



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

**APPROVED  
MINUTES**

The Montgomery County Planning Board met in regular session via Microsoft Teams video conference on Thursday, February 4, 2021, at 9:07 a.m., and adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Present were Chair Casey Anderson, Vice Chair Natali Fani-González, and Commissioners Gerald R. Cichy, Tina Patterson, and Partap Verma.

Items 1, 9, 2, 4, 6, and 7, discussed in that order, are reported on the attached agenda.

Item 3 was removed from the Planning Board agenda.

The Planning Board recessed for lunch at 12:16 p.m. and reconvened via video conference at 12:50 p.m.

Items 5 and 8 are reported on the attached agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Planning Board will be held on Thursday, February 11, 2021, via video conference.

*M. Clara Moise*

M. Clara Moise  
Sr. Technical Writer/Editor

*James J. Parsons*

James J. Parsons  
Sr. Technical Writer/Editor

**Montgomery County Planning Board Meeting**  
**Thursday, February 4, 2021**  
2425 Reddie Drive  
Wheaton, MD 20902  
301-495-4605

**1. Consent Agenda**

**\*A. Adoption of Resolutions**

1. Poplar Grove Preliminary Plan 12019004A - MCPB No. 21-008
2. Poplar Grove Site Plan 82019006A - MCPB No. 21-009

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:** CICHY/VERMA

**Vote:**

**Yea: 5-0**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action: Adopted the Resolutions cited above, as submitted.**

**\*B. Record Plats**

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:**

**Vote:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action:**      **There were no Record Plats submitted for approval.**

**\*C. Other Consent Items**

**1. 9119 Redwood Avenue, Administrative Subdivision No. 620210040, Extension Request No. 2---**R-200 zone, 1.647 acres, second request to extend review period from February ~~25~~-28, 2021 to March 25, 2021; located at 9119 Redwood Avenue, approximately 410 feet south of Bradley Boulevard; 1990 Bethesda/Chevy Chase Master Plan.

*Staff Recommendation: Approval of the ~~with Conditions~~-Extension Request*

**2. MGCDC-CentroNia, Preliminary Plan 120210050, Regulatory Extension Request No. 1--**-First request to extend the regulatory review period, from February 25, 2021 to April 22, 2021 for Preliminary Plan approval (associated with Conditional Use CU202008) for a Day Care Center for 180 children, to be established on the 2.02 acre, former Silver Spring Library site in the R-60 Zone; located at 8901 and 8907 Colesville Road, approximately 390 feet north of Spring Street, within the 2000 North and West Silver Spring Master Plan.

*Staff Recommendation: Approval of the Extension Request*

**3. Ruck Property, Administrative Subdivision Plan No. 620190120, Regulatory Review Extension Request No. 3---**Request to extend the regulatory review period from February 4, 2021 until March 11, 2021: An application to create one lot on 3.38 acres of land in the AR Zone; Parcel 70; located on Rocky Road, 2100 feet west of Route 108, southwest quadrant of the intersection of Rocky Road and Route 108; 1980 Preservation of Agricultural & Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan.

*Staff Recommendation: Approval of the Extension Request*

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion: 1. through 3. CICHY/VERMA**

**Vote:**

**Yea: 1. through 3. 5-0**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action: 1. & 3. Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Administrative Subdivision Plan Extension requests cited above.**

**2. Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Preliminary Plan Extension request cited above.**

**\*D. Approval of Minutes**

Planning Board Meeting Minutes of January 21, 2021

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:** CICHY/VERMA

**Vote:**

**Yea:** 5-0

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action:** Approved the Planning Board Meeting Minutes of January 21, 2021, as submitted.

**9. Bethesda Downtown Plan - Implementation Advisory Committee – Appoint One New Member to the Committee**

*Staff Recommendation: Approval*

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion: FANI-GONZÁLEZ/PATTERSON**

**Vote:**

**Yea: 5-0**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action: Following a brief discussion, approved staff recommendation to appoint Mr. Vince Burke to the Implementation Advisory Committee for the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan.**

**2. Roundtable Discussion**

- Parks Department Director’s Report

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:**

**Vote:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action: Received briefing.**

**Parks Department Director’s Report** – Parks Department Director Mike Riley briefed the Board on the following ongoing and upcoming Parks Department events and activities: the upcoming celebration of Black History Month, with five events scheduled for staff throughout February; the recent winter weather event and the commendable snow removal work performed by staff; and the upcoming annual Greenscapes Symposium, with this year’s presentation, Back to Our Roots – Leveraging Native Plants to Restore the Environment, scheduled for February 19. There followed a brief Board discussion with questions to Mr. Riley.

