

PLANNING BOARD DRAFT AMENDMENT TO THE
MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND:
WILD ACRES (GROSVENOR ESTATE)
5400 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, Resource #30/15



Montgomery County
Planning Department
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL
CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING
COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

September 2008

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Park and Planning Commission

Published by
The Maryland-National Capital
Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

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PLANNING BOARD DRAFT AMENDMENT TO THE
MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

WILD ACRES (GROSVENOR ESTATE)
5400 Grosvenor Lane, Resource #30/15

An amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation; being also an amendment to the North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan (1992); and an amendment to the General Plan for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District within Montgomery County, Maryland

Prepared By:

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8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760
September 2008

Reviewed By:

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY EXECUTIVE
(Date to be Established)

Approved By:

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
(Date to be Established)

ABSTRACT

Planning Board Draft Amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*:
Wild Acres (Grosvenor Estate), 5400 Grosvenor Lane, Resource #30/15

SOURCE OF COPIES:

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

NUMBER OF PAGES:

This document contains the text, with supporting illustrations, for an amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County*; being also an amendment to the *North Bethesda-Garrett Park Master Plan (1992)*; and an amendment to the *General Plan (On Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District Within Montgomery and Prince George's Counties*. This amendment considers the nomination of Wild Acres, the Grosvenor Estate, 5400 Grosvenor Lane, to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

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MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

Master plans provide policy guidance concerning the private and public use of land, for use and reference by private landowners, public agencies, and interested parties generally. Every master plan amendment also amends the General Plan for Montgomery County. The process of initiation, review, and adoption of amendments is generally as follows.

Public Hearing Draft Amendment

This document is the formal proposal to amend an adopted master plan. It is prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Before proceeding to publish a final draft of the amendment, the Planning Board must hold a public hearing. After the close of the record of this public hearing, the Planning Board holds an open worksession to review the testimony, and to determine whether to make any revisions to the Public Hearing Draft.

Planning Board Draft Amendment

This document contains the Planning Board's final recommendations. It is transmitted to the County Council for review. In addition, the County Executive must receive a copy and must provide comments on the amendment.

The County Council typically schedules a public hearing on the Planning Board Draft Amendment. After the close of record of this public hearing, the Council holds an open worksession to review the testimony, and then adopts a resolution approving, modifying, or disapproving the amendment.

Adopted Amendment

The amendment approved by the County Council is forwarded to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission for adoption. Once adopted by the Commission, the amendment officially amends the various master plans cited in the Commission's adoption resolution.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT

The *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and the *Historic Preservation Ordinance*, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code, are designed to protect and preserve Montgomery County's historic and architectural heritage. When a historic resource is placed on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, the adoption action officially designates the property as a historic site or historic district, and subjects it to the further procedural requirements of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Designation of historic sites and districts serves to highlight the values that are important in maintaining the individual character of the County and its communities. It is the intent of the County's preservation program to provide a rational system for evaluating, protecting, and enhancing the County's historic and architectural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. The accompanying challenge is to weave protection of this heritage into the County's planning program to maximize community support for preservation and minimize infringement on private property rights.

The following criteria, as stated in Section 24A-3 of the *Historic Preservation Ordinance*, shall apply when historic resources are evaluated for designation in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

(1) Historical and cultural significance:

The historic resource:

- a. has character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the County, State, or Nation;
- b. is the site of a significant historic event;
- c. is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society; or
- d. exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities; or

(2) Architectural and design significance:

The historic resource:

- a. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;
- b. represents the work of a master;
- c. possesses high artistic values;
- d. represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- e. represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

IMPLEMENTING THE MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Once designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, historic resources are subject to the protection of the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A. Any substantial changes to the exterior of a resource or its environmental setting must be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and a historic area work permit issued under the provisions of the Ordinance, Section 24A-6. In accordance with the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* and unless otherwise specified in the amendment, the environmental setting for each site, as defined in Section 24A-2 of the Ordinance, is the entire parcel on which the resource is located as of the date it is designated on the master plan.

Designating the entire parcel provides the County adequate review authority to preserve historic sites in the event of development. It also ensures that, from the beginning of the development process, important features of these sites are recognized and incorporated in the future development of designated properties. In the case of large acreage parcels, the amendment will provide general guidance for the refinement of the setting by indicating when the setting is subject to reduction in the event of development; by describing an appropriate area to preserve the integrity of the resource; and by identifying buildings and features associated with the site that should be protected as part of the setting. It is anticipated that for a majority of the sites designated, the appropriate point at which to refine the environmental setting will be when the property is subdivided.

Public improvements can profoundly affect the integrity of a historic area. Section 24A-6 of the Ordinance states that a Historic Area Work Permit for public or private property must be issued prior to altering a historic resource or its environmental setting. The design of public facilities in the vicinity of historic resources should be sensitive to and maintain the character of the area. Specific design considerations should be reflected as part of the Mandatory Referral review processes.

In the majority of cases, decisions regarding preservation alternatives are made at the time of public facility implementation within the process established in Section 24A of the Ordinance. This method provides for adequate review by the public and governing agencies. To provide guidance in the event of future public facility implementation, the amendment addresses potential conflicts existing at each site and suggests alternatives and recommendations to assist in balancing preservation with community needs.

In addition to protecting designated resources from unsympathetic alteration and insensitive redevelopment, the County's Preservation Ordinance also empowers the County's Department of Environmental Protection and the HPC to prevent the demolition of historic buildings through neglect.

The Montgomery County Council passed legislation in September 1984 to provide for a tax credit against County real property taxes in order to encourage the restoration and preservation of privately owned structures located in the County. The credit applies to

all properties designated on the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* (Chapter 52, Art. VI). Furthermore, the HPC maintains up-to-date information on the status of preservation incentives including tax credits, tax benefits possible through the granting of easements on historic properties, outright grants, and low interest loan programs.

THE AMENDMENT

| Resource # | Historic Name | Location |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 30/15 | Wild Acres (Grosvenor Estate) | 5400 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda |

This Amendment considers the designation of one resource to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. If designated the resource would be protected by the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

- The Wild Acres estate was the home of Gilbert H. Grosvenor and Elsie Bell Grosvenor. Gilbert Grosvenor, Editor of the National Geographic Magazine and President of the National Geographic Society, was a photojournalism pioneer and influential in the expansion of the national park system.
- In 1912, the Grosvenors purchased a 104-acre parcel flanked by Rockville Pike on the east and the Rockville streetcar line on the west. Wild Acres is highly representative of the country estates that once lined Rockville Pike in the early 20th century.
- The Tudor Revival style mansion house and coordinating garage, as well as the rustic Craftsman style of the caretaker's cottage possess distinct characteristics of these architectural styles. The three buildings were designed by Arthur Heaton, an accomplished local architect who was prolific in the early 20th century. Heaton designed all three of the resources in this nomination.
- The resource possesses high artistic value for the siting of mansion, carriage house, and caretaker's cottage in a natural setting, and for sweeping vistas to the north and south.
- The resource is located on parcel P065 (Tax ID 0042430). The recommended environmental setting includes that mansion house, garage (carriage house) and caretaker's cottage. The setting boundary around the mansion and garage is five acres. The setting around the caretaker's cottage extends ten feet from each side of the structure. Significant to the setting are the vistas looking north and south from the main residence. The setting excludes the right of way for Grosvenor Lane.



Wild Acres, north facade



Wild Acres, south facade



Garage



Caretaker's House

Wild Acres #30/15, 5400 Grosvenor Lane
Environmental Setting





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September 2008

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission