

SEPTEMBER 2008

KENSINGTON SECTOR PLAN

scope of work



Montgomery County Planning Department
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

September 2008

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8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

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introduction

This report provides the scope of work for a comprehensive amendment to the 1978 Sector Plan for the Town of Kensington and Vicinity. It describes the area in the context of Montgomery County's General Plan Refinement; shows the physical geography that will be studied; articulates the purpose of the Plan; highlights Plan goals, objectives, and issues to be addressed; and describes the Plan's overall approach and its strategy for community participation. Finally, this report outlines the tasks and resources needed to complete the Plan.

context

The 1993 General Plan Refinement includes Kensington in the Urban Ring. Like other Urban Ring places, Kensington is a railroad suburb. Its densities are higher than the more suburban communities to the north and east. In addition, much of the town's residential district is designated on the County's *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Its historic status gives it a distinct character and a clearly defined image. While a major objective of the General Plan Refinement focused future growth to the Urban Ring, it primarily directed that growth to areas with transit stations. Kensington's MARC station offers service to employment centers in Silver Spring and the District of Columbia.

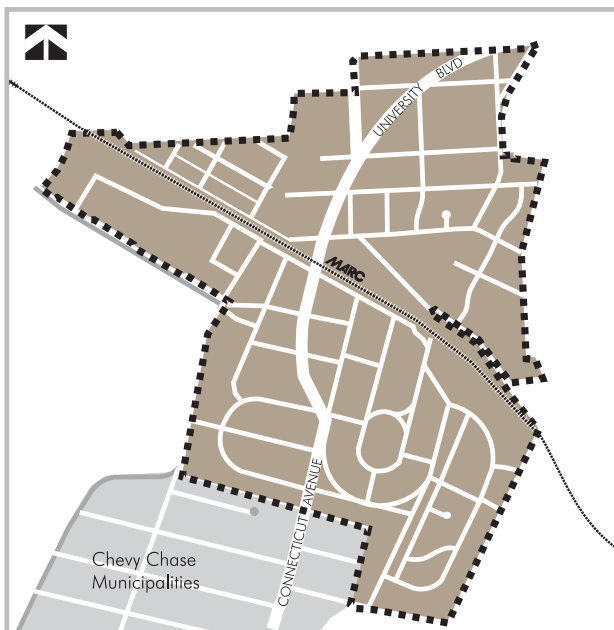
geography

The geography for the Plan will be the same as that used for the 1978 Plan. The proposed plan area includes the town and three areas outside it: the Ken-Gar neighborhoods, the West Howard Antiques District, and the neighborhood commercial district at Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard.

The West Howard Antiques District is an important component of the town's status as a specialty retail destination and it should be evaluated along with commercial areas inside the town. The adjoining commercial district at Connecticut Avenue, Lawrence Avenue, and University Boulevard is perceived as part of the town's business area even though it is outside town boundaries. Residents are very interested in connections from residential neighborhoods to the town center. These connections should be evaluated and developed as part of a single planning process. The Plan will confirm general land uses and zoning in areas that will not be the focus of the planning effort.

The Plan does not propose to include the portion of University Boulevard between Kensington and Wheaton as part of its study area. Much of the north side of University Boulevard is already devoted to multifamily housing. On the south side, there is a mix of older homes in good condition and more recently constructed homes, leaving few blocks outside the town susceptible to redevelopment. One of the few remaining undeveloped properties has begun the subdivision process.

Sector Plan Boundary



development activity

Since 1978, when the Plan was approved, there has been relatively little development activity—residential or commercial—in the Plan area. From 1978 to 1990, the Planning Board approved about 225,000 square feet of non-residential space. About half—105,000 square feet—is devoted to a Kaiser Permanente medical facility on Connecticut Avenue. The Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union headquarters was constructed in 1980. The Planning Board approved slightly more than 100,000 square feet of non-residential space between 1990 and June 2008, mostly associated with two projects—the rebuilding of the Safeway, Kensington’s main grocery store, and the establishment of an assisted living facility on Knowles Avenue.

