



Kensington Sector Plan Draft Design Guidelines

- Michael Brown, Urban Designer, Area 2, Michael.Brown@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4566
 - Khalid Afzal, Planning Supervisor, Area 2 Planning Division, Khalid.Afzal@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4650
 - Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Area 2 Planning Division, Glenn.Kreger@montgomeryplanning.org, 301.495.4653
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description

- Draft Design Guidelines for the Draft Kensington Sector Plan

summary

- Review and approve the draft Design Guidelines for transmittal to the County Council.

On July 28, 2011, staff presented a PowerPoint presentation of the Draft Design Guidelines to the Planning Board, and sought the Board's comments and approval to produce a draft document of the guidelines for general distribution. The attached draft is a result of the Planning Board's comments and the feedback received from the public to date. The County Council will hold a public hearing on the Draft Kensington Sector Plan on Tuesday, October 11, 2011. The draft guidelines will be available to the public and the County Council during the Council's review of the Draft Kensington Sector Plan. Upon approval of the final Kensington Sector Plan by the Council, this document will be revisited to incorporate any changes stemming from the Council review and approval of the Sector Plan.

The draft guidelines report is organized into four sections:

1. Introduction – purpose and limitations of the guidelines
2. Context – relationship to the Sector Plan and design guidelines approach
3. Guidelines – goals and strategies
4. Resources – relevant information for implementing the guidelines

Staff recommends approval of the attached Draft Design Guidelines for transmittal to the County Council.

Kensington Design Guidelines DRAFT

October 2011

Draft Design Guidelines
Draft Kensington Sector Plan

Montgomery County Planning Department
M-NCPPC
MontgomeryPlanning.org

Kensington Design Guidelines DRAFT

Abstract

These guidelines are intended to provide direction in meeting the goals of the *Kensington Sector Plan*. They are approved by the Planning Board for staff use in reviewing development proposals. They should be used as well by developers in shaping their projects and by citizens interested in the pattern and character of development in their community.

Source of Copies

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Online at MontgomeryPlanning.org/community/kensington

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Introduction

The Kensington Design Guidelines represent the County's, Town's and the community's design aspirations for the future of Kensington. They should be used as a resource by all stakeholders while exploring ways to enhance the quality of urban design in Kensington.

Urban design is concerned with the physical characteristics of an area, and these Guidelines consider the design implications of planning decisions in the public realm. An urban design strategy should serve as an integrating tool to coordinate how various development proposals will affect the city physically, with a principal focus on the public realm: the public faces of buildings, spaces for public use, and the streets, sidewalks, parks and plazas that provide the outdoor public venue for everyday activities.

The Guidelines assist in the implementation of recommendations in approved and adopted master plans or sector plans by encouraging better building design in properties considering redevelopment, and by promoting the creation of safe pedestrian environments and attractive gathering places defined by buildings.

The Guidelines are approved by the Planning Board for use by property owners and Planning Staff. Their intent is to illustrate how plan recommendations might be met, to inform applicants of design expectations and possible resources to accomplish them, and to provide staff with a framework for project review and a tool for obtaining enhanced design and related amenities. Guidelines do not set architectural styles, are only applicable during discretionary reviews, and will be revised and updated as necessary.

Context

Kensington Sector Plan, page 1

The vision is “To promote a mixed-use Town Center with pedestrian-friendly connections to the vibrant neighborhoods that define Kensington. Kensington’s Town Center will be a lively and active place with streets that are welcoming and comfortable for residents, workers, and visitors.”

To fulfill the Plan’s vision, the guidelines promote General Design Considerations that are not site-specific. They are applicable on all locations with the purpose of transforming transitional suburban development into active neighborhood centers. Their goal is to encourage building design for pedestrians and the creation of attractive gathering places.

General considerations include:



Buildings

- Encourage pedestrian activity
- Create consistent street walls
- Promote concealed parking



Open Space

- Create networks of open spaces
- Create activated gathering spaces
- Promote consolidation



Streets

- Create active pedestrian environments
- Promote pedestrian safety
- Encourage undergrounding of utilities

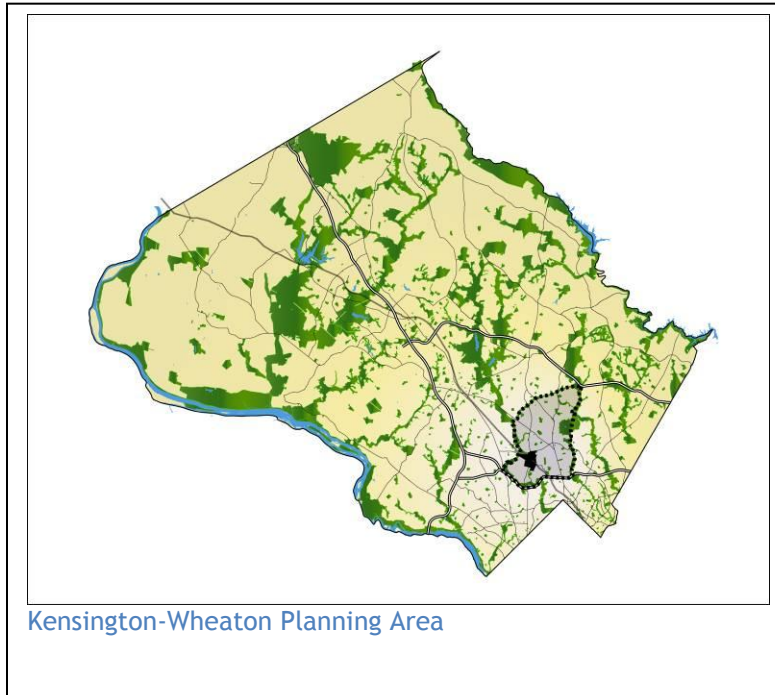
Kensington Sector Plan Vision page 1

Connectivity Create new pathways for town's people to move car free throughout the Town, enjoying a healthier, more sustainable community.

