

September 24, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: John A. Carter, Chief (301-495-4575) *JAC*
Community Based Planning Division

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Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Work Session No. 2: Woodmont Triangle
Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. PUBLIC AMENITIES AND FACILITIES
2. URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES
3. IMPLEMENTATION

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Planning Board reviewed the Public Hearing Draft and took public testimony on May 20, 2004. At the first work session on July 23, 2004, the main topics were housing, transportation, schools, retail, zoning, FAR, and building height. The staff report expanded on the recommendations in the Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD.

The Planning Board Discussed the following on July 23, 2004:

- **Housing:** Increasing the supply of housing in the Woodmont Triangle for a variety of income levels by allowing building height and density to be determined by the provisions of each zone except as noted, and locating the Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU's) on-site.
- **Transportation:** Supporting the Sector Plan Amendment, because the traffic impact from the increase in the number of dwelling units is balanced by a decrease in the number of future jobs.

- **Schools:** Supporting the Sector Plan Amendment, because the number of students generated is within the planned capacity of the public schools in the area.
- **Retail:** Supporting the Sector Plan Amendment's strategy of retail renovation by supporting streetscape improvements in the public rights-of-way, and requirements for retail on the first floor of developments especially along Norfolk Avenue through the development process.
- **Zoning, Floor Area Ratio, and Building Height:** Approving the proposed changes in the zoning, floor area ratio, and building height contained in the Sector Plan Amendment.

Purpose of Work Session 2

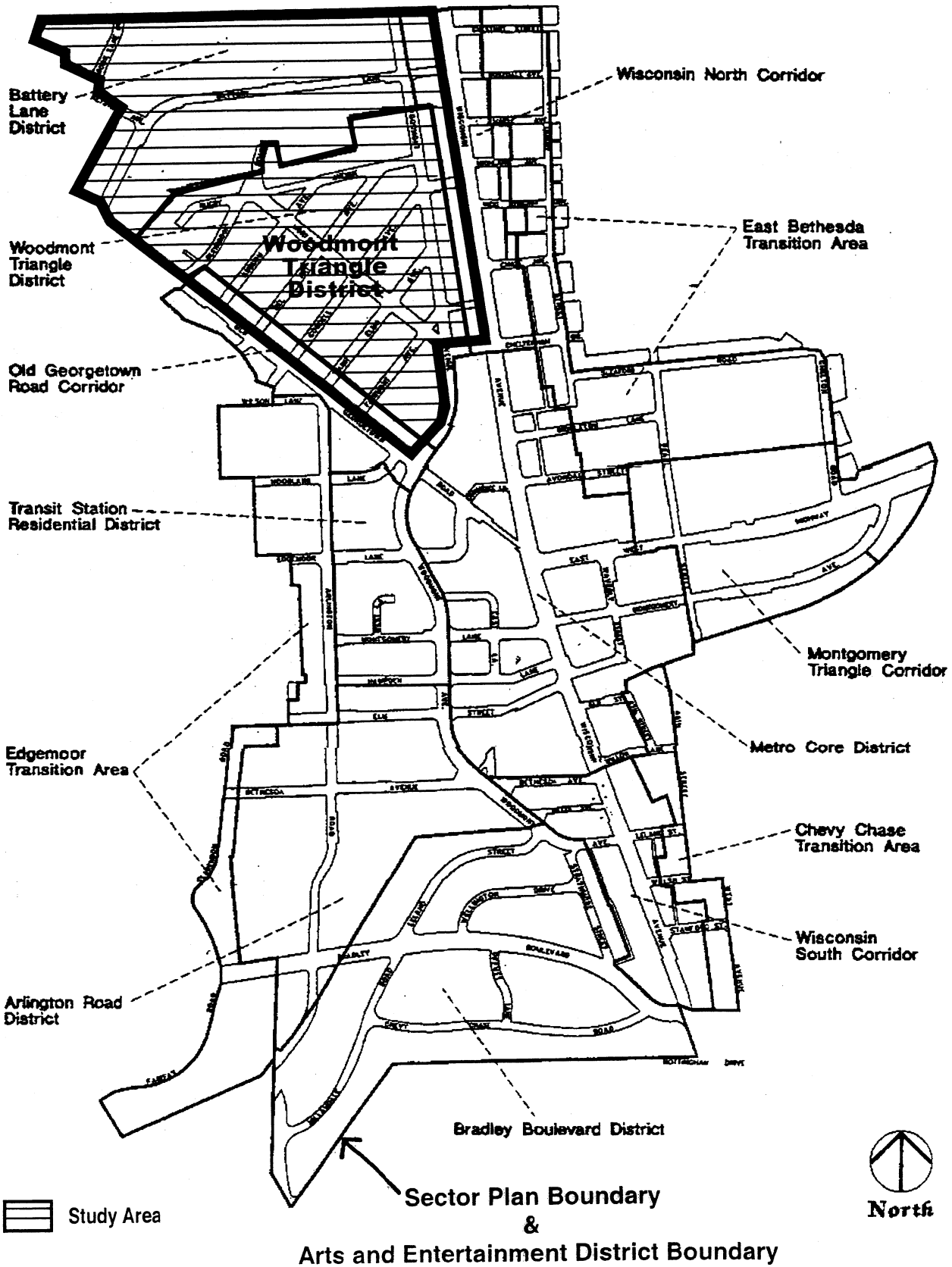
At the Planning Board's request, Work Session No. 2 expands on the Public Hearing Draft discussion of amenities, facilities, and implementation. Staff proposes one zoning change to the Public Hearing Draft Sector Plan Amendment. This session provides recommendations on a prioritized list of amenities, urban design guidelines, and describes implementation. These recommendations are intended to strengthen the Woodmont Triangle's vitality as an urban neighborhood and its part in the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District.

