

M-NCPPC



MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK AND PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

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June 3, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: John A. Carter, Chief *JAC*
Community-Based Planning Division

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Community-Based Planning Division

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SUBJECT: Work Session No. 5: Damascus Master Plan Transition Area Land Use
and Housing Data Summary

INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth Work Session on the Damascus Master Plan. The items to be covered at this Work Session are the Land Use in the Transition Area, and the summary of housing recommendations for the Damascus Master Plan. The schedule for Damascus Work Sessions includes:

- Planning Board Public Hearing: November 4, 2004
- Work Session No. 1: December 23, 2004
Housing, Water and Sewer, Schools and Community Facilities, and Historic Preservation

Planning Board Discussion: Request for additional housing options to consider, informal approval of Community Facilities and Historic Preservation recommendations.

- Work Session No. 2: January 13, 2005
Transportation and Connectivity, Parks and Trails, Legacy Open Space, and Environment

Planning Board Discussion: Informal approval of Transportation and Connectivity, Parks and Trails, Legacy Open Space, and Environmental recommendations.

- Work Session No. 3: February 17, 2005
 Land Use in the Town Center and Transition Area

Planning Board Discussion: Informal approval of Town Center recommendations, and request for additional housing options to consider in the Transition Area.
- Work Session No. 4: March 10, 2005
 Housing Issues, Southwest Transition Area Land Use (continued), and Rural Area Land Use

Planning Board Discussion: Informal approval of Rural Area recommendations, including Rural Hamlet Zone, and request for summary tables on housing options and additional housing options to consider in the Transition Area.
- Work Session No. 5: June 9, 2005
 Transition Area Land Use and Housing Data Summary
- Work Session No. 6: July, 2005
 Final Summary and Transmittal of Final Draft of the Damascus Master Plan to the County Council and the County Executive

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the request from the Planning Board, the Work Session will again consider housing in the Transition Area surrounding the Town Center, and the summary of housing data for the Master Plan. In previous Work Sessions on Land Use, the Planning Board supported the proposed land use for the Town Center, and the proposed land use in the surrounding Rural Area. The Planning Board requested the preparation of additional options for certain properties in the Transition Area. The options are intended to resolve conflicting views on density in Damascus. The Planning Board also requested more detailed information on the amount of additional housing that the Public Hearing Draft Plan, and subsequent alternative proposals would create in order to evaluate the impact of those alternatives.

The staff began the Master Plan process with direction from the Purpose and Outreach Report to limit additional housing potential outside the Town Center, given the location of Damascus in the rural area, substantially removed from job centers and frequent public transit. That document speaks of the need to “preserve and enhance” a “rural community of low to moderate density residential uses surrounding a town scale center”. With that direction, the Master Plan process led to the Public Hearing Draft recommendation to put most additional density in the Town Center, to minimally increase density in the Transition Area and only through the use of transferable development rights (TDRs), and to recommend use of TDRs on two developable sites.

At the first Work Session, the Planning Board requested additional options that would increase the amount of housing in the Transition Area to address housing concerns facing the County. Alternate options were presented in Work Sessions 3 and 4 that

would increase the amount of potential housing in the Transition Area. While there seemed to be support for some of these proposals, the Planning Board requested further options to consider, particularly in the western quadrant of the Transition Area.

In this report, the staff is presenting a unified proposal to address the housing concerns expressed by the Planning Board. The proposal will preserve the town vision of a compact rural community, with a moderate density transition area, surrounded by a preserved rural landscape. It will also address the concerns about TDR receiving sites that have become more prominent in recent County Council discussions. Some of the proposals pose consequences to environmental policy, and these concerns are outlined in the individual property analysis in Attachment B.

A. TRANSITION AREA PROPERTIES LAND USE
Pages in Public Hearing Draft Master Plan: 25-36, 98-104

Staff Recommendation – In response to the request by the Planning Board, the staff offer an alternative recommendation in this report. The primary difference between the Public Hearing Draft and the alternative is in the amount of TDRs allowed in the clustered neighborhoods. The Public Hearing Draft Plan limited development mainly to the existing density – but allowed sewer and changed the zoning to the RNC Zone to allow tighter clustering. Two sites were given additional density potential through the use of TDRs. The Housing/TDR alternative in this report, adds five additional TDR receiving sites, and very little additional density is proposed without the use of TDRs. The proposal increases housing potential by approximately 374 dwelling units, but only if the density serves the goal of creating TDR receiving sites.