Design Redefining public spaces for people and creating activity along sidewalks through smart design of buildings and the spaces around them. Define new public spaces that will exemplify the unique scale and character of Kensington.

Environment Promote sustainable infill and reuse, with a goal of creating a neighborhood with the lowest feasible carbon footprint. Implement effective environmental practices that will inspire current residents and future generations to become stewards of the environment.

Diversity Create an active Town Center with new residential uses. Promote the community's heritage through its buildings, spaces and people.



Kensington Sector Plan Design Concepts (pages 19, 20, 25)

The Plan includes the following design concepts:

- Enhance Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard with mixed uses and provide better safety and function for all modes of transportation.
- Develop Howard Avenue as an active, pedestrian-friendly street, generating active street life.
- Create a mixed residential and commercial thoroughfare along Metropolitan Avenue.

Design Goals

To fulfill the Plan’s vision, the guidelines were organized around the following design goals:

- Emphasize pedestrian connections.
- Relate to the scale and context of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Design buildings and open spaces in a way that strengthens the public realm.
- Preserve, enhance and create local character.



Development along Connecticut Avenue, University Boulevard, Howard Avenue and Metropolitan Avenue will define the center of Kensington. The design concepts of the Sector Plan focus on development along these thoroughfares.

GUIDELINES

Goal: EMPHASIZE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

Multiple transportation choices are vital to creating a vibrant Town Center. Successful streets accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles. Currently, auto travel is the overwhelmingly predominant mode in Kensington. Improvement to the sidewalks, crosswalks and trails is needed to encourage travel by foot and bicycle. The needs of pedestrians, children, cyclists and the disabled should be balanced with those of motorists and public transit users. An improved pedestrian network will create a healthy balance of transportation that supports a vibrant Town Center.

“The Sector Plan’s recommendations for better connections in Kensington will give pedestrians priority, especially in the Town Center. Physical and operational improvements can easily accommodate current traffic flows while giving pedestrians the ability to move safely and efficiently through Kensington.” (Kensington Sector Plan, page 8)

Objective: Create a high-quality pedestrian network system

Strategies

1. Provide direct and safe routes for pedestrian travel.
 - a. *Develop defined sidewalk zones: building frontage zone, movement zone, planting/street furniture zone, and curb.*

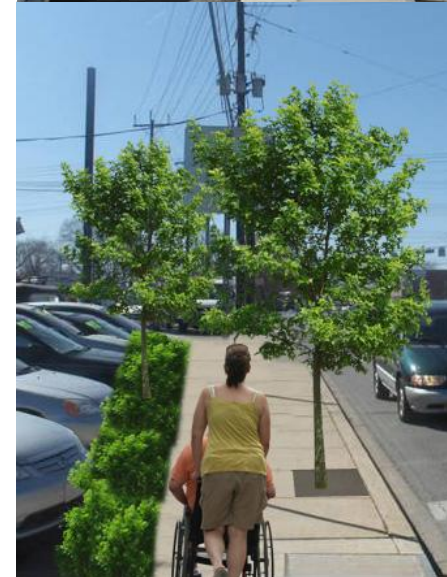
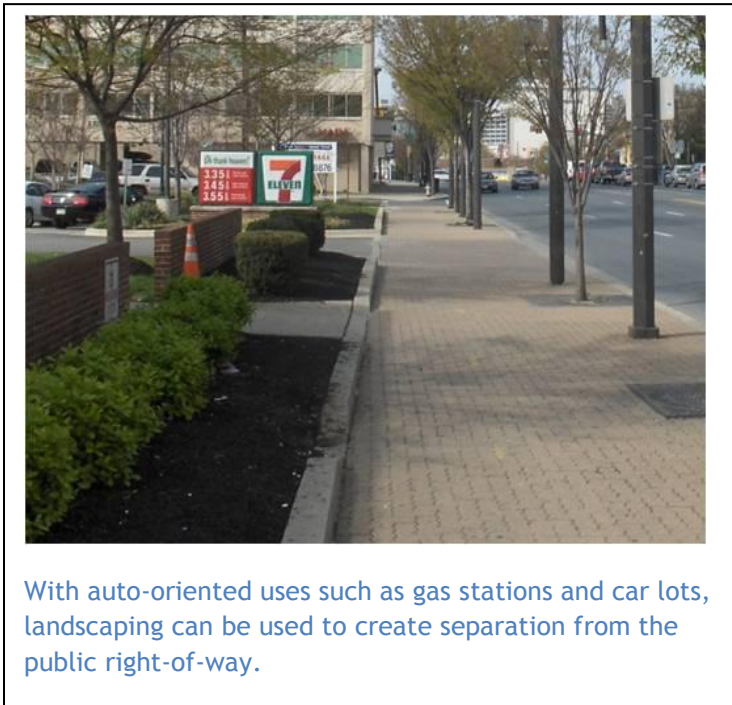


This pedestrian path is unsafe due to obstructions and its proximity to high speed vehicular traffic.



before and after, West Howard Avenue: Clearly- defined zones of vehicular and pedestrian traffic create a safe environment for pedestrians.

- b. *Provide ample landscaping to screen and buffer the vehicular zone on private property abutting the public right-of-way.*
- c. *Design intersections to provide safe crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.*
- d. *Ensure accessibility and enjoyment for users of varying ages and mobility.*



(Metropolitan Avenue, before and after): Existing condition along Metropolitan Avenue places pedestrians between two vehicular zones. Providing ample landscaping between the private property and public right-of-way improves the pedestrian zone.

