



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

July 23, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

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SUBJECT: Work Session No. 1: Woodmont Triangle
Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Item No. 1: Housing
- Item No. 2: Transportation
- Item No. 3: Schools
- Item No. 4: Retail
- Item No. 5: Zoning, FAR and Building Height

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Amendment

In October 2003, the Montgomery County Council requested that the M-NCPPC prepare a limited, Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda Central Business District. The primary purposes of this Woodmont Triangle Amendment include the following:

- **Encourage Housing** - Provide opportunities to increase the supply of housing to serve a variety of income levels.
- **Support Small-Scale Retail** - Provide opportunities to retain existing small-scale retail businesses and expand opportunities for new businesses.
- **Enhance Public Facilities and Amenities** - Establish a unique set of amenities and facilities for the Woodmont Triangle including the following:
 - Public Amenities - Increase the variety of public use spaces and facilities provided in the Optional Method of Development, and identify opportunities for off-site amenities.
 - Improve Street Character - Focus on improving the safety and character of the existing streets.
 - Arts and Entertainment District - Enhance the Arts and Entertainment District to include additional opportunities for the visual and performing arts.

Schedule

This staff report is part of the first work session for the Woodmont Triangle Amendment. The proposed schedule includes the following:

- Completion of Staff Draft: April 2004
- Planning Board Public Hearing: May 20, 2004
- Work Session No. 1: July 29, 2004
- Work Session No. 2 and
Transmit to County Council: September 2004

Relationship to the 1994 Sector Plan

This limited Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda Central Business District is intended to retain the vision of the existing Sector Plan. This Amendment provides additional opportunities to help realize the "housing and neighborhoods" objective (pages 28–31) of the existing Sector Plan. The Amendment is not intended as a significant departure from the recommendations in the existing Sector Plan.

Woodmont Triangle Study Area Boundary

The study area for the Woodmont Triangle Amendment is bound on the north by the National Institutes of Health, on the east by Wisconsin Avenue, on the south by Woodmont Avenue, and on the west by Old Georgetown Road. The study area includes portions of the Battery Lane District, Wisconsin North Corridor, the Old Georgetown Road Corridor, and the entire Woodmont Triangle District of the existing Sector Plan. The multiple family housing located along Battery Lane and adjacent to the National Institutes of Health is included in the Woodmont Triangle study area. Portions of the properties along the west side of Wisconsin Avenue and the properties along the east side of Old Georgetown Road are also included as part of the mixed-use environment of the study area.

SUMMARY OF THE AMENDMENT

Vision

The Woodmont Triangle will be a vibrant and urban, mixed-use neighborhood emphasizing residential, small-scale retail, and the arts.

Description of the Amendment

Housing - The Woodmont Triangle Amendment expands the opportunities to provide housing for a variety of income levels. Instead of reducing the floor area ratio and building height for some areas in the CBD-1 Zone, the Amendment allows property owners to develop according to the maximum limitations in the CBD-1 Zone. The proposed Amendment increases the amount of residential zoning by changing from the CBD-1 Zone to the CBD-R2 Zone for a three-block area. In return for reducing these limitations, each project will be required to provide housing including moderately priced dwelling units on-site if the Optional Method of Development is used. The intent is to increase the opportunities for housing to serve a variety of income levels. The Amendment also provides for a range of housing types from townhouses and four-story multiple family units concentrated along Battery Lane to high-rise multiple family units and mixed-use buildings located south of Battery Lane.

Retail - The Amendment is also intended to support small-scale retail. Retail will be required at street level for all projects located along Norfolk Avenue. This street will become a recognizable spine of retail activity to serve as a focus of activity in the Woodmont Triangle. Residential uses and a hotel will be encouraged within the Woodmont Triangle area to support retail uses. On-street parallel parking and the use of private parking in office buildings during evening hours will also be encouraged to support small-scale retail.

Arts and Entertainment District - The Amendment supports the Arts and Entertainment District by identifying opportunities for public art, performance spaces, and other public open spaces. The Norfolk Avenue spine will be one of the most visible public spaces identified in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment. Norfolk Avenue will be the focus of a unique set of amenities and facilities. Streetscape improvements including closely spaced street trees, streetlights, special paving, parallel parking, street furniture, outdoor space for restaurants, and public art will be located along Norfolk Avenue. A continuous bikeway along Norfolk Avenue will connect North Bethesda and the Capital Crescent Trail through the Woodmont Triangle. Off-site public use space will be encouraged if on-site public use space conflicts with locating small-scale retail adjacent to public streets. Improvements to Battery Lane Urban Park will be encouraged to increase recreation opportunities. An arts incubator space will also be encouraged.

