

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Terry Schum, Planning Director

DATE: May 20, 2014

SUBJECT: Preliminary College Park-Riverdale Park Transit District Development Plan (TDDP)

ISSUE

The process for updating the 1997 College Park-Riverdale Park TDDP was initiated by The Prince George's County Planning Board in May 2013. The citizen participation process included several community workshops and a series of smaller stakeholder group meetings. The project web site is at <http://www.pgplanning.org/CPRP-TDDP.htm>. The Preliminary TDDP was released on April 25, 2014 and both the Planning Board and District Council will hold public hearings. The Planning Board hearing will be held on May 29, 2014 at 7:00 pm at the County Administration Building with written testimony accepted through June 13, 2014. Planning Board adoption of the TDDP will be on July 10, 2014. The District Council hearing is tentatively scheduled for September 16, 2014 at 7:00 pm with approval of the TDDP on October 21, 2014. City staff participated in the planning process and reviewed the TDDP. Key elements of the TDDP are summarized in this memo and comments are recommended for public testimony.

SUMMARY

Vision – Page 31

The Vision for the transit area is five interconnected neighborhoods that capitalize on public transit, existing recreational amenities, historic features and affiliation with the University of Maryland. It proposes a transformation from an auto and suburban-oriented office and industrial area into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use center.

Comment: City staff concurs with the vision but objects to some of the neighborhood boundaries and terminology used in the TDDP. The following specific changes are recommended:

- *Extend the TOD Core boundary to 52nd Avenue. Change the neighborhood name to Metro Core since the entire district is proposed for transit-oriented development.*

- *End the boundary of the College Park Aviation Village at 52nd Avenue and create a new neighborhood designation for the O-S-zoned property owned by M-NCPPC on both sides of Paint Branch Parkway perhaps, “Active Recreation.”*
- *Eliminate the Greenway Corridor neighborhood.*
- *Expand the Research Core neighborhood to include the portion of the former Greenway Corridor south of M-NCPPC property.*

Achieving the Vision – Pages 35-36

Several impediments to achieving the vision are identified including property owner covenants with the Town of Riverdale Park signed in the 1980’s, existing development approvals for M Square and a competitive marketplace. The TDDP recommends that one or more entities including the City of College Park step up as a champion of the plan, that assets be leveraged to help create a market for development and that financial incentives and public improvements be used to attract the private sector.

Comment: Existing and approved development in M Square represents sprawl and an outdated approach inconsistent with attracting the creative class or millennial generation. It could be retrofitted with liner buildings along the surface parking lots and include a mix of uses and building types as well as shared parking. When approved Detailed Site Plans (DSP’s) expire, they should not be extended unless they are amended to comply with this TDDP. Also, it is recommended that the College Park City-University Partnership (CPCUP) come to the table as one of the champions of this plan and assist the University of Maryland (UM) with a retrofit strategy for M Square.

Land Use and Urban Design – Pages 39-60

The goals, policies and strategies for this section focus on creating a walkable mixed-use center and competitive employment hub integrated with diverse residential neighborhoods, retail and recreational amenities. It also proposes high-quality and sustainable design, innovative floodplain mitigation techniques, maximizing the investment in transit and place-making. It specifically calls for creating a signature transit plaza in the core area, a greenway corridor and an urban conservation park on the UM-owned Litton property.

Comments: Staff is generally supportive of the strategies listed in this section, however a few of the strategies (parking and green building practices, for instance), are not adequately reflected in the Transit District Standards. The following changes are recommended:

- *Revise the Proposed Land Use Map 8 to show mixed-use predominately residential in the area of the College Park Aviation Village north of Paint Branch Parkway shown as mixed use; and show the proposed urban conservation park area as open space rather than mixed use.*
- *Delete strategy 2.4 that prohibits expansion of the TDOZ boundaries. Current law (Section 27-548.09.01 of the Zoning Ordinance) requires any change of a TDOZ boundary to be heard by the District Council.*

- *Enhance the illustrative drawing of the proposed transit plaza shown on page 49 by labeling the important features (purple line route, bus route and bays, hardscape plaza, lawn area and retail).*
- *Revise strategy 1.3 on page 55 that calls for buildings up to 12 stories to front the greenway. Building heights in the TDDP should not exceed 8 stories and the tallest buildings should front Paint Branch Parkway and River Road, not the greenway.*

Transportation and Mobility – Pages 61-83

The goals, policies and strategies for this section call for an expanded network of roads, complete and green streets, pedestrian and bicycle facilities and minimizing vehicular travel and the demand for parking. Key recommendations include improving the MARC tunnel to provide 24-hour access across the tracks, construction of at least one new north/south road and new east/west road connections, narrowing River Road to two lanes with on-street parking and dedicated bike facilities, adding bike lanes to Paint Branch Parkway, establishing a Transportation Demand Management District (TDMD) and a Transportation Management Authority (TMA), establishing maximum parking ratios and a district-wide parking cap and the creation of a parking management district.