2. Use trees and plants to soften the hardscape.
 - a. *Use trees, understory plantings, and above-ground plantings*
 - b. *Increase tree canopy along streets and within medians to provide shade for pedestrians*



Landscaping within the right-of-way provides a soft complement to the sidewalk and building façade, while providing an attractive buffer for pedestrians.



The understory plantings at Howard Park also provide color and visual interest.

3. Incorporate amenities and attractions for pedestrians.
 - a. *Projections such as awnings and canopies are encouraged. They provide weather protection for pedestrians, create variety, and strengthen the image of individual businesses.*



Awnings and canopies are easy installations that add character to building facades.

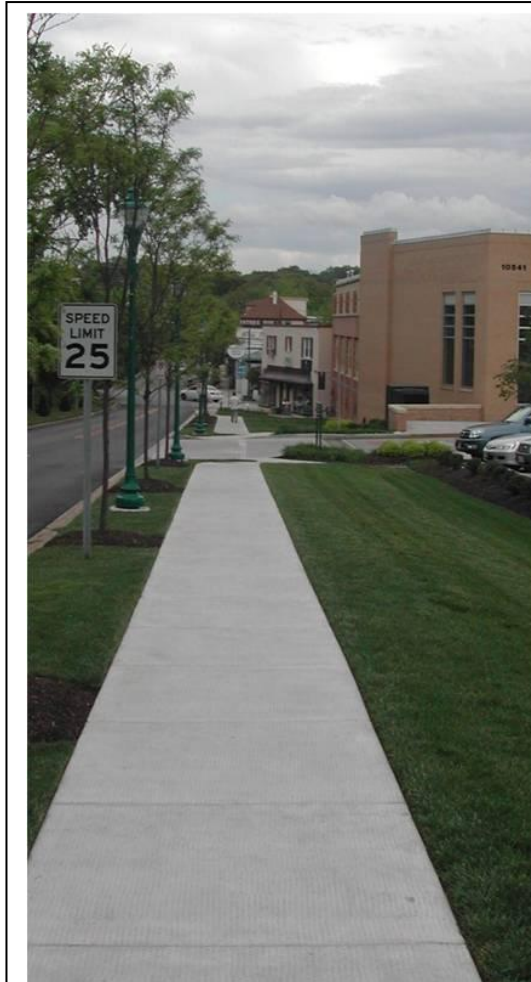
- b. *Displaying goods for sale outside of a storefront is an excellent technique to add visual interest to the street.*



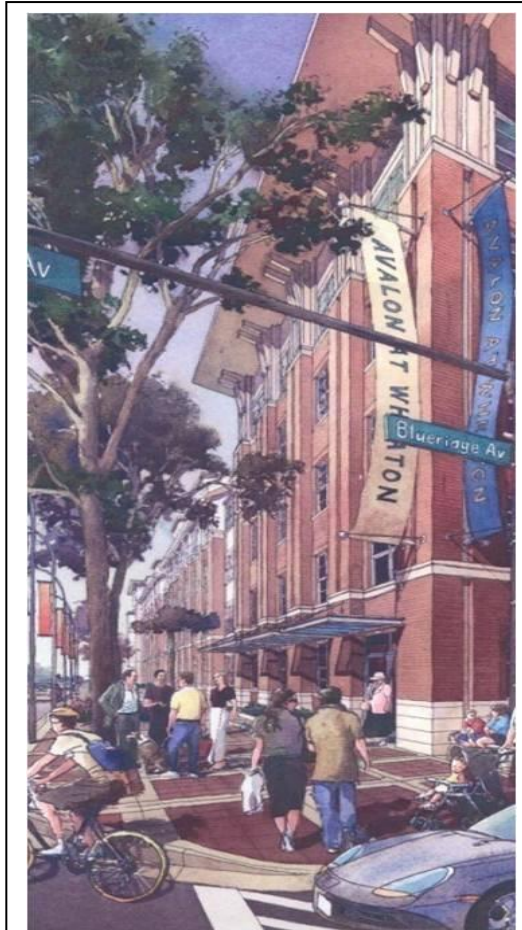
Vendors along Antique Row often display goods on the sidewalk.



- c. *Maintaining a line of building facades and storefronts to define sidewalk edge.*
- d. *Incorporate display windows to encourage stopping and browsing.*

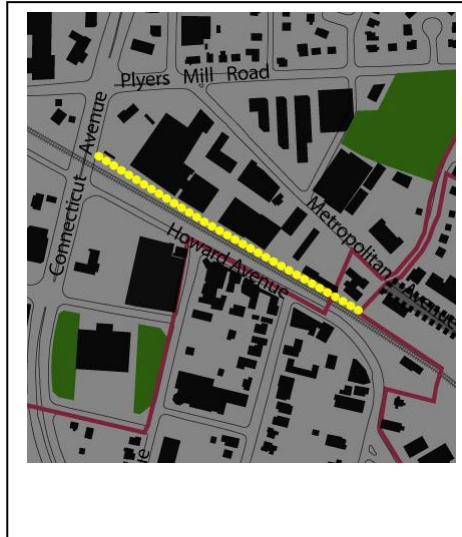


Lack of building facades with display windows or entrances along this sidewalk on the Safeway property creates a dead zone.



Active building frontage along the edge of a sidewalk helps create a more animated street environment.

