

October 12, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: John Carter, Chief
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SUBJECT: Report on Status of the MD 355/I-270 Tech Corridor Project Including
Summary of Community Comments, and the Results of the MD 355
Participation Session Held on September 27, 2006 at Brookside Gardens

The Planning Board requested a summary of the community presentations and comments received at the public meeting on Centers and Boulevards held at Brookside Gardens on September 27, 2006. In response to the request, the following overview of the meeting and summary of the community comments are enclosed.

DISCUSSION

This public meeting is the last of three meetings that discussed Centers and Boulevards. This meeting was intended to identify methods to establish thriving and sustainable communities, and apply the methods to the MD 355 area. The staff presentation on October 19, 2006 will provide an overview of the meeting program, the community response, and the next steps.

The public meeting was divided into two sessions: 1) General Goals, Attributes, and Actions, and 2) Application to the MD 355 Area. The following paragraphs summarize the community comments from each session.

SESSION 1: GENERAL GOALS, ATTRIBUTES, AND ACTIONS

During the first session, the entire group of community participants considered: 1) general goals, 2) community attributes, and 3) actions needed to establish thriving and sustainable communities in Montgomery County. The following outline summarizes the community response to each of the questions.

Question 1: What general goals would help guide future development in Montgomery County?

- Balance infrastructure with development, and make sure that infrastructure projects are delivered
- Provide for a diversity of community types
- Create bikeways/paths for common usage
- Establish an efficient and effective use of infrastructure (e.g. two-way movement for Metro) to increase transportation capacity
- Provide funding for infrastructure before a master plan is started
- Recognize that the need for cars and additional roads is not going away
- Provide for maximum, livable density recognizing that the density will vary depending on location
- Recognize that a regional look is needed to address problems with clean air and water
- Examine the County's strategic plan measures from growth and quality of life, and establish indicators to measure success

Question 2: What community attributes are necessary to foster quality living and working environments?

- Provide a sense of community
- Preserve and enhance green infrastructure
- Respect what has grown organically, and address the needs of small business
- Improve understanding of planning efforts by the community
- Recognize the need to diversify older areas to improve balance
- Recognize that one size does not fit all, and provide for land uses, housing types, and densities that recognize the differences in each area
- Improve the range of housing instead of segregated as it is now
- Develop strategies that accommodate houses of worship
- Create a matrix to determine objectives for particular communities
- Address the transportation needs to provide convenience during and after peak hours
- Establish more flexible zones that accommodate a mix of uses and functions
- Establish connectivity between and within neighborhoods through a well designed street grid that accommodates pedestrians, bikes and vehicles
- Build facilities where elderly feel comfortable
- Provide for spontaneity including unplanned and unprogrammed space
- Improve trash collection and establish well maintained public space
- Improve safety in communities
- Provide for pedestrian crosswalks including shelter for walkways
- Recognize that the General Plan was visionary. The General Plan Update does not reflect the General Plan's original dependence on transit, and the Update does not adequately provide for conservation of parks
- Provide for green infrastructure including parks and additional streetscape

Question #3: What actions are needed to cultivate these community characteristics that we value?

- Improve implementation by creating smart codes and enhancing agency coordination
- Recognize that we have too many actions, tools, and requirements that create homogeneity in the planning and regulating process
- Establish master plans that more clearly delineate areas for growth
- Allow communities to have a stake in planning their own neighborhoods during the master plan process
- Implement policies that recognize the value of the Agricultural Reserve to the whole community
- Explore the feasibility of revising housing to include additional accessory apartments and “granny flats”
- Avoid special exceptions that destroy the character of the arterials and major highways
- Revise the Growth Policy and the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance to improve the timing between private development and the delivery of public infrastructure
- Identify a funding source for infrastructure
- Tie transportation and development to provide adequate infrastructure
- Think more about how we are going to pay for this infrastructure and identify the source of money
- Look at what a community really wants and establish a matrix of items that can be quantified
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance and the development review process to establish rules that are streamlined, consistent, and understandable
- Provide more mass transit including dedicated lanes for rail and bus
- Create a rational set of mixed-use zones
- Recognize that the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance has not limited growth as intended
- Create a long-range plan for public facilities countywide

SESSION 2: APPLICATION TO MD 355 AREA

During the second session, each of eight breakout groups identified a different area along MD 355 in need of planning attention. Participants identified a vision, characteristics, and actions needed to make the vision a reality. The participants discussed the following eight geographic areas.

