

**Town Center Master Plan
Digest of Commentary
January 13, 2025**

Written Comments Following Release of First Draft through Planning Commission Review (April – September 2024)

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*** Note- Names refer to screen names provided via Engage Rockville. On this platform, participants participate and provide feedback through a screen name as opposed to their legal names.**

Written Comments Following Release of First Draft through Planning Commission Approval

April - September 2024

Mobility issues in Rockville Town Center plan

Judith Townsend <hkjtownsend@gmail.com>

Thu 5/2/2024 10:23 AM

To:Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

With limited mobility, these are the issues I keep seeing:
walk signals do not last long enough to get across the street
if using scooter, bumps don't work (scooter gets stuck)
The first issue should be easy to fix! I've addressed it multiple times.

Support for Rockville Town Center Master Plan + Suggestions

Michael Dutka <ditko86@gmail.com>

Fri 5/24/2024 10:12 AM

To:mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>;Planning Commission
<Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council Members and Planning Commision,

I want to voice my support for the new Town Center Master plan, but also urge it to go further in terms of increasing density and include some financial incentives in order to facilitate the plan becoming reality. Specifically I think parking requirements should just be eliminated throughout the entire planning area (preferably the entire city but that's beyond the scope of this plan) rather than just in areas close to the metro station. I think the "core area" by right height should be increased to at least 300 feet to bring it in line with other urban areas in MoCo, Ideally we wouldn't limit height at all, because that would create more architectural flexibility which would result in a more interesting skyline, as well as maximizing the use of the limited space within town center. For the edge areas the by right height should be increased to at least 85 feet because that is a typical height for a 5 over 1 apartment building (<https://www.archdaily.com/978264/in-praise-of-5-over-1-buildings>) which is a cost effective way to provide desperately needed housing.

On the finance side I think a property tax incentive would be too small to move the needle on a developers decision to build or not build (Rockville's rate is a small component of the total). What I do think we should do is help finance the demolition of 255 Rockville Pike and prepare the land for high rise redevelopment, assuming we can write a contract that says in no uncertain terms construction will begin shortly after the land is cleared. I'm sorry but we just can't have that 2 floor concretebrick sitting there any more, it's an eye sore and a severe

underutilization of that metro adjacent space. Redevelopment should also be granted "champion" status like Twinbrook Quarter, and allowed to be whatever height works, the bigger the better.

-Mike Dutka
713 Shetland Street
Rockville MD 20851

https://rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/54939/Town-Center-Master-Plan-Draft?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR3m52DNmDR3AEYQj27STQjmhNIkVPuo5wPTVkJlqnSRWqpgQC2oooFehZ0_aem_AQkQ95NcecOStX3Z9rK_8Y05aNZ7-qt0ja8el35Jtdcn-lebT_CgcAcfrmCHPL4nLWKMYoPHAvSR54VqQtXjR5gd

Town Center Impacts from Dawson's (Forced) Closure

Stephen Ayraud <sayraud@mac.com>

Mon 5/27/2024 3:48 PM

To: Comprehensive Plan <comprehensiveplan@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

In light of fast-moving events that won't be able to be considered in Town Center Master Planning, I want to express my feeling that the closure of Dawson's will negatively impact the quality of life at Town Center. As contrasted to the rumored replacement by ALDI, Dawson's varied selection of items supports the walkable community focus of Town Center. Among other things, Dawson's also provides senior discounts, local events support and developmentally challenged worker employment which support the Town Center community.

I realize that Rockville has limited influence on the decisions on this matter (and have separately contacted Morguard about it) but I urge you to make this position known to Rockville administrators who may be able to reverse this decision.

Sincerely,

Stephen Ayraud
37 Maryland Ave #321
Rockville MD 20850

FW: Town Center Master Plan Review

Ricky Barker <rbarker@rockvillemd.gov>

Thu 5/30/2024 12:11 PM

To: Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Andrew Reitelbach <areitelbach@rockvillemd.gov>; Megan Flick <mflick@rockvillemd.gov>; Jenny Snapp <jsnapp@rockvillemd.gov>

FYI

Ricky

Ricky W. Barker, AICP (He/Him/His)

Director

Community Planning and Development Services

111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville MD 20850

P: 240-314-8202

rbarker@rockvillemd.gov

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As we strive to improve our customer experience, we are seeking your help on how we can improve the permit process - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MGOCustomerExperienceSurvey>.



From: Monique Ashton <mashton@rockvillemd.gov>

Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2024 11:36 AM

To: Ekman, Robert <rekman@rockvillesciencecenter.org>; mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Ricky Barker <rbarker@rockvillemd.gov>; Jenny Snapp <jsnapp@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: RE: Town Center Master Plan Review

Thank you for taking the time to share this feedback. We will be reviewing and considering thoroughly as this plan will be coming to M&C for public discussion.

Regarding the rain water issues, would you be willing to share more information with our planning team? A member of their team serves on the board with Morguard to represent the City.

I am also copying REDI, as they have helped several non-profits find space for their growing needs if you need support in the future.

All the best,

Monique Ashton, MPH

Mayor

City of Rockville

----- Original message -----

From: "Ekman, Robert" <rekman@rockvillesciencecenter.org>

Date: 5/30/24 10:13 AM (GMT-05:00)

To: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: Town Center Master Plan Review

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Thank you for the City's Memorial Day events. We would have liked to see the parade, but understand the cancellation. I recently reviewed the Town Center Master Plan. The following are my comments on the Town Center Master Plan. I am open for comments and questions.

While the City staff has put time into collecting data and comments, I think it misses my view of the situation with the Town Square. The Town Square is old and deteriorating. To make it into a destination, it will take some serious changes. I am not slamming Morguard or the City, but I don't believe that either are up to changes that I think are needed.

When the development of the Town Square was first proposed over 20 years ago, I objected to the plan because it was too large, confused ownership, and turned a suburban area into urban development. It remains that today. Property ownership and area rights are confusing and fragmented. The City owns some property, the County owns some property, corporations own some, and individuals own some. The plan does not contain detailed inventory of ownership information and occupancy numbers for the area properties. I would like to see the rent charged by owners for all the tenants and their plans for their property. The City's plan requires the involvement and consent of the property owners.

The deterioration of the Town Square buildings has been apparent since we started in the storefront in December 2019. There is rain water in the walls and ceiling. There is no area pest control – mice and cockroaches are abundant. Each unit has a separate HVAC system. They are old, inefficient, and need maintenance. The number of empty stores is obvious.

Traffic around the Town Center and on Maryland Avenue is crowded and confusing. There are delivery vehicles, buses, and fire equipment going up and down Maryland Avenue, among the parking cars, pedestrians, dog walkers, and scooters. The recent changes in the roadways have not helped.

Mixed Use doesn't seem to work well for specialty stores such as the Science Center. We have very few local tenants participating in our activities. 99% of our participants arrive via personal vehicles. To increase participation in our programs, we need attention to parking, roadways, and traffic. These issues keep people away from our programs.

Over the past 30 years, the Science Center has had many development plans. At one time, the Center had a plan to build on 41 Maryland Ave. We have

drawings and worked with the City to start funding. But it became too expensive and we gave up. We are OK with where we are now, but we need more facilities that we can afford to hold our expanding activities.

Thank you for your support and continued cooperation.

Bob Ekman, Rockville Science Center
Trustee President
301-512-1278

Bob Ekman, Rockville Science Center
301-512-1278

Draft Town Center Master Plan Comments

Stephen Ayraud <sayraud@mac.com>

Wed 6/5/2024 10:14 AM

To:Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Katie - Thanks for meeting with me the other day. Please see my comments below on the Draft Town Center Master Plan. Generally I think the plan is very good and I agree with its goals. Of particular note is the very helpful Site Specific Vision section. My comments below largely echo one of the goals in the plan which is the importance in establishing an identity for Town Center.

Stephen Ayraud P.E.

-Demographics - Top of Page 25. "Generally speaking, Town Center is a wealthy and highly educated area." Suggest adding: However it also includes the highest percentage of residents living below the poverty level in Rockville. Consider mitigating the term "wealthy" which seems excessive.

"The median household income is \$96,773 and the average household income is \$127,8692. This is just higher than the City of Rockville as a whole, which has a median income of \$111,797." Change "higher" to lower.

-Transportation and Mobility - Public Transportation Page 45. I believe that you mentioned improved bus service between Town Center and Montgomery College.

-Transportation and Mobility - Page 50. Add a statement such as: Listening sessions indicate that parking costs at Town Square continue to be an area of confusion. Parking rates in Garages A,B and C are free for

two hours (the same rate as Pike and Rose) and need to be better advertised.

-Include in Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Page 60 AND in Economic Development and Business Page 72? Town Square is a community asset. In addition to being a retail center, it's a public park that includes splash fountains and play equipment that attracts families; a center for civic events including festivals, memorials, holiday celebrations; an educational resource with the Library, Dance, Arts (e.g. VisArts) and Science activities; an Innovation Center; an outdoor meeting place in the Square and on the Gibbs Street pedestrian plaza. Some of these activities don't necessarily promote increased retail sales and so comparisons with retail centers such as Pike and Rose are unfair. A retail plan that incorporates the educational and civics focused aspects of the Town Center needs to be developed.

-Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities - Schools Page 62. Montgomery College is just outside of the Town Center Boundary. Previous reports have discussed potential Montgomery College activities to be held at Town Center including classes. Transportation connections to Montgomery College should be discussed. (Note that I now believe that a pedestrian connection to MC is unlikely to be widely used).

-Economic Development and Business Tables 4 and 5 - Page 72. The size and makeup of Retail Supply needs to be clarified and could be considered as misleading. The Town Center value of 371,000 sf includes the areas surrounding Town Square as shown in Map 2. However I believe the Retail Supply for Pike and Rose includes only the area of the Federal Realty developed area bounded by Rockville Pike, Old Georgetown Road and Towne Road. This is an unequal comparison. An example of the discrepancy in comparison: Giant Supermarket (0.6 mile from Town Square) is included as retail space in Town Center and Target Store (0.6 mile from Pike and Rose) isn't included in Pike & Rose retail space.

and VisArts spaces are counted as retail space for Town Center. These areas are unusual to be considered as retail space and don't have comparable uses in Pike & Rose.

Correcting the Retail Supply values will improve the sf/capita comparison of Town Center with Pike & Rose without significantly diminishing the message that additional housing is needed for increased retail performance.

I suggest that a Town Square only calculation (with Library, VisArts, Dance, Science items removed) is added (or referenced in a footnote) in Table 4 to show the dramatic high retail vacancy rate at Town Square.

-Economic Development and Business - Page 72. The termination of the lease for Dawson's Market (June 2024) could have a significant negative impact on the Town Center community. The market serves as a resource for healthy nutrition, provides a walkable destination for residents, supports local events and provides employment for some developmentally challenged residents. A replacement business could have significant impact on the quality of life for Town Center residents.