- e. *Avoid creating blank wall on the façades along the CSX rail line, across from Antique Row.*



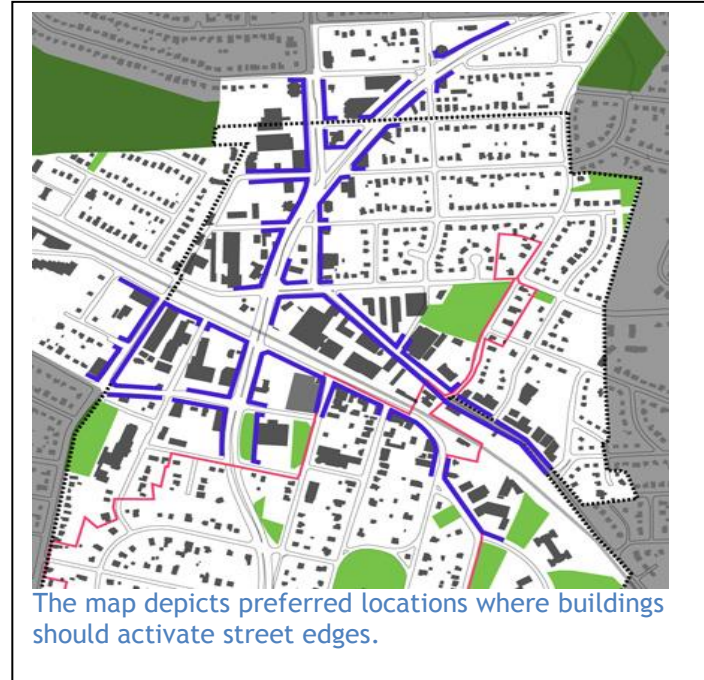
The back façade of existing development along Metropolitan Avenue is highly visible from Antique Row.



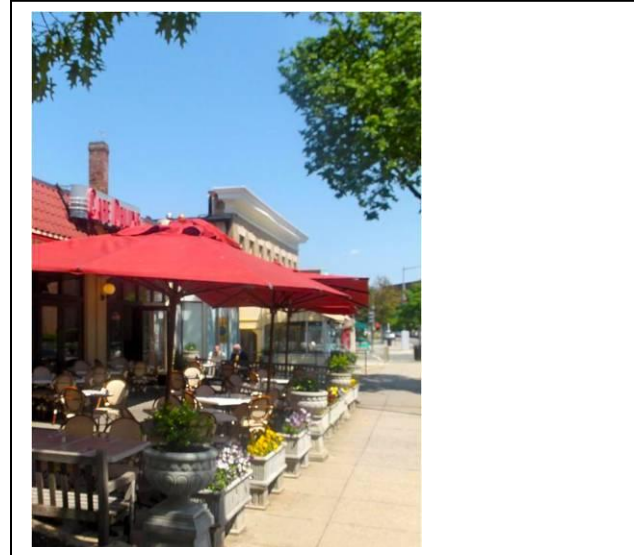
New development along the rail line can provide an attractive façade that enhances the experience along Antique Row.

4. Provide street-activating uses.

a. *Locating street-activating uses along the principal streets. They are also encouraged along some adjacent streets.*



b. *Encouraging outdoor eating. Such spaces should be well defined with railing and/or planters.*



Goal: EMPHASIZE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

Objective: Create public use space where neighbors socialize

A network of public use spaces should provide comfortable and attractive spaces that offer a range of experiences. The creation of such system will provide for a healthier environment by mitigating the effects of pollution and providing opportunities for recreation, respite, and enjoyment. Public use spaces should incorporate features that engage all age groups from young children to the elderly.

The Sector Plan seeks to create a system of parks and open spaces linked by bikeways and sidewalks to meet the increasing demand for outdoor gathering space. In the Town Center, the location and design of urban open space should support social life, sense of place, and economic vitality.

Some spaces will be privately owned yet maintained for public use. For small parcels, public use space may be combined to create a larger gathering space.

Objective: Create public use space where neighbors socialize

Strategies

1. Make space inviting at the sidewalk.
 - a. *Walls and planting should not block or screen space from the sidewalk.*
 - b. *Space should be at grade with the sidewalk. Elevation changes can create barriers.*
 - c. *Ensure accessibility and enjoyment for users of all ages and ranges of mobile abilities.*



- 2. Locate space in areas of high visibility.
 - a. *Public use open space should be in highly visible locations that are animated by adjacent land uses. Location should provide opportunities for casual monitoring from its perimeter and abutting developments.*
 - b. *Public use open space should not be in areas continuously shaded by surrounding buildings.*
 - c. *Lighting should be provided for visibility.*