Residential development inside the Plan area has been limited to small subdivisions. Two of the larger projects, 20 townhouses at Kensington Crossing and 23 single-family detached houses at Kensington Orchids, are located on Plyers Mill Road, just outside the Plan boundary.









purpose

This comprehensive update of the *Kensington Sector Plan* allows the area’s land use pattern and the zones supporting that pattern to meet several evolving County policies. Mixed-use districts can create communities that encourage walking and bicycle use, thereby reducing vehicle miles travelled, conserving energy, and reducing carbon emissions. When appropriately designed, they are lively and active areas with street environments that are welcoming and comfortable for residents, workers, and visitors. Mixed-use communities also encourage provision of housing for a wide array of ages and incomes. The Plan can set the stage for revitalization consistent with County policies for sustainable development, design excellence, and provision of housing.



kensington plan area



-  Enliven Town Center
-  Connect Neighborhoods to Town Center
-  Preserve Neighborhoods' Scale and Character
-  Balance Regional Traffic and Pedestrian Atmosphere
-  Sector Plan Boundary
-  Town of Kensington Boundary
-  CSX Railroad
-  Bridge and Underpass

goals and objectives

The Plan's broad goal is to enable revitalization while preserving the town's scale and character. This goal acknowledges the desirability of revitalization that meets larger County policies but recognizes that Kensington's location, history, and character make it less appropriate for the more intense redevelopment planned for White Flint and under study in the Wheaton Central Business District. Kensington's ability to accommodate revitalization should be carefully balanced with the desirability of preserving its established residential character and its historic value.

To achieve this goal, the Sector Plan will pursue these objectives:

- Enliven the town center by creating streets and public spaces that are well-designed and whose uses encourage community life.
- Promote sustainability—energy efficiency, water conservation, reduced carbon emissions—through land use recommendations and through environmental and design guidelines.
- Connect Kensington's neighborhoods to a revitalized town center by creating a network of sidewalks, bike paths, trails, and street crossings that enable access to community destinations on foot or by bicycle.
- Continue to accommodate regional traffic passing through Kensington while creating a safer and more hospitable atmosphere for walkers and cyclists.
- Explore regulatory methods for retaining the scale and character of Kensington's residential neighborhoods.





issues

At the March 2007 community workshop, planners heard these issues and questions from the 85 residents who participated.

- What kind of revitalization does the town envision?
- Are the current non-residential zones—a mixture of retail, office, and light industrial zones—adequate to accommodate revitalization? Will they produce an appropriate mix of uses and intensities?
- How can the Plan encourage sustainable development?
- How much redevelopment can the transportation network accommodate?
- What kind of land use or regulatory process is needed to create a well-designed, cohesive, and connected commercial district?
- What public infrastructure—streetscape, pedestrian connections, sidewalks among other items—will support a well-designed and cohesive center for the town?
- Should the Plan include studies of University Boulevard between Kensington and Wheaton?
- How can Kensington's historic district be preserved and enhanced?
- How can residents' concerns about mansionization in the town's residential neighborhoods be addressed?

approach

Kensington's location, combined with the desirability of maintaining the area's scale and character, argue against focusing revitalization efforts solely on increasing density. The planning process will focus on determining the combination of land uses, and regulatory techniques that will meet the Plan's goal of enabling revitalization without compromising the fundamental attributes that make Kensington an attractive place to live. The impacts on the area's infrastructure—particularly its roads—of denser mixed uses will be evaluated and adjustments made based on those impacts. The planning process aims to create a lively, well-designed commercial area that can be reached from Kensington's neighborhoods and that offers residents opportunities for shopping, gathering, and entertainment.



The findings and report of the Infill Housing Task Force, which examined issues involving the construction of new houses on existing lots in established residential neighborhoods, also will inform the Plan.

The Town of Kensington has contracted with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) for a visit in November from a technical advisory services panel that will evaluate Kensington's prospects for revitalization and redevelopment. Department staff will likely provide significant resources for this visit and intends to evaluate the panel's findings as part of its own analysis.

o u t r e a c h

The project team will work with residents, business owners, and others interested in the revitalization of Kensington. Because the Town of Kensington is an incorporated municipality, its elected officials will be closely involved in the development and review of Plan recommendations. Civic associations representing residents in the town and its adjoining neighborhoods have come together to form the Coalition of Kensington Communities. The Coalition will play an important role in developing the Plan's recommendations. The planning team will deliver regular status reports at the town's regular monthly meetings, and to the Coalition, whose executive committee meets quarterly.

Department staff held two community meetings, in March 2007 and June 2008, to identify residents' land use planning concerns and to hear their ideas for revitalization. The planning team will hold community meetings this fall to discuss its analysis of the issues and the Plan's recommendations. Planning Department staff will also offer "office hours"—regularly scheduled times when they will be available in Kensington to discuss plan topics with anyone interested.

