

Resolution No.: 15-924
Introduced: March 8, 2005
Adopted: March 15, 2005

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
SITTING AS THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THAT PORTION
OF THE MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT
WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: District Council

Subject: Approval of Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan

1. On June 1, 2004, the Montgomery County Planning Board transmitted to the County Executive and the County Council the Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan.
2. The Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan amends the approved and adopted 1980 Master Plan of Bikeways; The General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; The Countywide Park Trails Plan; and The Master Plan of Highways within Montgomery County.
3. On July 23, 2004, the County Executive transmitted to the County Council his fiscal analysis of the Olney Master Plan.
4. On September 21, 2004, the County Council held a public hearing regarding the Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan. The Master Plan was referred to the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee for review and recommendation.
5. On October 25, November 5, November 15, and November 22, 2004, the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee held worksessions to review the issues raised in connection with the Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan.
6. On December 7, 2004, January 18, March 8 and March 15, 2005, the County Council reviewed the Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan and the recommendations of the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland sitting as the District Council for that portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan, dated May 2004, is approved with revisions. Council revisions to the Planning Board Draft Olney Master Plan are identified below. Deletions to the text of the Plan are indicated by [brackets], additions by underscoring.

This resolution also designates two areas in the Olney Master Plan as part of the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area and Environmental Overlay Zone. The two areas are: 1) the Upper Rock Creek watershed within the Olney Master Plan boundaries north of route 108 and west of the Upper Rock Creek Planning Area western boundary; and 2) the Norbeck Country Club property on Cashell Road.

Page vi: Add the following language to the end of the second paragraph:

Maps and illustrations are generally provided for illustrative purposes.

Page 3: Update the third sentence in the second paragraph (estimates of population at build out) to reflect Council changes to the Plan.

Page 3: Delete the second sentence from the last paragraph on the page:

The Town Center is envisioned as a local, rather than a regional, shopping and service area that also serves as the focal point of the community's civic life. [The Plan reinforces the Town Center by prohibiting commercial development outside the Town Center.]

Page 4: Add after the last paragraph:

The plan expands the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area and Environmental Overlay zone into the Olney planning area to limit the impact from development in the headwaters of Rock Creek north of Route 108 and on the largest property in the Olney portion of North Branch Rock Creek Watershed, the Norbeck County Club property.

Page 12: Modify the second sentence in the last paragraph as follows:

Northern Olney comprises approximately two-thirds of the Master Plan [A]area—almost all of it in the Patuxent River Watershed, which includes the Hawlings River watershed.

Page 15: Update numbers in the second paragraph under INTRODUCTION to reflect Council actions on the Master Plan.

Page 15: Modify the last paragraph as follows:

The proposed Land Use Plan generally maintains the current distribution of land uses in the Master Plan area. It envisions the Olney of the future to be a more refined picture of what is there today, and applies the most recent planning and regulatory mechanisms to the few areas that have the potential for redevelopment in the future. All developed, vacant and redevelopable properties in Olney not recommended for a zoning change in this plan should maintain their existing zoning. [It anticipates approximately 400 new] The Plan encourages mixed-use with housing [units] in the Town Center and recommends rezoning of some of the vacant and redevelopable properties in Southern Olney adding between *(update remaining portion of paragraph to reflect Council actions on the Master Plan)*.

Page 16: Modify the fourth sentence in the first paragraph under OLNEY AS A SATELLITE TOWN as follows:

Olney is mainly a housing resource; [and] all other uses, including retail [commercial] and service uses, [community services] are meant primarily to support housing in the area [for local residents].

Page 23: Modify the first sentence on this page as follows:

Larger properties and assemblages that produce [35] 20 or more units [may] will be required to provide MPDUs at 12.5 percent of the total units [at 0.33 units per acre if they are subject] pursuant to the MPDU law.

Page 23: Amend 'Recommendation 6' as follows:

6. [Integrate] Connect properties in the quadrant with bikeways, walkways, and park trails to enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, schools, and other facilities [for pedestrians and cyclists].

