



**Planning Board Briefing for the Westbard Sector Plan, Working Draft**

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**Completed:** 7.8.15

**Description**

*Summary*

Staff will present to the Planning Board the Working Draft of the Westbard Sector Plan. This Sector Plan updates earlier Sector and Master Plans by reevaluating their original goals and the changes and improvements that resulted. It defines the Plan Area, context and purpose for the update and makes recommendations that will improve the quality of life for all those who live, work and shop in Westbard.

*Vision*

In 2035, the residents of Westbard and surrounding neighborhoods will enjoy a vibrant village center that provides the community with a greatly improved quality of life.

The Plan will achieve this by building on its assets -- proximity to Downtown Bethesda, Friendship Heights and the District of Columbia; conveniently located shopping centers and industrial businesses; and surrounding established residential neighborhoods and civic institutions.

The neighborhood scale and amenities of Westbard will be retained and the community will be revitalized through a diversity of uses, transportation connections

and environmental upgrades.

Finally, affordable housing, a variety of stores and restaurants, and numerous parks and open spaces will make Westbard a more vibrant, greener place in which to live, work and play.

### *Planning Framework*

#### Overarching Goals

The goals of the Sector Plan are to provide the land use, zoning and urban design recommendations that will incentivize property owners to make investments and improve the quality of life in Westbard. These recommendations include:

- Transforming existing streets into multi-modal transitways and adding new connections.
- Preserving and enhancing local retail.
- Retaining light industrial uses.
- Designing mixed-use buildings that offer residents a range of retail, office and housing options.
- Providing housing options that will allow residents to age in place.
- Adding a network of green open spaces connected by trails and bikeways that provide places for outdoor recreation, gathering and relaxation.
- Renovating the Willett Branch stream into a major amenity that will become a unifying feature of the community.
- Increasing affordable housing options.

#### Approach:

Montgomery County's new Zoning Ordinance, enacted in October 2014, provides the tools for developing a mix of residential and non-residential uses within the Commercial Residential (CR) zones, such as those in Westbard. These zones allow for public amenities and benefits, including affordable housing, environmental restoration, public open space and high quality design of streetscapes and buildings. The methods of achieving these benefits include:

- Optional Method Public Benefits in the CR Zone
- Design Excellence

**Next Steps**

- Staff anticipates to hold a Planning Board public hearing on September 24, 2015
- Work sessions will begin in October and continue through the Fall of 2015.

**Recommendations**

- Staff is recommending approval of the Working Draft and is requesting to set a date for the Public Hearing

**Attachments**

- Westbard Sector Plan – Working Draft – July 2015 (*Copy will be couriered to Commissioners by COB Friday July 10, 2015*)