Deputy Parks Department Director John Nissel then offered a multi-media presentation and discussed the recent Parks Department re-accreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). According to Mr. Nissel, the full CAPRA re-accreditation process, which occurs every five years, requires the drafting of an acceptable five-year Action Plan and includes the adoption of a Commission Resolution that affirms the Parks Department’s commitment to CAPRA standards; the designation of a CAPRA Standards Program Manager; the establishment of agency-wide Compliance Committees with assigned standards regarding recreation programming, facilities management and maintenance, agency-wide standards and corporate governance, and park planning, safety, law enforcement, and security; the establishment of a succinct and consistent template for developing response for each standard; establishment of timetables for committees’ completion of responses to standards; the training of staff involved with the CAPRA review and accreditation process; and the promotion of accreditation via marketing and communications. Mr. Nissel added that for this most recent re-accreditation, the Parks Department met 150 out of a possible 151 standards and received an A+ rating.

There followed a brief Board discussion with questions to Mr. Nissel.

**3. ~~Audobon Naturalist Society a/k/a Woodend Nature Sanctuary, Modification to a Special Exception CBA-2643~~ — R-90, 40.19 acres, Request to create a nature play space for outdoor recreational opportunities and outdoor learning; located 8940 Jones Mill Road approximately 1700 feet north of Jones Bridge Road; Bethesda-Chevy Chase Plan — **REMOVED****

*Staff Recommendation: TBD*

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:**

**Vote:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action:        This Item was removed from the Planning Board agenda.**



**4. Briefing on Draft Montgomery County Climate Action Plan**---Staff Action: Briefing on Montgomery County's Draft Climate Action Plan to be provided by Adriana Hochberg, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer and Climate Change Coordinator, Office of the County Executive. Request Planning Board comments prior to the February 28th public comment deadline.

*Staff Recommendation: Receive Briefing*

### **BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:**

**Vote:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action: Received briefing followed by discussion.**

Following brief opening remarks from Planning Department staff, Ms. Adriana Hochberg, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer & Climate Change Coordinator from the Office of the County Executive, offered a multi-media presentation and discussed the Montgomery County Draft Climate Action Plan (CAP). Ms. Hochberg noted that the CAP is the County's strategic plan to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035. The CAP also details the effects of a changing climate on the County and includes strategies to reduce GHG emissions and climate-related risks to County residents, businesses, and the built and natural environments. The CAP will also identify and address the County's largest growing climate hazards, including extreme heat, extreme precipitation, high winds, and drought; a vision for building a healthy, equitable, and resilient community; climate planning principles; racial equity and social justice; climate adaptation actions; GHG emission sources and emission reduction strategies; carbon sequestration actions; governance actions, such as the integration of climate costs into the budgeting process, identification and training of departmental Climate Ambassadors, and the development financing strategies for implementing climate actions; public engagement, partnerships, and education actions; the potential cost of the proposed climate actions; implementation; and community outreach. Ms. Hochberg added that the public comment period is open until February 28, 2021, with County staff scheduled to finalize the CAP in the spring.

Ms. Hochberg noted that since the effort was launched, Planning Department staff have participated in technical workgroups, which include the Buildings, Transportation, Clean Energy, and the Climate Adaptation and Sequestration workgroups. These four workgroups have met monthly between summer and fall 2019 and developed draft CAP recommendations that were released in early 2020. Planning staff who have participated in the CAP process are currently

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**4. Briefing on Draft Montgomery County Climate Action Plan**CONTINUED

reviewing the draft CAP and will provide written comments on behalf of the Department. These staff have also been part of the staff team that drafted the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan. Since the release of the draft CAP, Planning Department staff have been coordinating with Ms. Hochberg and other County staff to explore how the two draft plans are currently integrated and to identify additional ways to integrate the plans. An in-depth discussion with the Planning Board on the integration of Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the CAP will take place during the Thrive Montgomery 2050 worksession scheduled for later today.

Messrs. Doug Weisburger and Stan Edwards from Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) offered comments and answered questions from the Planning Board.