Page 23: Add recommendation #8 as follows:

8. Protect the rustic road character of Batchellors Forest Road by using topography, clustering of houses away from the road, and landscaping to preclude, or minimize, the visibility of new developments from Batchellors Forest Road.

Page 25: Modify the 5th and 6th design guidelines as follows:

5. For properties along [Batchellors Forest Road and] Georgia Avenue, provide a green buffer of at least 100 feet, outside of the master plan right-of-way, to screen views of [new] houses from the road[s].
6. Preserve exceptional vistas of open fields on larger properties from Batchellors Forest Road, especially on the Casey, Hyde and Polinger properties by clustering homes in such

a way that they are not visible from the road. If that is not feasible, use landscaping techniques to screen houses from the road.

Page 28: Modify the third paragraph under Casey Property as follows:

This property should be rezoned to RNC with 0.33 units per acre. Permitted density from the 17.4-acre portion should be located on the larger portion of the property on the west side of Batchellors Forest Road and the 17.4-acre portion should be [dedicated] designated as rural open space under RNC Zone and dedicated as parkland for active recreation purposes.... [If the eastern portion of the site is dedicated as parkland, the rural open space requirement of the RNC Zone should be calculated based on the western portion only].

Page 29: Modify recommendation #2 as follows:

2. Designate [Acquire] the 17.2-acre portion of the Casey property as rural open space under the RNC Zone and acquire it through dedication for a local park for active recreation purposes [through dedication] at the time of subdivision.

Page 33: Change the sentence in the middle of the first full paragraph as follows:

Since [there is a possibility that] this property [will be used] has an approved preliminary plan for institutional use for the Washington Christian Academy [or other institutional uses], the appropriate zoning for this property would be RC [on septic].

Page 33: Change the second bullet as follows:

2. Rezone the Gandel property from RE-2 to RC [on septic]. Preserve a major portion of the existing forest on the property. If the Washington Christian Academy does not relocate to this site, explore alternatives (other than acquisition) to [If possible] preserve the entire property [through] , such as through an assemblage of land with a transfer of density or purchase as off-set for other projects.

Page 35: Modify the last sentence of the second paragraph and the third paragraph as follows:

If this scenario is not carried through and the State does not acquire additional land for the park, there would [essentially be no land left for the Tower Company to develop] be approximately 3.2 acres available for development.

Since there is a strong need for at least 5.4 acres of parkland to augment the existing Norbeck-Muncaster Mill Neighborhood Park, the [recommended land use for this property is parkland] a possible use of any remaining land not needed for road interchange project is parkland. [The precise location of the proposed parkland will be determined in conjunction with the SHA study.] If [for any reason] the SHA [is] does not [able to] acquire all of the remaining portion of the site for parkland, it would be suitable for a small special exception use [as originally recommended in the preliminary plan approval of the Small's Nursery subdivision] or a townhouse development under the RT-10 zone.

Page 35: Modify Recommendation 1 and delete Recommendation 3 as follows:

1. Maintain the current RE-1/R-200 Zone with community water and sewer for [this] a portion of the property needed for the proposed road interchange project. The remaining portion of the property would be suitable for RT-10 Zone.
- [3. Support a special exception use on any remaining portion of the property if the interchange project does not occur, or SHA is unable to acquire proposed parkland on the property.]

Page 37: Add to end of the page as follows:

The public ownership, its location on a major road, and the size of the property make it suitable for a housing development including affordable. To maximize the potential for affordable housing, the site is appropriate for R-200/PD-3 zoning but the actual yield may be limited due to compatibility and environmental constraints on the site. The full yield allowed by the PD-3 zone is only appropriate if the following objectives can be met:

- 1) At least half of the units are affordable (Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) or work force housing). It would be acceptable to have the affordable housing (in excess of what is required by law) placed on another site in Olney if there is joint development of both sites. The Council recommends that the Executive pursue this option first.
- 2) The size, scale, and design of the development preserve the sensitive environmental resources in accordance with a stormwater management concept approved by the County. The stormwater management concept must include measures which are designed to enhance natural storm water filtration and recharge.
- 3) The density of development and the resulting population increase does not overwhelm the area's already severely strained public facilities.
- 4) Lot sizes, the mix of housing types (single family detached duplexes, and townhouses excluding multi-family units), and the density are compatible with adjacent properties.
- 5) Commercial development is not appropriate for this site.