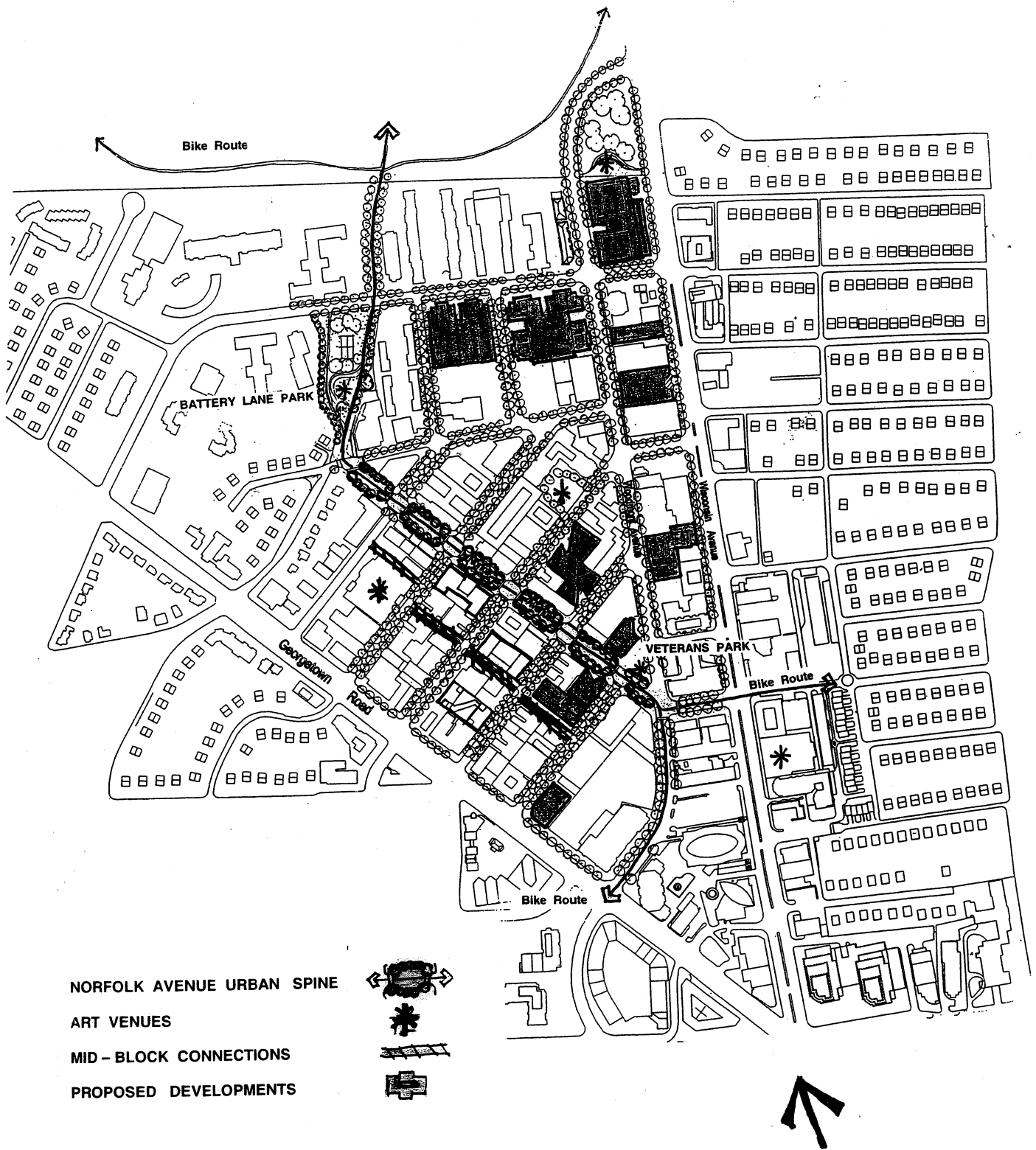
The staff will incorporate any changes and present the final version of the Sector Plan Amendment to the Planning Board for approval and transmittal to the Montgomery County Council in early November.