Ms. Sandra Brecher from Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) also offered brief comments and answered questions from the Planning Board

There followed extensive Board discussion with questions to staff, Ms. Hochberg, and Messrs. Weisburger and Edwards.

**6. Bill 52-20 - Landlord-Tenant Relations - Protection Against Rent Gouging Near Transit**---Protection Against Rent Gouging Near Transit, would establish protections against rent gouging for certain rental units; set the base rental amount for certain rental units; provide for exemptions from certain rent protection requirements; and require each landlord to submit an annual report regarding rents. The goal of this legislation is to set standards regarding rent increases near certain transit corridors and to ensure that unfair rent gouging does not take place.

*Staff Recommendation: Transmit Comments to the County Council*

**(NOTE: Action required for County Council Public Hearing of February 9, 2021)**

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:** VERMA/FANI-GONZÁLEZ

**Vote:**

**Yea:** 5-0

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action:** Received briefing regarding the upcoming Legislative Bill, and approved staff recommendation to transmit comments to the County Council, as discussed during the meeting, and as stated in the attached transmittal letter.

Planning Department staff offered a multi-media presentation and discussed a proposed County Council Bill that will establish protections against rent gouging for certain units near rail and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations. Staff noted that as written, Bill 52-20 will limit rent increases in rental housing units within one mile of Metrorail Red and Purple Line transit stations, and within one half mile of bus rapid transit stations. Rents within these areas would then be required to comply with rent guidelines published by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA). Certain rental properties would be exempt from the rent standards under the bill, including certain owner-occupied properties, religious and non-profit organizations, and licensed facilities. A regulated rental unit under the bill would be permitted to raise rent by an allowable increase once per year. However, a landlord would be permitted to defer the allowable increase and apply it to a future year. Landlords subject to the bill would be required to submit annual reports regarding their rents to DHCA.

Staff noted that the rent regulation proposed by the bill could potentially preserve affordability for low- and moderate-income renters, reduce and stabilize tenant turnover, improve economic opportunity by reducing rent burden and eviction, reduce displacement risks and cost burdens for people of color, and provide landlords with a more secure cash flow opportunity. However, the proposed regulation could also potentially contribute to negative effects on uncontrolled units outside of the regulated area, deteriorating housing quality, disincentivizing new rental development, increased property tax burdens on landlords, increased

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**6. Bill 52-20 - Landlord-Tenant Relations - Protection Against Rent Gouging Near Transit**CONTINUED

difficulty in evicting problem tenants, decreased rental units due to condo conversion, use of unforeseen loopholes by landlords, and poorly targeted benefits that are accrued by wealthier households. Staff then discussed their analysis of the possible effects of the proposed rent regulation policy, in which they considered how the policy might have affected market rents if it had been in place since the year 2000. By comparing actual rent data within the entire County, the Red Line Corridor, and the Purple Line Corridor, the analysis indicated that Bill 52-50 would not have had much impact on market-level rents. Given the results of the analysis, staff believes the proposal will have a limited impact on rents in the County. The beneficiaries of the proposed rent regulation policy will likely be existing tenants of rental units within the transit buffers through preserved affordability. The proposed rent regulation, however, will also have unintended negative consequences on the broader housing market that need to be weighed carefully, specifically in its impact on housing supply, quality, and overall rents.

There followed extensive Board discussion with questions to staff, during which the Planning Board instructed staff to include additional comments to the County Council stating that pending additional analysis, they do not currently support the proposed legislation as written.

**\*7. Poplar Pointe, Minor Site Plan Amendment No. 82020002A**---Request for approval of architectural drawings that illustrate exterior architectural character, proportion, materials, and articulation for 11 previously approved detached houses; 6.28 acres located at 13710 Alderton Road, 150 feet north of Night Sky Drive, Silver Spring, MD, 20906, within the R-200 Zone and the 1989 Communities of Kensington -Wheaton Master Plan.

*Staff Recommendation: Approval and Adoption of Resolution*

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:** CICHY/VERMA

**Vote:**

**Yea:** 5-0

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action:** Approved staff recommendation for approval of the Minor Site Plan Amendment cited above, subject to conditions, and adopted the attached Resolution.