DEVELOPMENT COMPARISON

Comparison to the Existing Sector Plan

The following paragraphs provide a comparison of the recommendations proposed in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the recommendations in the existing Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD. The estimates are based on the land use and zoning proposed in the Sector Plan Amendment versus the land use and zoning in the existing Sector Plan. A summary of the findings follows:

- The proposed amendment provides for approximately 3,136 total dwelling units or an additional 1,616 additional dwelling units in the Woodmont Triangle.
- The proposed amendment provides for a reduction of approximately 860 projected new jobs in the Woodmont Triangle area to accommodate the housing units.

Methodology

The staff used the development potential of the existing Sector Plan as estimated in the recent Comprehensive Local Area Transportation Review (CLATR) as the beginning point to estimate the existing development potential in the Woodmont Triangle. The projections for jobs and housing in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment are based on the projects proposed in the testimony at the recent public hearing. In addition, the staff included an estimate of the development potential of vacant or under-utilized sites in the Woodmont Triangle. The development is not based on the maximum allowable zoning for each block.

Comparison with Other Mixed-Use Centers

The Woodmont Triangle area is intended as a complement to the Core District of the Bethesda CBD located at the Bethesda Metro Station. The maximum density in the Core District is a FAR of 5.0 for the site of the Chevy Chase Bank development. The other sites located adjacent to the Bethesda Metro Station are limited to an average FAR of 4.0. The Woodmont Triangle Amendment allows a maximum FAR of 5.0 in the areas located northeast of Norfolk Avenue in accordance with the CBD-R2 Zone. In the areas located southwest of Norfolk Avenue, the Amendment allows a maximum FAR of 3.0 in accordance with the CBD-1 Zone. The maximum FAR is only permitted if housing is provided as part of the Optional Method of Development. The existing Sector Plan reduces the FAR permitted on some of the blocks with the CBD-1 Zone by 1.0 FAR, and on some blocks with the CBD-R2 Zone by 2.0 FAR. In contrast, the Amendment allows each zone to determine the maximum FAR. This represents an increase in FAR from 1.0 to 2.0 in selected areas.

The following table compares the floor area ratio (FAR) proposed in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment with the existing FAR in the Bethesda Core, the Silver Spring Core, Twinbrook Commons, Shady Grove, and the Reston Town Center.

Comparison of Mixed-Use Centers

Project Name	Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
Bethesda CBD Core Area	4.0 - 5.0
Proposed Woodmont Triangle Amendment	3.0 - 5.0
Silver Spring Core Area	2.0 - 6.0
Twinbrook Commons	1.9 - 2.5
Shady Grove Sector Plan	1.8 - 2.4
Reston Town Center	1.2 - 2.0

The charts and diagrams on the following pages provide additional information to compare the size, number of units, gross floor area and FAR proposed in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment with the Bethesda CBD Core, the Silver Spring Core, Twinbrook Commons, Shady Grove, and the Reston Town Center.