Comment: Some of the strategies in this section are brought forward from the 1997 TDDP and others are fresh ideas. Many of the recommendations will be hard to implement without an influx of financial resources, intergovernmental coordination and/or mandatory requirements. Specific comments are:

- *Under Aviation on page 68, provide more specific information on the height limitations and other regulations that impact the College Park Airport.*
- *Eliminate strategy 1.2 on page 81 that calls for the establishment of phased maximum parking ratios that allow more generous parking to be built up to the year 2025 with more stringent parking ratios following this date. This strategy contradicts other narrative in this section that states a number of existing developments have provided too much parking and the overall parking utilization in the district is 60-75% when the optimal utilization should be 85-90%. Also, the Purple Line is slated to open in 2020 providing even more transit options.*
- *Eliminate or revise strategy 1.3 on page 81 that allows developments to exceed the already generous parking ratios up to 2025 if certain criteria are met. Staff is recommending that a different parking schedule be used in the TDDP (see Transit District Standards) that would lower the parking ratio and eliminate the timeframe. If this proposed schedule is used, this strategy could also be implemented.*
- *Eliminate strategy 1.4 on page 81 that calls for district wide parking caps. While this may seem like a good idea, unless there is a district wide parking manager, it will be difficult to enforce and may serve to disadvantage development in the long term. Instead, parking ratios should be lowered and a strategy for shared parking garages proposed.*

Environmental Infrastructure/Healthy Communities/Parks and Recreation – Pages 85-107

The goals, policies and strategies in this section call for improving the environmental integrity of the area's streams, water quality, and air quality and stormwater management. It proposes reductions in impervious surfaces, increases in urban tree canopy, innovative stormwater treatments, and sensitivity to noise and light pollution. The proposed Urban Conservation Park is a key recommendation for providing floodplain compensatory storage, improving water quality and control of water quantity as well as restoring lost ecological functions of the adjacent stream including stream habitat and sediment control.

Comment: The transit district has 92 acres of floodplain, 118 acres of impervious surfaces a poor water quality rating and a very poor watershed rating. The proposed Urban Conservation Park would provide many environmental, economic and social benefits for the district. Page 56 contains illustrative drawings showing how this park could be combined with the level of development potential already approved for this UM-owned site and staff supports the strategies proposed to explore funding opportunities to acquire and build this park as well as the other urban parks envisioned in each neighborhood.

- *Strengthen strategy 3.1 on page 105 to ensure that the land needed to develop the proposed urban park system is dedicated or acquired.*
- *Revise strategy 4.2 on page 107 to include the construction of 52nd Avenue between Paint Branch Parkway and the Aviation Museum as well as bicyclist and pedestrian facilities to improve direct access and visibility to the museum.*

Economic Prosperity - Pages 111-121

The goals, policies and strategies in this section indicate the potential for M Square to become one the nation's premier research parks, for diverse housing options to be developed and the importance of creating a sense of place within the transit district. It emphasizes that a market creation approach will be necessary to capture the office market in this competitive region and will occur only after supportive uses and amenities are on site. It states that demand for residential, particularly multi-family rental product near transit, will lead the way.

Comment: The information in this section was based on two alternate market analyses of phased future growth and build out to the year 2040. While there are some interesting tables here, particularly on jobs and best practice research parks, the results of the market study forecasts are not summarized. Staff recommends:

- *Add one or more tables showing the base market forecasts for residential, retail, office and hotel uses for the two alternate market approaches.*
- *Revise the first paragraph on page 118 under residential development to define "medium to high-density-multifamily development" in terms of the number of dwelling units per acre.*

Housing and Neighborhoods/Community Heritage/Public Facilities – Pages 123-133

The goals, policies and strategies in these sections address creation of new sustainable residential neighborhoods in the transit district, preservation of the character of existing residential neighborhoods bordering the district, promotion of heritage tourism and the provision and maintenance of public facilities that efficiently serve the population of the transit district.

