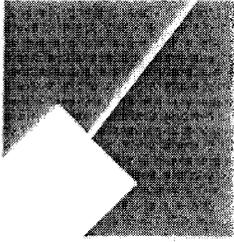


M-NCPPC



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL  
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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March 4, 2005

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Montgomery County Planning Board

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

**FROM:** Judy Daniel, Rural Area Team Leader (301-495-4559)  
Community-Based Planning Division *JD*

Malaika Abernathy, Senior Planner *Ma*  
Community-Based Planning Division

Katherine Nelson, Environmental Planning  
Countywide Planning Division

**SUBJECT:** Work Session Number 3: Damascus Master Plan Land Use in the  
Transitional Areas (continued) and Rural Areas

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This is the fourth Work Session on the Damascus Master Plan. The items to be covered at this Work Session include:

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In response to the request from the Planning Board during the last Work Session, the additional property information and density options requested by the Planning Board led to a re-evaluation of the overall Housing Policy of this Plan. The Plan Housing Policy issue should be resolved before the individual property decisions can be made properly. The staff recommends that these decisions be made in the context of an overall policy, not incrementally.

## INTRODUCTION

The schedule for Damascus Work Sessions includes:

- Planning Board Public Hearing: November 4, 2004
- Work Session No. 1: December 23, 2004  
Housing, Water and Sewer, Schools  
and Community Facilities, Historic Preservation
- Work Session No. 2: January 13, 2005  
Transportation and Connectivity,  
Parks and Trails, Legacy Open Space, Environment
- Work Session No. 3: February 17, 2005  
Land Use Town Center and Transition Areas
- Work Session No. 4: March 10, 2005  
Housing Issues  
Rural Area Land Use
- Work Session No. 5: Date To Be Determined  
Transition Area Land Use (continued)  
Final Summary of Planning Board Recommendations
- Work Session No. 6: Date To Be Determined  
Presentation of Planning Board Draft  
Transmittal to County Council

## STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### ITEM NO. 1: HOUSING ISSUES

Location in Master Plan: Housing Chapter (page 41)

#### **Recommended Board Actions**

The following represent the core guiding principles of the Housing Policy in the Public Hearing Draft Master Plan. The staff recommends support of these principles:

- **Town Center** - Highest residential density
  - Unit Types: Multi-family and Townhouse  
Appropriate for Senior and Affordable Housing
  - Density: 15 dwellings per acre in town core  
20 dwellings per acre in outer core
- **Transition Areas** - Moderate density adjacent to Town Center

Neighborhood Transition Areas:

Unit Types: Small lot single-family home neighborhoods  
Cluster preferred if environmental constraints

Density: 

- 2 units per acre maximum with sewer
- 1 unit per acre maximum with sewer
- Some additional density with TDRs

Rural Transition Areas:

Unit Types: Low density single-family home neighborhoods  
Cluster preferred if environmental constraints

Density: 

- 1 unit per acre maximum with sewer
- 1 unit per 2 acres maximum without sewer
- Some additional density with TDRs

- **Rural Areas** - Significantly reduced densities beyond the Transition Areas

Unit Types: Low density single-family home neighborhoods  
Land conservation design preferred, or  
Farms and Farmettes

Density: 1 unit per 5 acres – 1 unit per 25 acres

### Summary of Public Hearing Testimony and Planning Board Requests

The majority of Public Hearing comments reflected requests from property owners and their representatives for additional density. Since the first Work Session, the Planning Board has received comments from the County Executive regarding the Plan (attached). The comments contain support for the Housing element of the Plan, specifically the potential for increased residential capacity in the Town Center, stating:

*"....We support the recommendation for the increased housing options within and near the Town Center, and the limitations on residential development in the Agricultural Reserve...."*