Schedule

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|--|--------------------|
| • Completion of Staff Draft: | April 2004 |
| • Planning Board Public Hearing: | May 20, 2004 |
| • Work Session No. 1: | July 29, 2004 |
| • Work Session No. 2: | September 30, 2004 |
| • Transmit Final Text to County Council:
(Tentative Date) | November 4, 2004 |

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY





NORFOLK AVENUE URBAN SPINE
 ART VENUES
 MID-BLOCK CONNECTIONS
 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

URBAN DESIGN FOR THE WOODMONT TRIANGLE

PUBLIC AMENITIES AND FACILITIES

Staff Recommendation: Incorporate the following prioritized list of public amenities and facilities into the Public Hearing Draft Sector Plan Amendment:

1. Renovate Norfolk Avenue as a linear urban spine:
 - Place utilities underground;
 - Provide Washington Globe street lights;
 - Provide benches, bike racks, brackets for banners, and trash receptacles;
 - Provide street trees;
 - Allow outdoor seating for restaurants and cafes; and
 - Allow art in the public right-of-way.
2. Provide the “Bethesda streetscape” on other Woodmont Triangle streets.
3. Implement Battery Lane Urban Park Renovation using an Arts Theme:
 - Provide a new gathering area for picnics and performances;
 - Assure a 10-foot wide hiker/biker trail;
 - Create a new south entrance to the park using public right-of-way;
 - Incorporate an arts or arts and science theme into furnishings and trail enhancements;
 - Reinforce the strong link between Norfolk Avenue and the N.I.H. through design and signage; and
 - Provide improved lighting.
4. Provide other Public Use Spaces in the Woodmont Triangle as part of a Network of Urban Spaces:
 - Provide a diversity of small urban places, supportive of retail and the pedestrian environment when development proposes public use space on site; and
 - Improve the N.I.H. green space between Wisconsin and Woodmont Avenues as off-site public use space.
5. Support the development of a north-south, mid-block pedestrian connection between Old Georgetown Road and Norfolk Avenue.
6. Support an Arts Incubator Space of approximately 10,000 square feet managed by the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP):
 - Encourage art studios for emerging visual and performing artists; and
 - Incorporate temporary exhibit, teaching, and lecture space.
7. Support space for the Arts and Entertainment District managed by BUP as follows:
 - Dance studios, approximately 1,500-2,000 square feet each;
 - Black box theater, 140-170 seats, 2,500 square feet, and
 - Live/work space for artists.