Land Use Recommendations Overview – In either recommendation, the overall vision for the town would remain. Damascus will center its highest density in a fully mixed-use Town Center. Multi-family and mixed commercial/residential housing will be encouraged at densities allowing 3-4 story buildings. The added residential uses will enable more community oriented retail options for the town, and address a need for moderate-income housing. Immediately beyond the Town Center are existing small lot single-family neighborhoods with some multi-family housing. Both recommendations would provide new clustered neighborhoods replicating the existing development patterns in the town. The neighborhoods would be bordered by the large areas of preserved open space required in the Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone. The required open space would protect the stream headwaters and the forest stands that characterize the valleys surrounding the Damascus highlands. Beyond these new neighborhoods, the Plan area will stretch to the hills and valleys of the Agricultural Reserve. The stronger edge of the clustered neighborhoods will create a better visual separation between the town and the rural countryside.

Public Hearing Draft Recommendation – If distance from jobs and transit is still to be considered a limiting factor for adding density in this rural community, the staff recommends that the Planning Board support the Public Hearing Draft recommendations for Land Use in the Transition Area.

As noted on the attached summary, the Public Hearing Draft creates the potential for up to approximately 7,103 dwelling units if all TDR potential is used, and 7,027 without the use of TDRs. This represents a range of 815-890 more dwelling units than the existing Master Plan, depending on the amount of actual new development in the Town Center, the use of TDR potential, and the moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) requirements. The proposal creates receiving sites for up to 76 TDRs on two sites in the Transition Area, and up to 173 MPDUs (depending on TDR use). This is a very modest level of growth for the community over the anticipated 20-year life of the Plan, and most of the growth would be in the Town Center.

Additional Housing and TDR Alternative - If a countywide need for housing, particularly more affordable small lot single family communities, and the creation of new TDR receiving sites is considered more important than the distance of Damascus from jobs and transit and the environmental impact on some of the sites; the staff recommends that the Planning Board support the following proposals for limited increased density on selected properties. In order to achieve limited additional density, and to geographically disperse the potential density, the proposals are generally to use the RNC Zone with a base level that approximates the existing density, with additional density from TDRs.

This proposal gives additional TDR potential to the Warfield and Kingstead properties; and TDR potential is added for the Burdette, Smart-Miner, Kings Valley, Casey, Rice/Conway, and Stanley/Leishear properties. Some of these proposals could cause environmental concerns that will require language in the Master Plan to ensure that development potential be constrained to that possible within environmental guidelines.

The proposal represents a unified approach to creating a somewhat more dense Transition Area through the use of TDRs, while still reflecting the overall vision of a compact town core surrounded by small lot, single-family neighborhoods. As seen on the attached summary charts, the alternative creates the potential for up to 7,477 dwelling units (DUs) if all TDR and MPDU potential is used.

This reflects 374 additional single-family dwelling units in the Transition Area and up to 56 additional MPDUs depending on the extent of TDR use, and the MPDU requirements.

Realistically, not all of the properties will be able to achieve the maximum density, due to the number of environmental constraints that impact many parts of Damascus. The staff believes that having a generally consistent approach that will be tempered by other constraints at the time of development is a stronger planning approach than creating a patchwork of zones that try to accommodate too many factors that are unknown at the time a Plan is adopted. Over the anticipated 15 to 20 year life of the Damascus Master Plan, some of the properties will be developed, and some will not. The Plan should be a guideline for the community vision, not a cookbook with overly detailed instructions.

The staff also proposes adjusting the zoning in some existing neighborhoods to reflect the actual lot patterns and sizes. This is a "housekeeping" recommendation, and no significant additional density is anticipated from those proposed modifications.

In accord with the guiding principles of the Public Hearing Draft Plan, the additional density is primarily located in close proximity to the Town Center, using clustered approaches with strong design standards that will create town scale, primarily single-family communities, with preserved open space on their perimeter. The development plans being discussed would reflect the town vision for small lot single-family neighborhoods of mixed housing types. The alternative proposal includes modifications on the following property groupings, organized by the type of modification proposed. Detailed information on the individual property groups are given in Attachments A-E:

- A. Recommendation Unchanged from Public Hearing Draft Plan:
 - 1. Miller Property – RE-2C/PD-5 to RE-1 Zone
 - 2. Patuxent Neighborhood Properties – RE-2C to RC Zone

