

PART III: PROPOSED MASTER PLAN PROCESS

PROPOSED COMMUNITY OUTREACH STRATEGY

1. General Public Meetings

General public meetings will be held throughout the master plan process. Two general public meetings were held in November to listen to the concerns of the community and to introduce the community to the proposed master plan process and issues as discussed in this report. The issues that are proposed reflect concerns heard from members of the community and from the M-NCPPC and Montgomery County staff. The staff is especially appreciative of the Damascus Alliance, a local civic group that has been working over the past two years with the community and the staff to raise awareness of issues of particular concern in the community. All of the concerns they have brought to the attention of the staff have been included as issues to be addressed as a part of this Master Plan. Also, a composite of the questions raised at the November public meetings is included in the Appendix to this report.

The initial general public meetings introduced the community to the master plan process and the proposed issues for consideration. Further general public meetings will be held as required to introduce proposals determined from the work of issue-oriented task forces, as discussed below, and the Staff Draft of the Master Plan. At least one general public meeting will include a presentation of the concerns and questions of individual property owners.

2. Master Plan Review Committee with Task Force Methodology

The proposed outreach method will provide for participation and input from as broad a spectrum of the community as possible. The proposed process is being used currently in several master plan areas because of its more inclusive approach. This process combines an open participation process with topic oriented "Task Forces" to address specific issues of the Damascus Master Plan. It allows broader participation from those with limited time available or strong interest in only one or two topics, instead of limiting participation to those with the time to devote to all elements of the master plan process (an ongoing concern with the more limited Master Plan Advisory Groups or Citizens Advisory Committees).

Any Damascus area resident or landowner interested in participating in the master plan process will be included in an overall Master Plan Review Committee (MPRC). Those choosing to participate will attend an orientation meeting on the processes to be followed and the interrelationship of their individual work. Those on the Committee will join one or more Task Force to be a part of studying those issues of interest to them. Those with the interest and time available may choose to participate in all Task Forces, but those with limited time can be a part of those issues of primary interest to them. Six Task Forces, related to the major topics of this Master Plan, are proposed:

- Land Use and Zoning in the Town Center - with Design Charrette
- Land Use and Zoning Outside the Town Center and Historic Preservation
- Housing - Affordability and Senior Needs
- Transportation Capacity and Network
- Preservation of the Patuxent River and Other Environmental Issues
- Rural Open Space, Parkland, Recreation, and Community Facility Needs

These Task Forces will meet, as necessary, over a period of approximately six months with the M-NCPPC and County staff to discuss the topics and issues outlined for Master Plan review. Some will meet more than others, depending on the complexity of the issues they are addressing. Each Task Force will conclude with recommendations for addressing issues.

The Task Force members and the M-NCPPC staff will present their recommendations to the full membership of the Master Plan Review Committee at a series of meetings following the completion of the work of the Task Forces. After these meetings and adjustments that arise from those meetings, the Task Force reports will be incorporated into the staff draft of the Master Plan. After the staff draft has been prepared, its major conclusions and recommendations will be presented at a general community meeting for review and comment before being presented to the Planning Board.

3. Communication Techniques

The staff will maintain communication with the community and interested parties through a variety of methods including electronic media (e-mail and a website), a mailing list, and notices in the Damascus Gazette.

TENTATIVE MASTER PLAN SCHEDULE

The scheduled timeframe for the active phases of this master plan process are noted below:

July 2002 through January 2003

Preparation of Community Issues Report
Community Information Gathering Meetings
Preparation of Draft Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report

February 2003

Presentation of Purpose and Outreach Strategy Report to the Planning Board

February to July 2003

Task Force Meetings
Identification of Alternative Actions and Recommendations

July through September 2003

Finalizing the Staff Draft Plan
Presentation of Staff Draft Plan to the Community
Adjustments to Staff Draft if Needed

October 2003 – February 2004

Planning Board Public Hearing and Worksessions

March to November 2004

County Executive Review
County Council Review
Public Hearing
Worksessions
Approval