

Citizen Forum Initiates Work to Update Germantown Master Plan

On May 31, 2006, Councilman Michael Knapp introduced four community leaders to a full house at the Black Rock Center for the Arts to initiate the process of up-dating the 1989 Germantown Master Plan. The Germantown Citizen Forum panel featured Allison Bryant, Principal, The Assignment Group, and Commissioner, Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission; John A. Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division, Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission; Dr. Royce Hanson, Director, Center for Washington Area Studies; and Stephen Poteat, College Manager, Germantown Technology Park, Montgomery College.

As noted by the panelists, the Germantown Master Plan Revision is part of a program of master plans for the I-270 Corridor. These plans strive to provide a coordinated system of communities that are great places to live and work and a thriving 21st century employment center. Among the aims of the Germantown Master Plan are to better balance the location of jobs and housing and to improve transportation options so that relatively fewer workers drive alone to work thereby minimizing road congestion. Also, the Plan will be looking at the needs of current and future Germantown residents, such as for parks and other public facilities and at the character of Germantown.

When the 1989 Master Plan was adopted in 1990, only 35,000 residents lived in Germantown. By late 2003, the Census estimated 83,000 persons lived in Germantown, or 93 percent of the Master Plan “build-out” of 90,000. At the same time, the 1989 Master Plan zoned for 70,000 jobs, yet Germantown was estimated to have only 24,000 jobs in 2005, or about 34 percent of those zoned. About 44,000 jobs are forecast for Germantown by 2030, or 57 percent of the total Master Plan job capacity. A major objective during the two-year master plan process is to explore and encourage the potential for economic growth, and to encourage the employment of more Germantown residents in its jobs. Montgomery College and its Germantown Development Project, which trains students in bioscience and provides a business incubator for bio/technoscience projects, will play a key role in Germantown’s economic expansion.

During the Citizen Forum the panelists noted that only about 2000 residents lived in Germantown when it was planned as a “new town” in the early 1970’s and its first master plan, the 1974 Master Plan was adopted. Germantown has grown enormously since then. As usual for new towns, the residential areas have developed first, and Germantown has grown from the outside inward. The remainder of the Master Plan process will present the opportunity to “complete and update” the vision for the “new town”. (See the complete Forum minutes for more information.)