8. Support development of an indoor youth recreation space of approximately 2,500 square feet.

Discussion

In urban and inner suburban neighborhoods across the country, land uses have changed dramatically over the last century. Two of the better-known former commercial and industrial areas, New York's SOHO (South of Houston) and San Francisco's SOMA (South of Market), are now popular residential, retail and arts neighborhoods. This evolution occurred incrementally, not by plan. In the eyes of many, the Woodmont Triangle is Bethesda's NOMA (North of Metro): It has most of the components of an urban neighborhood but needs a cohesive, improved image and upgraded facilities to create the thriving pedestrian, retail, restaurant, and arts environment the community wants. The list of prioritized amenities and facilities provided above will be used to guide developments and improvements in the Triangle. Developers will be able to provide public use space off-site in the Triangle, if they provide MPDU's within their projects. Any projects without a residential component will be limited to the standard method of development. At a minimum, they will provide streetscape along their frontage and 10 percent public use space.

Norfolk Avenue

Improvements to Norfolk Avenue, especially placing the overhead utilities underground, are the first priority on the list. The Woodmont Advocacy Group, The Bethesda Chamber, and BUP have requested these improvements for many years. Developers in the Woodmont Triangle will fund and implement these and other Bethesda streetscape improvements.

There are street trees along much of Norfolk Avenue. Additional trees will be provided as needed, such as on the block between Rugby and Auburn Avenues. Washington Globe streetlights should be provided from Veterans Park to Battery Lane through the development process and CIP initiatives.