Planning Department staff offered a multi-media presentation and discussed a proposed Minor Site Plan Amendment request to approve architectural drawings that illustrate modifications for previously approved single-family detached dwelling units. The 6.28-acre property, consisting of Parcels 526, 582, and 605 owned by the Deborah Poznerzon-Tallman Trust, and Parcel 607 owned by Martha Barrick, is located on the east side of Alderton Drive, approximately 150 feet north of Night Sky Drive, and is zoned Residential within the Communities of Kensington – Wheaton Master Plan area. Parcels 605 and 607 are both currently improved with single-family detached houses. Parcels 526 and 582 currently consist of undeveloped open space, which was used historically for horses and recreation. Parcels 526, 582, 605, and 607 all front onto Alderton Road. The existing houses on the property are currently served by well and septic.

Staff noted that in the absence of architectural details during the initial Site Plan review, the Planning Board approved Site Plan Condition 4, which required architectural drawings that illustrate exterior architectural character, proportion, materials, and articulation for 11 previously approved detached houses be provided prior to issuance of the building permit. The details of the proposed houses should include elements related to garages that are recessed by at least four feet from the main body of the house or architecturally treated garages to minimize presence from the sidewalk, front porches that cover a minimum of 33 percent of the front façade, building fenestration for side elevations that add up to a minimum of 15 percent, and the option for lead walks that connects the porch or stoop to the main sidewalk. To address these required elements, the applicant proposes five new home models that will conform to the architectural guidelines set forth in the Site Plan conditions, minor adjustments of the homes’ building footprints on the lots,

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**\*7. Poplar Pointe, Minor Site Plan Amendment No. 82020002A**CONTINUED

adjusting grading to accommodate the new home footprints with limited introduction of on-lot retaining walls as may be necessary, and minor shifts in streetscape tree locations on Lots 1 and 2, due to potential impacts of driveways and lead walks. The proposed Amendment does not propose changes to any other previously approved Site Plan elements such as roadways, parking, vehicle queuing or loading, pedestrian walkways along the main roadway, open space or recreation, landscaping or lighting on the site. Staff added that by providing these architectural details, the applicant has demonstrated compliance with Condition 4 for the previously approved Site Plan.

Staff has received correspondence from the Poplar Run Homeowners Association (HOA) and four nearby property owners expressing concerns regarding a proposed stop sign at the intersection of Night Sky Drive and Alderton Road, the schedule for utility tie-ins and the associated interruptions to residents, sediment control, the monitoring of stormwater ponds, the shared cost for the Alderton Road extension, a request to relocate a proposed 10-foot wide Public Utility Easement (PUE) along the property frontage, a request to remove sidewalks from Alderton Road, loss of privacy for existing homes, and a request to reconfigure the apron of an existing driveway during the construction of the Alderton Road extension. Staff has addressed each of these issues, as detailed in the January 25 technical staff report.

There followed a brief Board discussion with questions to staff.

**5. Zoning Text Amendment No. 20-07: R-60 Zone – Uses and Standards**---ZTA 20-07 would allow owners of R-60 zoned property located within 1 mile of a Metrorail station to build duplexes, townhouses, and multi-family structures within the current R-60 lot coverage, building height, setbacks, minimum lot size, and minimum parking requirements. More flexibility would be allowed for projects constructed on R-60 zoned sites located within ½ mile of a Metrorail Station. Such sites would be excluded from infill lot coverage limits and the minimum parking requirements would be decreased.

*Staff Recommendation: Transmit Comments to the County Council*

**(NOTE: Action required for County Council Public Hearing of February 11, 2021)**

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:** FANI-GONZÁLEZ/VERMA

**Vote:**

**Yea:** 5-0

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action:** Approved staff recommendation to transmit comments to the County Council regarding Zoning Text Amendment 20-07 cited above, as discussed during the meeting, and as stated in the attached transmittal letter.

In keeping with the January 28 technical staff report, Planning Department staff offered a multi-media presentation and discussed a proposed Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) request, ZTA 20-07, which would allow owners of Residential (R-60) zoned property located within one mile of a Metrorail station to build duplexes, townhouses, and multi-family structures within the current R-60 lot coverage, building height, setbacks, minimum lot size, and minimum parking requirements. More flexibility would be allowed for projects constructed on R-60 zoned sites located within half a mile of a Metrorail Station. Such sites would be excluded from infill lot coverage limits and the minimum parking requirements would be decreased. Staff noted that ZTA 20-07 was introduced on December 8, 2020 by Councilmember Jawando. This ZTA is one part of Councilmember Jawando’s “More Housing for More People” package, which also included the previously presented rent stabilization bill. ZTA 20-07 is envisioned as a small step that can result in the creation of more attainable housing options near Metro stations in advance of more comprehensive changes to the Zoning Code or a “Missing Middle Functional Plan” as suggested by the Montgomery County Planning Department [2018 Missing Middle Housing Study](#).

