



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item #
5/14/09

May 6, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John Carter, Chief. *JC*
Urban Design and Preservation Division

Bill Barron, Team Leader
Vision Division
South Central Transit Corridor

FROM: John Marcolin, ASLA, Planner Coordinator (301/495-4547) *Jm*
Urban Design and Preservation Division
South Central Transit Corridor

SUBJECT: **Amendment to the Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan:**
Pedestrian Bridge, CBD-0.5, CBD-1, CBD-2 and CBD-3 Zones
2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan

RECOMMENDATION

Approval to transmit the following comments to the County Council:

1. Pedestrian bridges and structures that cross existing rights of way are explicitly excluded in the 1999 Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan, and a new pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue to serve the library should not be permitted in downtown Silver Spring
2. Safe and convenient access to the future library for the disabled should be provided on-site

SUMMARY OF THE AMENDMENT

The Montgomery County Council received a draft amendment to the Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan from the County Executive on March 19, 2009. The County Council submitted it to the Planning Board on March 20, 2009 for comment. The existing Urban Renewal Plan prohibits the use of pedestrian bridges across Wayne Avenue, Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, and Cedar Street. The draft amendment seeks to amend the Renewal Plan, on page III-21, as follows:

“A pedestrian bridge shall be permitted over Wayne Avenue connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage to a County facility that includes a public library located on the opposite side of Wayne Avenue outside the Urban Renewal Area. This bridge must comply with ADA design standards, provide protection from the weather and utilize transparent construction materials to enhance security.”

The purpose of the amendment was to provide a pedestrian bridge to serve the future public library. The new Silver Spring Library will have special collections and services for the disabled. According to the County Executive, the bridge would be particularly important to patrons with disabilities.

ANALYSIS

Conformance with the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan

The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan encourages the development of active streets and sidewalks, busy with people walking to shop, to commute, or for pleasure (page 24). This plan places an emphasis on concentrating pedestrian traffic on sidewalks instead of diverting pedestrian traffic away from sidewalks to pedestrian bridges.

Conformance with the Urban Renewal Plan

The use of pedestrian bridges is not in conformance with the specific text in the Urban Renewal Plan. The County Attorney has determined that an amendment is required to establish conformance.

Accessibility

The reasons for the pedestrian bridge would be to serve the handicapped by avoiding a crossing of Wayne Avenue and to connect the library to an existing parking garage and avoid constructing additional parking.

As an alternative to a bridge, a limited number of spaces could be provided on the ground floor of the proposed library building. These on-site spaces would provide short-term parking for the library such as a book drop-off and meet the ADA requirements for parking (see attachment). These spaces could be provided at limited cost because they would be located within the first floor area of the building instead of located underground. In addition, on-street parking and improvements to the sidewalks could be provided adjacent to the ground floor entrances to the building to improve access and meet the ADA requirements.

Other jurisdictions such as Rosslyn in Arlington County have removed existing pedestrian bridges because they divert pedestrian traffic away from the street level. These jurisdictions also find that the streets become undesirable places if the pedestrian traffic is diverted to bridges. The library will not serve as a catalyst for existing and proposed retail in the area if the pedestrian traffic is diverted directly to an upper level. The costs to improve the sidewalk and crosswalk would be substantially less than the cost for the bridge.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS

The County Executive has recommended a schematic design for the library and the pedestrian bridge. The County Council's Health and Human Services Committee, responsible for the review of the library, has supported the location of the library and the use of the pedestrian bridge.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends eliminating the opportunity for a bridge. Providing access at street level will provide an active, safe and attractive sidewalk. Eliminating the opportunity for a bridge will also reduce the cost of the project. Providing a limited amount of on-site parking within the first floor of the future building and on-street parking in combination with the sidewalk improvements could address access concerns and meet the ADA requirements.

Attachments:

- Plan of the Library
- Existing Conditions
- Pedestrian Bridge Alternative
- Street Improvement Alternative
- Urban Renewal Plan