Support for Rockville Town Center Master Plan + Suggestions

Jonathan Robinson <jonathanmrobinson2@gmail.com>

Tue 6/11/2024 9:29 PM

To:mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>;Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

I just wanted to write a short note to Mayor and Council and the Planning Commission. I love what I've seen from the Rockville Master Plan. Jane Lyons did an incredible job there. I'd just want to put a plug in for less parking and more density in Town Center. Having a stronger customer base and more foot traffic would be a huge boon to the businesses there and easily fill up the unused storefronts. This plan is a really exciting and fantastic opportunity with all that's being done w/ city owned properties that could be converted to housing as well as the WMATA engagement. It's a fantastic time for pushing beyond what is merely good and shoot for something bold and excellent!

Sincerely,

Jonathan Robinson
1006 Curtis Pl, Rockville, MD 20852

I'm using [Inbox When Ready](#) to protect my focus.



DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

David Dise
Director

June 17, 2024

Mr. Ricky Barker
Director of Community Planning and Development Services
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Barker:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan: DRAFT for Review and Comment (April 26, 2024).

Action 9.2.2 of the plan is to “create a public park within the block bounded by Monroe Street, E. Jefferson Street, Park Avenue and Fleet Street” (page 63). Map 29 on page 64 the block includes the County-owned property at 301 E. Jefferson Street. This is the county-owned ‘Jury Lot’, which is heavily utilized as parking for jurors serving in the courts located in downtown Rockville.

Redevelopment of the Jury Lot would require replacement parking and it is anticipated that the County would likely double the current number of spaces to serve future needs. If underground parking is contemplated as replacement for the surface lot for a future park, the cost to construct the replacement parking is likely prohibitive. Accordingly, we do not believe this is a feasible concept.

We further note that the Jury Lot is one of several County-owned properties that the County is considering for affordable housing development. We request that the recommendation to create a public park in a location that includes the Jury Lot be removed from the draft.

We look forward to continued coordination as the Town Center plan continues through the review process. Please contact me directly if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Greg Ossont
Deputy Director

Office of the Director

101 Monroe Street, 9th Floor • Rockville, Maryland 20850

www.montgomerycountymd.gov

RE: Rockville Town Center master plan

Ricky Barker <rbarker@rockvillemd.gov>

Fri 6/21/2024 9:39 AM

To:rtreinhard@aol.com <rtreinhard@aol.com>

Cc:mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>;Barack Matite

<bmatite@rockvillemd.gov>;Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>;Jenny Snapp

<jsnapp@rockvillemd.gov>;Andrew Reitelbach <areitelbach@rockvillemd.gov>;Manisha

Tewari <mtewari@rockvillemd.gov>;Jim Wasilak <jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

Rick,

Thank you for your feedback. I'm copying Katie Gerbes and Andrew Reitelbach of our staff to add your feedback with others who have commented on the draft plan. Staff will assess all the feedback received and make recommended changes to the Plan. Your feedback will also be shared with the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is tentatively scheduled to hold a public hearing on July 10th if you would like to attend in-person or virtually and participate. Thank you for your engagement and insights provided throughout the Master Plan process.

Ricky

Ricky W. Barker, AICP ([He/Him/His](#))

Director

Community Planning and Development Services

111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville MD 20850

P: 240-314-8202

rbarker@rockvillemd.gov

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From: rtreinhard@aol.com <rtreinhard@aol.com>

Sent: Thursday, June 20, 2024 7:00 PM

To: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>; Ricky Barker <rbarker@rockvillemd.gov>; Barack Matite <bmatite@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: Rockville Town Center master plan

To Mayor Ashton, Councilmembers, Acting City Manager Matite, and Planning Director Barker:

I am writing to you my thoughts on the Rockville Town Center Master Plan, as I was unable to attend this past week's online meeting and will be unable to attend next week's meeting.

In general, I support the direction of the Master Plan and the efforts of the Rockville City Government to improve the Town Center. Under current leadership, the Town Center is headed in the right direction.

I do have some critiques and suggestions, summed up in the three points that follow:

1. Lack of data. The plan lacks a high quality and quantity of data. The Planning Department and Rockville Economic Development Inc. should be charged with collecting and analyzing an array of data not included in the draft master plan. Examples: The plan includes vacancy rates on retail for the Town Center, Pike and Rose, and Rio but not retail sales. The vacancy rates (which are specious to begin with because of the presence of low-intensity public uses) make it appear that Town Center is competitive with the other two when, measured by retail sales, we would be crushed by them.

The plan points out the gross number of parking spaces but not occupancy rates. Perhaps I am missing it, but I cannot find data on

crime or homeless persons, two topics on the minds of those of us who live in the Town Center.

These are just a few examples of lack of data and accompanying analysis.

I would suggest that city leaders examine the Downtown DC Business Improvement District's 2022 State of Downtown report, released in 2023, which features 55 pages of detailed data and analysis. I had a role in producing the report annually when I was Deputy Executive Director 2007-2015.

The net result of the lack of data in the Town Center Master Plan is that it is a "soft" report, with conclusions not backed by facts and a focus on soft "placemaking" as opposed to more rigorous financial and economic-development goals.

2. Residential goal. The goal of 2,000 additional residential units by 2040 is low. Such a goal would be equivalent to building one new BLVD/Ansel development every four years, with no additional residential development. Certainly the sites above and adjacent to the Rockville Metro station should be built upon with BLVD/Ansel-like development. The empty office buildings at 51 Monroe, 255 Rockville Pike, 21 Church Street, and perhaps others should be transformed into residential units--some affordable or workforce housing-- with incentives from the city, county, and state.

3. Pre-BID. The Mayor and new City Manager need to establish a different and more positive relationship with Morguard and the other major property owners than the city has had under the former leadership. I don't understand the resistance to forming a business improvement district or urban district. One works well for Bethesda and okay for Silver Spring and Wheaton. They work well for more than a dozen communities in the District and Northern Virginia.

But what really needs to happen is for the Mayor and City Manager to reach out and convene the CEOs or regional directors of the top handful of property owners on a regular basis to work collaboratively. If the group decides to form a BID or Urban District, that's great; if not, that's okay, too. High-level communication is what is critical.

I make these suggestions after a 30-year career running downtown organizations such as business improvement districts and redevelopment agencies and serving as a mayoral chief of staff in a city of 300,000 residents. I also make them as a Rockville Town Square resident, property owner, and taxpayer, and a City of Rockville voter, married to another of the same.

Thank you for your hard work.

Rick Reinhard

38 Maryland Avenue, Unit 501

Rockville MD 20850-0346

202-669-2205 (cell/text)

Feedback on town center master plan draft regarding driveway aprons

seah0rse <seah0rse@yahoo.com>

Sun 6/23/2024 10:09 PM

To:Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Driveway aprons, the area of the driveway that crosses the public sidewalk, can pose hazards to pedestrians when poorly constructed. This poor construction is ubiquitous throughout town center. The rules and enforcement regarding driveway aprons in public sidewalks typically fall under local municipal codes. Policy and actions are needed in the town center plan that explicitly address this issue.

Design and Construction Standards

1. ****Slope and Surface****: The apron should be designed with a gentle slope to minimize tripping hazards and should be made of non-slip materials to ensure safety during all weather conditions.
2. ****Width and Clear Path****: The apron should not obstruct the pedestrian path. The clear width of the sidewalk should be maintained according to local accessibility standards, typically at least 4 feet.
3. ****Visibility and Markings****: Proper signage and markings can alert both drivers and pedestrians to the shared space, improving awareness and safety.

Enforcement and Accountability

1. ****Local Ordinances****: Municipalities may have specific ordinances that govern the construction and maintenance of driveway aprons. Violations can result in fines or required modifications to meet standards.
2. ****Code Enforcement****: Local code enforcement officers can inspect

and ensure compliance with construction standards. Complaints about hazardous aprons can lead to inspections and mandated corrections.

3. ****Penalties for Non-Compliance****: Penalties for non-compliance can include fines, orders to repair or reconstruct the apron, and in severe cases, legal action against the property owner.

Reporting and Community Action

1. **Report Hazards**: Pedestrians can report hazardous driveway aprons to local authorities, such as the city's public works department or a local traffic safety committee.

2. **Community Advocacy**: Community groups can advocate for safer sidewalk designs and stricter enforcement of existing laws to protect pedestrian

3. **Regular Maintenance**: Ensuring that driveway aprons are regularly inspected and maintained can prevent hazards from developing over time.

Feedback on town center Draft regarding pedestrian right of way

seah0rse <seah0rse@yahoo.com>

Sun 6/23/2024 9:43 PM

To:Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc:Bryan Barnett-Woods <bbwoods@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

I was present at the listening hearing held at Brightview. I am looking for areas of the action plans related to their concerns regarding the current cobblestone textures that are barriers to many pedestrians.

Cobblestone and textured pedestrian right-of-ways can pose significant challenges for individuals using mobility aids or pushing strollers. To address these access issues, various policies and guidelines have been established to ensure more accessible and inclusive public spaces. Here are some key policies and considerations:

ADA Standards (Americans with Disabilities Act)

1. ****Surface Stability, Firmness, and Slip Resistance****: The ADA requires that surfaces be stable, firm, and slip-resistant. Cobblestones and heavily textured surfaces often do not meet these criteria, making them problematic for accessibility.

2. ****Maximum Cross Slope and Grade****: The ADA also specifies maximum slopes for pathways to ensure they are navigable for people with disabilities. Irregular surfaces can exacerbate slope issues, making pathways steeper or uneven.

Universal Design Principles

1. ****Smooth Pathways****: Universal design advocates for smooth, even surfaces for all pedestrian pathways to accommodate users of all abilities, including those with mobility aids and strollers.

2. **Contrast and Tactile Markings**: Where textured surfaces are used for aesthetic or historic preservation reasons, it's important to incorporate contrasting and tactile markings to guide visually impaired users safely through or around these areas.

Local and State Regulations

1. **Building Codes and Zoning Laws**: Many localities have building codes and zoning laws that incorporate ADA standards and may include additional requirements to ensure public spaces are accessible.

2. **Historic Preservation vs. Accessibility**: In areas with historic cobblestone streets, municipalities often seek a balance between preservation and accessibility. Solutions can include adding smooth pathways alongside cobblestone areas or using materials that mimic the aesthetic while providing a smoother surface.

Best Practices for Implementation

1. **Smooth Ramps and Transitions**: Where changes in elevation occur, ramps should have smooth transitions and comply with ADA slope requirements.

2. **Material Alternatives**: When possible, use alternative materials that provide a similar visual effect without compromising accessibility. For example, stamped concrete can create a cobblestone look with a smoother surface.

3. **Regular Maintenance**: Ensure that pedestrian pathways are regularly maintained to address any issues with uneven surfaces or damage that could impede accessibility.

