



June 4, 2010

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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SUBJECT: Hearing, Worksession and Action:
Design Guidelines for the Great Seneca Science Corridor

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Review the Testimony and Approve the Urban Design Guidelines for the Great Seneca Science Corridor

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES

In response to the testimony and discussion with the Planning Board during the recent worksessions on previous design guideline projects, the following changes have been incorporated into the design Guidelines for the Great Seneca Science Corridor:

- Provide in the Foreword, and in a "sidebar" at the beginning of each section, a description of the Master Plan recommendations and the relationship to the Design Guidelines
- Clarify that the Design Guidelines are not regulations that mandate specific forms and locations for buildings and open space. They illustrate how Master Plan recommendations and principles might be met
- Eliminate all building layouts and replace with diagrams of streets, open space and buildings in each of the districts

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Planning Department developed the Urban Design Guidelines to assist in implementing the recommendations in the Approved and Adopted Master Plan for the Great Seneca Science Corridor. These guidelines are intended to accomplish the following:

- **Foster Design Excellence** - Provide design ideas instead of mandates that will build a community in accordance with the Approved and Adopted Master Plan
- **Clarify Design Expectations** - Illustrate the recommendations in the Master Plan for the Seneca Science Corridor for each district, and for the streets, open spaces, buildings, and environment in accordance with the Master Plan
- **Promote Creativity and Provide Flexibility** - Provide guidance in accordance with the Master Plan that recognizes the need for flexibility in community building

The attached document is the Draft Report for review and discussion by the Planning Board. In accordance with the Planning Department practice:

- The document will go through final layout, design and production in accordance with the recommendations from the Planning Board
- The document has been edited for tone, organization and consistency with the Twinbrook, White Flint, and Germantown Design Guidelines in the I-270 Corridor
- Illustrations and renderings are integral to the recommendations and help tell the story
- A useful, interactive web site for each of the design guidelines will be created and located on the M-NCPPC site

The combination of the comprehensive Master Plan for the Great Seneca Science Corridor and the Design Guidelines provides a unique planning tool for Montgomery County. This planning tool is necessary in the area as density increases, the mix of land uses becomes more complex, and transitions to the existing neighborhoods need to be compatible. The Design Guidelines are not mandates, except for the streets in the Road Code and designated open spaces in the Master Plan.

The Planning Board reviewed the Staff Draft of the Great Seneca Science Corridor prior to sending the Master Plan to the County Council, and received limited testimony. This hearing and worksession provides the opportunity for the Planning Board to finalize comments prior to final publication. The Urban Design Guidelines for the Great Seneca Science Corridor will complete the master plan process for the I-270 Corridor. A similar format has been used for each of these documents.

Scope of Urban Design Guidelines

The document provides design guidance for the basic building blocks of a community as follows:

- **Streets:** In accordance with the Great Seneca Science Master Plan and the Road Code, the Design Guidelines illustrate and provide ideas that will help establish the character for the streets. The guidelines for streets will identify elements that create attractive streets, reinforce the sense of identity for each district, and promote walking and biking in accordance with the recommendations in the Master Plan.
- **Open Spaces:** Based on the Approved and Adopted Master Plan for the Great Seneca Science Corridor, guidelines have been established for the open spaces. The

Design Guidelines are intended to assist in creating a variety of high quality open spaces within the districts.

- **Buildings:** The Design Guidelines for buildings are not mandates. They illustrate examples of building forms that implement the recommendations in the Master Plan. The intent is to ensure a form of development that will be attractive, sustainable and compatible with the adjacent residential communities.

How to Use the Urban Design Guidelines

With the exception of street standards and specific recommendations for open spaces included in the Master Plan, the Design Guidelines are not regulations that mandate specific forms and locations for buildings and open space. They illustrate how Master Plan recommendations and principles might be met, and encourage applicants to propose designs that create an attractive and successful public realm. The examples and case studies are intended to frame discussions regarding street, open space, building design, and the environment in a flexible way, without proscribing specific standards.

The structure of the planning process follows:

- Master Plans and Sector Plans - Provide the vision for a specific geographic area
- Zoning Ordinance - Establish the regulations and implementation tools
- Design Guidelines - Provide the inspiration and provide an illustration of the vision

NEXT STEPS

- Approve the Urban Design Guidelines with all modifications recommended by the Planning Board
- Publish the Urban Design Guidelines for the Great Seneca Science Corridor including the following:
 - Printed document
 - Useful interactive, web design resource to be located on the M-NCPPC site

Attachments

Urban Design Guidelines for the Great Seneca Science Corridor