Department staff continues to meet with interested landowners and prospective developers about properties in the Plan area. The project team will work as well with County and State agencies on matters of joint interest.

phasing

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Department staff is scheduled to complete a draft Plan by December 2008. The Planning Board is scheduled to review the Plan beginning in January 2009. The Planning Board Draft is scheduled for transmittal to the Executive and the Council in July 2009. Council review is scheduled for fall 2009.

After the County Council approval of the Plan and its adoption by the Commission, a Sectional Map Amendment is needed to implement the Plan's zoning recommendations. The SMA could require another three months to complete. The SMA is scheduled to be completed by May 2010, before the next Council election.

phase i: pre-plan

TASK 1: SCOPE PROJECT

Prepare a need statement that briefly describes issues and establishes the Plan boundaries. Identify a project manager.

Product: Budget program element that describes and maps the project

phase ii: develop draft plan (9 months)

TASK 2: ESTABLISH WORK PROGRAM (1 MONTH)

Discuss and finalize the needed analysis and resources, and establish a methodology and approach. Prepare a detailed Scope of Work that describes the Plan area, issues, and goals; outlines the activities to occur in each phase of the Plan's development; provides a community outreach plan; and establishes a timeline. Staff will establish a liaison with the Town of Kensington and with appropriate County agencies.

Product: Scope of Work

TASK 3: BACKGROUND RESEARCH (1 MONTH)

Complete an existing conditions inventory, analysis, and mapping that includes data on land use, zoning, demographics, transportation, environment, community facilities, and parks and recreation facilities. Establish the extent of transportation analysis and determine the level of work to be accomplished by Town of Kensington transportation consultants. Initiate economic analyses of office, retail, and housing.

Product: Existing conditions maps and data, community contact and distribution list, demographic profile, economic and market analyses as needed

TASK 4: ANALYSIS (4 MONTHS)

Following community meetings to hear residents' vision for Kensington's future, the planning team will evaluate the impact of varying mixes and intensities of development on the natural environment and the transportation network. The team will also analyze methods for preserving neighborhood character and consider levels of public infrastructure needed to meet Plan objectives for connecting communities.

Product: Alternative land use schemes, with their transportation and environmental impacts; design studies illustrating alternatives where needed; sustainable community concepts; open space schemes; community facility proposals; and zoning implementation analysis

TASK 5: DEVELOP DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS (1 MONTH)

Preliminary recommendations will include illustrations of urban design concepts and draft zoning amendments. Staff will present the preliminary recommendations to the Planning

Board. After obtaining Board input, staff will finalize the recommendations.

Product: Draft recommendations, zoning, and design guidelines

TASK 6: PREPARE DRAFT PLAN (2 MONTHS)

Staff will prepare the draft Sector Plan, enabling the Planning Board to schedule a public hearing.

Product: Public Hearing Draft

phase iii: planning board review (6 months)

TASK 7: CONDUCT PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING (2 MONTHS)

Staff will schedule and advertise the public hearing, and distribute the Plan. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the draft Plan.

Product: Public hearing transcript and summary notes

TASK 8: PLANNING BOARD WORKSESSIONS AND PLANNING BOARD DRAFT (4 MONTHS)

Staff will prepare the issues for the Planning Board worksessions. Following the worksessions, staff will prepare the Planning Board draft document and seek Board approval to transmit the Plan to the County Council and Executive.

Product: Planning Board Draft and design guidelines

phase iv: county executive review (60 days)

TASK 9: COUNTY EXECUTIVE REVIEW

The Executive will review the Plan's recommendations, conduct a fiscal analysis, and transmit comments to the County Council.

Product: Executive's comments on the Planning Board Draft

phase v: county council review (6 months)

TASK 10: COUNTY COUNCIL HEARING AND PHED COMMITTEE WORKSESSIONS

The County Council will tour the planning area and hold a public hearing on the Planning Board Draft, followed by the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee worksessions. The PHED Committee will make recommendations to the full Council on the Planning Board Draft Plan. The County Council will approve the Plan.