Examples of Successful Policies

1. **City of Seattle**: The Seattle Department of Transportation has guidelines for accessible design, emphasizing smooth surfaces and addressing challenges posed by historic areas.

2. ****City of New York****: New York City has initiatives to replace or modify cobblestone streets in historic districts with materials that preserve the look while improving accessibility.

Community Involvement and Feedback

Engaging with the community, particularly individuals with disabilities, can provide valuable insights into specific challenges and effective solutions for ensuring accessible pedestrian pathways.

By adhering to these policies and practices, municipalities can create more inclusive environments that accommodate everyone, regardless of their mobility needs.

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy Tablet

June 25, 2024

Shayan Salahuddin, Chair
City of Rockville Planning Commission
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

RE: Transportation and Mobility Commission Rockville Town Center Master Plan Recommendation

Dear Chair Salahuddin,

The Transportation and Mobility Commission (TMC) reviewed the draft Rockville Town Center Master Plan and recommends the Planning Commission approve the plan by resolution and recommend the Mayor and Council adopt the plan with the recommendations attached herein.

The Rockville Town Center Master Plan provides a comprehensive list of necessary actions for city staff to achieve the plan's vision, "to grow as a vibrant, multicultural, diverse, and inclusive community that celebrates a high quality of life and place," (p. 14). The TMC recognizes that it is necessary to ensure convenient and equitable multimodal access and mobility to improve the quality and character of a community, especially as that community grows. The actions in the draft plan will contribute to improving the Rockville Town Center's multimodal transportation network. This includes collaborating with the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to improve the safety transportation facilities and the service provided; enhance connectivity between the Rockville Town Center and surrounding areas and improve the local roadway network for all modes. Having the opportunity to walk, roll, bike, or drive is of critical importance for residents in Rockville Town Center.

Department of Community Planning and Development Services staff presented the Rockville Town Center Master Plan to the TMC during the May 27, 2024. The TMC recommends strengthening proposed actions, and adding new actions related to ensuring multimodal transportation facilities are comprehensively considered throughout the Rockville Town Center, and to further support to proposed land use development recommended in the plan. Additionally, the TMC recommends providing more specificity for many of the existing recommended actions.

The TMC finalized and approved these recommendations during the June 25, 2024, meeting and is grateful for the opportunity to review this plan. Should you have any questions related to our recommendations, please feel free to contact me directly or through our city staff liaison.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Kleinmann, Chair
City of Rockville Transportation and Mobility Commission

Transportation and Mobility Commission Recommendations – Rockville Town Center Master Plan

1. The City's ADA coordinator should be directly involved in the development of this plan.
2. Institutional Zone Parks
Page 33 of the plan indicates that a park is recommended for the institutional zone of the Rockville Town Center planning area. However, Mt. Vernon Park is already located in the zone adjacent the high school. Monroe Park is also just outside of the institutional zone on Monroe Street. The TMC recommends that these existing parks be improved instead of building a new park in this area.
3. Clarify Town Center Complete Streets Improvements
Page 48 lists improvements that were included in the recently completed Town Center complete streets project on N. Washington Street and E. Middle Lane. This description includes, "widened sidewalks." However, only the sidewalk on the south side of E. Middle Lane between N. Washington Street and Gibbs Street was widened. The remaining sidewalks were not impacted by the project and sidewalks along N. Washington Street, north of Beall Avenue are narrow and should still be improved. This includes areas where the sidewalk is less than five feet wide and where utility poles encroach on the pedestrian walkway. We recommend that this paragraph clarify that only a short segment of sidewalk was widened and that additional sidewalk widening along N. Washington Street would improve walk-and-roll-ability in the Rockville Town Center.
4. N. Washington Street and Hungerford Drive (MD 355)
The intersection of N. Washington Street and Hungerford Drive (MD 355) is one of the most used intersections in the planning area for all modes of transportation. However, its design prioritizes the throughput of motor vehicles over the safety and ease-of-use for vulnerable roadway users. The TMC supports Actions 4.1.1 and 4.1.3, which direct the city to collaborate with MDOT SHA to advance safety at state-owned-and-maintained intersections. Additional action is necessary. This includes a redesign of the intersection itself as well as improving the sidewalk on the east side of N. Washington Street approaching the intersection. This sidewalk has a utility pole placed in the center of the sidewalk, and the between the grade change and curved design, limits safe use for pedestrians. The TMC recommends the following action be added to Policy 4.1:

Action 4.1.3 - The City of Rockville shall coordinate with MDOT SHA to redesign and reconstruct the N. Washington Street and Hungerford Drive (MD 355) intersection so that crosswalks are placed on all legs, right turns on red are prohibited, the slip lane is removed, leading pedestrian intervals are provided, and the approaching and connecting receiving lanes and clearly defined. Additionally, the city shall reconstruct the sidewalk along northbound N. Washington Street to reduce the grade and curve as it approaches the intersection to increase visibility of pedestrians and improve accessibility for people using mobility devices.

5. Pedestrian mid-block crossings

Along many streets in Rockville Town Center, many pedestrians will choose to cross mid-block. This is particularly prevalent along Monroe Street, Beall Avenue, and Maryland Avenue. While we recognize that this is likely the result of a variety of factors including shortest route and perceived safety, it will benefit all modes of travel if marked crosswalks are more frequently used. Policy 4.1 directs the city to improve local streets and the TMC recommends that the built environment be modified to reduce the instances of pedestrians crossing midblock.

Action 4.1.4 – The City shall seek roadway design improvements and modifications to help reduce the number of instances where pedestrians cross the street mid-block, particularly along Monroe Street, Beall Avenue, and Maryland Avenue. Moreover, motorists shall be better notified of potential pedestrian crossings along Maryland Avenue. This effort should be supported with an informational campaign for pedestrians and supplemented by additional pedestrian enforcement by the Rockville City Police Department.

6. Implement the Business District Street standard and detail

The city's existing street standard and details for Business District Streets includes space for vehicle travel, on-street parking, a buffer space for tree plantings and street furniture, and a sidewalk space. This standard fosters multimodal transportation and is supported by the TMC. However, not all streets in the Rockville Town Center follow this standard, in particular, W. Montgomery Avenue, which has large street tree planters and parking meters encroaching on the sidewalk. The TMC recommends that the city enforce this street standard and recommends the following action:

Action 4.1.5: The City of Rockville should require development and redevelopment applicants to meet all requirements of the business district street standards and details. Also, the city should implement these standards when reconstructing streets as part of future capital improvement projects.

7. Wider and smooth surfaced sidewalks

Goal 4 outlines the need to improve transportation facilities to enhance the experience as well as safety. While sidewalks in much of Rockville Town Center are wider than five feet, many are five feet or less and only meet the minimum requirements. This includes stretches of N. Washington Street between Beall Avenue and Hungerford Drive, Wood Lane, Park Avenue, and Jefferson Plaza. Additionally, many of the sidewalks in the Rockville Town Center are constructed using cobblestones, stamped concrete, brick, or pavers. While this style may evoke an "old town" feeling, it makes it less comfortable and less usable for pedestrians using wheelchairs, pushing strollers, or walking with canes or walkers. There are many residents who have indicated that they choose not to frequent the Rockville Town Center because the sidewalks are unpleasant.

The TMC recommends that two additional actions be provided under Policy 4.2:

Action 4.2.3 – Wider sidewalks – All sidewalks in the Rockville Town Center planning area shall meet the width requirements provided in the approved street section standards and details. This includes 10-foot-wide sidewalks along business districts streets and 5-foot-wide sidewalks on residential streets. Furthermore, these sidewalks must be clear of street furniture, utility poles, signs, meters, or other encroachments.

Action 4.2.4 – Smooth surfaced sidewalks - All sidewalks in the Rockville Town Center planning area shall be surfaced in concrete, asphalt, or another smooth surfaced material that will not detrimentally impact travel by pedestrians using mobility devices. Sidewalks built from brick, pavers, stamped concrete or asphalt, or cobblestones shall be replaced as part of ongoing maintenance, redevelopment, or other reconstruction.

8. Enhance accessibility in Rockville Town Center

As noted in the draft plan, there is a higher-than-average proportion of people in Rockville with disabilities. This is common among cities as many people seeking access to a variety of services can best do so in a denser area. Policy 4.2 provides direction for city staff to implement design improvements on local streets to increase safety and accessibility. There is no mention in the plan of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or the federally adopted Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). The TMC recognizes that the city strives to build new and maintain existing roadways and sidewalks following the ADA and PROWAG. However, there are still instances where these are not applied, especially when building or rebuilding driveway aprons, reconstructing narrow sidewalks, and maintaining brick or other non-smooth surfaced pavements.

The TMC recommends the city include explicit reference to the ADA and to PROWAG and work to make the Rockville Town Center more accessible than what is minimally required. We proposed the following actions:

Action 4.2.3 – Americans with Disabilities Act and Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. As part of the city's ongoing roadway and sidewalk pavement and maintenance program, all sidewalks and roadways that do not meet the ADA and PROWAG standards shall be improved to meet these standards.

Action 4.2.4 – Accessible routes to city destinations.

All city-owned destinations in the Rockville Town Center shall have an ADA compliant and accessible route for all modes of transportation. This includes routes to the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center, Welsh Park, and City Hall, among other locations.

Action 4.2.5 – Beyond minimal accessibility requirements. The City of Rockville should consider updating the zoning ordinance and building code for retail and recreation land uses to require ADA accessibility features beyond the minimal requirements set forth in

the ADA guidelines. This should include providing additional accessible parking spaces, automated doors, and more space for pedestrians with mobility devices to maneuver.

9. Improve pedestrian circulation to destination entrances.

Pedestrians will access Rockville Town Center destinations from bus stops, motor vehicle parking, or the public right of way. It is necessary to provide a clearly defined and accessible route for pedestrians to access the main entrance or entrances to all destinations from bus stops, the public right-of-way, and through parking lots. Improving pedestrian access is particularly important for increasing population density in the Rockville Town Center. The TMC proposes the following action:

Action 4.2.6 – All development and redevelopment applications, and city capital projects shall ensure that a pedestrian route between the public right of way, bus stops, and through parking lots be accessible, direct, and minimizes the potential opportunities for conflict between motorists and pedestrians.

10. Shared use path width

Action 5.1.2 proposes a ten-foot-wide shared use path along Hungerford Drive (MD 355). The TMC proposes that this action be updated to provide a “minimum” 10-foot-wide shared use path and opportunities to widen the facility should be considered and analyzed during development, redevelopment, and capital improvement projects.

11. Pedestrian accessibility signage

Goal 6 recommends implementation of wayfinding signage in the Rockville Town Center. The TMC fully supports this goal. Moreover, there are some Rockville Town Center destinations, such as Monroe Park, wherein it is not immediately clear where to access the accessible route. We recommend that the following action be added to Policy 6.1:

Action 6.1.4 – Provide directional signage at destinations for pedestrians using mobility devices to the closest accessible route if it is not immediately apparent.