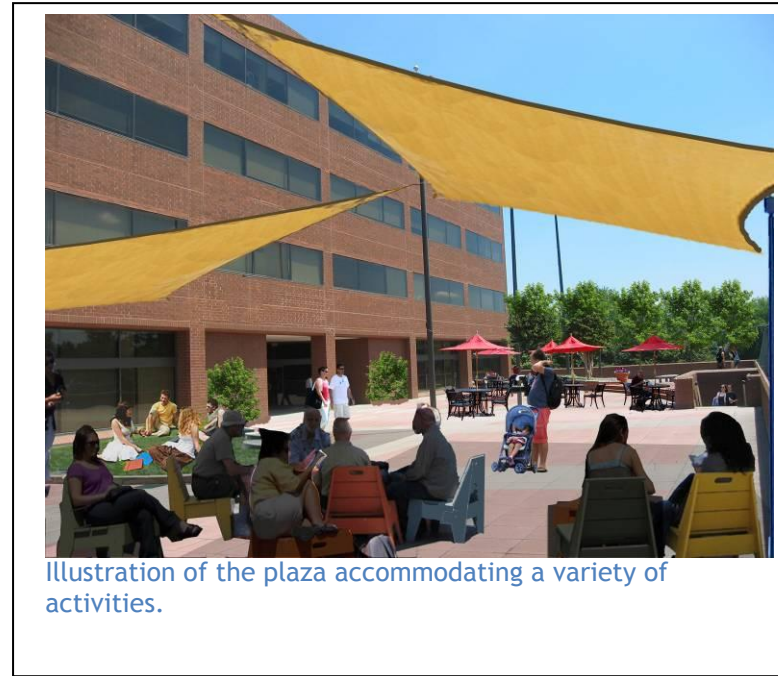
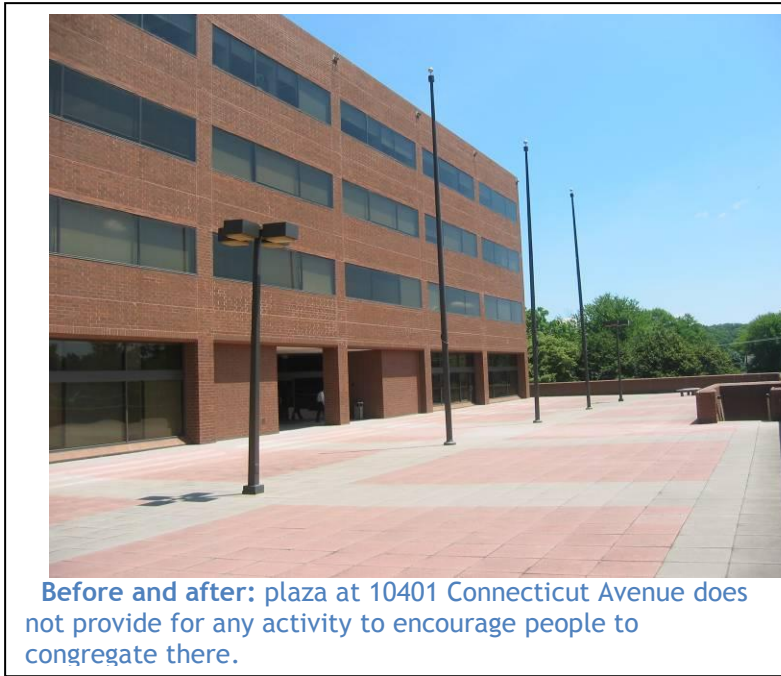
Natural Surveillance is a principle of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)

- 3. Incorporate seating.
 - a. *Incorporate seating in choice locations: near building entrances, in shade, in sun, toward street, near activity/amenity.*
 - b. *A variety of seating types: single/couple/groups; fixed and moveable.*
 - c. *Comfortable.*



Seating can add visual interest.

- 4. Design flexible spaces to accommodate a variety of activities.
 - a. *Provide infrastructure to support events (electrical, water supply, lighting).*
 - b. *Provide amenities appropriate for the size and program(s) (water features, game tables, play equipment, kiosks, tables).*
 - c. *Drinking fountains and waste receptacles are practical, essential amenities.*
 - d. *Interactive public art is an effective way to activate small spaces.*



Goal: DESIGN BUILDINGS AND OPEN SPACE IN A WAY THAT STRENGTHENS THE PUBLIC REALM

The orientation, height, massing, and facade of buildings shape the character of a place. These guidelines encourage building design that fulfills the functional needs of its use while reinforcing pedestrian activity. The goal is to produce private and public development that enhances the public realm and protects the environment.

Because of their inherent automobile-orientation, service stations, car lots, and auto repair shops present unique design challenges in pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use areas. These guidelines seek to enhance the character and quality of the public realm while balancing the needs of motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

The Sector Plan promotes street-oriented development. The following guidelines illustrate how these recommendations can be achieved.

Objective: Design structures that enhance the pedestrian experience

Strategies

1. Orient buildings to face the sidewalk.

- a. *Provide the main entrance of buildings directly from the street. Entries can be articulated through the use of building massing, special architectural features, or changes in the roof line.*
- b. *Provide an entrance to portions of the building above the ground floor through a street level entrance.*



2. Vary building massing along sidewalk.

- a. *For scale and visual interest, break down building mass into a hierarchy of volumes. Avoid creating large, monolithic structures.*

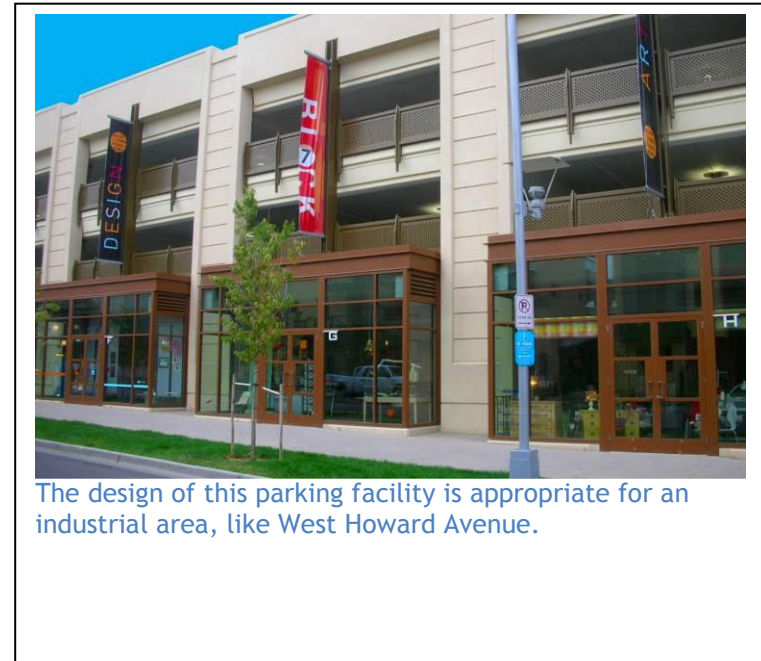


- b. *Consider a building entry, additional or varied building massing, or distinctive architectural elements at the corner.*