MIXED-USE CENTERS

Reston Town Center

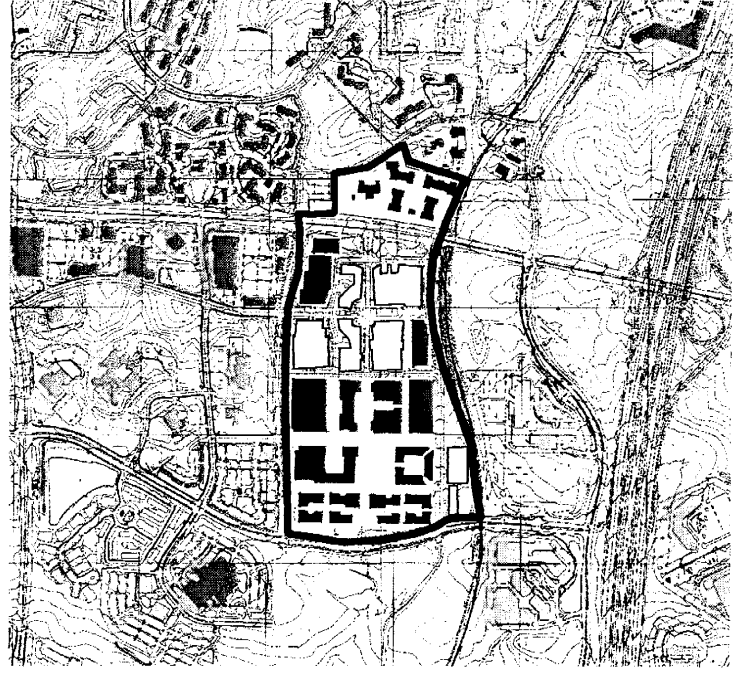
85 acres

1,034 du

16 du / gross acre

4,260,000 square feet

1.2 FAR



Bethesda CBD Core

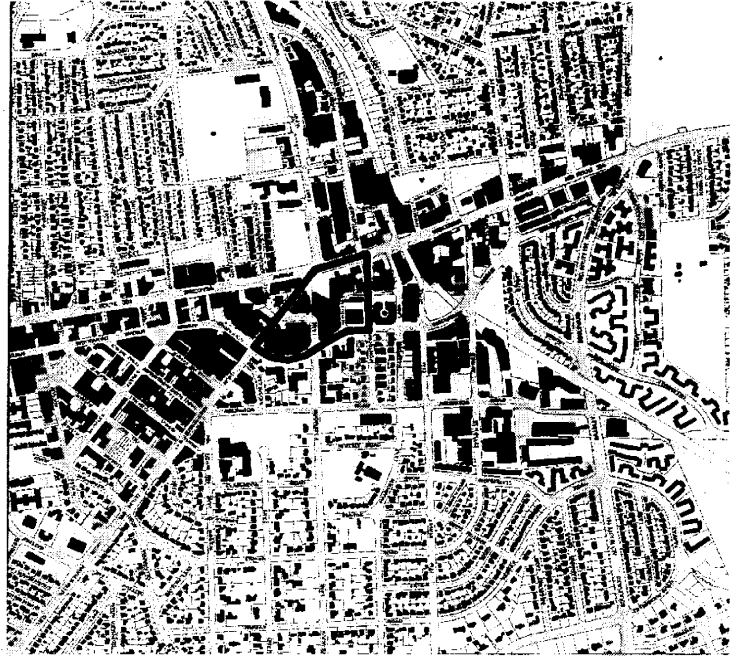
9 acres

300 du

33 du / gross acre

1,320,400 square feet

4.0 FAR



Project:

Size:

Residential Units:

Residential Density:

Gross Floor Area:

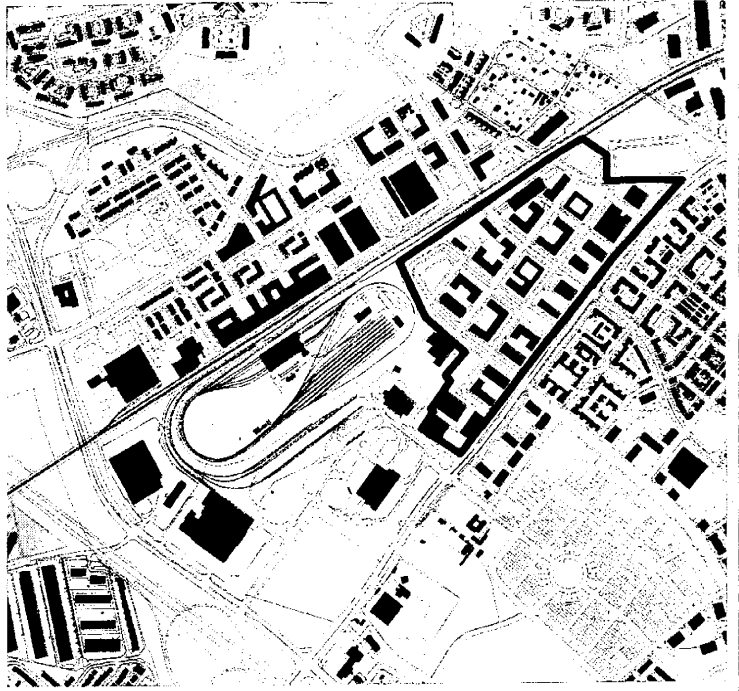
Density:

Area Plan:

MIXED-USE CENTERS

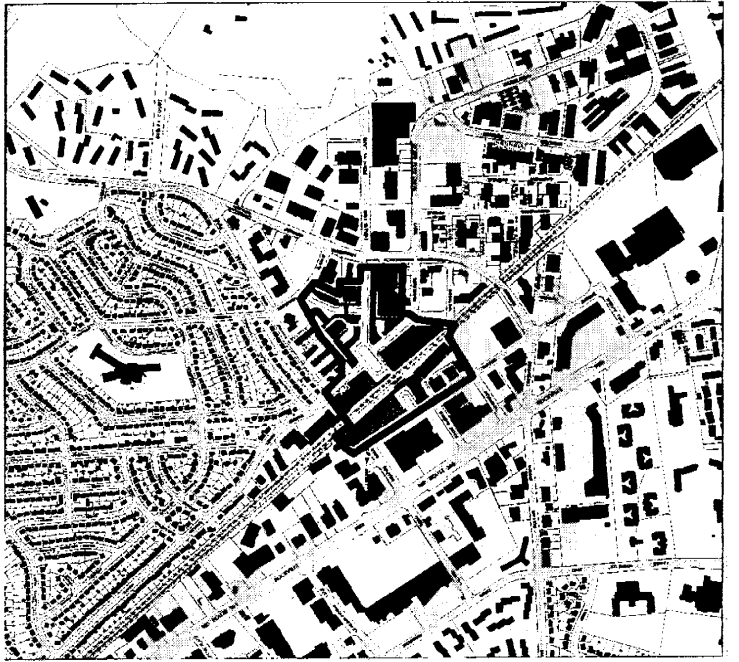
Shady Grove

Size: 55 acres
Residential Units: 2,800 du
Residential Density: 51 du / gross acre
Gross Floor Area: 4,701,000 square feet
Density: 2.0 FAR



Twinbrook Commons

Size: 26.2 acres
Residential Units: 1,288 du
Residential Density: 49 du / gross acre
Gross Floor Area: 2,833,000 square feet
Density: 2.5 FAR



Area Plan:

MIXED-USE CENTERS

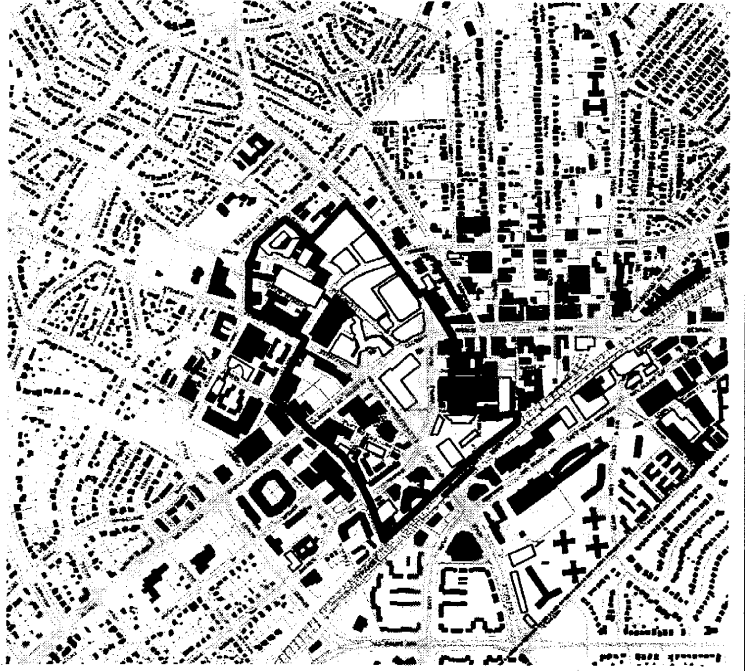
Woodmont Triangle

98 acres
5,533 du
56 du / gross acre
-
3.0-5.0 FAR



Silver Spring CBD Core

58.6 acres
920 du
16 du / gross acre
6,154,337 square feet
2.4 FAR



Project:

Size:

Residential Units:

Residential Density:

Gross Floor Area:

Density:

Area Plan:

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION

ITEM NO. 1: HOUSING

Staff Recommendation

Approve the recommendations in the Amendment to increase the supply of housing in the Woodmont Triangle for a variety of income levels by increasing the building height and density in accordance with the provisions in each zone. Locate moderately priced dwelling units on-site.