12. Require property development management firms in the Rockville Town Center to participate in ADA trainings to better provide for the needs of individuals with disabilities.

0	Team	Commenter	Page	Summary	Comment
1	Policy	ADB	41 64	MARC Third Tracking	<p>Ensure the Plan supports or does not preclude third tracking of the MARC Brunswick Line as outlined under the 2019 MARC Cornerstone Plan:</p> <p>https://s3.amazonaws.com/mta-website-staging/mta-website-staging/files/Transit%20Projects/Cornerstone/MCP_MARC.pdf#page=59</p> <p>This may notably affect available rights-of-way along the corridor, potentially affecting constrained sites such as the redevelopment of the western WMATA property (Action 1.2.1 on p41) and the proposed park at 301 Hungerford (Action 9.2.4 on p64).</p> <p>Third Tracking is an important milestone toward improving Brunswick Line services, including off-peak and reverse direction services.</p>
2	Policy	HP	42 80	EV Incentives	Consider coordinating with the County's Dept of Environmental Protection on incentives for EVs. Consider requiring EV capabilities for all new and retrofitted off-street parking at a certain percentage.
3	Policy	HP	42 50	Parking Data Sharing	Can Rockville share data on their current parking occupancy levels, both on street and private? For developers providing private parking, require provision of shared data to city and county. Data on parking trends can support Countywide parking policy.
4	DTEO	MT	44 52	Safe Ped Crossings	Consider expanding the actions under Policy 4.2 to more broadly address the need for safe pedestrian crossings/treatments such as PHB's, flashing beacons, etc at unprotected multi-lane crossings, especially with the adoption of Vision Zero. Also consider additional traffic calming needs. Actions 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 (on p52) focus on two specific locations, but there remain other needs elsewhere within the plan area.
5	Policy	HP	48	Pedestrianized & Shared Streets	Consider interim pedestrian-only connections or designations of shared streets in lieu of car-focused Maryland Ave extension. This could be accomplished in the short term with easements on private parking lots and wayfinding signs.
6	Policy	HP	49	Ped/Bike Levels of Stress / Comfort	Consider designating bike and pedestrian level of stress / comfort on existing maps.
7	Policy	HP	49	Bike Parking	There is no discussion of bike parking. While an inventory isn't needed, it would be helpful to note whether provision of on-street and off-street bike parking and/or corralls are sufficient to meet current and future needs.
8	VZ	WH	52	Action 4.2.2 PHB or Full-Color Signal	Consider updating Action 4.2.2 to include installation of PHB or full color signal. An RRFB may not be appropriate given the # of lanes, the slope at the bridge, and vehicle speed.

0	Team	Commenter	Page	Summary	Comment
9	VZ, Policy	WH, ADB	53 63	SB BRT Station & Promenade Bridge	<p>Action 5.1.1 recommends that the SB 355 BRT station be located "as close as possible to the elevated pedestrian bridge over MD-355."</p> <p>Consider omitting recommendation 5.1.1, as it is unclear what this recommendation is seeking to achieve. There is currently no connection between MD 355 to/from the bridge, and such a station location would force users to either travel greater distances to cross, or else unsafely & unlawfully cross midblock.</p> <p>It would be more prudent to locate the station nearer to one of the signals as that is the more convenient path to both the Metro Station and Town Center, and this also does not require navigating grade changes.</p> <p>If it is intended for a connection to eventually be provided: language supporting a convenient and accessible connection should be included as a goal in Action 9.1.1 on p63, and also be highlighted for the 51 Monroe Street and 255 Rockville Pike properties on p35. Action 5.1.1 should change the word "possible" to either "practicable" or "reasonable".</p>
10	Policy	ADB	53	Bus Lanes	The plan does not provide any mention of dedicated bus lanes, which are currently master planned along both MD 355 and MD 586 within the plan area. An Action under Policy 5.1 should reference and reaffirm these bus lanes.
11	Policy	HP	53	Digital Kiosks	Action 5.2.1 - Digital kiosks are expensive to maintain and may be outdated quickly. Suggest replacing with "signage or technology aiding passengers in real-time bus notification"
12	Policy	HP	53	Transit Wayfinding	Suggest Actions under 5.2 be revised to consider designating hubs for cross-Town-Center connection. Ride On and Flex (and to a lesser degree Metrobus) already offer circulation within the Town Center, but this is not intuitive. The City could provide maps and wayfinding signs to these hubs, and MCDOT staff can help identify where these would best be located, given current routes.

July 2, 2024

Shayan Salahuddin, Chair, City of Rockville Planning
Commission City of Rockville
111 Maryland Ave, Suite 2
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan
Amendment to the previously adopted 2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan and the 2040
City of Rockville Comprehensive Master Plan (2021)

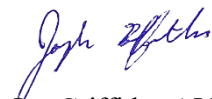
Dear Chair Salahuddin:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan. Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) received the above referenced draft plan on May 8, 2024. MDP believes good planning is important for efficient and responsible development that addresses sustainability, adequate public facilities, housing, resiliency, and economic development. Please keep in mind that MDP's attached review comments reflect the agency's thoughts on ways to strengthen the Draft Plan, as well as satisfy the requirements of Maryland's Land Use Article.

MDP forwarded a copy of the Draft Plan to several state agencies for review, including: the Maryland Historical Trust and the Departments of Transportation, Environment, Natural Resources, Commerce, Disabilities, and Housing and Community Development. To date, we have received comments from the Maryland Historical Trust, Environment, and Housing and Community Development. These comments are included with this letter. Any plan review comments received after the date of this letter will be forwarded upon receipt.

MDP respectfully requests that this letter and accompanying review comments be made part of the city's public hearing record. If the plan is adopted, please send Susan Llareus a link to the adopted and approved version of the final document. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these comments, please email Susan at Susan.Llareus@maryland.gov

Sincerely,



Joe Griffiths, AICP
Director, Planning Best Practices

cc: Ricky Barker, AICP, Director of Community Planning and Development Services
Megan Flick, Community Planning and Development Services
Susan Llareus, Planning Supervisor, Maryland Department of Planning



Maryland Department of Planning
Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan
Amendment to the 2001 Town Center Master Plan & 2040 City of Rockville Comprehensive
July 2, 2024

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) received the Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan (Draft Plan) from the City of Rockville on May 8, 2024. The purpose of this letter is to provide guidance to improve the Draft Plan and better address the statutory requirements of the Land Use Article. Attached to this are other state agencies' comments who have contributed to the review. Other agencies may submit comments separately. If comments are subsequently received by MDP, the department will forward them to the city.

Draft Plan Summary

This Draft Plan is a full update to the adopted and approved 2001 Town Center Master Plan and amends the 2040 City of Rockville Comprehensive Master Plan (2040 Rockville Plan). The Draft Plan will replace the Planning Area 1 chapter of the 2040 Rockville Plan.

After a five-month engagement with stakeholders, the Draft Plan created seven thematic chapters that identify and sets forth many goals including:

- 1.) Increasing density in the town center by adding 2,000 new dwelling units (by 2040).
- 2.) Reducing the required parking spaces within the transit-oriented development area.
- 3.) Promoting pedestrian oriented design features.
- 4.) Enhancing safety for all forms of transportation.
- 5.) Enhancing the bus system and accessibility.
- 6.) Implementing wayfinding signage.
- 7.) Strengthening connections to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- 8.) Increasing affordable housing.
- 9.) Expanding upon a sense of place.
- 10.) Preserving historical features and promoting heritage tourism.
- 11.) Supporting retail.
- 12.) Encouraging sustainability and resilient building practices.

Maryland State Visions – Synopsis

The Land Use Article Section 1-201 requires Maryland jurisdictions with planning & zoning authority to implement the state's twelve planning visions (visions) through a comprehensive plan and its amendments. The visions reflect the state's ongoing aspiration to develop and implement sound growth and development policy. The visions address: quality of life and sustainability; public participation; growth areas; community design; infrastructure; transportation; housing; economic development; environmental protection; resource conservation; stewardship; and implementation approaches. The Draft Plan provides Town Center vision (p. 13) that appears to address some of the 12 visions. MDP

encourages the city to make references where appropriate to further demonstrate the connections in the plan to the 12 visions.

Municipality Minimum Planning Requirements

Maryland's Land Use Article (LUA) requires the inclusion of certain elements within the comprehensive plan and any amendments to it. As such, local governments have addressed these required elements in a manner that fits the needs of their community and the resources available to respond to the issues explored during the planning process. The following checklist provides for each required plan element for a Municipality and the Maryland Code reference. The table includes links to the LUA that we hope you will find helpful. MDP encourages the City of Rockville to use this table as a self-evaluation tool. The original plan was approved in 2001 and this checklist includes criteria that was not in effect at the time of the original approval, but now is required.

Checklist of Maryland Code (Land Use Article)-Municipality Division I, Title 1, Subtitle 3 Required Elements of a Comprehensive Plan		
State Comprehensive Plan Requirements	MD Code Reference and Additional MD Code Reference	
(1) A comprehensive plan for a non-charter county or municipality MUST include:	L.U. § 3-102(a)	
(a) a community facilities element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(i)	Land Use § 3-108 -- Community Facilities Element
(b) an area of critical State concern element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(ii)	Land Use § 3-109 --Area of Critical State Concern Element
(c) a goals and objectives element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(iii)	Land Use § 3-110 --Goals and Objectives Element
(d) a housing element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(iv)	Land Use § 3-114 --Housing Element
(e) a land use element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(v)	Land Use § 3-111 -- Land Use Element
(f) a development regulations element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(vi)	Land Use § 3-103 -- Development Regulations
(g) a sensitive areas element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(vii)	Land Use § 3-104 -- Sensitive Areas Element
(h) a transportation element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(viii)	Land Use § 3-105 -- Transportation Element

(i) a water resources element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(1)(ix)	Land Use § 3-106 -- Water Resources Element
(j) a mineral resources element, IF current geological information is available	L.U. § 3-102(a)(2)	Land Use § 3-107 -- Mineral Resources Element
(j) for municipalities only, a municipal growth element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(3)	Land Use § 3-112 -- Municipal Growth Element
(k) for counties only if located on tidal waters, a fisheries element	L.U. § 3-102(a)(4)	Land Use § 3-113 -- Fisheries Element
(3) Visions -- A local jurisdiction SHALL through the comprehensive plan implement the 12 planning visions established in L.U. § 1-201	L.U. § 3-201(c)	L.U. § 1-201 -- The 12 Planning Visions
(4) Growth Tiers -- If the local jurisdictions has adopted growth tiers in accordance with L.U. § 1-502, the growth tiers must be incorporated into the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan	L.U. § 1-509	

In addition to the above requirements of the Land Use Article, Please note that [HB-538 \(2024\)](#) Land Use – Affordable Housing – Zoning Density and Permitting (also known as the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act of 2024) becomes effective January 1, 2025. MDP suggests that the city consult with their land use attorney if it has any questions about this legislation.