Page 38: Modify the first recommendation on the page as follows:

Recommendations:

1. **Since it has been determined that the site is [If] not needed for educational purposes, the site should be used for affordable housing designed to be compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhood. The site is currently zoned R-200 and is [not] recommended for [rezoning] R-200/PD-3.**

Page 39: Modify the second paragraph as follows:

The continued use of this property as country club is consistent with the Land Use Plan of the area. If the property is redeveloped to another use, the environmental goals of protecting the water quality of the Northwest Branch suggest that clustering any development away from the stream valley and minimizing imperviousness would be the most appropriate way to protect the environmental resources in [pattern with land along] the stream valley [dedicated as parkland]. Since the property has possible access to sewer, it should be rezoned to RNC on community water and sewer with [0.33] 0.45 units per acre, with an imperviousness limit of eight percent. [which is consistent with recommendations for rezoning of some of the properties in this watershed in the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan.] The stream protection goals for this site can best be achieved by extending the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area and the Overlay Zone to this site.

Page 39: Modify recommendation 1 and add recommendation 5 as follows:

1. Rezone the Norbeck Country Club from RE-1 to RNC on community water and sewer with [0.33] 0.45 units per acre and an imperviousness limit of eight percent.
5. Extend the Upper Rock Creek Special Protection Area and Overlay Zone to this site. Minimize imperviousness on the property through smaller lot sizes and clustering new development closer to Cashell Road.

Page 39: Modify the last paragraph on the page as follows:

This approximately 3.0-acre property, also known as Martin's Dairy or Higgin's Tavern, comprises two parcels and is currently zoned C-1 and R-200. It is located on the west side of Georgia Avenue [which provides only a right-in/right-out access to this property since a median break for a left turn into or out of this property is not permitted. It] and includes an historic house designated on the Master Plan of Historic Properties.

Page 40: Replace the second and third paragraphs with the following text:

This property should be allowed to develop pursuant to C-1 Zone. The R-200 portion should be rezoned to C-1 to facilitate the development of up to 32,000 square feet in accordance with the approved subdivision plan. Any new development should be consistent with the Master Plan's goals of protecting the residential character of Georgia Avenue between Norbeck Road and the Town Center through appropriate landscaping, lighting and design of signage and access to Georgia Avenue.

Page 40: Modify the recommendations for the Silo Inn property as follows:

1. Rezone the R-200 portion of the Silo-Inn property [from] to C-1 [to R-200].
2. Support an appropriate special exception use consistent with the applicable requirements and findings.]

Page 40: Delete last sentence on the page as follows:

[If all or a portion of the property, large enough for a housing development, is not used for the ICC, it should be considered for affordable elderly housing.]

Page 41: Delete second sentence under the Recommendation at the top of the page:

[If not used for the ICC, this property should be considered for affordable elderly housing.]

Page 41- 42: Modify the last paragraph on page 41 and continued to Page 42 as follows:

[Two properties in Olney are suitable for special exception uses. One is the Silo Inn property on the west side of Georgia Avenue near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Emory Church Road. The other is the Tower Company's property near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Norbeck Road (see specific properties section for a detailed discussion of these two properties and recommendations).] Special exception projects [on these two properties and others not envisioned by this Plan] should be compatible with the development pattern of the adjoining uses in terms of height, size, scale, traffic and visual impacts of the structures and parking lots.

Page 42: Combine the first full paragraph on this page with the last sentence of the preceding paragraph, and add a sentence to the end of the paragraph as follows:

In addition, special exception uses of a commercial nature that do not need large properties and can be located in the Town Center should be discouraged in residential areas, especially along major streets. The section of Georgia Avenue between Norbeck Road and the Town Center especially should be kept free of any large uses that would change its low-density residential character and create pressure to allow other such developments along this stretch. Sites with existing special exception uses may be considered for redevelopment and alternative special exception uses, provided that they are consistent with the Master Plan.

