate that these amenities and facilities are not listed in order of priority.
- Include the opportunity for a non-profit organization to manage the other facilities and amenities.
- Incorporate comments from the Park Development Division for Battery Lane Urban Park.

Discussion:

In response to the request from the Planning Board, the above items have been incorporated into the Amendment. The following text replaces the paragraphs on page 13 and 14, Public Amenities and Facilities. Additions are identified by underline, and deletions are indicated by strikethrough.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND AMENITIES (Page 13)

The following list represents the priority amenities and facilities for the Woodmont Triangle. Each project should incorporate items from this list as a first priority. Sufficient amenities and facilities must be provided in each project to serve the additional density and building height proposed in this Amendment. The amenities and facilities to be approved in each project must contribute to the creation of an outstanding urban neighborhood in the Bethesda CBD. The facilities and amenities listed below are prioritized in order of importance to the Woodmont Triangle. The combination of existing amenities and facilities with the prioritized following list of proposed new amenities will create a strong network of active public spaces.

- Norfolk Avenue Urban Spine – A linear system that includes the Capital Crescent Trail and connects the existing public facilities and amenities including Battery Lane Urban Park, the Whitney Theater, the Bethesda Outdoor Stage, the Imagination Stage, and Veterans Park. Renovation of the Norfolk Avenue Urban Spine includes:
 - ~~Place utilities~~ Underground utilities
 - ~~Provide~~ Washington Globe street lights and other festive lighting
 - ~~Provide~~ Benches, bike racks, brackets for banners, and trash receptacles
 - ~~Provide~~ Street trees
 - ~~Provide~~ Outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes
 - ~~Provide~~ Public art
 - Special paving for sidewalks

- Streetscape Improvements - Provide the Bethesda streetscape improvements on other streets such as Cordell Avenue in the Woodmont Triangle Study Area.
- Battery Lane Urban Park Improvements – Improve Battery Lane Urban Park as the major green space and public park in the Woodmont Triangle. A future facility plan should be completed by a developer, in coordination with the Park Development Division, in exchange for additional density under the Optional Method of Development, or as part of a CIP project. This facility plan will be the guiding document for all future development and improvements within the park including other potential developer funded projects. Objectives of the facility plan may include the following:
 - Improve the entrance to the park from Norfolk Avenue using public right-of-way or potential acquisition to increase the visibility and promote safe use of the park
 - Widen the existing trail through the park to 10 feet and improve it as necessary to reinforce its importance in linking the Bethesda Trolley Trail and Capital Crescent Trail
 - Create a new gathering area for picnics and small performances through potential expansion of the park
 - Incorporate art or an arts and science theme into the site furnishings

~~Expand and renovate Battery Lane Urban Park as part of a facility plan for the entire area and incorporate the following:~~

- ~~———— New gathering area for picnics and small performances~~
- ~~———— 10-foot wide hiker/biker trail~~
- ~~New south entry to the park using public right-of-way and increasing the land area~~
- ~~Arts or arts and science theme into furnishings~~
- Intersection Improvements - Provide intersection improvements to Rugby Avenue/Norfolk Avenue to improve the pedestrian and bicycle connection to Battery Lane Urban Park
- NIH Gateway Park - Improve the NIH green space or Gateway Park located between Wisconsin and Woodmont Avenues as off-site open space
- Pedestrian Connections - Establish north-south, mid-block pedestrian connections for the blocks located between Old Georgetown Road and Norfolk Avenue
- New Urban Streets - Provide new north-south urban streets between Battery Lane and Rugby Avenue for improved pedestrian and vehicular circulation
- Other Public Facilities and Amenities - Establish ~~other public facilities and amenities to create~~ a network of diverse urban spaces when including public use space on-site.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

In addition, the Woodmont Triangle area is an important part of the Bethesda CBD Arts and Entertainment District. Within the Study Area, there are currently over 20 art galleries, music stores, and dance and music schools. This amendment supports the continued use of the Optional Method of Development to provide public art, art facilities, and public gathering spaces. These other public facilities and amenities could be managed by a non-profit organization.