3. Reduce the visual impact of auto-oriented uses.

- a. *Use underground parking or parking structures over surface parking lots.*
- b. *Locate parking facilities in the rear or side yard with vehicular access from side streets. Parking structures facing the street should have active ground level uses with pedestrian details.*
- c. *Incorporate vegetation through green roofs, rooftop gardens and green walls.*



- d. *Locate gas station structures close to the street to help define the street edge.*
- e. *Provide an entrance with transparent windows and doors from street sidewalk.*
- f. *If car wash facades line public streets, use clear windows with interior views into the car wash. Avoid blank wall along active street frontage.*
- g. *Provide wide landscaped buffers to separate parking areas, driveways and stacking lanes from the sidewalk. Trees, shrubs, and low planting walls should be used to screen the visibility of cars.*
- h. *Provide ground mounted monumental signs which are preferred over signs on the station canopy.*



The building design and site layout of this gas station support the pedestrian realm while accommodating vehicular traffic associated with its use.



This gas station provides an entrance from the street sidewalk.

Goal: RELATE TO THE SCALE AND CONTEXT OF EXISTING RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

The existing single-family neighborhoods contribute to Kensington’s overall vitality and they are an important part of creating an active community life. Preserving this residential character is paramount. The guidelines encourage new development adjacent to neighborhoods to be compatible in height, setback, scale, massing, and detailing.

The Plan recommends a cluster of taller buildings along Connecticut Avenue. The proposed building heights in the CR Zones are sensitive to the adjacent low-density neighborhoods with lower building height recommended for properties abutting single-family homes. The following guidelines offer further recommendations to develop new structures that are not intrusive to existing neighborhoods.

“Buildings at the edges of the Town Center are recommended for lower height to ensure gradual transitions of buildings to the adjoining residential neighborhoods.” Kensington Sector Plan (page 19)

Objective: New development should respect the character of existing residential neighborhoods

Strategies

1. Building massing and orientation should step down to transition to smaller-scaled buildings.

- a. *Maintain compatible height with adjacent and confronting buildings.*



- b. *Open space can provide a transition between differing uses and building heights.*

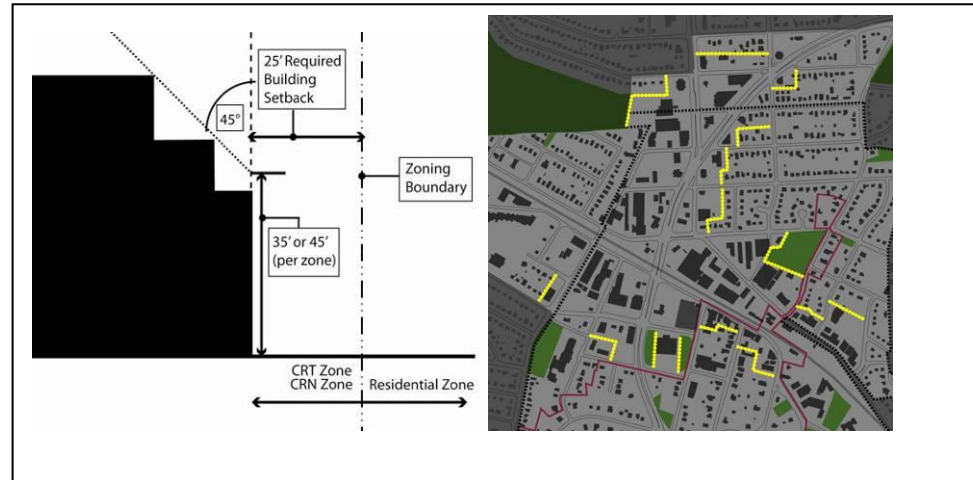


- c. *Infill and redevelopment of properties located directly opposite historic district resources and single-family homes, should consider adequate scale, massing and setback to provide appropriate transition between new and old. This includes development along Warner Street, Amory Avenue, Kensington Parkway and Plyers Mill Road.*



- d. *Per the CR Zones requirements, “Where a property is adjacent to a lot or parcel in an applicable residential zone, any building:*

must have a minimum setback of 25 feet or the setback required by the adjacent property, whichever is greater; and must not project beyond a 45 degree angular plane 45 feet in CRT zones or 35 feet in CRN zones”
59-C-15.72, Setbacks



2. Shadows and lighting glare should be mitigated on neighboring residential buildings.

- a. *Providing trees and hedges to screen and create separation between commercial and residential uses.*
b. *Using lighting fixtures with shields.*



Landscape buffer between commercial parking and residential.

Goal PRESERVE, ENHANCE AND CREATE LOCAL CHARACTER

From its inception in 1873 as a railroad community, Kensington has developed a unique identity in Montgomery County. With turn-of-the-century Victorian era residences, curvilinear streets, and commercial area well preserved, the Kensington Historic District was designated in 1986 to preserve that unique identity. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Kensington Historic District is one of the County's largest with approximately 180 buildings.

Today, Kensington is home to a number of antiques and furnishings stores that attract visitors from throughout metropolitan Washington region. Many of these businesses are located along Howard Avenue east of Connecticut Avenue in historic Antique Row. Other antique retailers have located among the warehouses and services west of Connecticut Avenue on West Howard Avenue.

