

Twinbrook Sector Plan

Community Meeting

October 6, 2004

Introduction

The October 6, 2004 meeting held at Twinbrook Elementary School was the second large community meeting and was intended to elicit comment on the Plan's vision for the future of Twinbrook; to help determine what kind of place Twinbrook should become.

Staff began the meeting with a presentation of the planning context and findings of previous community outreach meetings.

The group was asked to respond to the following draft vision statement and to draw their own plausible scenarios for their community's future.

Twinbrook is a vibrant mixed-use and compact core incorporating dense housing, neighborhood shopping, restaurants, regionally important life sciences and lab space, and light industrial uses within walking distance of the region's Metro system.

The group's concerns about their community's future included traffic congestion and school crowding, which are concerns across the region. They also expressed more local concerns, including operation of and access to Metro, the physical character of the area's streetscape and land development, the operation of particular intersections, and the area's best use and zoning. The group was then divided into three groups to discuss these issues in more detail. Their comments follow.

The Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County participated in this meeting and summarized the groups' responses by identifying commonalities and differences among the groups and from previous meetings.

This meeting was part of an outreach strategy developed to integrate public insight, opinions, and concerns into the Sector Plan process.

TABLE 1

Planning Area Characteristics

- Pedestrian connectivity
- Pedestrian- and bike-friendly
 - Streetscape
 - Safe adequate pedestrian access to Rockville Pike
 - Bike to Metro
 - Another crossing of tracks to connect the planning area to surrounding areas and to Chapman Avenue and Rockville Pike

Character

- Extend hours of activity
- Meet a range of needs, including education and arts space (studio, performing)
- Encourage preservation and modernization of existing industrial uses
- Provide basic services (grocery store, cleaners, post office) to serve the surrounding neighborhoods
- Avoid competition (hurting) existing business

Land Uses

- Preserve some light industrial uses
- Incorporate green space
- Modernize existing industrial uses
- Allow mixed-use in current industrial area
- Create more housing within five-minute walk of Metro, including senior housing
- Recreate Parklawn Drive as a boulevard connected to Metro and a focus for development
- Transform Washington Street into a community-oriented street, including a community center, post office, and park
- Increase density in portions of the industrial area to allow more green space, commercial, and nighttime uses

Connection to Rock Creek Park

- Create a greenway to Rock Creek Park along the cemetery's edge
- Allow night clubs

Vision

The Twinbrook Metro Station area will be:

- Adequately supplied with infrastructure and facilities for daily living
- Pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly
- Environmentally-friendly and greener (less surface parking)
- A mixed range of land uses with denser housing near the station, more urban type mixed-uses, including shops and night clubs, and a modernized light industrial area
- A more connected place with links across the tracks and more road connections to Randolph and Veirs Mill Roads
- A main street (Washington Street) as a focus for community and public facilities

TABLE 2

This group's response to the proposed vision statement included the following comments.

- Theoretical potential walking distance
- Restore the street grid pattern
- Emphasize pedestrian safety
- Repair streets (swales)
- Improve sidewalks with streetlighting and landscaping
- Make streets pedestrian-friendly
- Concentrate mixed-uses (residential, retail, and office) at Metro
- Install a public restroom at Metro
- Establish a free shuttle to White Flint Mall
- No more residential beyond Twinbrook Commons
- Allow mixed-use (with residential) along Washington Street (high density perceived as safer)
- Preserve light industrial and provide incentives for business owners to improve
- Place low income housing in Bethesda
- Locate middle and higher income new housing near the cemetery

TABLE 3

The participants at this table support housing in Twinbrook, but do not want to see “dense” housing, as proposed in the vision statement. They would add the following ideas to the vision:

- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly with connections to what surrounds the area
- “with a lively main street”
- “open, green space and corridors for sitting, outdoor enjoyment”
- “with improved environmental quality”
- Metro and other public transportation including MARC (add a station)

The group also proposed the following ideas:

- Establish a route to Veirs Mill Road, connecting Fishers Lane and Parklawn Drive that would have limited access and connect to intersection at Aspen Hill Road. It could be run directionally by time of day (east: 4:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., west: 12:00 p.m. – 12:00 a.m., and closed 12:00 a.m. – 4:00 a.m.). Its size could be limited to minimize its footprint in the park
- Explore an alternative connection at Halpine
- Improve safety of walking to Metro (The industrial area is perceived as unsafe at night, and the area should be made pedestrian friendly.)
- Propose mixed, street level commercial uses (shops and restaurants) with different upper floor uses to activate the space
- Create a parking structure instead of surface lots
- Build a pedestrian bridge to Nebel Street/Rockville Pike from Washington Avenue with trees, street lights, and open space where lot is now at Wilkins Avenue and Parklawn Drive
- Create green connections and a bike path to Rock Creek Park
- Create a walking path off of a ring route created by Fishers Lane and Parklawn Drive
- Slow traffic on Parklawn Drive with techniques such as a traffic circle and stop signs

The facilitators summarized the responses of the three groups to the proposed vision by identifying commonalities and differences.

Common Themes

- Make the area pedestrian friendly, balancing biking, walking, and driving, and provide transit incentives
- Make urbanization work, create a Main Street
- Access
- Create green spaces and outdoor spaces
- Enable mixed-uses
- Maintain the light industrial uses
- Redevelopment should be environmentally friendly
- Require a complete street treatment, appealing to all who use the streets

Differences

- Housing vs. biotech; additional housing behind Parklawn Building
- Housing within the five-minute walking radius
- No additional housing
- Pedestrian bridge over tracks to Bou Avenue and Washington Street, complete street from Twinbrook to Rockville Pike
- Complete street over to Rockville Pike vs. pedestrian access to a community center as visual anchor

The facilitators also identified differences in this group's response from those at previous meetings.

- Treat Parklawn Drive as a main street and slow traffic down
- Establish a free shuttle service
- Locate a MARC Station in the Twinbrook planning area
- Establish areas for new housing area within a five-minute walking radius of the Metro, adjacent to the station, and possibly behind the Parklawn building