Responding to property owner requests and an emerging need for housing in Montgomery County, the Planning Board requested additional density options, primarily for the southwest Transition Area near the Town Center. At the third Work Session, the staff presented alternative recommendations for several properties in that area. An alternate scenario was also presented for properties north of the Town Center. Both were predicated on the Plan guiding principles of concentrating new development near the Town Center, and new sewer pumping stations. The Planning Board supported most of the alternative recommendations, rejected one recommendation, requested more alternative density recommendations on three property groupings, and requested additional information on the following topics:

- A table to clarify the total number of anticipated dwelling units that would result from the proposed Plan as compared with the existing Plan.
- A general assessment of whether more affordable housing is appropriate in this rural community, and if so, how much would be appropriate.
- An assessment of whether an active retirement housing option would be appropriate in this Master Plan area, and if so, where.

The staff believes that given the evolving nature of the housing issue, a holistic approach is important in considering appropriate locations for additional density. The Plan Housing Policy should be established before appropriate recommendations can be made to the Planning Board in the context of the Plan principles.

Also, in light of current issues before the Planning Board and the County Council, the issue of TDR receiving sites is discussed.

### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

This analysis first discusses the Housing Policy of this Plan, so that a proper context can be set for the remainder of the Plan discussions. The information requests from the Planning Board are discussed subsequently:

#### **A. Additional Housing Potential**

##### **Staff Analysis and Discussion**

The Housing Policy recommendations in the Public Hearing Draft Plan, and the modified recommendations from the February Work Session reflect the goal of guiding higher density development to the Town Center and the immediately surrounding Transitional Areas. In responding to the request for further density options for the Plan, the staff recommends a holistic approach that respects the guiding principles of the Plan, rather than incremental decisions.

The Master Plan process for Damascus began with an assumption that little additional housing capacity would be created beyond the Town Center, since Damascus is not near either jobs or frequent transit. This was stated in the Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report. With that assumption, great strength was given to the concept of environmental protection over housing density creation. In recent months, the need to create additional housing potential has become more important, so that policy has been reconsidered.

The following discusses the overall housing goals of the Town Center, Transition Areas, and Rural Areas of the Damascus Master Plan.

## 1. **Town Center**

### Recommendation

Support a two-tier, moderately high density Town Center with mixed-uses encouraged. Up to 15 DUs/Acre in the core where commercial uses are more encouraged, and up to 20 DUs/Acre on in the balance of the Town Center, where residential uses are more encouraged. Mixed-use structures, multi-family, and townhomes are recommended.

### Discussion

At the last Work Session the Planning Board supported this concept as proposed in the Public Hearing Draft.

## 2. **Transition Areas**

### Recommendation

Support a two-tier moderate to low density residential Transition Area, with higher density where sewer is available, and lower density elsewhere.

- Use of cluster in areas with environmental concerns
- Small-lot single-family neighborhoods nearer the Town Center and where sewer is available, and larger lot single-family neighborhood where sewer is not available
- Allow somewhat higher densities with TDRs in areas where sewer is available

### Discussion

To address the housing issues, the staff proposes a modification to the recommendations in the Public Hearing Draft on properties in the Transition Area near the Town Center. The staff believes that this approach respects the guiding principles of the Public Hearing Draft, and allows further additional density potential without significant environmental impact. The alternate approach outlined below reflects additional density within the overall vision outlined in the Public Hearing Draft Master Plan.

This approach modifies the recommendations in the Public Hearing Draft for more of the developable properties in the Transition Area, and entails the creation of additional TDR receiving capacity. If the proposed density is modified for the Burdette, Warfield, and Casey/Lewis properties, they can provide additional density in the areas immediately adjoining the Town Center. In addition, some additional density is proposed on the Kingstead/Leishear properties, without significantly diluting the Rural Transition character of that location.

In this approach, all the properties would work from a base density approximating their current density, with additional density up to one dwelling per acre achieved through the use of TDRs. This is in accord with policy recommended by the TDR Task Force and supported by the Planning Board in 2002. The density shown does not include the bonus for moderately priced dwelling units.

