



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED
MINUTES

The Montgomery County Planning Board met in special session on Monday, October 5, 2015, at 6:25 p.m. in the Montgomery Regional Office in Silver Spring, Maryland, and adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Present were Chair Casey Anderson, Vice Chair Marye Wells-Harley, and Commissioners Norman Dreyfuss, Amy Presley, and Natali Fani-González.

Item 1, Worksession on the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan, is reported on the attached agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Planning Board will be held on Thursday, October 8, 2015, in the Montgomery Regional Office in Silver Spring, Maryland.

James J. Parsons
Technical Writer

Montgomery County Planning Board Meeting
Monday, October 5, 2015
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910-3760
301-495-4600

1. Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan-Worksession #3

BOARD ACTION

Motion:

Vote:

Yea:

Nay:

Other:

Action: Received briefing followed by Board discussion.

Planning Department staff offered a multi-media presentation and discussed in detail the zoning and building height recommendations set forth in the Public Hearing draft, and the zoning and building height modifications requested by property owners in the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan area. Staff stated that Worksession #3 will continue the work started in Worksession #2 and will focus on the Pearl and Wisconsin Avenue Corridor Districts. Staff noted that one of the primary goals for updating the 1994 Sector Plan is to maintain the unique character of each District within the plan area. The Pearl district, the eastern gateway of the plan area, is an emerging center of activity that is currently developed with small-scale commercial uses in single-family homes, and high-rise commercial and residential buildings. Staff proposes to promote open space and street activity through mixed-use development that includes improved pedestrian connectivity and increased public spaces. Following discussion, the Board agreed to increase density and building heights along East-West Highway, Pearl Street, Montgomery Avenue, and Avondale Street.

Staff noted that the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor is the main artery through Downtown Bethesda. The existing Bethesda Metrorail Station, Bus Rapid Transit options, and planned Purple Line make Wisconsin Avenue a critical focus area for improved access, mobility, and pedestrian safety. Staff added that the Wisconsin Avenue Corridor is envisioned as the center of the Downtown area that connects the surrounding districts. Following discussion, the Board

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1. Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan-Worksession #3

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agreed to increase density and building heights on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue at its intersection with Avondale Street, and on the west side near the intersection with West Virginia Avenue, and near the intersection with Rosedale Avenue.

The following City Council member, public agency representative, developers, and attorneys offered testimony: Mr. Jody Kline of Miller, Miller, and Canby; Mr. Tim Dugan of Schulman Rogers; Ms. Stacy Silber and Messrs. Bill Kominers and Steve Robins of Lerch, Early & Brewer; Ms. Emily Vaias, Ms. Heather Dlhopsky, Ms. Barbara Sears, and Mr. Bob Dalrymple of Linowes & Blocher; Mr. Fred Cecere of the Chevy Chase City Council; Mr. Doug Firstenberg of Stonebridge Carras; Mr. James Donohoe of Donohoe Companies; and Mr. Al Roshdieh of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

There followed extensive Board discussion with questions to staff and speakers.