Page 45 through 57: Modify the Town Center Chapter as follows:

Goals:

Create an economically healthy, attractive, pedestrian-oriented, and well connected Town Center to be the commercial and civic heart of the community. [Explore the feasibility of] Create a civic center [(library, service center, police substation, community meeting space, teen center)] in the Town Center through redevelopment of a major shopping center or a public-private partnership.

The Olney Town Center is the commercial area around the intersection of Georgia Avenue and MD 108. It covers approximately 90 acres and contains some 150 stores and other commercial establishments in more than 820,000 square feet of commercial space, approximately 550,000 square feet of it retail. Georgia Avenue and MD 108 intersect and divide the Town Center into four quadrants, which include four strip shopping centers—the

two largest ones in the Northeast Quadrant—and numerous other businesses. The neighborhoods around the Town Center consist of townhouses, garden apartments and single-family houses.

The Town Center is located in the Upper Rock Creek (North Branch) and the Hawlings River watersheds. Both the Hawlings River and the North Branch of Rock Creek are sensitive watersheds, and the area around the Town Center is designated for several actions to improve water quality through watershed restoration action plans prepared by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (see Environmental Resources Chapter).

Major Issues

Although the Town Center has been successful in adhering to the Master Plan policies and preventing the spread of commercial strips along major roads, it is presently a suburban crossroads with a collection of strip shopping centers and individual stores. It is not pedestrian-oriented and it lacks easy and convenient connections among the different shopping centers. [A direct vehicular connection between Village Mart and the Olney Shopping Center in the Northeast Quadrant has been one of the more prominent circulation issues in the recent past.] Long distances between shopping centers, created partly by large parking lots, and the lack of safe and pleasant walkways, make pedestrian circulation in the Town Center challenging.

The Olney community has been exploring the possibility of a civic center in Olney where multiple public facilities could be sited in one location. In 2000, the Olney Community Center Task Force, a joint effort by the Greater Olney Civic Association and the Olney Chamber of Commerce, requested the County not only to expand and renovate the current library space but to “address the long standing problem of trying to locate a permanent home for a number of other County services such as the Olney Police satellite office and the Olney satellite office of the Mid-County Regional Services Center.” The goal was to have a place where a variety of County services can be located jointly in one location in Town Center [, along with other community-based organizations such as the Olney Chamber of Commerce, a visitor’s center and a teen center].

The Town Center lacks a major open space, a place for the community to gather and to celebrate its festivals and events. It needs an outdoor public space that would accommodate the many civic functions and annual events that take place in Olney. Currently, they are held in parking lots or playgrounds. Ideally, the public space should be located as part of a mixed-use civic center project to function as the town commons.

The Town Center lacks a strong visual identity. Even though some structures provide a variety in building types and architectural styles, its character is mostly defined by [the larger] strip shopping centers and other commercial establishments along the two State highways. The views from [these] the main roads are generally dominated by parking lots. The physical form of the Town Center is too scattered and needs an identifiable physical feature such as a compact building pattern, unique landscaping, or pedestrian oriented streets with special character that would help create a sense of place. [Two major highways, large

parking lots, and lack of large shade trees or other distinct features create a monotonous landscape of hard surfaces. As redevelopment occurs in the future, a strong visual identity should be created through architecture, a more compact building pattern, landscaping/trees, and other urban design elements.]

Proposed Concept

The proposed Town Center Plan is guided by the concept of Olney as a satellite town that functions as a local retail center rather than a regional shopping and employment center. The Town Center is envisioned as a compact, low-scale, retail and service center containing a mix of commercial and residential uses in a variety of building types and sizes with safe and convenient pedestrian connections, public open spaces and other amenities. Georgia Avenue and MD 108 will continue to be the main thoroughfares and carry large volumes of local and through traffic, but landscaping, improved crosswalks, and urban design treatment will help manage the traffic and improve their character. Residential uses in the Town Center will be less dependent on cars for access to the Town Center, which [will also] may help reduce parking demand there. Stores that serve a regional rather than a local area should be prohibited since they would consume the area's traffic capacity, and land in the Town Center, that would otherwise support a greater number and variety of smaller stores in the Town Center. A major public open space with a civic center [will] should provide a focal point and a place for the community's civic life.