1. The Green Mile (Friendship Heights CBD to Bethesda CBD)
2. Bethesda North/NIH to I-495
3. I-495/Grosvenor to White Flint Mall
4. White Flint Metro Station to Rockville South
5. Rockville North to Montgomery College
6. Shady Grove to Gaithersburg South
7. Germantown including Milestone Shopping Center
8. Clarksburg Transit Corridor

The attached outline summarizes the community comments from each of the eight groups.

CONCLUSION

This community worksession represents an important first step in the planning for several communities along MD 355. Planning for these communities provides the opportunity to establish a holistic approach to a variety of housing, transportation, and community issues. The worksessions generated a variety of ideas that will be included in the planning of the MD 355 area. The participants recognized that the different sections of MD 355 need different considerations, but the sections also have the potential for a set of unified themes. These ideas and themes could also be transferable to other areas of Montgomery County. As part of the next steps, the staff looks forward to participating in the community planning process to create a series of master plans and sector plans that will augment and enhance the unique characteristics of the communities in the I-270 Corridor in accordance with the highest standards of planning and design identified in this public meeting.

JAC:ha: G:\carter\Staff Report MD 355

Attachments:

1. Summary of Community Comments: Application to MD 355
2. List of Participants

MD 355/I-270 Corridor Project Discussion Groups Map

**ATTACHMENT 1: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY COMMENTS
APPLICATION TO MD 355**

**TEAM NO. 1: VISION FOR MD 355
GREEN MILE (FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS CBD TO THE BETHESDA CBD)**
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355) or the “green mile” between the Friendship Heights and the Bethesda CBDs should be a grand boulevard (e.g. Connecticut Avenue near Chevy Chase Circle) with commercial areas contained within the central business districts of Friendship Heights and Bethesda.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Retain and preserve the green and residential character of this boulevard:
 - Provide a wider median with trees and plantings
 - Preserve and enhance perimeter landscaping
 - Provide sidewalks on both sides
 - Provide additional dedication
 - Relocate utilities
 - Retain and enhance the existing green character
 - Retain setbacks of buildings
 - Retain green front yards, and do not pave front yards
2. Enforce the Zoning Ordinance concerning home occupations
3. Reduce or eliminate the approval of Special Exceptions
4. Reduce the speed limit to 25-30 mph and enforce the restriction
5. Reduce from 6 lanes to 4 lanes with a median from Western Avenue to Bradley Boulevard
6. Improve bike connections:
 - Examine the potential for a bike path, not necessarily along Wisconsin Avenue
 - Provide a sidewalk or bike path along the frontage of the Country Club
7. Provide opportunities for additional public transit such as a trolley or bus
8. Provide additional stormwater management facilities and solve drainage problems on the site of the Country Club
9. Continue the median with trees and other plantings to Western Avenue
10. Prohibit any commercial encroachment outside of the central business districts
11. Provide special signage compatible with a green boulevard
12. Preserve the existing development

Green Mile Map

ACTIONS

1. Require DPS to enforce the restrictions on home occupations and other development standards
2. Create a special MD 355 Boulevard master plan with an overlay zone
3. Restrict commercial development to the central business districts
4. Enforce the Sign Ordinance
5. Address the stormwater management issues near the Country Club
6. Reduce and enforce speed limits
7. Improve the landscaping, and provide additional trees in the median