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**5. Zoning Text Amendment No. 20-07: R-60 Zone – Uses and Standards**CONTINUED

Staff noted that ZTA 20-07, as introduced, applies to properties in the R-60 zone with a tract area of 25,000 square feet or less, located within a one-mile radius of a Metrorail station entrance. In total, parcels zoned R-60 account for 7,000 acres, which is 30 percent of the land within the one-mile buffer. R-60 zoning is most prevalent around the Silver Spring and Takoma Park stations, the east side of Forest Glen station, the north and west side of Medical Center station, and the north side of Friendship Heights station. While ZTA 20-07 was introduced before the adoption of Thrive Montgomery 2050, should the amendment pass, potential linkages should be assessed to ensure coordination and successful implementation of both the proposed amendment and the General Plan. One such potential missing linkage between the ZTA and Thrive Montgomery 2050 that should be explored is the idea of allowing Missing Middle housing along our high-capacity transit corridors, which would include more areas than the 1-mile buffer around Metro stations. Thrive envisions a web of complete communities connected by vibrant corridors, which not only include our Red Line stations, but also our Purple Line and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridors. ZTA 20-07 would only partially implement the actions called for in the draft General Plan by loosening standards around the development of duplexes, townhouses and apartment buildings near transit. But absent a more comprehensive approach to Missing Middle housing, this ZTA falls short of the desired Thrive Montgomery 2050 outcomes. Through the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, Planning staff are taking a detailed approach researching best practices for implementing Missing Middle type housing in the single-family neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown Silver Spring. In addition to Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, staff believe that the Missing Middle Housing Study provides a valuable framework for encouraging the production of Missing Middle housing in the county. The elements of that framework are missing from this ZTA.

Staff added that Planning Department staff recommends that the scope of this ZTA be expanded to include the R-90 zone to increase the likelihood of obtaining the desired outcome of new Missing Middle housing within one mile of a Metro station. As currently written, the intent of the R-90 zone is identical to that of the R-60 zone although the development standards differ, with larger lot sizes, bigger setbacks and lower densities in the R-90 zone. Nevertheless, both are characterized by moderate density residential uses that are predominantly detached houses. Permitted uses in each zone are nearly identical, however the conditional use and limited use standards may vary. Staff does not believe this ZTA will result in an appreciable increase in the quantity of affordable housing but may result in additional market housing types that are more affordable than the predominant single-family detached housing. One of the most commonly asked questions about Missing Middle housing is whether it is income restricted affordable housing. Missing Middle housing is not income-restricted affordable housing. Most Missing Middle housing is market-rate housing that will generally be more affordable than the typical new detached single-family home due to its smaller size. The prices of Missing Middle housing, however, will be determined by what the market can bear and will likely vary by market area in the county. This is a Missing Middle ZTA, not an affordable housing ZTA.

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**5. Zoning Text Amendment No. 20-07: R-60 Zone – Uses and Standards**CONTINUED

Staff then discussed the development standards noting that as introduced, buildings must still meet the development standards of the R-60 Zone including setbacks, lot coverage and building heights, and on properties beyond half a mile of Metro, the parking requirements should also be met. Keeping these development standards do serve the purpose of helping with compatibility, however; while these standards may be practical for small projects such as converting one house into a duplex, or for the largest projects that assemble land up to the 25,000 sq. ft. limit, the setbacks and height limitations may not be practical for many projects in the middle, greatly reducing the number of projects developed. This ZTA does propose reduced parking within half mile of Metro. Staff believes this is a good start but looking at more broad parking reductions is something that should be reviewed further prior to implementing this ZTA. Staff recommend additional analysis be conducted to consider modifications to parking requirements and development standards, including setbacks, coverage and building height, to ensure a meaningful increase in Missing Middle housing in these areas near Metro stations.