Discussion

Since the existing Sector Plan was approved in 1994, only two housing projects have been approved in the Woodmont Triangle. A small townhouse project was approved at the intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Battery Lane. A high-rise residential project, the Palisades, was completed for 314 units near the intersection of Woodmont Avenue and Cordell Avenue. Additional housing was proposed in the existing Sector Plan, but it has not been completed. Increasing the opportunities for housing is a primary goal of the Woodmont Triangle Amendment. In addition, the goal is also to improve the opportunities to provide moderately priced dwelling units on-site.

In addition to the 1,520 dwelling units projected in the existing Sector Plan, the Amendment provides opportunities for an increase of 1,616 dwelling units in the Woodmont Triangle. Moderately priced dwelling units will be provided on-site. Opportunities to construct a total of approximately 3,136 dwelling units will be provided by the Woodmont Triangle Amendment.

The Amendment encourages a range of housing types including four-story multiple family units and townhouses along both sides of Battery Lane. High-rise, multiple family units in mixed-use buildings with a variety of building heights will be located south of Battery Lane.

The following table compares the projections for jobs and housing in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment with the projections in the existing Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD. Additional detail is included as an attachment to this report.

Planning Areas	Existing Jobs	Existing Housing	Proposed Jobs	Proposed Housing
Woodmont Triangle Area, New	2,029	1,520	1,170	3,136
Bethesda CBD, Total	43,112	13,186	42,253	14,802
BCC Policy Area, Total	107,678	46,689	106,819	48,305

Source: Round 6.4A Forecast for 2030

A balance of jobs and housing is 1.6 jobs for each household in Montgomery County. The above chart indicates that the Bethesda CBD and the Bethesda Policy Area have a substantial number of jobs in excess of the number of dwelling units. The increase in the number of dwelling units in the Woodmont Triangle will improve the balance of jobs and housing and reduce the need for commuting from areas outside Bethesda.

The entry-level salary for an NIH post-doctorate employee may be as low as \$28,260, and the entry level salary for a Montgomery County Teacher is \$36,841. The average monthly rent in Bethesda is about \$1,400, and the average cost of a new single-family detached home is \$981,500. The entry-level salaries of these sample workforce professionals would not support the cost of renting or buying a new house in the Bethesda CBD, even for two-income families. Providing moderately priced dwelling units on-site in the developments in the Woodmont Triangle will improve the opportunities for some members of the workforce to live near the Metro station and near the many job sites in the Bethesda CBD and on the adjacent NIH campus.

ITEM NO. 2: TRANSPORTATION

Staff Recommendation

The Woodmont Triangle will have only a minor impact on the traffic conditions in the Bethesda CBD because the traffic impact from the increase in the number of dwelling units is balanced by a decrease in the number of future jobs.

Discussion

The land use in the existing Sector Plan was tested in the recently completed Comprehensive Local Area Transportation Review (CLATR). The staff compared the land use changes recommended in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment with the land use plan in the existing Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD (see tables attached to this report for the specific comparisons).

The conclusions found in the attached memorandum from Transportation Planning are based on the fact that the estimated number of vehicle trips generated for the Woodmont Triangle Amendment during the weekday periods would generally be equal to those generated by the development tested in the existing Sector Plan. The land use scenario in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment includes a greater number of residential dwelling units than assumed in the existing Sector Plan, but a lower square footage of office and retail space. Compared to the existing Sector Plan, the land use scenario in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment is expected to impact total peak hour trip generation during the weekday periods only slightly.

The recently completed Comprehensive Local Area Transportation Review Analysis (CLATR) indicates that the policies and programs described in the existing Sector Plan are sufficient to accommodate projected Stage II development in the Bethesda CBD. At three intersections located outside the Bethesda CBD, traffic congestion already exceeds current policy thresholds. Planned policies and programs do not effectively relieve existing or forecasted congestion at the three locations. The CLATR analysis provides the following findings:

- The existing and forecasted area wide transportation level of service meets the acceptable AGP standard.

- Reasonable travel demand management objectives and intersection improvements can be implemented to achieve Stage II development except at the three intersections located outside the Bethesda CBD.
- The Woodmont Triangle Amendment will retain the existing staging ceiling of 5,000 jobs.

ITEM NO. 3: SCHOOLS

Staff Recommendation

The proposed Woodmont Triangle Amendment is projected to generate approximately 210 elementary students, 75 middle school students and 55 high school students. This number of students is within the planned capacity of the public schools in this area.