#### Burdette Property

This 82-acre property immediately adjoins the Town Center. This property is in an excellent location for additional housing. It has areas of topography amenable for development, but requires significant clustering for watershed protection.

A RNC Zone base density of RNC .4 units per acre, with a TDR density of 1.0 units per acre would yield approximately 81 dwelling units, with a 49 TDR receiving capacity, offering a variety of lot sizes and dwelling types. This could be a small-lot single-family community, with over 50 acres of preserved open space. The design flexibility of the RNC Zone could allow the majority of additional dwellings to be built west of Woodfield Road Extended, out of the Patuxent River Primary Management Area. It could have lots of 10,000 square feet or smaller; located a short walk from the Library, Senior Center, Post Office, and many shopping opportunities.

An impervious area of 10 percent or less will result from this recommendation in the Patuxent watershed. This impervious area and density is consistent with other properties in the Patuxent area. The proposed zoning would not result in overall increased imperviousness in the watershed area.

#### Warfield Property

The 78-acre Warfield property has direct sewer access, but the land is topographically amenable to development, and is in close proximity to the Town Center. An RNC Zone base density of RNC .4 units per acre, with a TDR density of 1.0 per unit would yield approximately 78 dwelling units, with a 47 unit TDR receiving capacity, offering a variety of lot sizes and dwelling types. This could be a small-lot single-family community, with over 50 acres of preserved open space. It could have lots of 10,000 square feet or smaller, located in walking distance of the Town Center.

#### Smart/Miner

This 16-acre property will have direct sewer access, so some additional density is possible. To be consistent with the other property recommendations, the proposed additional density on this property would be gained through the use of TDRs. The RNC Zone base density of RNC .4, with a TDR density of 1.0 would yield approximately 16 dwelling units, with a 10 unit TDR receiving capacity, offering a variety of lot sizes and dwelling types. This could be a small-lot single-family community, with

over 10 acres of preserved open space. It could have lots of up to 14,000 square feet or smaller, located in the immediate proximity of the Town Center.

#### Casey Properties

The 17-acre Casey/Lewis property will have sewer access, but the land has topographic capacity constraints. A RNC Zone base density of RNC .4 units per acre with a TDR density of 1.0 units per acre is also recommended. It would yield approximately 17 dwelling units, with an 11 TDR receiving capacity, offering a variety of lot sizes and dwelling types. This could be a small-lot single-family community, with over 10 acres of preserved open space. It would need lots of 10,000 square feet or smaller, and would be in walking distance of the Town Center schools and shopping. Higher density is not recommended for this property which would overlook the Rural Density Transfer Zone.

#### Stanley/Leishear/Day/Browning

This 27-acre property grouping will have direct sewer access, so some additional density is possible. To be consistent with the other property recommendations, the proposed additional density on this property would be gained through the use of TDRs. The RNC Zone base density of RNC .4, with a TDR density of 1.0 would yield approximately 27 dwelling units, with a 17 unit TDR receiving capacity, offering a variety of lot sizes and dwelling types. This could be a small-lot single-family community, with over 17 acres of preserved open space. It could have lots of up to 14,000 square feet or smaller, located in the immediate proximity of the Town Center.

#### Kingstead/Leishear Properties

The 126-acre Kingstead/Leishear properties have sewer access, but the location at the edge of the Rural Transition Area preclude significant additional density within the guiding principles of the Plan. On the other hand, this location can provide some additional housing opportunities through the use of TDRs, since there is a sewer pump station in the area.

With the use of TDRs, a development of up to 126 homes on the 126 acres would provide additional housing, and create additional TDR receiving capacity. A RNC base density of .21 units per acre (approximating the density of the current zoning) with a TDR density of 1.0 unit per acre is recommended. Because this site is so large, this could create a small-lot single-family community with a wide variety of lot sizes and dwelling unit types, and create receiving capacity for up to 100 TDRs.

The staff acknowledges that the King family representatives believe that a higher base density is warranted on this property because of the large amount of park donation being sought by the M-NCPPC on the RDT portion of this property, and the very high cost of TDRs.