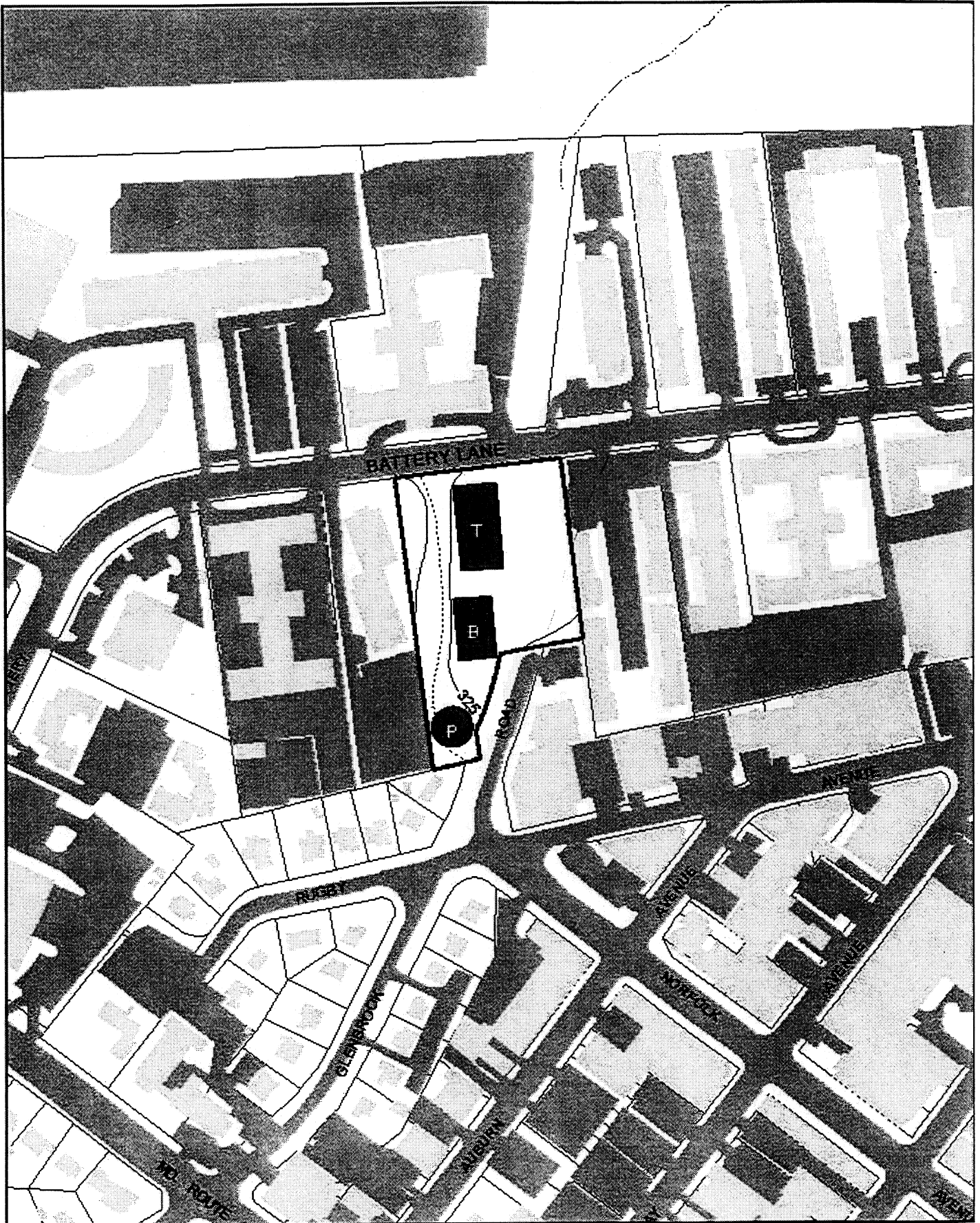
Woodmont Triangle merchants have long wanted to have the same outdoor seating and dining arrangement as at the Bethesda Row development. With the patron seating at the curb, and pedestrians passing directly in front of shop and restaurant windows, a dynamic relationship is created, and storefronts get more exposure. Norfolk Avenue has enough width to provide this layout, but some of the cross streets do not. In redevelopment, a minimum 15-foot sidewalk area should be implemented on such streets as Cordell Avenue. 15 feet of sidewalk will allow room for street trees, streetlights, café space, and clearance for pedestrian passage.


Battery Lane Urban Park

This park is 1.9 acres of green space that occupies former right-of-way for the extension of Glenbrook Road to Battery Lane. Currently, residential parking and access to the American Blood Bank parking in the remainder of the right-of-way conceal the park entrance from Norfolk Avenue to the south. Many who work or live in the Triangle do not know it's there. Employees of the N.I.H., residents of the apartments on Battery Lane,

Battery Lane Urban Park

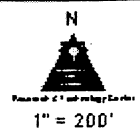
4960 Battery Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814



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and local bicyclists use the park facilities and walk to Norfolk Avenue through the park. The park currently has tennis courts, a basketball court, and a tot lot.

Battery Lane Urban Park has great potential to be an amenity for the Woodmont Triangle area with, for example, a small amphitheater carved out of the land rise west of the main path, or a picnic area in the space east of the path. Temporary art exhibits could be set up along the paths, and site furnishing could be designed to implement an arts or arts and science theme. These improvements and their maintenance can be funded through the optional method of development process if public use space is approved off-site. Funds for development and maintenance may also be contributed to a non-profit, as long as developers meet their regulatory requirements for staging of amenities and enforcement.

