



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 14, 2007

TO: The Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Melissa Cunha Banach, Chief, Strategic Planning Division
John Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Bridget Stesney, Senior Planner, Strategic Planning Division

SUBJECT: Master Plan Reassessment Project: Planning Board Focus Group Roundtable

RECOMMENDATION: The Department and Board will conduct a lively discussion regarding the future content, process, and outreach envisioned in master plans. The discussion will be facilitated by Deana Rhodside, Director of Rhodside & Harwell, a landscape architecture and planning firm.

The Master Plan Reassessment Project is examining both the process and content of our master plans. The effort responds to the fact that planning for large area, *greenfield* development is almost over in Montgomery County. Future planning will focus on smaller geographic areas, or plans that meet a specific need. Plans will need to more nimbly reflect the County's changing land-use, economic, and demographic trends. To do this, they must be built in an efficient and comprehensive manner that utilizes the entirety of the Departments growing analytic skills.

The Master Plan Reassessment involves a multi-tiered approach that includes: an analysis of current conditions; a series of staff and community focus groups; and a nationwide best practices survey. By December 31, 2007, we will provide the Planning Board with recommendations on how the Department can improve the process, content, and outreach of its master plans beginning with master plan inception/data collection and concluding with transmittal to the County Council.

More specifically, the Master Plan Reassessment will evaluate the need to: a) streamline the master plan process to deliver plans in a more timely and responsive fashion; b) reshape Master Plan documents to achieve greater clarity; and better integration of information; express clearer linkages between land use, zoning, and urban design; c) expand and recommend new community outreach approaches to more effectively inform the master plan with civic, business, development, institutional, and countywide/regional perspectives; e) explore new approaches that would effectively substitute for the zoning text amendment (ZTA) process; and f) better use technology in developing and disseminating master plans.

A critical part of improving our master planning processes, master plan content, and community outreach is to expand our understanding of how effective the plans are in meeting the needs of the constituencies that we serve. We are gathering this information through stakeholder focus groups in September and October. The groups will include representatives from the categories listed below.

- Park and Planning Department Staff (3 sessions)
- Montgomery County Planning Board (1 session)
- Institutional and Non-Profit (1 session)
- Civic (2 sessions)
- Development and Business (2 sessions)
- Countywide and Regional Planning Agencies/Organizations (1 session)
- Technology/Information and Community Outreach (1 session)
- Government Agency Officials (1 session)
- Council Staff (1 session)

Each of the focus groups will be facilitated by Deana Rhodeside, Director of Rhodeside & Harwell, a landscape architecture and planning firm. Ms. Rhodeside will take participants from each focus group through a set of discussion questions developed to ensure thoroughness and consistency of captured information. Attachment 1 contains the questions for the Planning Board Focus Group. Attachment 2 contains Ms. Rhodeside's resume.

We are also analyzing current master plan processes and content to develop a base for understanding if and how they can be improved. Attached are two documents provided by the Community-Based Planning Division. The first includes the actual timelines for recently completed master plans (Attachment 3). The second document outlines the step-by-step approach currently used in the master plan process (Attachment 4). The master plan process was last comprehensively examined in 1997 by the Planning Board in a document entitled, *The Master Planning Process in Montgomery County* (Attachment 5).

The nationwide best practices survey is also underway. We asked staff, local experts, and national associations to recommend jurisdictions that have: developed streamlined master plan processes for smaller planning areas; innovatively use technology; or have written plans that closely link form-based code development to master plan recommendations. Lessons learned from the survey results will help inform final recommendations.

We are on schedule to complete the Reassessment by December 31, 2007.

ATTACHMENT 1: PLANING BOARD ROUNDTABLE QUESTIONS

Process

- What are the land use challenges or concerns that you think Master Plans in the county should address? How well are current Master Plans addressing these?
- Do you agree that the Master Plan process needs to be streamlined? What are your top three suggestions to streamline this process, beginning with data collection and concluding with the Final Public Hearing Draft?
- Are there key elements of the Master Plan process that should not be streamlined?
- How might the inclusion of form-based coding better implement the visions and recommendations in master plans? Form-based codes regulate development by specifying form and not land use.
- What are your top three suggestions for ensuring the effective inclusion of civic, business, development, organizational/institutional, countywide, and regional perspectives in a streamlined Master Plan process?

Content

- How can the Master Plans be written to better inform the decision making process for the Planning Board?
- Do you have suggestions on how to better organize the content in Master Plans?
- Are there examples of documents that have worked for you, in both content and form?
- Do you have recommendations for how the county can improve the final format and content of master plans, including technological applications, to make them more navigable and easier to read? (Note: Technological examples might include blogs; 3-D visualizations, bulletin boards, group voting, GIS, online surveys, videoconferencing, wiki-pages, etc...)

DEANA RHODESIDE, Ph.D.
Director, Urban Planner, Community Outreach Specialist

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy in
Urban Studies and Planning,
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology,
1978

Master of Arts in
Psychology,
Temple University,
1968

Bachelor of Arts in
Psychology,
City College of New York,
1966

MEMBERSHIPS

American Planning
Association

Dr. Rhodeside, a director and co-founder of Rhodeside & Harwell, incorporated, has been professionally active in the fields of planning, community outreach and facilitation for over 33 years in Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, and London. She has been particularly effective in the public involvement arena and in incorporating public outreach into planning and design products to achieve results that are both functional and grounded in reality. Her work has ranged from master planning to environmental impact analyses, and from urban revitalization to community consensus building and visioning.