Community Facilities Element - Synopsis

The Community Facilities Element is required to propose, as far into the future as is reasonable, the most appropriate and desirable patterns for the general location, character, and extent of public and semipublic buildings, land, and facilities. These facilities may include, but are not limited to fire stations, libraries, cultural facilities, hospitals, places of worship, school and education facilities, and parks.

Plan Analysis

Parks - The Rockville town center area is categorized as fairly high park equity in the DNR [MD Park Equity Mapper](#). The park projects are identified in the Implementation Chapter of the Plan and the action indicates that the projects should be included in the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan). These projects should be coordinated with the county and included in the County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP), if not already included.

MDP suggests that more analysis be added to the Draft Plan to ensure that the increase in population and proposed density will be supported by either existing or planned community facilities. This will ensure the approved master plan is generally supported by the adequate public facility ordinance, including the transportation system, public schools, water and sewer, solid waste, police, and fire and rescue facilities. It is unclear if this was done as part of the early analysis of the small area plan, partly because the Draft Plan does not have a chapter devoted to this topic.

Areas of Critical Concern Element - Synopsis

The Areas of Critical State Concern Element is required to include planning commission recommendations to determine, identify, and designate areas that are of critical state concern.

Plan Analysis

Add a note to the Draft Plan that the chapter relating to Historic Preservation is an issue of critical state concern. The Maryland Historic Trust supports the set of recommendations for the remaining historic properties within the town center.

Goals and Objectives Element - Synopsis

The Goals and Objectives Element requires that comprehensive plan goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards guide the development, economic growth, and social well-being of the community.

Plan Analysis

The Draft Plan provides goals and objective throughout the plan.

Housing Element - Synopsis

The Housing Element is required to address the need for housing within the jurisdiction that is affordable to low-income and workforce households. The housing element is required to also assess fair housing and ensure that a jurisdiction is affirmatively furthering fair housing through its housing and urban development programs.

Plan Analysis

MDP suggests that the city add the definitions of low-income and workforce housing, in accordance with the LUA Section 3-114, to the Draft Plan.

Land Use Element - Synopsis

The Land Use Element is required to reasonably project into the future the most appropriate and desirable patterns for the general location, character, extent, and interrelationship of the uses of public and private land.

Plan Analysis

The Land Use and Zoning Chapter set forth the urban character of the Town Center and seem to allow for a variety of uses on most properties. MDP suggests that flexibility, especially with commercial retail and office, be provided in the zoning districts so that the area can be responsive to market trends and not be burdened with requirements that cannot be fulfilled due to market constraints.

Development Regulations Element – Synopsis

The Development Regulations Element is required to include the planning commission's recommendations for land development regulations to implement the plan. Regulations are required to be flexible to promote innovative and cost saving site design, protect the environment and identify areas of growth. The areas identified for growth are required to encourage flexible regulations, which should further promote economic development using innovative techniques, streamlining the review of applications, including permit review and subdivision processing.

Plan Analysis

The city is in the process of updating its zoning ordinance and the Implementation Section of the Draft Plan discusses legislative actions needed to accomplish these strategies.

Sensitive Areas Element – Synopsis

The Sensitive Areas Element is required to include the goals, objectives, principles, policies, and standards designed to protect sensitive areas from the adverse effects of development (more recently referred to as climate change impacts). The LUA also assigns sensitive areas element data provision and review responsibilities to the Maryland Departments of the Environment and Natural Resources.

Plan Analysis

Protecting sensitive land features requires acknowledging the impacts from climate change. This Draft Plan has incorporated goals from the county Climate Action Plan to maximize transit ridership, encourage active transportation, and increase density at Metro stations and other activity centers. These transportation elements are designed to protect air quality by moving people away from the single occupancy vehicle. MDP commends the coordinating efforts with city and county plans to address impacts of climate change.

Transportation Element - Synopsis

The Transportation Element is required to reasonably project into the future the most appropriate and desirable location, character, and extent of transportation facilities to move individuals and goods, provide for bicycle and pedestrian access and travelways, and estimate the use of proposed improvements.

Plan Analysis

The Draft Plan provides a thorough analysis of the current major planning issues and goals for the town center area and lays out a clear pathway to address these issues and achieve the stated goals.

Water Resources Element – Synopsis

The Water Resources Element is required to consider available data provided by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to identify drinking water that will be adequate for the needs of existing and future development proposed in the plan, as well as suitable receiving waters and land areas to meet stormwater management and wastewater treatment and disposal needs. MDE and MDP are available to provide technical assistance to prepare the water resources element, ensuring consistency with MDE programs and goals

Plan Analysis

Since the Draft Plan is an amendment to the Rockville 2040 Plan, intended to update the vision for the Town Center, the water resources section is half a page (p. 84). This section refers to the Rockville 2040 Plan and states that there is sufficient water and sewer capacity to meet the land use recommendations

within the Draft Plan. However, it's unclear what projection was used to calculate water/sewer demand, as the Draft Plan includes some seemingly contradictory information regarding the number of proposed residential units. Page 39 of the Zoning & Land Use chapter indicates that "the Town Center planning area could accommodate up to 1,640 net new residential housing in addition to the 1,200 units that could be accommodated on the Metro station property" and later, "Goal 1: Target areas for higher density residential developments to reach 2,000 new residential units by 2040." It seems unclear whether the water/sewer demand projection is based on 1,640, 1,640+1,200, or 2,000 residential units.

These numbers were not found during a search of the Rockville 2040 Plan and the projections in that plan appear to be for the entire city, so it is unclear whether the residential unit projections in the Draft Plan used to estimate water/sewer availability to meet demand differ from those used in the Rockville 2040. It is also unclear whether non-residential land use in the Draft Plan differs from that in the Rockville 2040 Plan, and whether the city completed a capacity analysis to ensure available capacity for non-residential demand. MDP recommends clarification regarding these items.

The mineral element, the municipal growth element, and the fisheries elements are not addressed in this review as they are not applicable. The growth tier map indicates the entire area as tier one.

Plan Implementation

Implementation of the Draft Plan is discussed in the final chapter and provides for short-, mid- and long-term timeframes. If this Draft Plan is adopted, it will become part of the Rockville 2040 Plan. As a reminder, LUA Section 1-207(c)(6) requires jurisdictions to submit a comprehensive plan implementation report every five years.

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments
Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan**

STATE AGENCY COMMENTS

The following are state agency comments in support of MDP's review of the Draft Plan. Comments not included here may be submitted under separate cover, or via the State Clearinghouse. If comments from other agencies are received by MDP, the department will forward them to the city as soon as possible.

Attachments

Page 8: Maryland Department of Maryland Department of Housing and Community
 Development

Page 11: Maryland Department of the Environment

May 29, 2024

Susan Llareus
Maryland Department of Planning
301 West Preston Street, 11th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Ms. Llareus,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan (the “Plan”). When reviewing plans, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) comments on items for which political subdivisions can strategically leverage DHCD’s resources to accomplish their housing and community development goals. DHCD also reviews comprehensive plans for consistency with relevant statutes and, if appropriate, Sustainable Communities Plans.

Overall, DHCD staff were impressed with the quality of the Plan. Staff in the DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization reviewed the Plan and provided the following comments, which are meant to help realize the Plan’s goals. We present the following in no particular order:

1. The housing and economic development components of the Plan are consistent with and build upon the County’s Sustainable Communities Plan.
2. The Plan identifies a need to revitalize the community through adaptive reuse for which the DHCD’s Community Legacy Program grants could assist. Planning staff can learn more about Community Legacy online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CL.aspx> or contact Jessica Argueta at 410-209-5849 or jessica.argueta@maryland.gov.
3. The Plan identifies a goal to support the vitality of its downtown. DHCD’s Maryland Facade Improvement Program (MFIP) provides funding for aesthetic improvements to the exteriors of businesses located in Maryland’s Sustainable Communities in order to stimulate local economic activity and support community development. Planning staff can learn more about MFIP online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/StateRevitalizationPrograms/MFIP.aspx> or by contacting Jessica Argueta at 410-209-5849 or jessica.argueta@maryland.gov.
4. The Plan identifies a goal to support sustainable housing that enables seniors to age in place. DHCD can assist with home repairs that improve comfort, livability, and accessibility for homeowners through its Special Loan Programs. Planning staff and

residents can learn more about these programs at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Residents/Pages/SpecialLoans.aspx> or contact the program directly at 301-429-7409 or DHCD.SpecialLoans@maryland.gov.

5. The Plan identifies a goal to leverage redevelopment opportunities for which DHCD's Strategic Demolition Fund (SDF) grants could assist. Planning staff can learn more about SDF online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/SDF.aspx> or by contacting Jessica Argueta at 410-209-5849 or jessica.argueta@maryland.gov.
6. The Plan does not identify goals or actions regarding services for people experiencing homelessness. For information on DHCD's programs addressing homelessness, please see more online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HomelessServices/Pages/GrantFunding.aspx> or contact the Homelessness Solutions Program Manager, Suzanne Korff, at 410-209-5850 or Suzanne.Korff@maryland.gov. Persons experiencing homelessness who need assistance should contact 240-907-2688.
7. The Plan identifies the community's needs with respect to income and poverty. Rockville or non-profits active in Rockville may be eligible to apply for discretionary Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds administered by DHCD in order to provide services for low-income individuals and families at or below 125% of poverty. Planning staff can learn more about CSBG programs online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CSBG.aspx> or contact the Poverty Solutions Team at 301-429-7525 or csbg.dhcd@maryland.gov.
8. The Plan identifies a need for affordable housing, including workforce and low-income housing. If planning staff want to support further affordable housing development with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) or other DHCD programs, information is available online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/HousingDevelopment/Pages/lihtc/default.aspx> or contact Edward Barnett, Director of Rental Lending, at 301-429-7740 or edward.barnett@maryland.gov.
9. The Plan identifies a need to support businesses in the town's core. Info on DHCD's support for businesses can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Business/Pages/SmallBusinesses.aspx> or by contacting Mike Haloskey, Director of Business Lending Programs, at 301-429-7523 or Michael.Haloskey@maryland.gov.
10. The Plan identifies a need for infrastructure improvements that increase overall safety. DHCD's Community Health and Safety Works program is a potential resource to support these projects. More information on the program can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/csw/default.aspx> or by contacting Eric Borchers, Project Manager, at 410-209-5833 or eric.borchers@maryland.gov.