The Woodmont Triangle Arts Network

For urban residents, linear parks for hiking and biking have taken on a great importance as available land becomes scarce and old rights of way become reused for recreation. In addition to the Capital Crescent Trail, a notable prototype is the Planet Walk in Anne Arundel County where private donations to the Friends of the Trails helped local artists and the County complete over four miles of a unique trail experience defined by public art.

Veterans Park, the Norfolk Avenue "Linear Urban Park", and Battery Lane Urban Park connect to the North Bethesda Trolley Trail. They could form the beginning of a linear network of discovery, with a special logo and artist-designed site furnishings.

On-Site Public Use Spaces

Other Public Spaces may be provided on the site of optional method of development projects. Each proposal will be reviewed for its contribution to the whole network of Woodmont Triangle's public use and arts spaces. New public use spaces should encourage retail, contribute to the liveliness of the public streets, and add to the variety of public open spaces in the Triangle.

Space for the Arts

The Woodmont Triangle is an important part of Bethesda's Art and Entertainment District. Attachment #4 is a map provided by the "Bethesda Chevy Chase Community for Public Space, Arts and Amenities." It shows proposed development projects and possible links between the Woodmont Triangle, bicycle trails, and art venues. This association of civic groups has also provided a list of desired amenities as part of attachment #4. Staff has incorporated most of these features into the above list.

Mid-Block Connections

The blocks between Old Georgetown Road and Norfolk Avenue are very long. To facilitate pedestrian circulation in the Triangle, north-south, mid-block pedestrian connections could be built between Auburn, Del Ray, Cordell and Fairmont Avenues. Small-scale retail could front the pedestrian passages, but they would not be used for parking or regular thoroughfare. One such passage exists next to the Imagination Stage, the Betty Anne Krahnke Intermission Terrace, connecting Auburn and Del Ray Avenues. Adjacent developers would build and maintain these connections.

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

The overall urban design concept for the Woodmont Triangle is shown on page 4. The following urban design recommendations are based on the goals established in the community workshops and expanded in the Amendment.

Staff recommends incorporating the following guidelines into the Public Hearing Draft:

1. Approve the Building Heights in the Amendment.

The maximum height recommended in the Woodmont Triangle is 143 feet in the optional method of development with MPDU's on site. This height can be achieved on the CBD-2 and CBD-R2 sites. Properties in the CBD-1 zone can achieve 90 feet, if they build MPDU's on site. Several public testimony development proposals proposed heights over 143 feet. For reference, attachment #2 is a summary of the May 20, 2004 testimony on development projects and staff responses. All building heights will be carefully reviewed for shadowing of sidewalks, public spaces and adjacent uses. Along Old Georgetown Road, the 50-foot height limit will be retained north of St. Elmo Avenue.

2. Approve Building Stepbacks from Norfolk Avenue for New Projects.

Maintaining good sunlight to Norfolk Avenue is important to the pedestrian and outdoor dining environment. Along Norfolk Avenue, buildings must step back, possibly in several steps, to assure adequate sunlight to Norfolk Avenue mid-day throughout the year. This will be particularly important on the southwest side of Norfolk. Stepbacks in height will help maintain the scale of the existing street profile.

3. Maintain the Established Building Line Along Norfolk Avenue.

The Norfolk Avenue sidewalk width is adequate to incorporate pedestrians, outdoor seating, and streetscape.

4. Provide the Bethesda Streetscape and the Undergrounding of Utilities Along Norfolk Avenue. Other Streets, such as Cordell Avenue, may be considered as well.

A consistent streetscape is a unifying design element when architecture is highly diverse. The streetscape will help develop the public right-of-way into an attractive, linear pedestrian promenade or linear urban park. The public right-of-way can also be furnished with banners, public art, and a variety of temporary installations. In the Woodmont Triangle workshops, all participants wanted the utilities located underground and the streetscape implemented.