Product: Approved Sector Plan

phase vi: implementation

TASK 11: PLANNING BOARD AND FULL COMMISSION ADOPTION OF THE APPROVED PLAN

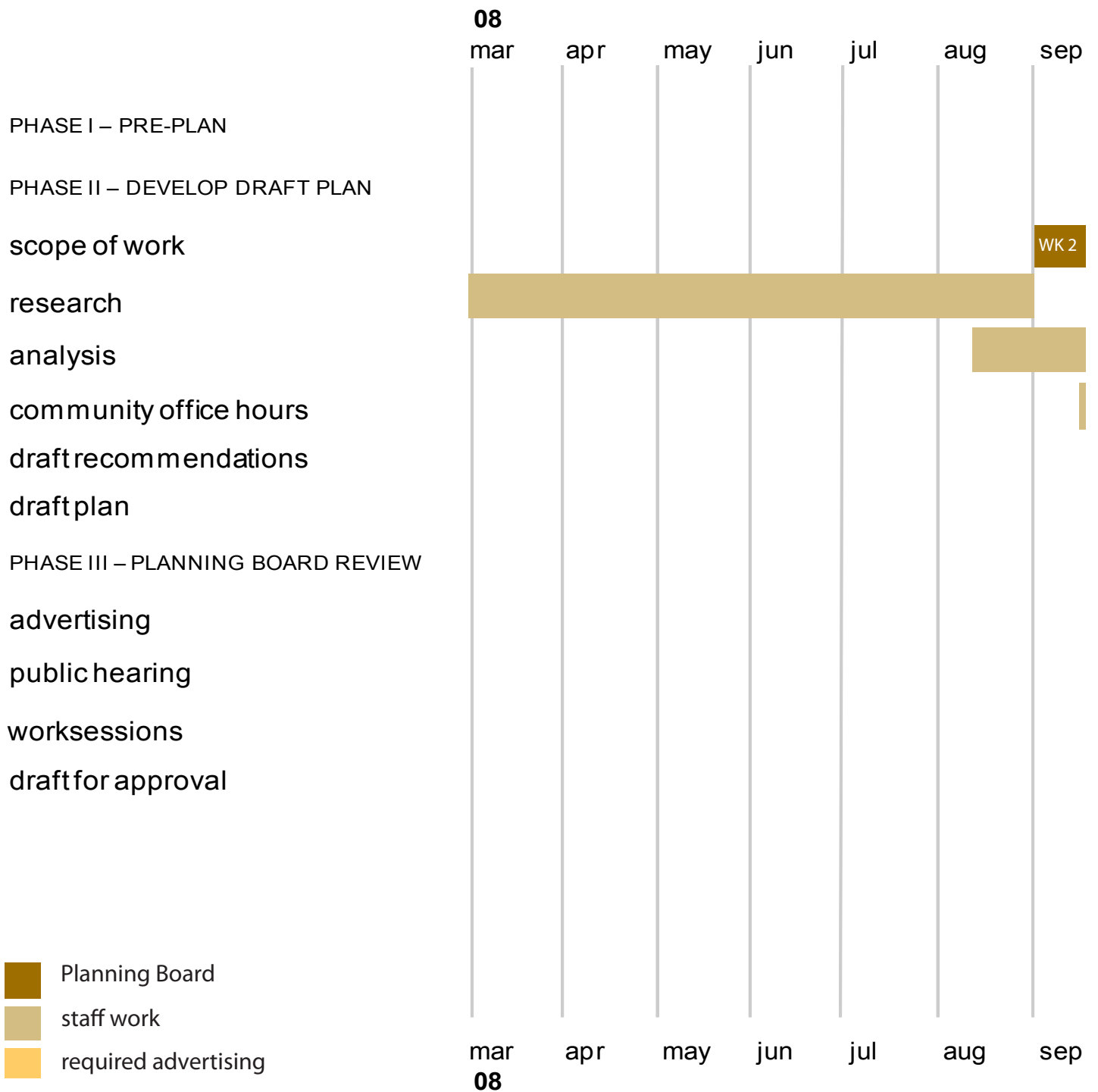
Product: Approved and Adopted Sector Plan

TASK 12: SECTIONAL MAP AMENDMENT

Staff prepares the Sectional Map Amendment to implement the Plan's zoning recommendations.

Product: Updated zoning maps

kensington sector plan proposed schedule



resources

The Planning Department’s approved FY09 budget allocates 3.75 work years to the Kensington Sector Plan.

09

oct nov dec jan feb mar apr may jun jul

■ Planning Board approves the scope of work



■ WK 3 Sets a public hearing date

30 DAYS

■ WK 4

■ WK 1

■ WK 1

■ WK 1 Approves the draft plan

oct nov dec jan feb mar apr may jun jul

09

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