11. The Plan identifies a need to increase energy efficiency for buildings. DHCD has several programs that support energy efficiency, and more information on those programs can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/EnergyEfficiency/default.aspx>.
12. The Plan identifies a need to fill vacant commercial properties. DHCD's Project Restore can be leveraged to attract and retain businesses that occupy vacant properties. More information on the program can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Pages/ProjectRestore/default.aspx> or by contacting Kristin Dawson at 410-209-5847 or kristin.dawson@maryland.gov.

We in the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization look forward to continuing our productive partnership with Rockville in its future initiatives. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Plan. If you have any questions regarding the comments above, please contact me at carter.reitman@maryland.gov or 410-209-5849.

Sincerely,

Carter Reitman
Project Manager
State Revitalization Programs

Cc: Joseph Griffiths, Maryland Department of Planning
Jessica Argueta, DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization
John Papagni, DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization



MDE Comments for Environmental Clearinghouse Project MD20240507-0319

Response Code: C-1, R-1

1. Any above ground or underground petroleum storage tanks, which may be utilized, must be installed and maintained in accordance with applicable State and federal laws and regulations. Underground storage tanks must be registered and the installation must be conducted and performed by a contractor certified to install underground storage tanks by the Land and Materials Administration in accordance with COMAR 26.10. Contact the Oil Control Program at (410) 537-3442 for additional information.
2. If the proposed project involves demolition – Any above ground or underground petroleum storage tanks that may be on site must have contents and tanks along with any contamination removed. Please contact the Oil Control Program at (410) 537-3442 for additional information.
3. Any solid waste including construction, demolition and land clearing debris, generated from the subject project, must be properly disposed of at a permitted solid waste acceptance facility, or recycled if possible. Contact the Solid Waste Program at (410) 537-3315 for additional information regarding solid waste activities and contact the Resource Management Program at (410) 537-3314 for additional information regarding recycling activities.
4. The Solid Waste Program should be contacted directly at (410) 537-3315 by those facilities which generate or propose to generate or handle hazardous wastes to ensure these activities are being conducted in compliance with applicable State and federal laws and regulations. The Program should also be contacted prior to construction activities to ensure that the treatment, storage or disposal of hazardous wastes and low-level radioactive wastes at the facility will be conducted in compliance with applicable State and federal laws and regulations.
5. The proposed project may involve rehabilitation, redevelopment, revitalization, or property acquisition of commercial, industrial property. Accordingly, MDE's Brownfields Site Assessment and Voluntary Cleanup Programs (VCP) may provide valuable assistance to you in this project. These programs involve environmental site assessment in accordance with accepted industry and financial institution standards for property transfer. For specific information about these programs and eligibility, please Land Restoration Program at (410) 537-3437.
6. Borrow areas used to provide clean earth back fill material may require a surface mine permit. Disposal of excess cut material at a surface mine may requires site approval. Contact the Mining Program at (410) 537-3557 for further details.



**City of Rockville has submitted their City of Rockville Town Center Master Plan on
5/7/2024 to the State for review and comment,
Montgomery County**

Maryland Department of the Environment – WSA/WPRPP

**REVIEW FINDING: R2 Contingent Upon Certain Actions
(MD20240507-0319)**

The Water Resources & Public Utilities portion of the draft Plan indicates that an analysis was performed and found that there was adequate capacity for both water supply and wastewater for future land use. The plan should include a summary of the analysis.

Testimony regarding plans for re

Sami Khan <samikh94@gmail.com>

Fri 7/5/2024 9:21 AM

To:mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>;Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Hello Planning Commission, Mayor and Council Members,

My name is Sami Khan a resident of the Rockville Town Center. I attended a meeting discussing the Rockville Town Center Master Plan on July 24th, 2024 and had a comment I wanted to share with you that I wanted entered into the formal record.

One of the goals within the Town Center Master Plan (Goal 12) speaks about sustainable building practices such as the adaptive reuse of existing spaces. However, a number of the policy shifts in other sections of the document seem to encourage benefits for new construction - in particular the affordable housing bonus for increasing building heights and tax abatements. I would like to suggest that the council include policy to actively encourage developers to reuse existing infrastructure that is sitting unused rather than allow for as much new construction. One example includes the buildings that are unused on the corner of 51 Monroe Street & 255 Rockville Pike as shown on Map 13 of the Town Center Master Plan. Rather than require new buildings in that location, perhaps those buildings such can only be reused, but in choosing to do so the developer will receive some sort of subsidy.

New construction, while on average cheaper, also tends to bring about larger environmental impacts than renovations even with strict requirements on reuse of existing building materials etc. If the City can use tools such as tax breaks, subsidization for development, rezoning etc, to encourage developers to choose the adaptive reuse route rather than always opt for new construction I believe that would help the City better achieve its sustainability goals while incorporating its goals to boost Town Center's economic development. In addition, renovations would have smaller turn around times, which would help current residents avoid long construction related difficulties (such as increased traffic, noise etc).

Thank you for the forum to share my thoughts, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of public meetings as the development of Rockville Town Center continues.

Best,

--

Sami Ur-Rahman Khan, P.E

| M.S. Civil Engineering, 2018 | University of Maryland, College Park |

July 15, 2024

Ms. Katie Gerbes, AICP

Comprehensive Planning Manager
Community Planning and Development Services
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

SUBJECT: Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan

Dear Ms. Gerbes,

The Montgomery County Planning Department appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan. We appreciate the City's continued efforts to include Montgomery Planning as a part of its outreach efforts.

Overall, the Draft Plan advances many of the policies and practices in *Thrive Montgomery 2050* and other recent plans along the MD 355 corridor, such as increased densities near transit and new approaches to existing roadways. Additional detailed comments are attached to this letter for the City's consideration.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss our comments as well as the referenced initiatives at your convenience. The Montgomery County Planning Department looks forward to continuing our collaborative relationship with the City of Rockville on this and other initiatives.

Sincerely,



Jason K. Sartori
Planning Director

Attachment

cc: Carrie Sanders, Chief, Midcounty Planning Division
Jessica McVary, Master Plan Supervisor, Midcounty Planning Division
Nkosi Yearwood, Planner, Midcounty Planning Division

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT COMMENTS ON DRAFT 2024 ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN

Land Use

The City of Rockville's Town Center Draft Master Plan (2024) recommends more intense development, including building heights, within the Town Center area. The core area will allow by-right heights of up to 200 feet and buildings up to 75 feet for properties at the edge of the plan area. To promote more affordable housing, the Draft Plan recommends creating a bonus height program that provides additional height for any development project with a residential component that includes 20 percent or more moderately priced dwelling units (MDPUs) or other deed-restricted affordable housing. In the core area, up to 50 additional feet is proposed and up to 20 additional feet for edge properties.

Reduced Parking

The Draft Plan recommends eliminating minimum parking requirements for properties within ½ mile from the Rockville Metro Station or within ¼ mile from a bus rapid transit (BRT) station funded for construction. This is consistent with the County Council's recent action on parking.

Placemaking and Open Space

The Draft Plan recommends several approaches to promote placemaking and new open spaces in Town Center, including new wayfinding signs and creating new parks and open spaces. It also suggests that different funding mechanisms should be considered to determine how to manage public realm activities and improvements throughout the plan area. In addition, developing a unique brand for the area that builds upon the area's diversity and multicultural identity, and attracting anchor or destination uses should be considered.

Sustainability

The Draft Plan looks to the Climate Action Plan as the City's guide to achieving carbon neutrality. However, it does propose that flood prevention and mitigation should be addressed given Town Center's urban environment; explore the feasibility of developing a microgrid for the area; and promoting strategies to mitigate heat island impacts in the area.

Street Network

The City completed road diets on sections of N. Washington Street and E. Middle Lane in 2023, repurposing right-of-way to provide additional on-street parking and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The Draft Plan encourages new roadway extensions that further complete the street grid in Town Center: Maryland Avenue, which parallels MD-355, and Dawson Avenue, which connects the Maryland Avenue extension to MD-355. Both projects are included in the City's CIP and rely on future development to dedicate right-of-way.

Transportation Safety

The Draft Plan recommends transportation-related safety improvements, including bicycle and pedestrian improvements, traffic calming, complete streets features, and coordination with ongoing SHA audits. The Draft Plan specifically recommends efforts to coordinate safety improvements with

SHA on MD-28 and MD-355; it may be beneficial to coordinate MD-28 improvements with the study of MD-28 to reduce travel lanes on Key West Avenue that is recommended in the Planning Board Draft of the Great Seneca Plan.

Transit

The Draft Plan recommends working with WMATA and MCDOT to implement BRT along MD-355, site and connect planned MD-355 BRT stops with planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and inventory and improve existing bus stops with real time notifications, shelters, and seating.

Wayfinding and Connectivity

The Draft Plan recommends actions to improve Town Center wayfinding and connectivity between Town Center and adjacent neighborhoods, including adopting and implementing a comprehensive wayfinding plan; completing a feasibility study for complete streets improvements to Beall Avenue; improving the Park Road underpass of the WMATA and CSX tracks; and coordinating with WMATA to improve the western side of Unity Bridge, which connects people walking, biking, and rolling across the WMATA and CSX tracks.

July 17, 2024

Via Electronic Mail

Shayan Salahuddin, Chair
Rockville Planning Commission
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Town Center Master Plan

Dear Chair Salahuddin and Members of the Planning Commission:

On behalf of Promark Partners, the owners of the property located at 451 Hungerford Drive (the “Property”), we would like to recommend two additions to the Town Center Master Plan for your consideration to be discussed at the upcoming worksession on the Master Plan on July 24, 2024. The first relates to the service lane currently designated along the 451 Hungerford Drive frontage and the second relates to the importance of promoting residential uses over the preservation of under-utilized office buildings. The Property is currently improved with a 101,000 square foot office building, with ground floor retail. We propose the two additions to the Master Plan with an eye toward the potential future redevelopment of the Property to accommodate residential use.

1. Service Lane

The recorded plat of the Property (Plat No. 12541) provides for a 30 foot wide service lane that runs parallel to Hungerford Drive. The concept of service drives is a relic from the past, when transporting automobile traffic was the priority and buildings were positioned far from the street, allowing for expansive rights of ways. Functionally, the existing service lane design is problematic and becomes a limiting factor for the future redevelopment of the site. It is contrary to the urban design notion of locating structures close to the right-of-way to help frame the street, establish a safer pedestrian environment, create visual interest and provide a more urbanized environment. The service lane also creates significant confusion between vehicles and pedestrians. To this end, service lanes on other parcels along Hungerford Drive and Rockville Pike have been removed upon redevelopment.

We have met with Planning Staff to discuss the removal of the service lane and there appeared to be support for this, although it was noted that the additional right-of-way may nonetheless be needed to accommodate the bus rapid transit (“BRT”). We therefore request that the following language be added to the Master Plan:

Support the elimination of the 30 foot wide service lane along the frontage of the 451 Hungerford Road property, provided that this additional right-of-way is not needed to accommodate the future BRT.