5. Require street-front retail, restaurant or entertainment uses on the first floor of buildings along Norfolk Avenue. Encourage small-scale specialty retail.

Uses with an active clientele and long hours of operation are desirable. Windows, doors, and displays encourage pedestrian activity and enhance safety. Parking structures should have first floor retail or arts spaces with windows. Large chain stores, commercial offices, and blank walls are not desirable on the first floor.

6. Narrow the width of pavement at the intersection of Rugby and Norfolk Avenues to create a safer pedestrian and bicycle crossing and provide a more visible park and trail entrance.

Staff of the M-NCPPC and the DPWT has met to discuss improvements to all intersections with Norfolk and Woodmont Avenues, from Rugby Avenue south to Bethesda Avenue. A DPWT consultant report is due on September 28, 2004 and will most likely recommend reduction of the pavement width at the intersection of Rugby and Norfolk Avenue, the installation of all-way stop signs and reduction of private parking in the public right-of-way.

IMPLEMENTATION

Staff recommends approval of the implementation section of the Public Hearing Draft Amendment with one exception to the Zoning:

Zoning

The May 20, 2004 Public Hearing Draft provided zoning recommendations on page 15 and in the map on page 17 as "proposed zoning." The zoning changes were limited to blocks 12, 44 and 45, located near Metro and the Core: CBD-R2 was recommended to promote the development of housing.

Staff Recommendation: Modify the language in the Amendment for blocks 44 and 45. The recommended zoning for blocks 44 and 45 is CBD-2. The Maloney project, on block 12, will be zoned CBD-R2.

Applicant properties on these blocks are in agreement with the CBD-2 designation. The reason for this change is that for many existing businesses on these blocks, the CBD-2 zone is appropriate, and the existing uses will remain conforming. The intent of the CBD-2 zone also encourages housing as stated under 59-C-6.213(c) (2) of the Zoning Ordinance, "To provide an incentive for the development of residential uses to meet the needs of those employed within the central business districts and those who will be able to use the district transit facilities to travel to and from places of employment. A revised page 17 of the Public Hearing Draft is attachment #3.

The Optional Method of Development (OMD)

Developers will fund and implement improvements to the Woodmont Triangle through the optional method of development. In addition to the 20% public use space requirement, the developer provides an amenity package in exchange for an increase in density. In the Woodmont Triangle, a developer may provide some or all of the public use space and amenities off-site by providing MPDU's on site. Once the basic regulatory requirements are met, a developer could also donate, build, or lease space for the arts, as part of the amenity package, through the mechanism of a non-profit at the time of Project Plan and Site Plan review.

The new "Bethesda-Chevy Chase Community for Public Open Space, Art and Amenities Fund," the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP), or the Arts and Entertainment District could receive space or funds for the development of an Arts Incubator or one of the other specified arts amenities. An arts organization could occupy the space at a

reduced rate, BUP would manage and maintain the space. At the time of Project Plan and Site Plan review, this would require coordination between the Planning Board and the applicant regarding the amenity package.

Providing space for the arts seems to be the best way to use this mechanism proposed by the B-CC Public Open Space, Art and Amenities Fund. They have provided attachment #4.

All development projects within the Woodmont Triangle, whether optional or standard method, will participate in funding and implementing the public use spaces and amenities detailed above, in order of priority. Each development will also provide streetscape adjacent to its property, and the location and nature of its public use space and amenity package will be determined in the Project Plan and Site Plan Review process.

Staff will present the final version of the Woodmont Triangle Public Hearing Draft, with the corrections and additions from this work session, to the Planning Board for transmittal to the County Council in November.

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Attachments:

1. 3-D Map of the Bethesda CBD
2. May 20, 2004 Testimony Development Projects/Staff Comments
3. Zoning Map
4. Map and List of Amenities submitted by the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Community for Public Space, Art and Amenities
5. The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce
6. September 24, 2004 letter from Linowes and Blocher