- B. New Recommendation to Conform Zoning with the Existing Lot Pattern:
 - 1. Town Spring Neighborhood – RE-2C to RE-1 Zone
 - 2. Ridge Road South Neighborhood – RE-2C to R-200 Zone
 - 3. Ridge Road North Town Neighborhood – RE-2C to R-200 Zone
 - 4. Ridge Road North Transitional Neighborhood – RE-2C to RE-1 Zone

- C. Density Increased from Public Hearing Draft Plan:
 - 1. Burdette Property – RNC.4 to RNC.4/TDR 1.0
 - 2. Warfield Property – RNC .4/TDR .75 to RNC .4/TDR 1.0
 - 3. Kingstead Property – RNC .21/TDR .56 to RNC .4/TDR 1.0
 - 4. Smart/Rice Properties – RNC .4 and RE-2C to RNC .4/TDR 1.0
 - 5. Kings Valley Property – RDT to RNC .04/TDR .5
 - 6. Casey/Lewis Properties – RE-2C to RNC .4 with RNC/TDR 1.0
 - 7. Souder and Adjoining Properties – RE-2C to R-90
 - 8. Stanley/Leishear Properties - RE-2C to RNC .4/TDR 1.0

Analysis

The staff continues to believe that a holistic approach is preferable in considering additional housing options for Damascus. The staff continues to keep in mind what elements make a town work best for its residents, what level of density is appropriate for a small town setting, and what is the best model to use when a town expands. The philosophies of urbanist Leon Krier in “Choice or Fate” outline the advantages of towns that expand incrementally and compactly at their edges, not over expanding vertically and becoming inappropriately dense, or over expanding horizontally at low densities and diluting the countryside. He states, “*Town and countryside are antithetical concepts. Like every natural organism, a town must have defined limits.*” Moderate density expansions with green buffers create human scale extensions of towns that maintain a direct relationship to the countryside.

To address very real county needs for new housing opportunities particularly the demand for more single-family neighborhoods, some land on the perimeter of towns should be used for new housing. To “organically” grow and maintain more potential for affordability, this housing should be designed to offer smaller lot communities with a mix of housing types, connected to the town, to community facilities, and to each other with pedestrian walkways or trails. A basic town growth pattern should be established – and then duplicated on the perimeter – not diluted on the town perimeter.

The need to create stronger edges between town and country is an issue of intense debate and concern to urbanists and agriculturalists. As noted in Country and City: The Common Vision of Agrarians and New Urbanists (Benjamin Northrup and Benjamin Lipscomb), cohesive, moderate density neighborhoods are the core building block of good urban places. They state:

While some neighborhoods are denser than others, all traditional neighborhoods have sufficient density – and the necessary structure of walkable, interconnected streets and blocks – to support a vibrant street life....The density of a traditional town permits the preservation of more farmland and open space.

The residents of Damascus established in their town vision a desire to remain a small town of moderate density, small lot residential neighborhoods with a somewhat higher density core offering commercial and residential options. The proposals for adding additional housing potential for Damascus have been crafted to replicate that vision. They also create new TDR receiving sites, following the recommendation of the TDR Task Force to secure new density through the use of TDRs.

As with the Public Hearing Plan recommendations, the new neighborhoods proposed are almost all given a base density in the RNC Zone that replicates their existing density, primarily in the RE-2C Zone. They are given the opportunity to achieve additional density through the use of TDRs, up to a maximum density (before MPDUs) of one dwelling per acre through the RNC Zone. The use of this zone, with strong guidelines for its use in the Master Plan, can add new small town neighborhoods to the edges of Damascus while preserving open space and natural resources – and in some instances farmland – on their perimeter.

Some of these properties are large enough to require MPDUs so that additional density is included in the calculations. From a town planning perspective, the properties are in locations that will allow easy walking access to town or community facilities where density is preferred, and they also permit easy access to the countryside.

The advantages and concerns regarding specific property groups are discussed in Attachment B. The Table below summarizes the major land use advantages and disadvantages of each of these property groups beyond providing housing and TDR receiving sites.