2. Prioritizing Housing

The City of Rockville recognizes the severe housing shortage affecting Rockville, as well as the larger District, Maryland and Virginia region, and we applaud the City's efforts to address this. As you are aware, currently the demolition of any structure within the City of Rockville requires the approval of the Historic District Commission ("HDC"). As the HDC considers the demolition of office buildings to make way for the development of needed residential uses, we think it is important that the Master Plan include language that conveys the importance of prioritizing new residential development over the preservation of underutilized, soon to be obsolete, office buildings. In this regard, we recommend the following language for inclusion in the Master Plan:

Prioritize new needed residential development over the preservation of existing office buildings within the Town Center Master Plan area.

Finally, we would like to voice our support for the language in the Master Plan (Goal 2, Policy 2.1) recommending that the parking requirements within the Town Center be revised to eliminate minimum parking requirements for properties within ½ mile of the Rockville Metro station and that the parking requirements for properties outside the ½ mile radius be reviewed. Eliminating the parking minimums will allow developments to provide only the parking that is needed and at the same time, promote the use of non-auto modes of transportation.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our recommendations with you for inclusion in the Town Center Master Plan. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Harris

cc: Katie Gerbes

The Rockville Environment Commission has reviewed the Rockville Town Center Master Plan and is pleased to submit its comments in support of the plan's environmental, climate and sustainability goals. A general comment is that many planning actions that improve livability, culture and economic development also naturally work in favor of environmental goals. We encourage the city to continue to seek out such opportunities for all-around wins.

We would particularly like to highlight the following categories of actions:

Increasing density of amenities, housing and mass transit

Dense urban development, in which the things people need in the course of ordinary life are within walking, biking or transit distance of each other, is both appealing and energy- and resource-efficient. Dense urban development also preserves the natural areas outside the city limits by preventing sprawl. Town Center has been developing according to this urban pattern in recent years and the new master plan has several action items that will encourage this trajectory, particularly in light of changing workforce and economic patterns that necessitate adaptive reuse of buildings (e.g., shifting from shopping and offices to more diverse housing and social spaces). Repurposing and redeveloping existing land and buildings is a priority for sustainability.

1.1.1 - Modify zoning regulations within Town Center to allow and encourage innovative and creative development and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to development.
12.1.1 - Encourage and allow flexibility for the adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of commercial properties as market demand changes over time. Work with property owners to find creative solutions to meet the City's regulatory requirements when adaptive reuse projects are proposed.

A key component of both livability and climate action goals is increasing the adoption of mass transit. We would particularly like to highlight action 5.2, "Make improvements to existing bus service and bus stops." People will be more likely to use the bus system if buses are frequent and reliable and bus stops feel safe and comfortable. Providing seating and shelter at bus stops, particularly during increasingly extreme weather, will make buses a more attractive option for those who have other alternatives and is an equity and justice consideration for those who do not.

5.1 - Monitor and support the implementation of bus rapid transit along MD-355.
5.2 - Make improvements to existing bus service and bus stops.

Disincentivizing parking in favor of more dynamic land uses

Meeting climate action goals will require a drastic reduction in the use of single-occupancy vehicles. Parking lots are at the center of a vicious cycle of car-dependency: parking requires copious land, which pushes destinations further apart, which creates the necessity for driving and thus reinforces the need for car parking. A first step toward recalibrating and right-sizing land use in urban contexts like the Town Center planning

area is removing parking minimums near transit options and converting underutilized parking lots to more productive uses. Several actions in the Master Plan address this. We would like to emphasize that eliminating or loosening the regulations on *minimums* does not mean the radical elimination of parking altogether, but rather creates the flexibility for land use to evolve away from parking as priorities change.

1.2.1 – Encourage WMATA to release a joint development solicitation to redevelop their surface parking lots.

2.1.1 – Eliminate minimum parking requirements within ½ mile of Rockville Metro station or ¼ mile from a bus rapid transit station.

2.1.2 – Review code and develop updated off-street parking requirements for properties outside of ½ mile radius from Metro.

Thoughtfully planning green space

The Town Center Master Plan includes several provisions for strategically using green space not just for recreation, but for urban heat island effect mitigation, flood water management and carbon capture. We would like to particularly highlight the need to plant copious native plants, which support native insects and birds, allowing urban centers to contribute to biodiversity. To maximize these benefits, the city will need to work with property owners and businesses to promote green roofs and native plant landscaping to ensure continuity with city-managed spaces. For example, in synergy with other goals in the plan, the city could use the opportunity to put green roofs or solar panels on bus stop shelters. Taken together, these efforts will help continue to support Rockville's Sustainable Maryland and Tree City USA designations.

12.2.1 - Ensure that the Flood Resiliency Master Plan, currently in development by the Department of Public Works, addresses the unique challenges of Town Center regarding flood prevention and mitigation given its dense and urban development pattern.

12.2.3 - Develop and promote strategies to mitigate urban heat island impacts on Town Center. Work with property owners and businesses to educate them on changes to the built environment that can help tackle the effects of urban heat island, such as providing shade structures, incorporating trees and native plants into landscaping, or building green roofs.

12.2.4 - Establish a connected network of green spaces throughout the Town Center Planning Area.

Multi-level collaboration on electrification projects

The Town Center Master Plan will coordinate with the in-development EV Readiness Plan to provide electric vehicle charging in the Town Center planning area, encouraging EV adoption by residents and workers. Not directly addressed in the plan, but a solution that should be strongly considered, is the use of solar panel canopies over parking lots to power both EV charging and general grid energy. Solar canopies provide shade and increase the productivity of parking lots, and federal and state [grant](#)

and incentive programs exist. A parking lot solar canopy array is part of the [Montgomery County Public Safety Headquarters Microgrid](#). The Environment Commission was particularly excited to see point 12.2.2, regarding the development of a microgrid in Town Center to provide backup power to county and city buildings in the event of grid failure. If developed, a microgrid in Town Center could also be a testing ground for implementing distributed and resilient electricity infrastructure throughout the city. The Commission recognizes that electrification projects such as these will require navigating and coordinating activities across federal, state, county and city institutions.

2.1.3 – Expand electric vehicle charging in Town Center per EV Readiness Plan.

12.2.2 - Partner with Pepco, Montgomery County, and other property owners to assess the cost and feasibility of developing a microgrid in Town Center to serve as a backup power for critical functions.

Signed,
The Rockville Environment Commission
William McClain, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. McClain', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Members
Sasha Mushegian, Summer White, Susan Koester, Clark Reed, Ted Stauderman,
Pavitra Srinivasan, Jen Hawse

FW: Draft Town Center Master Plan (PLAN)

steven.steven@vangracklaw.com <steven@stevenvangracklaw.com>

Mon 8/12/2024 4:23 PM

To: Jim Wasilak <jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Eric Fulton <emfulton@yahoo.com>; Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Jim Wasilak

I was intending to speak, during public comment, before the Planning Commission's Meeting on August 14 and was advised there will be no public comment. I was also advised there was no provision for public record at this meeting. However, I understand the public record shall be kept open until September 11. Would you please make sure that the Planning Commission receives this communication prior to the meeting of August 14.

Please confirm.

Steven VanGrack

The August 7, 2024 Planning Commission Memo from the staff of the Department of Planning and Development Services is exceptional.

The introductory statements provide for exactly what the Town Center needs. “To create a flexible regulatory environment that allows Town Center to thrive by enabling by-right development and allowing the market to dictate the ‘highest and best’ uses over the next two decades” and “to prioritize the development of additional residential housing units with a particular emphasis on affordable and attainable housing units” are accurate areas to emphasize.

The Town Center and the City of Rockville will be greatly enhanced by the positive support of the Plan by the Planning Commissions.

1. Proposed height limits are very good and might be slightly increased. The Bonus Height Program is superb.
2. Elimination and reduction of parking requirements within a ⁵⁴½ mile distance from the

Rockville Metro Station is excellent.

3. There should be a one step by-right development process without additional layers of discretionary reviews and take less than one year from formal proposal submission to final review.
4. The additional housing units should specifically prioritize work force housing. (Rockville City, Montgomery County and State of Maryland employees)
5. The Task Force should include Montgomery County Government, Circuit and District Courthouses, Rockville Economic Development Inc., Rockville Chamber of Commerce, Montgomery College, WMATA, Rockville Police Department, Rockville Volunteer Fire Department, and legislative and executive representatives of the State of Maryland.
6. The Rockville Metro Station needs urgent and massive revisions with greatly enhanced pedestrian access to the Town Center.
7. Town Center should be overwhelmingly safe from crime which could include extensive security cameras, extensive signage of cameras and

volunteer public safety officers walking around at all times.

Respectfully submitted

Steven VanGrack

8.

9.

August 27, 2024

Hon. Mayor Monique Ashton and City Council
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Rockville Metrorail Station Visioning Study

Dear Mayor Ashton and Members of the City Council,

The Traffic and Mobility Commission (TMC) has been paying close attention to the city's progress on the Rockville Metrorail Station Visioning Study, both when it was a separate project and most recently as a component of the Rockville Town Center Master Plan. While the TMC has provided the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Council with comments related to the Rockville Town Center Master Plan, those comments did not include the Rockville Metrorail Station Visioning Study.

The TMC supports the recommended development concept of the study. The TMC concurs that this is a practical alternative that can be implemented by WMATA and the city with available resources and will lead to redeveloping the area surround the Metrorail Station into an attractive station, hosting a mix of uses and amenities, providing both convenient transit connections, and opportunities to support further economic development in Rockville. The other development concepts, reconstruction of 255 Rockville Pike or undergrounding Rockville Pike, included real obstacles to implementation and would likely have prevented opportunities for redevelopment had they been selected. The TMC also recognizes that the preferred concept does not preclude the consideration and further exploration of those alternatives in the future when their implementation may be more feasible.

In addition to supporting the preferred development concept, the TMC provides the following comments for your consideration.

1. Pedestrian bridge over Rockville Pike (MD 355). This bridge is the best option for pedestrians crossing MD 355 and both the city and WMATA should make additional efforts to provide clear directional signage for rail users to access the pedestrian bridge. Also, the TMC recommends additional lighting and other safety measures be provided on the pedestrian bridge so that a pedestrian's personal sense of security is improved. Furthermore, the city should improve the pedestrian plaza and park between the pedestrian bridge and Monroe Street so that it is more welcoming and comfortable for all pedestrians.
2. Bridge extension over boarding platforms and rail tracks. The preferred development concept includes an additional "add-on" pedestrian bridge extension that would be constructed over the railroad tracks and would provide access to the boarding platforms. The TMC supports this "add-on" pedestrian bridge extension. The current configuration does not encourage use of the pedestrian bridge because it requires transit users to travel down a level and then up two levels to access the pedestrian bridge. Since "add-on" is likely to be expensive and cannot be funded in part by WMATA, the TMC recommends that the city explore this improvement in a future feasibility study and cost benefit analysis.
3. Wayfinding. As part of any redevelopment of the Metrorail station and surrounding area, it is necessary to provide new and comprehensive wayfinding. Wayfinding should not only provide

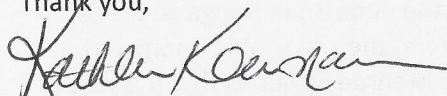
direction to transit users and pedestrians to trains, connecting transit modes, and the station entrances, but also to the pedestrian bridge, the Rockville Town Center/Town Square, County and City offices, and nearby parks. The wayfinding should also be designed consistently with the city's new logo and branding, and other wayfinding in Rockville.