TEAM NO. 2: VISION FOR MD 355

BETHESDA NORTH/NIH TO I-495

September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

For the Battery Lane to Middleton Road segment, MD 355 will be an attractive, pedestrian-friendly and community-oriented gateway into the CBD that retains community-serving retail. It will not be aggressively urban.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Maintain existing jobs along corridor
2. Provide affordable low-income housing
3. Need more accessible green space for urban areas, and uncover streams
4. Need useful retail/service – not just eating/drinking/artsy stuff. Limit chain stores
5. Smaller, community-serving schools, in multi-story buildings with shared principals

ACTIONS

Zoning

1. Business Size - Establish mixed-use zone with maximum retail square footage to retain small/local retail in some areas
2. Allowed Uses:
 - To limit chain stores when rents are high in new development, require subsidized rent for local owned retail in return for density
 - MPDU Program to protect small office and retail space
3. Open Space
 - Too much focus on art galleries, need green areas for open space
 - Allow developer a green space buyout only if the green space gained is near the project
 - Establish potential to create private, gated, community parks
4. Housing Incentives
 - Moderately priced office and residential over retail program
 - Allow limited increase in building height to accommodate affordable housing, create potential to “pop the roof” of some existing buildings and add 1-2 floors with residential to help small local owned business/buildings to remain. Allow live/work units
 - Encourage rehabilitation instead of replacement in certain areas, and use housing incentive funds to rehabilitate

5. Building Height:
 - Graduate building heights from the center of the CBD, not so abrupt
 - Limit height on narrower streets, at least at lower floors - human scale at street/pedestrian level
 - Urban areas near single-family areas are appropriate, just not tall, with a gradual increase in height, but not abrupt

Transportation

1. Narrower streets to allow expanded medians, street trees, sidewalks, and narrower lanes are safer
2. Correspond street width to height of buildings
3. Expand "Bethesda 8" bus to include NIH and BNMH –flexible, dependable, efficient
4. Enhance alley systems for Woodmont Triangle to improve traffic flow
5. Create pedestrian zone on Woodmont and Norfolk Avenues (evenings/weekends)

MD 355 Planning Studies

1. Individual sector plans for road segments, not county-wide one size fits all
2. Work more closely with federal agencies on planning for NIH and BNMH. Federal installations have intensified, not enough attention to impact on the community. Montgomery County should work more closely with NCPC and GSA on further expansions, pressure on Congress/Senate
3. County liaison planning – look for national developers who use local business and housing but smaller scale. Competitive bid?

Bethesda North/NIH Map

TEAM NO. 3: VISION FOR MD 355
I-495/GROSVENOR TO WHITE FLINT MALL
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

Create a synergistic residential and retail mixed-use transitional area with improved aesthetic and functional connectivity to the higher density Strathmore-Grosvenor residential area and the Metro station to the south and to the commercial corridor to the north. MD 355 should be a boulevard with multiple transportation options.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Green space (throughout the MD 355 Corridor including pocket parks and other open spaces)
2. Adequate parking (especially for Grosvenor Metro area)
3. Adequate alternatives for transportation (different)
4. Road connectivity-access to Nicholson Lane-improved egress from neighborhoods
5. Office space and jobs associated with new development
6. Mixed-use development within the Corridor
7. Safety of movement for pedestrians and vehicles
8. Transportation management and sidewalks with curbs
9. Green parking within parking lots
10. Local buses throughout residential neighborhoods
11. Pedestrian access and better definition for bikeways including signage along MD 355
12. White Flint Mall should serve the White Flint/Grosvenor/North Bethesda area
13. Community center or other civic use between the White Flint Mall and existing residential neighborhood

ACTIONS

Public meetings should have updated information, especially maps.