These alternative concepts respect the Plan guiding principles, and would create the potential for 345 dwelling units, with receiving capacity for 234 TDRs. They also balance housing need and environmental concerns. If the Planning Board prefers this type of alternate approach to achieving additional density, the staff can prepare more detailed analysis of these properties (or others) for the next Work Session if necessary.

Property	Acres	Existing Zone	Existing Density Potential	Public Hearing Zone	Public Hearing Density Potential	Modified Zone*	Modified Density Potential*
Burdette	82	RE-2C	32	RNC .4	32	RNC .4/ TDR 1.0	81
Warfield	78	RE-2C	31	RNC .4/ TDR .75	58	RNC .4/ TDR 1.0	78
Smart/Miner	16	RE-2C	6	RNC .4	6	RNC .4/ TDR 1.0	16
Casey/Lewis	17	RE-2C	6	RE-2C	6	RNC .4/ TDR 1.0	17
Stanley/Day/ Leishear	27	RE-2C	10	RE-2C	10	RNC .4/ TDR 1.0	27
Kingstead	126	RE-2C RC	26	RNC .21 TDR .56	71	RNC .21/ TDR 1.0	126
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	-	<b>111</b>	-	<b>183</b>	-	<b>345</b>

### 3. Rural Areas

#### Recommendation

Support the Agricultural Reserve zoning, programs, and policies. Allow, primarily the very low density RDT Zone, some areas of Rural Cluster, and a few rural village areas. Support new guidelines for agricultural conservation development in the RDT Zone as proposed in the Public Hearing Draft.

#### Discussion

The Planning Board is discussing these recommendations today.

### B. Summary Table of Anticipated Dwelling Units From Plan Recommendations

The Planning Board requested a table that would clarify the anticipated number of dwelling units that would result from the Plan recommendations. To clarify proposed growth, the attached table compares the existing number of dwelling units in the Plan area to the:

- anticipated dwelling units under the existing Plan;
- anticipated dwelling units under the Public Hearing Draft Plan; and
- anticipated dwelling units under the modifications to the Public Hearing Draft Plan

The table includes the Town Center development potential, which is the location of greatest anticipated growth, as well as the development potential in the Transition and Rural areas. The table provides a realistic picture of anticipated growth in Damascus as a result of the Master Plan recommendations.

C. **Affordable Housing in Damascus**

**Recommendation**

Create additional housing potential at moderate densities in the Town Center and Neighborhood Transition Areas.

**Public Testimony and Planning Board Request**

The Planning Board asked the staff to provide a brief general assessment of whether more affordable housing is appropriate in this rural community, and if so, guidelines as to how much would be appropriate.

Since the last Work Session a letter in support of the Plan from the Office of the County Executive was received. It states the following in regard to anticipated potential for affordable housing in the Town Center:

*The County's Affordable Housing Policy proposes that affordable housing be provided in many forms and locations throughout the County. While the main focus of new growth will remain in the more urban areas of the County, along highway corridors and near Metro stations, providing some additional housing opportunities in areas such as Damascus helps round out the entire housing puzzle, and contributes to the diversity and balance countywide.*

**Discussion**

The recommendations for the Town Center and Transition areas will provide significant opportunities for moderately priced dwelling units in the Damascus Master Plan area. The 1992 Damascus Master Plan did not include moderately priced dwelling units because they were not required in the RE-2C Zone. The Research and Technology Center indicates that Damascus already provides a significant amount of work force housing (65% to 100% of the median family income) and locating additional work force housing is not necessary.

D. **Active Retirement Centers**

**Recommendation**

If considered, a location near public facilities and the Town Center would be preferable. The Southeast Neighborhood Transition area is the most appropriate.

**Public Hearing Testimony and Planning Board Request**

At the Public Hearing, the representative for the Kingstead property requested consideration of a Planned Retirement Community for up to 350 dwelling units on that property. In response to that request, at the third Work Session, the Planning Board requested an assessment of whether an active retirement center would be appropriate in this Master Plan area.