Discussion

The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster includes the following schools: Westbrook Elementary School, Somerset Elementary School, Bethesda-North Chevy Chase Elementary School, Rock Creek Forest Elementary School, Rosemary Hills Elementary School, Westland Middle School, and Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. There is capacity in the Bethesda-Chevy Chase School Cluster for several years. While elementary school capacity will decrease in 2007, because all-day kindergarten will commence, Westland Middle School's capacity will increase in 2008 when an addition is built. Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School may soon reach capacity, but five additional classrooms will be added in 2009 (see Montgomery County Public Schools Master Plan, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Cluster, pages 4-9).

Mixed-use and high-rise development does not generate a large number of school children, according to staff of the Montgomery County Public Schools. As discussed in the Housing Section, the maximum number of dwelling units projected for the Woodmont Triangle is approximately 3,136 for the life of this Sector Plan Amendment. Because of the small lot sizes and the difficulty of assemblage in the Woodmont Triangle, it is highly unlikely that this number of new dwelling units will be achieved. Staff chose to estimate a high number of dwelling units to evaluate the maximum impact on public services.

Montgomery County Public Schools used their standard formula to estimate that 3,136 new residences would generate approximately 210 elementary students, 75 middle school students and 55 high school students.

ITEM NO. 4: RETAIL

Staff Recommendation

The following actions are recommended to improve the opportunities for small-scale retail:

- Emphasize Norfolk Avenue as the main retail, restaurant and entertainment street where public and private improvements should be concentrated
- Support highly visible public spaces, including Veterans Park, Battery Lane Urban Park and Bethesda Place, linked by a lively linear urban pedestrian system that offer retail patterns a series of activities.
- Provide maximum exposure for retail by enhancing the legibility and the marketing of the Woodmont Triangle area through visual design, coordinated street features, streetscape and art, and programmed events
- Improve the visibility and availability of public parking to support retail
- Support retail through proximity to main features and new components of the Arts and Entertainment District
- In cooperation with the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce and the Woodmont Advisory Group, establish a Woodmont Triangle Retail Working Group to pool resources, exchange ideas, and assure a variety of neighborhood retail and services.

Discussion

The Woodmont Triangle has many strengths including restaurants, a variety of furniture stores, on-street parallel parking, public parking structures, potential evening use of underground parking in existing office buildings, a unique variety of service retail shops, nearby stable single-family neighborhoods, and opportunities for additional housing. This area is within walking distance to the Bethesda Metro Station and employment in the Metro Core and at the NIH.

Shops in the Woodmont Triangle have moved to the recently completed Bethesda Row. Neighborhood owners and retailers believe development limits must be changed to spur private and public reinvestment.

Bethesda Row has many advantages over the Woodmont Triangle. Bethesda Row includes several blocks developed by a single owner, a strong financial plan, and leases with national chains including the Barnes & Noble bookstore. Retail tenants are usually not pioneers and follow a lead tenant or anchor. Federal Realty has also attracted new customers by leasing space to Landmark Cinema, offering patrons a series of activities in the area, from dining to shopping to entertainment.

Keeping customers in the area for an extended period of time through a wide choice of entertainment and services is a goal of the Woodmont Triangle business community.

To compete with Bethesda Row yet retain its own character, the Woodmont Triangle has the challenge of trying to regain a high level of pedestrian activity, preserving many of its unique retail and restaurant enterprises, and of attracting its own kind of activity anchor. An arts-related anchor, such as a music or dance studio with performance space, could be established. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce and the Bethesda Urban Partnership have made great contributions to the marketing and visibility of the Triangle through locating concerts, art festivals and the Taste of Bethesda in the heart of the Woodmont Triangle.

ITEM NO. 5: ZONING, FAR AND BUILDING HEIGHT

Staff Recommendation

Approve the proposed changes in the zoning, floor area ratio (FAR) and building height as described in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD. The Amendment changes the zoning from CBD-1 to CBD-R2 for three of the blocks in the Woodmont Triangle. In general, the proposed Amendment increases the maximum allowable building height and FAR to the maximum permitted in the zones instead of reducing the building height and density as indicated in the existing Sector Plan. The following table compares existing and proposed recommendations for zoning, FAR and building height.