Staff also discussed the Design Review process, noting that another critical element of Missing Middle that is absent from this ZTA is the inclusion of design within the review. This ZTA makes development of duplexes, townhomes and apartment buildings standard method, which avoids the site plan process, and there is no inclusion of basic design standards or additional screening requirements within the limited use standards. There are many ways to add design into the process, from making some or all projects subject to a site plan (for example maybe 2 and 3 unit housing could be by right, but anything larger is site plan reviewed), the creation of a new overlay zone that includes design standards, or even developing a pattern book of pre-approved building forms that can be implemented by DPS at the time of permit. Staff recommend further analysis to determine the best solution.

Staff has received many letters expressing support for removal of restrictions on creating more housing opportunities near Metro stations; support for changes to zoning rules that can also address historical housing and land use inequities. Staff also discussed Historic Preservation Review noting that the geographic scope of the proposed ZTA would include portions of the Capitol View Park, Chevy Chase Village, Forest Glen, Garrett Park, Greenwich Forest, Hawkins Lane, Linden, Somerset, and Takoma Park Historic Districts. While these districts only represent about two percent of the land area within the one-mile buffer of Metro stations, large shares, if not the entirety, of these districts are impacted by this ZTA.

The following speakers offered testimony: Ms. Cecily Baskir of Ridge Street; Mr. Roberto Piñero of Blazer Lane; Mayor of the Town of Somerset, Mr. Jeffrey Slavin; Ms. Jane Lyons of East West Highway and representing the Coalition for Smarter Growth; Mr. Seth Grimes of Willow Avenue; Ms. Elizabeth Joyce of Takoma Avenue; Mr. William Chernicoff of Potomac Avenue; Ms. Shruti Bhatnagar representing the Sierra Club Montgomery County Group; Mr. Chris Bruch of Leland Street; Mr. John Paukstis, CEO, Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland; Mr. Bill Scanlan of First Avenue and representing the Woodside Civic Association; Ms. Shawna Lemonds of Taylor Road and representing the Naval Support Activity Bethesda; Ms. Mary Kolar representing the Montgomery Housing Alliance; and Ms. Tandra Leonard of Lynn Drive.

There followed extensive Board discussion with questions to staff.

**8. Thrive Montgomery 2050 Worksession No. 6:** Design, arts and culture: adding value and building community. Briefing on coordination with the Climate Action Plan.

*Staff Recommendation: Discuss Issues and Provide Direction to Staff*

**BOARD ACTION**

**Motion:**

**Vote:**

**Yea:**

**Nay:**

**Other:**

**Action: Received briefing followed by Board discussion and provided guidance to staff.**

Planning Department staff offered a multi-media presentation and briefed the Planning Board on the Design, Arts and Culture: adding value and building community, and on the coordination with the Climate Action Plan (CAP) group to finalize the chapter in the 2050 Thrive Montgomery Draft Plan. Staff noted that the chapter lays out the issues and existing conditions related to the disconnected land use pattern on a countywide scale, down to the design of neighborhoods, urban design, site design, parking, buildings, and how they connect to their context. Design approaches and standards that served us well when the county was primarily growing through greenfield development, do not serve as effective solutions to the challenges of infill projects and constrained sites. The revised chapter describes the goals and policies Thrive Montgomery proposes to address and the ways in which these policies will further the key objectives of the Plan, The chapter also includes a set of potential measures to monitor progress towards achieving the Plan's goals of compact, sustainable and equitable growth through great design.

Staff also noted that public comments received about design, arts and culture varied widely and covered every part of the county built-environment, buildings, streets, parks and open spaces, public facilities and infrastructure, as well as the arts and culture related institutions and activities in the county. The comments also talked about the role of design in achieving sustainable growth and addressing the challenges of climate change through compact, infill development as well as infrastructure improvements such as a safe efficient transportation network. Several speakers requested additional elements to the design-related goals. Some speakers asked for more explicit design-based language, while others wanted a more robust street planting program. Other speakers focused on historic preservation, while others were concerned with building resilience and the necessity for stronger net-zero goals. Staff also received comments that brought up the need to rethink public spaces to make them more suitable as

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**8. Thrive Montgomery 2050 Worksession No. 6**CONTINUED

gathering spaces, and a focus of neighborhoods. Some speakers thought that Design should not be a separate chapter of the Draft Plan as it is a function of the private sector, not the regulatory public sector, because they believe that good design is a matter of personal preference and aesthetics, and therefore not suitable for public intervention or oversight. They also stated that design should be addressed in the local area master plans, not in the general plan. A few speakers also raised the financial challenge arising from increased cost related to design excellence, given the fiscal issues facing the county. Some of the comments were based on a misunderstanding of the Draft Plan recommendations, such as “Make design excellence a priority, even when cost-saving measures are considered.” The speakers believed that the Plan was prioritizing design excellence over affordability and sustainability.