**Discussion**

The Transition Areas provide the opportunity for active adult communities within the proposed RNC/TDR Zones. Additional density and the use of Planned Retirement Zone are not recommended for this Plan.

**E. TDR Receiving Areas****Recommendation**

- Support TDR receiving sites for the Warfield and Kingstead properties.
- Support using TDRs to obtain any additional density in the Master Plan.

**Public Hearing Testimony and Planning Board Request**

Before the last Work Session, the Planning Board received a letter from the Agricultural Advisory Committee requesting the creation of TDR receiving sites in all master plans.

**Discussion**

As required by the Planning Board since 1980, this Master Plan considered where TDR receiving capacity would be appropriate. The Public Hearing Draft Plan includes additional TDR receiving capacity. Although Damascus is not a significant growth area, the Plan recommends two receiving sites, at the Warfield and Kingstead properties. This report contains recommendations for additional TDR receiving capacity.

The stated policy for this Plan is that if any significant additional density is recommended, this density should be obtained through the use of TDRs. This policy was recommended in the TDR Status Report of 2002, and supported by the Planning Board.

**ITEM NO. 2: RURAL AREA LAND USE**

Location in Master Plan: Land Use Chapter - Rural Areas (Page 36)  
Implementation Chapter – Rural Areas (Page 104)

**Recommendation**

Approve the recommendations in the Public Hearing Draft Master Plan with a modification for the use of the Rural Hamlet Zone.

**Summary of Testimony at Public Hearing:**

There were few who testified regarding the Rural Areas. Two comments were from Damascus residents in support of the proposed rural viewshed protection language. Three others related to questions or concerns regarding the proposed Rural Village Zone – one each regarding Etchison, Browningsville, and Purdum.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

The Public Hearing Draft Plan reflects a continuing commitment to the County’s agricultural preservation programs and policies. The Plan reflects and enhances the vision and structure of the **1982 Master Plan** that highlighted the importance of agricultural preservation in Damascus in terms of strengthening the community’s role as the rural commercial focal point of upper Montgomery County. To achieve this goal, both Plans establish the importance of “*channeling residential development from outlying areas to the center of Damascus.*” The following discussion addresses the Plan recommendations and comments from the Public Hearing testimony.

**1. Boundaries of RDT and Rural Cluster Zone**

Recommendation

Confirm existing zoning in the Rural Areas of the Master Plan, except in designated village areas as proposed in the Public Hearing Draft.

Discussion

The Plan generally proposes retaining the existing zoning boundaries. There were no Public Hearing comments regarding the zoning boundaries, but there was support expressed for the overall Plan intent to protect the Agricultural Reserve. Given the Planning Board comments from February 17 regarding concerns with changing the RDT Zone boundaries without a review of the “larger picture”, support for the Public Hearing Draft language is recommended.

**2. Rural Hamlet Zone**

Recommendation

Create a “Rural Hamlet” Zone for Browningsville, Etchison, and modify the Public Hearing Draft to include Purdum.

### Discussion

The Plan proposed creation of a new Rural Hamlet Zone (pages 38-40) for the villages of Browningsville and Etchison. This mixed-use zone has been anticipated since 1980 to protect these historic rural villages. Three Public Hearing comments were received regarding the proposed zone. A Browningsville resident was concerned that the proposed zone not limit existing uses allowed. A Purdum resident was concerned that without a Rural Hamlet designation, his property would continue to be "split zoned" between C-1 and RDT. A property owner in Etchison did not want potential uses restricted.

The staff urges support for the Rural Hamlet Zone concept. The recommendation directly reflects a recommendation from the 1980 Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space (page 72), to *"investigate the use of a "Rural Village Zone" to provide for a mix of residential lot sizes and limited commercial uses."* The purpose of the zone would be to maintain the existing scale of development, and to allow new development consistent with the historical character and community lifestyle. In the mixed-use concept, limited convenience retail, small scale specialty retail, agriculturally related commercial activity, or tourism related commercial activity would be permitted.