M: Marcolin/Urban Renewal Plan Ped Bridges



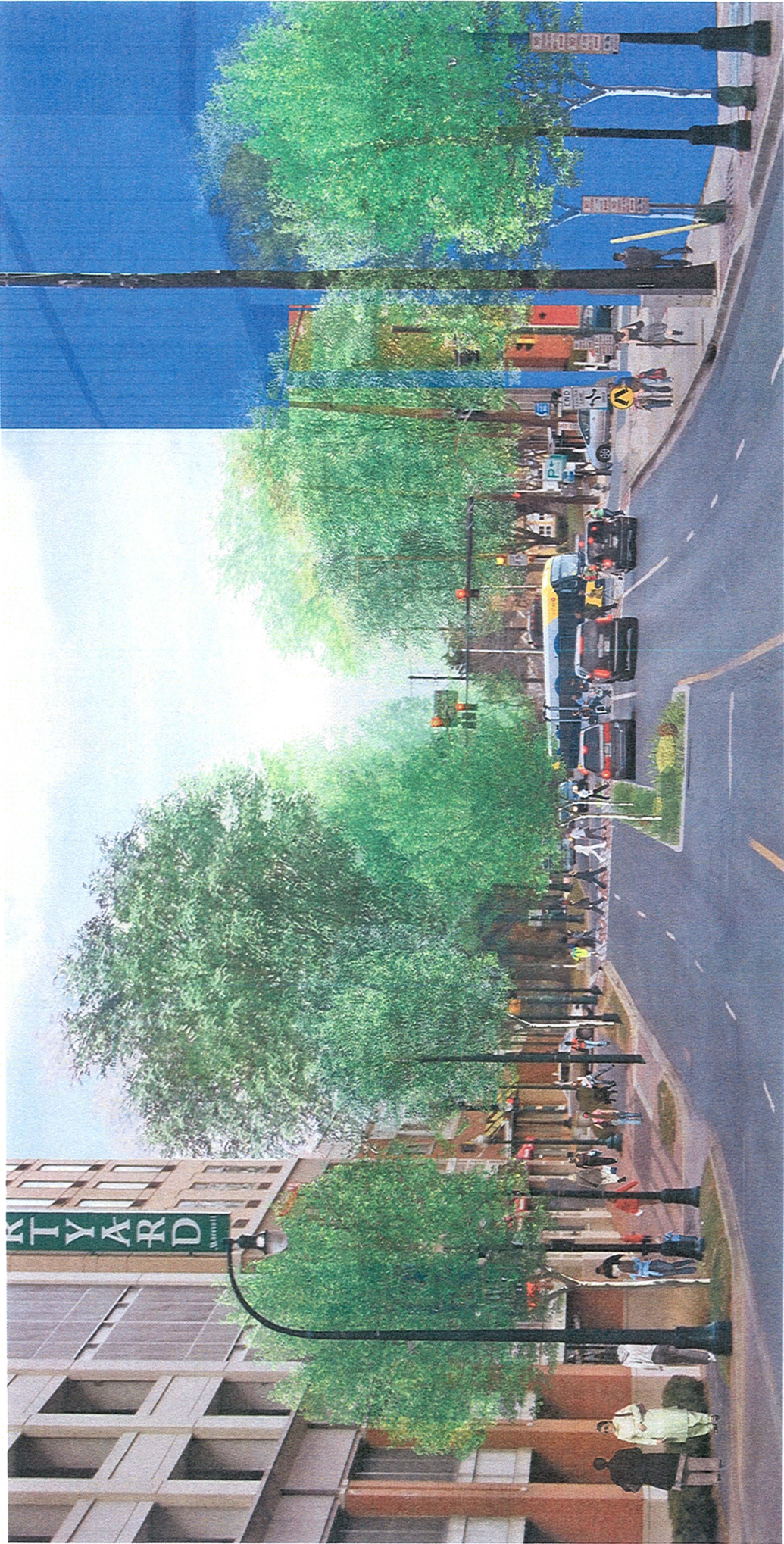
Plan of the Library



Existing Conditions



Pedestrian Bridge Alternative



Street Improvement Alternative

Resolution No.: _____

Introduced: _____

Adopted: _____

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

By: County Council

Subject: Amendment to the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan

Background

1. Under Chapter 56, Article III of the County Code, the County Council is authorized to implement urban renewal projects.
2. On March 11, 1997, by Resolution No. 13-816, the County Council approved the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.
3. On November 16, 1999, by Resolution No. 14-346, the County Council amended the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.
4. The County Executive transmitted to the County Council this proposed amendment to the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan that would permit the construction of a pedestrian bridge over Wayne Avenue connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage to the Silver Spring Library to be built on the south side of Wayne Avenue.
5. The pedestrian bridge will allow Library patrons to use existing public parking and eliminate the need to construct additional parking for the new Silver Spring Library.
6. The new Silver Spring Library will have a special collection and provide services for the disabled; a pedestrian bridge between the Wayne Avenue Garage and the Library would provide safe and easy access for patrons with disabilities.

Urban Renewal Plan

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution to amend the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan, dated November 16, 1999:

Amend the first paragraph on p. III-21 under the heading “Performance Guidelines for Compatibility” to state:

Pedestrian bridges and structures that cross existing rights-of-way will not be permitted over Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, Cedar Street, or Wayne Avenue with the following exception: A pedestrian bridge shall be permitted over Wayne Avenue connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage with a County facility that includes a public library located on the opposite side of Wayne Avenue outside of the Urban Renewal Area. This bridge must comply with ADA design standards, provide protection from the weather and utilize transparent construction materials to enhance security. Elsewhere in the Urban Renewal Area, pedestrian connections could form an arch, gateway, or covering and utilize transparent construction materials. Such connections must provide for attractive and active pedestrian environments underneath them.

This is a correct copy of Council action:

Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council