Comment: Police, fire, EMS and library facilities are found to be adequate to serve the transit district, however, some of the public school facilities that would serve the new population in the area are currently at or above capacity. The potential for locating a multistory urban school and co-locating a satellite public health clinic and social services facility in the district are plan strategies. Some of the proposed strategies are well intentioned but are not specific or strong enough to be implemented. Staff recommends:

- *Add a strategy for the consideration of daycare facilities in conjunction with a new school or major new office development.*
- *Add a strategy for density bonuses for new development projects that provide any of the following: 1) public open space or plaza; 2) affordable housing; 3) public art; 4) performing arts space; 5) LEED Silver or higher certification.*
- *Revise strategy 2.1 on page 128 to clarify the intent of appropriate height transitions closest to the Old Town College Park and Calvert Hills neighborhoods and provide a diagram to illustrate this.*

Implementation/Revitalization and Economic Development Tools – Pages 137-158

This section proposes a strategic six-step implementation plan and includes a detailed action table that identifies responsible parties and timeframes. Key recommendations include establishment of a TDDP Oversight Task Force, creation of transit district brand, identification of public sector incentives and leveraging existing anchors and the University of Maryland. It also includes an inventory of existing financial incentives and programs.

Comment: Staff generally agrees with the recommendations but has some concerns about the emphasis on an overall district brand when the district encompasses two municipalities and M Square already utilizes a strong branding approach. The proposed residential neighborhoods also lend themselves to separate branding efforts.

- *Revise the approach under Step One on page 138 to include a process for joint development review of new projects and coordination of official positions to the extent possible.*
- *If the transit district is to have a distinct brand, perhaps it should start with the name of this plan and the classification of the area in the General Plan. The proposed renaming to the College Park/University of Maryland Metro/M Square Purple Line Regional Transit District is unwieldy. Something catchy like the Pearl District in Portland would be nice.*

- *Add the new Regional Institution Strategic Enterprise Zone Program (RISE) legislation recently approved by the State to the list of economic development tools.*

Zoning Map Amendment Changes – Pages 167-183

In the existing TDDP, the zoning in the northern area is primarily M-X-T with some O-S and in the southern area is primarily I-3 with some O-S. The Preliminary TDDP proposes to rezone all M-X-T property to the M-U-I zone because it offers more flexibility in achieving the vision for transit-oriented development. In a TDOZ, the Zoning Ordinance requires the concurrence of the property owner to change the M-X-T classification to another zone.

Comment: An outreach meeting was held with affected property owners to explain the proposed change and obtain their consent. Negotiations are ongoing. If the law is not changed or consent obtained, properties zoned M-X-T will be retained in this zone. City staff supports the proposed zoning changes but notes that residential uses under the M-U-I zone are limited to 48 dwelling units per acre unless accompanied by another land use. It is important to clarify the density ranges desired in the TDOZ by dwelling units per acre, not just by number of stories.

Transit District Standards

Development in the transit district overlay zone is subject to the transit district standards in the TDDP. The standards include mandatory regulations and recommendations that are intended to create a high-quality built environment and a strong sense of place. They include building form regulations by neighborhood, parking regulations, architectural regulations, street and open space regulations and guidelines for sustainability and the environment. Key components of these regulations are addressed below.

Building Form – Pages 194-207

This section calls for build-to lines measured from the face of curb rather than the right-of-way, smaller blocks not to exceed 650 feet, proposes a street network of primary and secondary streets, calls for reducing public utility easements and placing utilities underground to the extent possible and establishes building heights. It also establishes neighborhood-specific standards.

Comment: In general, these pages should be reorganized to reduce the amount of narrative and place regulations in simple tables. Much of the information is not presented in a user-friendly manner and is repeated in hard-to-read diagrams. Specific recommendations are:

- *Consolidate the two diagrams on page 194 into one. The parking setback line needs to be explained or removed from the diagram.*