This zone is important to protect the character of these rural villages. As traffic loads increase along rural roads, these small communities could be the target for commercial land uses that are not appropriate for these small, historic rural communities. The intent for the proposed mixed-use zone is to allow many types of residential, institutional and commercial uses, but prevent suburban style commercial facilities such as mini-marts, gas station mini-marts, and commercial strip centers. The staff recommends that the range and scale of commercial uses allowed should be limited to those appropriate for villages. The proposed mixed-use zone would allow a wide range of uses although certain uses may be limited by the lack of public water and sewer. This proposed zone will support mixed lot sizes, and a range of smaller scale non-residential uses.

As requested at the Public Hearing, the staff would support the requested Rural Hamlet designation for the Purdum community. It was not originally included in the Public Hearing Draft Plan because it is more remote from potential development pressure. A map of the proposed Purdum Hamlet Zone area is attached to this report.

### **3. Rural Vista Protection**

#### Recommendation

Support a special exception guideline for Rural Vista Protection in the Rural Areas of Damascus as proposed in the Public Hearing Draft.

#### Discussion

The Plan recommends a statement to provide additional protection of rural vistas during the review of special exceptions. It states (page 38):

*To ensure careful consideration of this unique aspect of this community, this Plan strongly encourages the protection of the rural vistas that are intrinsic to the character of the Damascus vicinity. Damascus is a town set on a hill, and the long vistas outside the Town Center provide the most distinctive visual element for the community. Land uses that impeded those vistas should be discouraged.*

At the Public Hearing, two residents spoke specifically in support of this language, and the proposal was strongly supported by many residents during the Master Plan process.

#### **4. RDT Subdivision Guidelines**

##### Staff Recommendation

Support Guidelines for Agricultural Conservation Development for residential subdivisions in the RDT Zone for this Master Plan as proposed in the Public Hearing Draft.

##### Discussion

The proposed guidelines (page 37-38) are framed around a land conservation approach, not clustering or large lots. Home placement and open space protection mechanisms are emphasized and are more important than lot size. Clustering, large lots with easements, or outlot approaches can be used in differing situations to offer protection of contiguous open or forest areas.

No specific comments were given at the Public Hearing regarding this recommendation. The guidelines (page 37-38) are modeled on similar guidelines endorsed by the Planning Board in 1999. The staff strongly supports these guidelines that will give stronger authority to review the design of these rural subdivisions.

#### **5. Agricultural Support Recommendations**

##### Staff Recommendation

Reaffirm support for agriculture and agriculturally related uses as proposed in the Public Hearing Draft.

##### Discussion

This Master Plan should specifically state its support for agriculture and agriculturally related uses. No specific comments were offered at the Public Hearing regarding the agricultural support recommendations. While some of this language (page 36) is already in the Zoning Ordinance, Damascus is in the heart of the Agricultural Reserve and it needs to reflect specific support for the uses that are the prime impetus for the creation of Montgomery County's Agricultural Preservation programs.

## **CONCLUSION**

This staff report provides the basis for certain recommendations within the Damascus Master Plan. It discusses the testimony received during the Public Hearing regarding the Plan recommendations for the Rural Area, and additional information on Housing policy and recommendations. The staff recommendations to the Planning Board reflect the desire to approve the recommendations in the Draft Plan or the alternative recommendations as noted in this report.

The next Work Session is the final scheduled Work Session. It will continue the discussion regarding the Land Use recommendations for the Transition Areas, and concluding discussions, and ask for the Planning Board's final recommendations to the County Council.

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- Attachment A: Table of Existing and Proposed Density Calculations
- Attachment B: Comments from the County Executive
- Attachment C: Map of Purdum Rural Hamlet Community
- Attachment D: Comments Received at the Public Hearing