There are many themes unique to Kensington that promote its identity and image. Railroad community; suburban garden; community founders Brainard Warner, George Knowles, Crosby Noyes; antique dealers; Victorian architecture; Silver and Rock Creeks are examples of Kensington themes. Development proposals should integrate elements that reinforce the town's identity and image.

The Town is rich with a variety of historic architecture. Without dictating architectural style, these guidelines encourage innovative design that is sensitive to the historic architecture, which can be achieved by incorporating characteristics and patterns of the existing architecture into new structures. The goal is not to imitate or duplicate historic buildings, but to enhance the diversity of architecture in Kensington by interpreting certain existing elements in a new way.

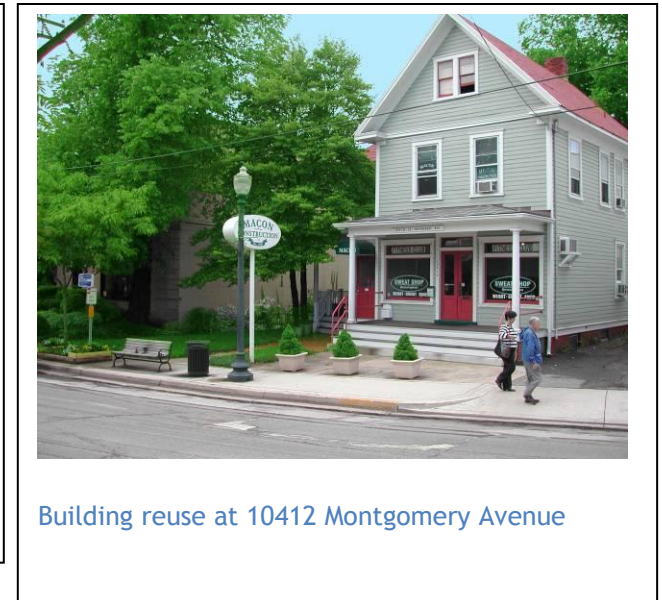


Kensington Historic District

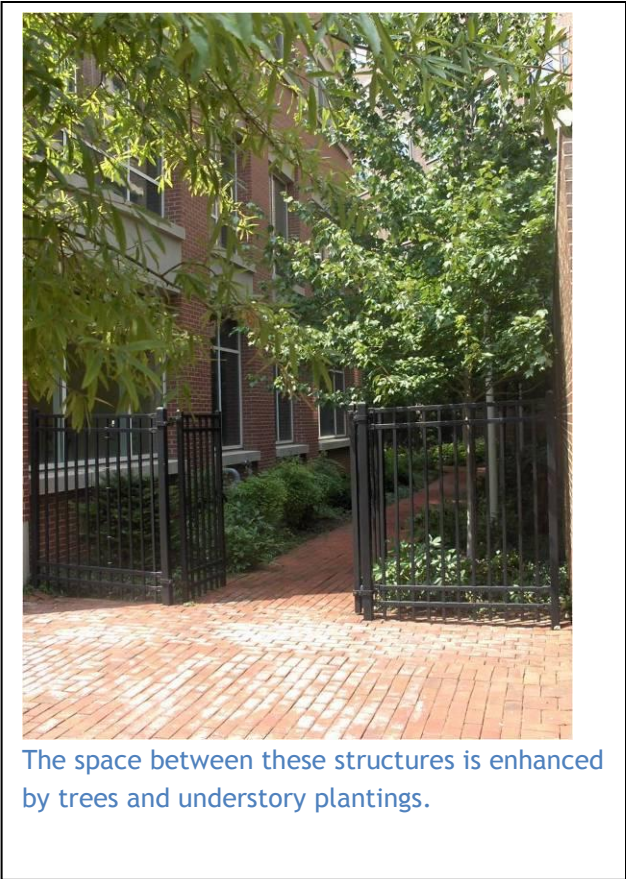
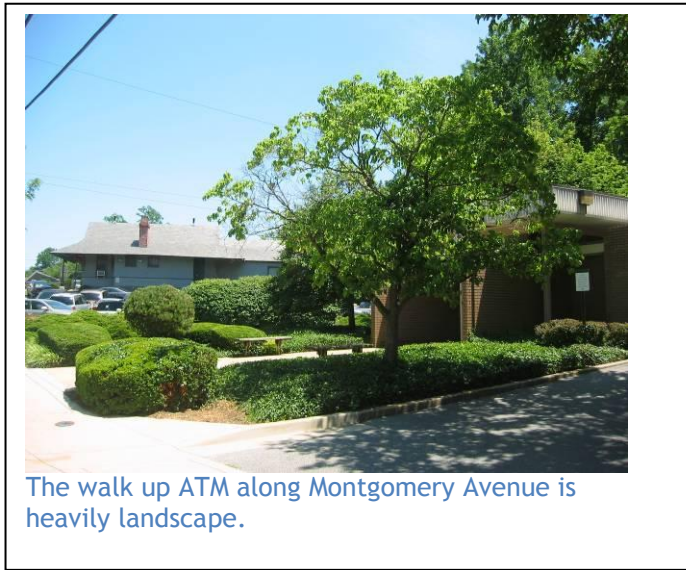
Objective: Highlight Kensington themes

Strategies

1. Manage and protect elements that are important to Kensington's identity.
 - a. *Use unique architectural elements such as construction materials, windows, doors or façade ornamentation distinctive to Kensington.*
 - b. *Consider adaptive reuse, rehabilitation and restoration of buildings that contribute to the area's character.*
 - c. *Consider reuse of existing structures, materials and other building components to reduce construction waste. Green deconstruction practices are strongly encouraged.*
 - d. *Distinguish new development from historic resources to highlight historic resources. Imitating historic designs may diminish the singularity of the historic original.*