I-495/Grosvenor to White Flint Mall Map

TEAM NO. 4: VISION FOR MD 355
WHITE FLINT METRO STATION TO ROCKVILLE SOUTH
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

MD 355 will be an urban boulevard with a mix of uses concentrating on a town center style of development at transportation nodes.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Establish vibrant mixed-use urban centers that provide a community focus for surrounding neighborhoods:
 - Variety of public spaces
 - Additional office and residential space, retail is already existing
 - Additional green space
2. Expanded multimodal connectivity and mobility within, between, and around the urban centers:
 - Strengthen the multimodal aspects of the transportation system
 - Reduce congestion
 - Improve weaker transportation modes (bus service, pedestrian and bicycle travel)
 - Improve and expand pedestrian access to the White Flint Metro Station
3. Improve pedestrian safety
4. Improve pedestrian connections between centers
5. Improve ground floor activity

ACTIONS

1. Establish a new zoning framework or a more form based code
2. Improve design standards
3. Establish minimum parcel sizes
4. Create an incentive zoning tool
5. Create a business improvement district to assist in funding of maintenance, promotion and facilities
6. Provide additional right-of-way for secondary roads
7. Encourage the retention of local retailers
8. Establish a parking district
9. Consider a toll road through transponders to reduce traffic
10. Establish requirements for affordable, mixed income housing

White Flint Metro Station to Rockville South Map

TEAM NO. 5: VISION FOR MD 355
ROCKVILLE NORTH TO MONTGOMERY COLLEGE
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

MD 355 will provide opportunities for a grand street and new development at Montgomery College and the area north to Gude Drive.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Develop Avenue for college, business, and residential users
2. Develop new Metro station and connecting stations
3. Develop an 18-hour community with mixed-uses and housing
4. Provide local shuttle service or some type of transit circulator
5. Utilize existing parking areas for redevelopment (i.e., the college)
6. Create more pedestrian connections and walkable development
7. Build closer to the street with spacious pedestrian sidewalks
8. Limit parking to emphasize transit with public garages
9. The Grand Avenue should have a “green character” with trees, parks, and green walls
10. Recreational uses and gathering places should be integrated into the corridor, ball fields should be located on the edges, and transit connector should be provided to serve the recreation areas
11. Create a grid of streets to improve access and connectivity
12. Provide TDRs to protect the Agricultural Reserve

ACTIONS

1. Use new mixed-use zones with design guidelines to achieve desirable form
2. Streamline process for new zones, expedite master plans
3. Update environmental streetscape standards
4. County and City to improve coordination, need public coordinating committee
5. Education effort in community outreach in all planning efforts
6. Utilize neighborhood plans (smaller than master plans)
7. APFO needs to allow for new development with priority on transit improvements, not road improvements
8. Require affordable housing and encourage new ways to achieve it (including student housing)

Rockville North to Montgomery College Map

TEAM NO. 6: VISION FOR MD 355
SHADY GROVE TO GAITHERSBURG SOUTH
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

Shady Grove to Gaithersburg South will include more density near Metro, a mix of uses, housing for a range of incomes, emphasis on “walking as the new transit,” additional connections to Metro and other transit, and additional green areas.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Five to eight stories with special attention to the first 25-30 feet
2. Focus on affordable housing
3. Commercial/retail on first floor, residential above
4. Force buildings to a street grid
5. Consider green design and solar orientation
6. Accessible to surrounding areas
7. Bike lane along MD 355
8. Wide shared use lane
9. Transit to Metro and the Corridor Cities Transitway
10. Pedestrian improvements
11. Trees and landscaping
12. Green median
13. Reduce building setbacks
14. Improve to County standards
15. Coordinated and consistent standards between the City of Rockville, and the City of Gaithersburg, and Montgomery County:
 - Streetscaping
 - Road standards
16. Reduce space for vehicles and increase space for pedestrians and cyclists
17. Improve access to adjacent communities
18. Reconsider the road layout and include the following:
 - Additional parallel road system
 - Recognize or modify role as an arterial road (consider potential function as a Market Street)
19. Increase infrastructure capacity if development increases
20. Segregate local and through traffic:
 - Green bridges
 - Underpasses at major intersections
 - New bike trail
 - Cut and fill to bury through traffic
 - Service roads parallel to MD 355
 - Underpass and a rotary (traffic circle) to improve pedestrian crossing