The arts-related space needs include the following:

- Arts incubator space - An older, stand-alone building or portion of a building open to the public and preferably located on Norfolk Avenue to provide studio space for emerging visual and performing artists.
- Exhibit, teaching and lecture space – Spaces within existing or new buildings that could provide flexible space for a variety of functions.
- Space for the arts, such as dance studios, a black box theater, and live/work space for artists - Large spaces for the Arts and Entertainment District that could be leased at moderate rates to non-profit arts organizations. Live/work spaces could be provided as part of the affordable housing program.
- Indoor youth recreation facility space in the Study Area - Flexible space to provide a variety of social and recreational programs open to the public.

Through the combination of new housing, improved public facilities and the development of an arts theme, the revitalization process proposed for the Woodmont Triangle also capitalizes on its close relationship to the Metro to achieve Master Plan goals.

3. ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS

Staff Recommendations:

- Revise the text of the Amendment to recognize that amendments to the Zoning Ordinance have already been approved to provide moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs).
- Revise the text to increase the flexibility for the transfer of density to adjacent blocks within a housing resource area.
- Recommend the creation of a Woodmont Triangle Action Group to coordinate and monitor the progress of development and the provision of amenities.

Discussion:

In response to the request from the Planning Board, a summary of the recently established text amendments for moderately priced dwelling units is included as an attachment. The following text replaces the sections on page 24, Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. A new paragraph is added to page 25, Woodmont Triangle Action Group. Additions are identified by underline, and deletions are indicated by strikethrough.

AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE

This limited Amendment to the existing Sector Plan supports modifications to the CBD Zones and Multi-family Zones to increase the opportunities for housing, support retail revitalization, and improve the character of the Woodmont Triangle Study Area. These modifications are part of a review of the CBD Zones. These changes are not necessary to implement the recommendations in this limited Sector Plan Amendment. The final list of modifications should be part of a series of comprehensive amendments to the CBD Zones. The modifications could include the following:

- **Minimum Lot Size** – The minimum lot size of 22,000 square feet could be reduced to at least 18,000 square feet for use of the Optional Method of Development to encourage additional housing development within the housing resource area indicated in this Amendment.
- **Transfer of Density** – The transfer of density is presently permitted throughout the overlay zones in the Silver Spring Central Business District, and this transfer of density could be expanded to the CBD Zones. This provision would provide more flexibility to preserve existing retail businesses by transferring density to parcels within each block within the housing resource area of the Woodmont Triangle as indicated in this Amendment.

The County Council recently approved the following amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.

- **Public Use Space** – A recently approved amendment to the Zoning Ordinance allows an increase in the flexibility in providing off-site public use space to meet the requirements in the CBD Zones. The requirement for public use space and amenities could be met on-site or off-site including streetscape improvements in the public rights-of-way, and park enhancements in the Woodmont Triangle Study Area. The public use space should provide an outstanding environment capable of supporting and enhancing housing development. The transfer of public use space to off-site areas provides the opportunity to create meaningful public spaces including indoor community centers open to the public. Developers are encouraged to combine properties to provide more significant and useful public use space than could be provided individually. Transfer of public use space must occur within the housing resource area of the Woodmont Triangle.
- **Coverage in Multi-family Zones** – A recently established Zoning Text Amendment will also modify the requirements for coverage and green space in the multi-family zones. These modifications will ~~the coverage requirement to be eliminated in the multi-family zones located adjacent to or within central business districts to create a more appropriate and urban development pattern. This decrease in coverage is intended to encourage the retention of existing housing and the construction of additional multi-family housing in the Woodmont Triangle Study Area to serve a variety of income levels. In addition, the green space could be reduced to 35 percent.~~

Incorporate the following text at the end of page 25:

WOODMONT TRIANGLE ACTION GROUP

This Amendment recommends the creation of a Woodmont Triangle Action Group. The purpose of this Action Group is to coordinate and monitor the progress of development, retail revitalization, and the provision of amenities and facilities. Representatives from the M-NCPPC, the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Civic Associations, the Bethesda Transportation Solutions, the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, and other appropriate groups should be included in the Woodmont Triangle Action Group.

CONCLUSION

The staff recommends that the revisions described in the above paragraphs be incorporated into a revised Planning Board Draft to be transmitted to the County Council and County Executive before the end of 2004.

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Attachments:

- Summary of Amendments to the Legislation and Zoning Text for MPDUs
- Correspondence
- Planning Board Draft of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD, November 2004
- Staff Report: Work Session No. 1
- Staff Report: Work Session No. 2
- Staff Report: Work Session No. 3