Dr. Rhodeside strongly believes that an open and inclusive participatory process enriches both planning and design and she incorporates a broad range of participation in all of her projects. She is particularly skilled at facilitating design workshops and visioning processes, and enjoys the challenge inherent in building consensus within a context represented by wide-ranging, diverse points of view.

Landover Gateway and Vicinity Sector Plan; Prince George's County, Maryland

Dr. Rhodeside has led a recent planning effort to develop a new downtown core for Prince George's County on land that was formerly occupied by the Landover Mall. This effort has involved a broad-range of stakeholder input, including participation from all levels of County agencies, the development community, the retail community, and the public. Dr. Rhodeside planned and led a series of community meetings and a "brainstorming" workshop to define an overall vision for the area. The process then included a five-day charrette process, with frequent input from a broad stakeholder group and from the public. The plan will be implemented through a form/design-based coding process that is now being defined by the County.

Mathis Avenue and Old Town Sector Plans; Manassas, Virginia

Dr. Rhodeside directed the development of two long-range urban design plans for the City of Manassas - a plan for the Route 28/Mathis Avenue area and a plan for the downtown (Old Town) core of the City. In both plans, the City was seeking opportunities to create new mixed-use districts that would bring economic vitality back to these areas. Both plans were developed under the guidance of active Citizen Advisory Committees, and included focus groups, workshops and open houses in order to allow for a high level of public input.

Bladensburg Town Center Sector Plan; Prince George's County, Maryland

Rhodeside & Harwell recently completed a sector plan that defined a new downtown core area for the Town of Bladensburg, Maryland. Working closely with M-NCPPC staff, Deana Rhodeside led the consultant team effort to develop a realistic plan that would stimulate revitalization along the Annapolis Road corridor, as well as in the communities adjacent to it. This sector plan served as the first project under the new "streamlined" planning model undertaken by County planning to shorten the planning timeframe and create a more readable and user-friendly product while, at the same time, allowing for a process that would encourage active community input.

DEANA RHODESIDE, Ph.D.
Director, Urban Planner, Community Outreach Specialist

Mixed-Use Zoning Toolkit; Prince George's County, Maryland

Rhodeside & Harwell is currently part of a team that has been retained by the County to develop a new planning tool that will improve the way that mixed-use development is regulated. Deana Rhodeside is leading the stakeholder and public outreach component of this effort. To date, this has included the establishment of a Technical Advisory Committee that meets on a monthly basis to oversee and have input into the project, a public workshop, and a series of stakeholder focus group meetings to identify the kinds of changes that are needed with regard to the County's current approach to mixed-use areas.

Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan, Arlington and Alexandria, Virginia

As the prime planning and design consultant, Rhodeside & Harwell lead a team of engineers, ecologists, hydrologists, and designers in the development of a master plan for this area. Dr. Rhodeside headed the planning process which included extensive community involvement through stakeholder round table discussions, civic association presentations, a community-wide Visioning Event, and several public Open Houses.

ATTACHMENT 3

Attachment 3 to be distributed to the Planning Board

THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS

STAFF DRAFT PLAN — This document is prepared by the Montgomery County Department of Park and Planning for presentation to the Montgomery County Planning Board. The Planning Board reviews the Staff Draft Plan, makes preliminary changes as appropriate, and approves the Plan for public hearing. When the Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan.

PUBLIC HEARING (PRELIMINARY) DRAFT PLAN — This document is a formal proposal to amend an adopted master plan or sector plan. Its recommendations are not necessarily those of the Planning Board; it is prepared for the purpose of receiving public hearing testimony. The Planning Board holds a public hearing and receives testimony on the Draft Plan. After the public hearing record is closed, the Planning Board holds public worksessions to review the testimony and to revise the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan as appropriate. When the Board's changes are made, the document becomes the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan.

PLANNING BOARD (FINAL) DRAFT PLAN — This document is the Planning Board's recommended Plan and it reflects the revisions made by the Board in its worksessions on the Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan. The Regional District Act requires the Planning Board to transmit the Plan directly to the County Council with copies to the County Executive. The Regional District Act then requires the County Executive, within sixty days, to prepare and transmit a fiscal impact analysis of the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan to the County Council. The County Executive may also forward to the Council other comments and recommendations regarding the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan within the sixty-day period.

After receiving the Executive's fiscal impact analysis and comments, the County Council may hold a public hearing to receive public testimony on the Plan. After the record of this public hearing is closed, the Council's Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee holds public worksessions to review the testimony and then makes recommendations to the County Council. The Council holds its own worksessions, then adopts a resolution approving the Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan, as revised.

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

The Master Plan Process in Brief
Planning Board submits and County Council approves:
<i>Annual Work Program</i>
Park and Planning staff initiates community participation and prepares:
<i>Purpose and Outreach Report</i>
Park and Planning staff reviews Purpose and Outreach Report with Planning Board and then prepares:
<i>Staff Draft Plan</i>
Planning Board reviews Staff Draft and, with modifications as necessary, approves plan as suitable for public hearing.
Public Hearing (Preliminary) Draft Plan
Planning Board reviews public hearing testimony, receives County Executive comments at Board worksessions, and adjusts Public Hearing Draft to become:
Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan
County Executive reviews Planning Board Draft and forwards fiscal impact analysis and comments to County Council.
Planning Board (Final) Draft Plan Transmitted to County Council
County Council holds public hearing and worksessions and approves, disapproves, or amends Planning Board Draft, which is forwarded to M-NCPPC to become:
Approved and Adopted Master Plan

PROPOSED MASTER PLAN SCHEDULE