A more compact development pattern is proposed to absorb additional development without increasing the overall land area of the Town Center and to transform the Town Center from its current linear setting to a more varied building form. A variety of building heights is encouraged to avoid the monotony of linear single-story shopping centers on major properties. New developments should be encouraged to have street facades (buildings located along or closer to sidewalks) and parking lots should be located in the back or side to create more attractive streetscape than parking lots as the dominant view in the Town Center.

This vision cannot be achieved without additional growth in the Town Center. Since it is not feasible to accommodate [any major new development] a major redevelopment of the Town Center with surface parking within the current boundaries of the Town Center, the proposed concept is based on a more compact pattern of development with some structured parking on larger properties. Although the proposed zoning framework would allow a total maximum of more than 3.8 million square feet of commercial space and up to [1,500] 2,000 residential units in the Town Center, not all properties would be able to achieve the maximum permitted density because of their size, configuration, access and other constraints, or their own program of development. Possible redevelopments most likely to happen in the near future are the two shopping centers in the Northeast Quadrant, which have the greatest potential for including a civic center and a town commons; a new Safeway store on the Safeway property in the Southeast Quadrant; and some residential or mixed-use development on assemblage of properties in the vicinity of North High Street in the Southwest Quadrant. The Town Center could possibly have [Only the larger properties, and potential future assemblages of some of the smaller ones, are expected to be able to achieve maximum permitted growth and create public amenities in return. The Plan estimates that] up to [300,000] 500,000 square feet of additional commercial growth for [an overall maximum development capacity] a total of

approximately [1.1] 1.3 million square feet of commercial space and [up to 400] between 400 and 1,300 residential units in the next 20 years. [can be accommodated in the Town Center with small to medium scale infrastructure improvements. However, the need, type, and scale of such improvements should be analyzed and decided as redevelopment occurs.]

[Among the four quadrants of the Town Center, the Northeast Quadrant has the greatest potential for change because of the two large properties, Village Mart and the Olney Shopping Center. The Southeast Quadrant has some redevelopment potential on the Safeway property, which has been looking to relocate to another site in the Town Center. The Southwest Quadrant has potential for redevelopment through possible assemblage of some of the vacant and residential properties in the vicinity of North High Street.]

The proposed concept would be implemented through a combination of zoning mechanisms and design guidelines to shape the future redevelopment of the Town Center. It is designed to be flexible enough to address future variations and opportunities. Sites may not be developed exactly as expected, not developed at all for a long time, or changes in ownership patterns may create unforeseen opportunities. [If the new developments are in harmony with the Plan's overall vision, and carefully executed to achieve its goals, they will contribute to creating a more desirable Town Center.] The proposed concept has four major elements:

1. Mixed Land Use;
2. A Civic Center and a Town Commons;
3. Pedestrian Circulation; and
4. Urban Design Controls

Mixed Land Use

A [variety of] mix of commercial and residential uses in the Town Center is a major element of the proposed concept. [All commercially zoned land in the Town Center should be allowed and encouraged to have residential uses to activate the core by increasing] Mixed-use developments would increase the number of people within easy walking distance of [the] stores and services in the Town Center, decrease parking needs for some of the uses, and create a larger customer base for local businesses without changing the concept of Olney Town Center as a place for local retail and services. [Residential buildings in the Town Center] Mixed use buildings with more than one floor would also help break the linear monotony of the single-story shopping centers surrounded by large parking lots. Developments along the edges of the Town Center should have residential buildings or uses compatible with the adjoining residential development. Ground floor of all new developments in the core should preferably have retail uses where appropriate while the upper floors can be residential, offices or other uses. Appropriate open spaces should be provided for the residential components of the mixed-use projects.