- *Revise the diagram on page 195 to show the dimensions within each zone and clarify the location of the face of curb which should fall between the parking zone and step-off zone.*
- *Further thought needs to be given to the need for public utility easements and the use of curb lines instead of right-of-ways for establishing build-to lines. This is particularly important for the establishment of new streets.*
- *Revise Map 22, Building Heights, to reflect a maximum height in the transit district of 8 stories, not 12. The tallest buildings, 5-8 stories, should be permitted along Paint Branch Parkway and River Road with 2-5 stories permitted in other areas except where only townhouse development is desired (2-3 stories). These should be considered typical building heights in these areas and allow for some variation including both lower buildings and taller buildings if awarded as part of a density bonus.*
- *Clarify the requirement for a transition in building heights along the western edge of the TOD Core (page 200). Delete the diagrams on this page.*
- *Revise the height from 4-6 stories to 2-5 stories in the College Park Aviation Village behind the Paint Branch Parkway frontage (page 201). Delete the diagrams on this page.*
- *Delete page 202 in its entirety to eliminate the Greenway Corridor neighborhood.*
- *Revise the building heights in the Research Core to 5-8 stories along River Road and 2-5 stories behind (page 203). Delete the diagrams on this page.*
- *Delete the requirement for a building setback above eight stories (eight stories should be the maximum height) on page 206. Replace the drawings on this page with buildings that more closely conform to the vision.*
- *Add a drawing and explanation to illustrate the type of transition that is envisioned between the rail lines and River Road in the TOD Core.*

Parking – Pages 208-212

The parking standards address the specific requirements for the number of parking spaces to be provided, the location and screening of surface parking, and requirements for loading and service areas, bicycle parking and car share facilities. Key recommendations are to eliminate parking minimums, base parking requirements on the distance from a transit station and timeframes and to establish overall parking caps for the district.

Comment: The entire TDOZ will be within a ten-minute walk once the Purple Line is constructed (2020). Having different parking requirements for ¼ mile and ½ mile distances and prior to 2025 and after 2025 seems unnecessary and overly complicated. The proposed parking requirements are greater than the requirements in the 1997 TDDP and in the US 1 Corridor Sector Plan and are contrary to the plan vision of minimizing parking and vehicle travel. Staff is concerned that setting a parking maximum for the TDOZ will serve to disadvantage or preclude later development and that a better strategy is to lower the parking maximums for all land uses. Staff recommends:

- *Eliminate Table 19 on page 208 and substitute the parking schedule used for Walkable Nodes in the US1 Corridor Sector Plan. Retain the criteria for exceeding the maximum parking ratios only if the parking ratios are lowered.*
- *Eliminate the transit district wide parking maximums (Table 20 on page 209).*
- *Delete the last sentence on page 210 under Transportation Adequacy (otherwise agree with the APF strategy).*
- *Ensure that the surface parking lot setback requirements are measured by the same standard as build-to lines (curb line or property line).*

Architectural Elements – Pages 213-218

These standards apply to general architectural design, fenestration, building materials and elements, signage and storefronts and are a mix of mandatory requirements and suggested guidelines.

Comment: Staff concurs with these standards with the exception that all signs in the TDOZ should be mandated to conform to the signage standards including the refacing of existing signs (TDOZ applicability, page 187).

Sustainability and the Environment – Pages 219-221

These standards provide guidelines for the design of new streets sections, the retrofitting of existing streets into green and complete streets and for streetscaping and placemaking elements. On-street parallel parking is required in front of storefronts and encouraged elsewhere in the district. Pedestrian-scaled lighting on all streets and at least one designated open space of at least 25,000 square feet for each neighborhood is required. A road diet is proposed in the short term for River Road by reducing it from 4 to 2 lanes, adding a bicycle lane and on-street parking. Bike lanes are proposed for Paint Branch Parkway.

Comment: Construction of the Purple Line may make the implementation of these short term recommendations infeasible. The impact of the right-of-way needed for the Purple Line on the west side of River Road needs to be addressed in relation to the required build-to line which may need to be increased. The parking lane and wide sidewalk between the Purple Line travel way and the roadway should be reexamined to minimize the overall width of the right-of-way. A center line platform would be preferable.

Table of Uses – Pages 233-289

All of the permitted and prohibited land uses are shown with a comparison between the M-U-I zone in the Zoning Ordinance and the M-U-I in the TDOZ.

Comment: Staff is in agreement with the Table with the following exceptions:

- *Since gas stations are permitted, consider allowing a single bay automatic car wash that is an accessory use (page 234).*

- *Prohibit drive-through windows associated with a bank, savings and loan or other lending institution (page 235).*
- *Provide clarification for why an office of a certified massage therapist is a permitted use (page 236) but a massage establishment is prohibited (page 239).*

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends review and discussion of staff analysis. Final written recommendations should be forwarded to the Prince George's County Planning Board and presented as testimony at the May 29 public hearing.