16. Increase infrastructure and create shared use street, dedicate a bus lane
17. Establish improvements through a combination of public and private participation, current right-of-way is quite wide
18. Improve importance of the pedestrian movements over vehicular movements
19. Accept congestion
20. Add pedestrian facilities, bus and other pathways
22. Improve land uses by creating methods to establish mixed-use at industrial areas (e.g. Oakmont Industrial area) and other locations

Shady Grove/Gaithersburg South Map

TEAM NO. 7: VISION FOR MD 355
GERMANTOWN INCLUDING MILESTONE SHOPPING CENTER
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

MD 355 will have a comprehensive, connected urban center extending from the MARC Station on the east side of I-270 through the Town Center transit and civic core to MD 355 and Montgomery College on the west side of I-270.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Tree-lined, pedestrian friendly streets in expanded urban center
2. Internal circulator transit routes with safe pedestrian access and facilities
3. Regional retail (e.g. Milestone Center) to be redeveloped in Main Street form with mixed use, connected storefronts and structured parking located on internal parcels
4. Montgomery College as centerpiece of academics, R & D, and housing
5. New high-rise conference center at MD 118 and I-270 (Bellemeade)
6. Vertical and mixed-use parcels along I-270, Century Boulevard, Ridge Road/Father Hurley Boulevard, and MD 355

ACTIONS

1. Flexible mixed-use zoning
2. Master Plan guidance to achieve design excellence
3. New/emerging housing and building types to distinguish Germantown from competing locations
4. Realign and build CCT
5. Operate a circulator bus similar to Van-Go in Silver Spring

Germantown Map

TEAM NO. 8: VISION FOR MD 355
CLARKSBURG TRANSIT CORRIDOR
September 27, 2006 Centers and Boulevards

VISION

The “Great Road” (MD 355) serves as a gateway to not only the County but also respects, highlights, and connects the historic and natural areas – the large expanse of parkland and the Agricultural Reserve.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. Unifying streetscape and transitional elements appropriate to each theme:
 - Hyattstown Historic District
 - Little Bennett Regional Park
 - Clarksburg Historic District
 - Linkage of MD 355 south to Boyds and Germantown
2. Buildings along the street corridor should consider LEED Certification, including the use of green roofs
3. Scale and compatibility with existing structures and development
4. Street facing buildings with parking in the rear
5. Respect period appearance in historic areas – parking, scale, and setback
6. Consider native plantings along the streets
7. Encourage infill that accommodates revitalization in historic areas, with special attention to water quality
8. Establish a trolley on MD 355 that connects the historic districts of Clarksburg and Hyattstown
9. Provide a transit connection to Little Bennett Regional Park
10. Respect and reinforce the existing master plan as adopted
11. Balance of jobs and housing
12. Limit impervious surfaces
13. Provide connecting bike paths and walkways
14. Make industrial areas more attractive

ACTIONS

1. Establish a design review board
2. HPC involvement

Clarksburg Map

ATTACHMENT 2:
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
Community Discussion Groups

Group 1

(Green Mile - Friendship Heights CBD to Bethesda CBD)
Mr. Bob Cope
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Ms. Peggy Erickson
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Mr. John Fay
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Mary Beth O'Quinn, Staff Resource
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Group 2

(Bethesda North/NIH to I-495)
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Group 3

(I-495/Grosvenor to White Flint Mall)
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Group 4

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Mr. Donald Hague
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Group 5

(Rockville North to Montgomery College)

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Mr. Scott Ullery
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Group 7

(Germantown including Milestone Shopping Center)

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Group 6

(Shady Grove to Gaithersburg South)

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Mr. Brian Jackson
Mr. Jody Kline
Mr. Charlie Challstrom
Rev. Justus Reeves
Ms. Lisa Rother
Mr. Steven Robins
Mr. Philip Perrine
Mr. Bill Michie
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Group 8

(Clarksburg Transit Corridor)

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