- 2. Provide new, predominantly green open spaces to reinforce the garden suburb theme in Kensington’s layout.
 - a. *Increasing tree canopy cover along streets and within medians, within existing neighborhoods, commercial areas, and on parkland.*
 - b. *Providing a natural complement to and respite from the built environment. Use trees, understory plantings, and above-ground plantings.*

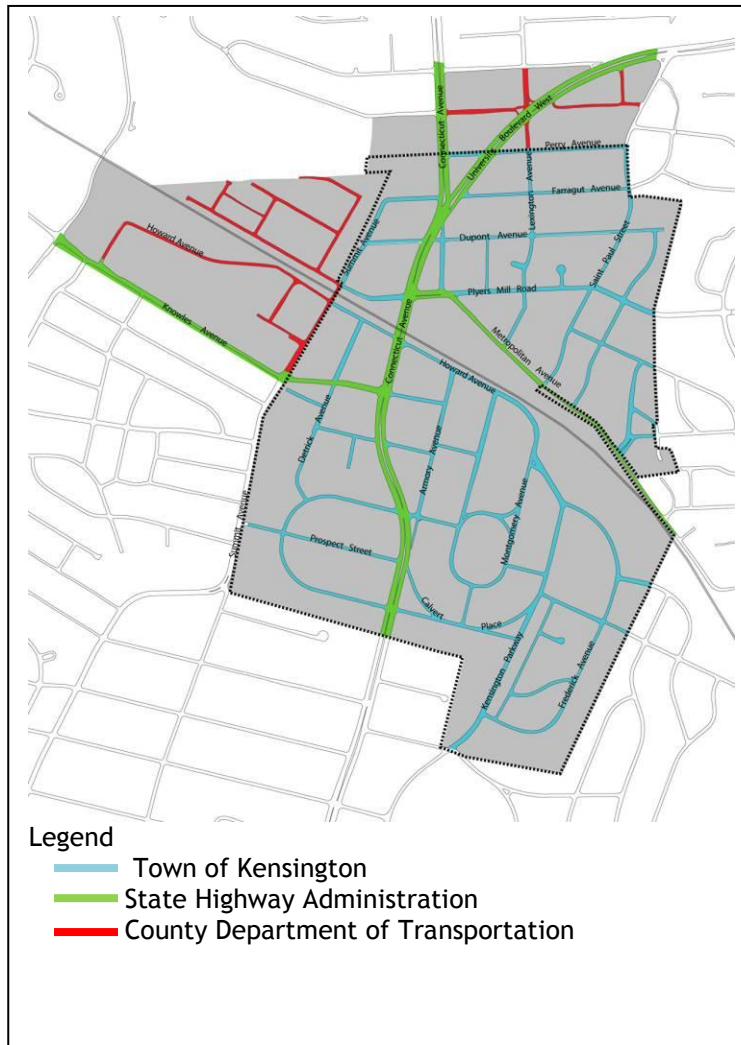


- 3. Express local history and identity through design elements and works of public art.
 - a. *Incorporating new public art in building design and public use spaces with a visible street presence. New projects are strongly encouraged to incorporate the artist into the development team at the conceptual stage.*
 - b. *Including public art in major public infrastructure projects such as bridges, transit systems, railroads or roadways. The integration of artists, architects, landscape architects and other designers into the design team for major infrastructure projects is strongly encouraged.*
 - c. *Incorporating traditional façade elements in new building design.*



RESOURCES

The streets within the boundaries of the sector Plan area are under varying jurisdiction. Right-of-ways within the Town of Kensington boundaries are under the purview of the Town. Rights-of-way outside the Town boundaries are under County’s purview. Connecticut Avenue and University Boulevard are under the purview of the State Highway Administration.



The Town of Kensington has a list of approved streetscape furniture for roads under their jurisdiction.



Kensington Design Guidelines DRAFT

Following is a list of resources that might be of relevance for those considering redevelopment. The list is provided as a reference tool, is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to be exhaustive.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance

Chapter 59 http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery_county_md/

Montgomery County Code

http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery_county_md/

Chapter 19 Erosions, Sediment Control and Stormwater Management

Chapter 22A Forest Conservation-Trees

Chapter 24A Historic Preservation Ordinance

Chapter 47 Vendors

Chapter 49 Streets and Roads

Chapter 50 Subdivision

DHCA West Howard Avenue Urban Design Study

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/dhca/West_Howard/west_howard_avenue_book_final_100609_low_res_landscape.pdf

DPS Outdoor Café Seating Guide

<http://permittingservices.montgomerycountymd.gov/permitting/pdf/OutdoorCafeSeating.pdf>

DPS Sidewalk Vendor Operation and License http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/content/council/pdf/SCANNED_DOCS/20070227_16-61.pdf

DPS Building Construction - Building Codes & Standards

<http://permittingservices.montgomerycountymd.gov/dpstmpl.asp?url=/permitting/bc/nfbldc.asp>

DOT Pedestrian Safety

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dotmpl.asp?url=/Content/dot/dir/pedsafety/index.asp>

Town of Kensington

Forms, Permits & Fees

<http://www.tok.md.gov/c/257/permits-regulations>

Kensington Design Guidelines DRAFT

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

M-NCPPC Kensington Sector Plan

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/kensington/index.shtm>

M-NCPPC County Bikeways Functional Master Plan http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/transportation/bikeways/A_A/contents.shtm

M-NCPPC Development Manual

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/development_manual/index.shtm

M-NCPPC Commercial Residential Zone Overview

http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/development/com_res_zones.shtm

M-NCPPC Historic Preservation Office

<http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/historic/>