Staff then discussed the problem they are trying to solve, the policies that are going to solve the problem, and how will these policies further the key objectives of the Plan. Staff noted that as greenfield development opportunities within the growth envelop have been exhausted, a new approach, more suited to infill and redevelopment, is required. The typical parcel size standards for public buildings, such as schools, are too large to fit most available sites, limiting the locations of new facilities. The building stock is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Shopping Malls, office parks, and other large, single-use buildings are difficult to repurpose and the high cost of readapting their layouts to meet new spatial needs due to technological shifts, demographic changes, and market preferences shrink their useful lives and make them less sustainable. Staff also added that diversity is not fully represented in public spaces, arts and cultural institutions, as artists and arts organizations cite the lack of affordable living, working, and sales spaces, as a major challenge. Staff recommends i) the use of urban design-based tools to create attractive places with lasting value that encourage social interaction and reinforce a sense of place, prioritizing the pedestrian scale, physically defining streets and public spaces as places of shared use, and preserving, renewing and reusing existing and historic buildings, districts, and landscapes; ii) promoting design strategies and retrofits to make new and existing buildings more sustainable and resilient to disruption and change; iii) supporting the arts and cultural institutions to celebrate diversity, strengthen the pride of place, making the county more attractive and interesting.

Staff added that design-based tools will create attractive buildings, streets, and public spaces, which better meet market demand and retain greater economic value over time, making the county economically stronger and more competitive. Sustainable design strategies for new construction and retrofits will also enhance the county’s environmental performance. Staff also added that a focus on form and adaptability, rather than use and density, will provide more flexibility to respond not changing market conditions and adapt to disruptions caused by technology and climate change. Public art, cultural uses and programming that showcase the county’s commitment to celebrating its diversity will create public spaces that are inclusive and encourage social interaction. Providing affordable living. Administrative, working and presentation spaces for artists equitably throughout the county will showcase diversity and help

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**8. Thrive Montgomery 2050 Worksession No. 6**CONTINUED

attract and retain cultural uses and arts related businesses and make them more significant economic contributors. Staff also discussed a list of tasks, which once completed, will be a sign that staff is making progress.

Parks Department staff then gave a preview of the upcoming Parks Chapter.

Staff also discussed the Montgomery County Draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80 percent by 2027 and 100 percent by 2035. The CAP also details the effects of a changing climate on the County and includes strategies to reduce GHG emissions and climate-related risks to county residents, businesses, and the built and natural environments. Staff added that since the release of the draft CAP, staff have been coordinating with county staff to explore how the CAP and the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Plan are currently integrated and to identify additional ways to integrate the two plans. Staff noted that it is making a coordinated effort to ensure that the plans are complementary, as Thrive Montgomery 2050 focuses on long-range land use issues and general policy guidance and CAP focuses on immediate and long-term specific actions to remediate climate change, reduce greenhouse emissions and foster community equity.

Staff also briefly discussed the list and proposed dates of upcoming worksessions: Worksession 7 – Parks and Recreation for an increasingly urban and diverse community- active and social scheduled for February 11; Worksession 8 – Complete Communities: Mix of uses and forms scheduled for February 18; Worksession 9 – Section 3: How the ideas in this Plan can be implemented scheduled for February 25; and Worksession 10 – Final Drafts of the remaining chapters scheduled for March 4. Staff added that approval of the Planning Board Draft Plan of the Thrive Montgomery 2050, and transmittal to the County Executive and County Council is tentatively scheduled for April 8, 2021.

The following speakers were present at the meeting to offer comments or answer questions from the Planning Board: Ms. Adriana Hochberg, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer & Climate Change Coordinator, Office of the County Executive; Mr. Stan Edwards of the Energy, Climate and Compliance Division, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP); Mr. Doug Weisburger, Senior Planning Specialist, Sustainability Programs, MCDEP; Ms. Sandra Brecher, Chief, Commuter Services Section, Division of Transit Services, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT); and Ms. Meredith Wellington, Land Use Planning Policy Analyst, Office of the Montgomery County Executive.

There followed extensive Board discussion with questions to staff.