COMPARISON OF THE PROPOSED ZONING, FAR AND BUILDING HEIGHT

Block No.	Zoning		FAR		Building Height (feet)	
	Existing	Proposed	Existing	Proposed*	Existing	Proposed*
8	CBD-1	CBD-1		3	90	90
9	CBD-1	CBD-1		3	90	90
10	CBD-R2	CBD-R2		5	122	143
11	CBD-1	CBD-1		3	122	90
12	CBD-1	CBD-1		3	50	143
13	CBD-R2	CBD-R2		3	90	143
14	CBD-R2	CBD-R2		5	110	143
15	CBD-R2	CBD-R2		3	90	143
16	R-10	R-10		NA	NA	NA
17	R-10	R-10		NA	NA	NA
20	CBD-1	CBD-1		3	50	50-90
21	CBD-1	CBD-1		3	50	50-90
22	CBD-1	CBD-1		2	50	50-90
23	CBD-1	CBD-1		2	50	50-90
44	CBD-1	CBD-R2		2	50	143
45	CBD-1	CBD-R2		2	50	143

Note: * Maximum allowed by zoning.

In addition to the above table a three-dimensional representation of the increase in building height and floor area ratio (FAR) is attached.

Discussion

Zoning - The Amendment recommends a change in the zoning for the three blocks in the Woodmont Triangle located within the boundaries of Woodmont Avenue, Saint Elmo Avenue and Old Georgetown Road. These blocks are located adjacent to the Core of the Bethesda CBD. The zoning for these three blocks is recommended for a change from the CBD-1 Zone to the CBD-R2 Zone. This change is intended to increase the supply of housing in the CBD. The zoning in the remainder of the Woodmont Triangle is recommended to remain the same as proposed in the existing Sector Plan.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) - The recommended maximum floor area ratio (FAR) will be as permitted in the applicable zones. The existing Sector Plan reduces the allowable FAR in the CBD-1 Zone from 3.0 FAR to 2.0 FAR on four blocks. The existing Sector Plan also reduces the allowable FAR in the CBD-R2 Zone from 5.0 FAR to 3.0 FAR on two blocks. On these six blocks, the Woodmont Triangle Amendment will provide for an increase in FAR up to the maximum allowable in the applicable zone to increase the opportunities for housing and to increase the opportunities to provide moderately priced dwelling units on-site. In the remaining blocks in the Woodmont Triangle, the FAR recommended in the Amendment will remain as proposed in the existing Sector Plan.

Building Height - The recommended building height will be 50 feet along Old Georgetown Road and north of Saint Elmo Avenue as proposed in the existing Sector Plan to provide compatibility with the adjacent single-family detached neighborhood. The building height in the remainder of the Woodmont Triangle will be revised. The Woodmont Triangle Amendment will provide for an increase in building height up to the maximum allowable in the applicable zone. This increase in building height is also intended to provide an incentive to increase the opportunities for housing and to increase the opportunities to locate moderately priced dwelling units on-site.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH

A unique outreach program was developed to address the issues in the Woodmont Triangle. The M-NCPPC with the Conflict Resolution Center of Montgomery County held five, public workshops and several focus group meetings. The public workshops and meetings included representatives from the East Montgomery Civic Association, Edgemoor Civic Association, the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, property owners, retail business owners, developers and architects from the Bethesda area. Individuals from the original Citizens Advisory Committee were also included in the workshops. The workshops included the following topics:

- **Workshop No. 1: Community Interests** - Interests and issues of the business owners and developers of the area without identifying solutions.

- **Workshop No. 2: Community Interests** - Interests and issues of the residents of the Woodmont Triangle and adjacent communities without identifying solutions.
- **Workshop No. 3: Vision, Challenges and Actions** - Vision, Challenges and Actions necessary to address the community interests and issues identified in the previous two workshops.
- **Workshop No. 4: Resolution of Issues** - Open forum for the participants to resolve issues identified in Workshop No. 3.
- **Workshop No. 5: Staff Recommendation** - Resolve remaining issues and present the staff recommendations prior to preparation of the Staff Draft Amendment.

CONCLUSION

This staff report provides the basis for the recommendations in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD. It discusses housing, transportation, schools, retail, and zoning, FAR and building height in the proposed Amendment. The next work session will provide recommendations for public facilities and amenities, and implementation. This session will provide recommendations for the area to support the Arts and Entertainment District, establish urban design guidelines, and improve the character of the existing streets to further support the revitalization of the Woodmont Triangle.

JAC:ha: j:\team2\woodmont july29

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Tables: Woodmont Triangle Study Area Projects

Attachment 2: Three-dimensional Representations of Future Development:

- Bethesda CBD
- Scenario 1
- Scenario 2

Attachment 3: Transportation Memo

Attachment 4: Summary of Testimony

Attachment 5: Letters