	Public Hearing Draft Plan	Housing/TDR Alternative	Major Advantages	Major Disadvantages
Burdette	RNC .4 32 DU	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 32-100 DU	Location	Environmental
Warfield	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 31 DU	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 31-95 DU	Location	None
Kingstead	RNC .21/TDR .56 28-93 DU	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 55-168 DU	Design, Parks, Trails	Proximity to Town Center, Environmental
Smart/Rice	RNC .4 and RE-2C 6 and 14 DU	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 20-62 DU	Location, Design	Environmental
Kings Valley	RDT 4 DU	RNC .4/TDR .5 4-69 DU	Location and Design	Precedent
Casey/Lewis	RE-2C 20 DU	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 20-61 DU	Location	Environmental
Souder	RE-2C 5 DU	R-90 14 DU	Location	Requires Assembly
Stanley/Leishear	RE-2C 10 DU	RNC .4/TDR 1.0 10-32 DU	Location	Design, Topography

Transportation Impact – The staff evaluated the impact of increasing the development potential in the Housing/TDR Alternative and find that:

1. On an individual property basis, none of the contemplated changes in development potential would affect the Master Plan transportation system. Each property is served by roadways with an appropriate functional classification for the ranges of dwelling units analyzed.
2. On an aggregate basis, the increase of 374 dwelling units would not result in a significant change in congestion levels great enough to affect the overall balance between land use and transportation established in the Public Hearing Draft Plan. Up to 200 additional dwelling units could be added to the development levels assumed in the Public Hearing Draft Plan without affecting the balance between land use and transportation.
3. If the Housing/TDR Alternative is adopted, the Planning Board should consider one or more of the following measures to address the balance between land use and transportation, listed below in descending order of staff preference:
 - a. Limit additional development to an aggregate of 200 dwelling units above the total of 7,100 dwelling units analyzed for the Public Hearing Draft Plan.
 - b. Revise the Master Plan recommendation to increase roadway network capacity, such as by increasing the recommended number of through travel lanes on the southernmost portion of Ridge Road (MD 27) from two lanes to four lanes.

- c. Establish a staging plan, as used in the Olney Master Plan, that effectively caps development in the Damascus Master Plan area at 7,300 dwelling units.

B. SUMMARY TABLES OF RESIDENTIAL POTENTIAL

Summary tables for the housing options are attached. They indicate the potential dwelling unit differences between the existing Master Plan, and the Public Hearing Draft Plan recommendations; and they present a holistic proposal for creating additional housing, TDR potential, and MPDUs.

The Housing/TDR Alternative creates the potential for up to 374 more dwelling units in the Transition Area than the Public Hearing Draft recommendations. If the TDR potential is not used, the proposal creates potential for only 54 more dwelling units. The Housing/TDR Alternative would also create more MPDUs depending on how much of the TDR potential is used. The overall housing density in the Transition Area is only moderately increased by the current proposal. Also, the additional housing potential is geographically dispersed to avoid a significant burden on any one area of the community.

The calculations in the attached summary charts include the following assumptions:

1. The Town Center existing zoning potential does not include the residential potential in the C-2, O-M, C-T, and I-1 zones, as historically their residential potential is rarely used except in very dense urban areas.
2. For the TDR receiving sites, the final MPDU calculation will vary depending on the number of TDRs used, as the MPDU calculation is proposed to be calculated from the proposed TDR density in the RNC/TDR Zone.
3. Dwelling unit calculations are based on the existing dwelling units plus remaining realistic development potential for indicated zones.

Overall, the Housing/TDR Alternative proposals could create a somewhat more populous Damascus over the anticipated 15-20 year life of the Plan, if the full TDR potential is realized. The anticipated designs for these neighborhoods would contribute to a cohesive development pattern for the community, and the preservation of extensive open space. The potential for the additional housing and TDRs must be weighed against the potential environmental impacts – particularly for the Burdette, Kingstead, and Casey/Lewis properties as discussed in Attachment B.

CONCLUSION

The Planning Board has indicated informal approval of all sections of the Public Hearing Draft Plan except for the Transition Area Land Use. The staff will make the necessary modifications to the Plan to conform to the Planning Board decisions and return with the proposed Planning Board Draft Plan, and ask for the Planning Board's final recommendations for transmittal to the County Council and County Executive.

JD:ha: j:\2005 staff reports\team 7\Damascus WorkSession Five

Attachments

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1. Modifications Unchanged from the Public Hearing Draft Plan (page 3)
 2. New Recommendation Conforming Zoning in Certain Neighborhoods to Existing Lot Pattern (page 3)
 3. Density Increased from the Public Hearing Plan
 - A. Burdette Properties (page 5)
 - B. Warfield Property (page 7)
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 - D. Smart/Miner/Rice/Conway Property Group (page 9)
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