4. Crossing Rockville Pike (MD 355). The most difficult part of accessing the Metrorail station is crossing Rockville Pike. While the TMC posits the pedestrian bridge as the primary entrance to the station, many residents and visitors will continue to cross Rockville Pike at Monroe Place/Church Street and at E. Middle Lane/Park Road. MDOT SHA recently audited these intersections in response to the city's request and installed no turn on red and flex posts to the Monroe Place/Church Street intersection and new crosswalk markings to the E. Middle Lane/Park Road intersection. The TMC recommends the city and any future redevelopment coordinate with MDOT SHA to carry out additional improvements at these intersections and consider pedestrian refuge medians, more lighting, leading pedestrian intervals, pedestrian recall, and other improvements. The need for additional pedestrian improvements at these intersections will be reinforced when the BRT is operational.
5. Incremental zoning east of the Metrorail station. The proposed redevelopment concept includes approximately 1,180 new residential units, a 25,000 square foot train hall, and 10,000 square feet of open space. This will create a significantly different development pattern compared to the single-family homes east of S. Stonestreet Avenue. The TMC recommends that the blocks west of Grandin Avenue be rezoned to increase their densities or to permit incremental densities. This would permit those property owners to redevelop their own properties and create a smoother gradient between the Metrorail station area the residential area to the east.

The TMC requests the Mayor and Council consider these comments when reviewing the Rockville Town Center Master Plan draft and incorporate them as appropriate. The Rockville Metrorail Station development vision and the Rockville Town Center Master Plan will help provide direction for the city to create an engaging and active community to benefit residents and visitors alike.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Thank you,



Kathleen Kleinmann, Chair

Rockville Transportation and Mobility Commission

Rockville Town Center

Claire Hannan <channan2530@gmail.com>

Tue 9/3/2024 10:42 AM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Claire Hannan <channan2530@gmail.com>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear members of the City of Rockville Planning Commission –

Thank you for your service and thank you for listening to input from residents. Please continue to seek input and resist the desire to go over and above what is discussed in the public comment process.

Request to Planning Commission in its recommendations to Mayor and Council in plan for Rockville Town Center:

- 1. Keep the Western border building height limit at 75 feet, as recommended in the draft plan.**
- 2. Do not eliminate or lessen the city's requirement that developments in Town Center include a minimum of parking spaces.**
- 3. Do not develop the current parking lot on Martin's Lane into a park.**

Building Height

With regard to the building height for the area of Rockville Town Center, please keep the edge limit at 75 feet as recommended by the City of Rockville. This is important to me as a resident of West End. The building height should be similar to the height across the street, which is 75 feet, and it should also not be so high so as to tower over the residences in the West End. I do not support creating a special exception zone on the west edge of Town Center and allowing a height limit of 120 feet.

Parking

Please do not eliminate the city's requirement that developments in Rockville Town Center include a minimum of parking spaces.

Developers need to provide adequate parking, regardless of how close to the Metro their location is. And you should not even be discussing an elimination of parking requirements for developers throughout Town Center. That was not even considered in the draft presented to the public. Again, please do not allow developers any exceptions to providing the minimum required parking in their developments.

Please do not consider changing the parking lot across from the Post Office into a park without providing parking alternatives to Post Office employees. It's not worth it to make that park space (it's small) when it will only add to the congestion of the area as more cars will have no parking.

Thank you,

Claire Hannan

Anderson Ave

West End Resident

channan2530@gmail.com

Town Center Master Plan

Sarah Looney Oldmixon <sarah.oldmixon@gmail.com>

Tue 9/3/2024 2:15 PM

To:Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

I know that there are vocal members of our community who oppose a Town Center master plan that increases density, relaxes height requirements, and reduces parking space requirements, so I want to weigh in with a different perspective.

I moved to central Rockville two years ago precisely because I wanted to live in a walkable community. I am a West End home owner and I support updates to the master plan for Town Center that decrease car-centered design and allow for denser residential options. I am eager to have a vibrant, transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly Town Center where businesses can thrive and there are a range of housing options available for local residents.

I look forward to seeing a progressive vision for our city adopted and implemented in the months ahead.

Thank you -

Sarah Oldmixon
7 Dale Dr, Rockville, MD 20850

Feedback on Rockville Town Center Master Plan

Roselie Bright <roseliemail@gmail.com>

Wed 9/4/2024 6:43 PM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Hi,

I apologize for thinking of offering these comments rather late in the public comment period. Nevertheless, I hope the planners give these ideas serious consideration. I think they will make Town Center an even more attractive place to live and do business without adversely affecting the surrounding areas.

1. The following air and energy provisions should be at least encouraged, during major renovations or new developments:

- a. Dig geothermal trenches or wells to supply the heat and cooling for the building(s). As the climate warms, and air conditioning becomes more necessary, geothermal cooling will become more and more economically and environmentally attractive. Unlike traditional air conditioning units, geothermal air conditioning units don't pump more heat into the air around the buildings. Geothermal units are more economical for large buildings. The only downside, having to drill wells or trenches, is best addressed when the ground is bound to be disturbed in any case.
- b. Roadways and rights of way are opportunities for geothermal trenches and wells. The City should consider using the ground-temperature fluids that are the outputs of geothermal trenches and wells as a public utility for adjacent buildings, and/or offering geothermal resources with public/private partnerships of some kind.
- c. Buildings should be designed to maximize opportunities for capturing solar energy with solar panels.
- d. Parking lots, including surface lots, such as the post office lots, can have solar canopies that provide both shade and electricity.
- e. Sidewalks and bus stops are opportunities for installing solar panels to provide shade, rain shelter, and electricity.
- f. The ventilation and air cleaning systems in all new and renovated buildings should be required to meet the new ASHRAE standards [<https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources>, accessed 2023 09 23.]. We are in a new era of realizing how damaging it is to get infected and reinfected with airborne pathogens. Air pollution damages our health. Higher carbon dioxide levels make people less productive. ASHRAE standards will help ensure that the occupants aren't catching infections, are protected from smog and smoke, and are more productive.
- g. The combination of geothermal and solar energy offers the opportunity for providing at least medically-necessary heating, air conditioning and electricity during network power outages. This will be a boon for elderly and disabled people who need both a narrow band of temperature, and enough electricity for medical devices, to survive while remaining in place.

h. Natural gas should not be allowed. The risks from explosions, leaks, combustion products, and climate change are no longer acceptable because gas costs will rise, and electricity is much less risky and less expensive.

2. Regarding parking provisions for each building, including the post office: I'm concerned that surrounding neighborhoods will end up bearing the burdens of overflow parking. Different incentives need to be considered to encourage people to give up their personal vehicles: tax incentives, guaranteed timely rides, etc.

3. The impact on schools MUST be considered. Denser development is not free. Children have always lived in dense housing. Rockville must protect the education of its children by ensuring enough school capacity with permanent classrooms (not portables) and low teacher to student ratios. The old Rock Terrace School lot could be developed into a new K-5 or K-12 school with an attractive alternative education strategy such as Montessori.

Sincerely,

Roselie A. Bright, ScD (Doctor of Science in Epidemiology with minor in Environmental Health)

Residence: 598 Mannakee St, Rockville 20850

Mailing address: 451 Hungerford Dr Ste 119-214, Rockville 20850

TOILET, WC, RESTROOM, WASHROOM, LOO, OUTHOUSE, BATHROOM

No matter what you call it, we all need to use it, and we all must use it EVERY DAY! And more than once, no matter who, or where, we are. There's also the "when."

That truly becomes a dilemma in public spaces like Rockville Town Square/Town Center that are open to the entire public; babies in diapers, toddlers, young children, old, older, oldest, those in wheelchairs.

For visitors who don't live nearby, if they have to "go," options are limited. Even with porta-potties that are placed for special, larger events, any options become even more limited for those in wheel chairs, with limited mobility, or with special needs.

Now I will address the "when." Anyone who is out and about in town center or the square in early morning will notice that maintenance staff are already at work keeping the sidewalks, Gibbs, and the square swept clean of trash and debris, garbage emptied. These staff are human beings who have the same needs. No business is yet open, including the library.

And then she has to "go." Where does she turn?

What would you do in a similar circumstance? You can't rush home because you bussed in, and because you're female, you can't exactly go "rogue" in some dark corner of a parking garage. You can only "hold it" for so long.

Also note that, at their entrances, many businesses post "Restrooms are for customers ONLY!" Others, to deter non-customers, (and maintenance staff) lock their restroom doors, either with a numbered keypad or an actual key.

Fortunately, I have the means to actually buy something in order to gain the privilege of using any businesses' restrooms. BUT..... that is not the case for many others. Instead, they will patronize public spaces that actually accommodate their need. As an example, we often drive to Pike and Rose to just walk around, maybe shop, and maybe dine, confident that we are welcome. THEY have public restrooms.

A little while ago, we visited Frederick, our neighbor city to the north. Next to the parking garage elevator, I noticed public toilets, right there to be used by anyone. WOW! And that city has an even older infrastructure than Rockville! Go figure.

So, you may ask, "Why should Rockville bother to install public restrooms in its town center, and the county's seat of government?"

With that question, the answer is glaring in your face. It is also a center for businesses and, even more importantly, a center for socializing. The town's square is the perfect place for

anyone to enjoy whether alone or just to be together. It's a happy place to be, young and old. It's a place for people to connect, to get to know one another, and to care.

And the more welcoming any space is, the longer people are likely to stay and patronize a business.

The biggest welcome sign a public space can display..... drum roll here..... is public restrooms. There are plenty of empty and unused spaces. Make them useful by turning some into restrooms.

Yes, indeed. Not festivals, free food and drinks, not clowns on stilts. The availability of restrooms open to the public acknowledges the human needs of the town's patrons. It acknowledges our humanity.

You, as the leaders of our community, must now lead. We know it is not easy and are aware of its challenges. It took courage for you to ask people to vote for you and your ideals. And it takes that very same courage to now take those initial steps to lay down the welcome mat in this town, for everyone.

Aby and Ilze Mohseni

38 Maryland Ave., Unit 333

Rockville, MD, 20850

Ilze.mohseni@gmail.com

Aby.mohseni@gmail.com

Town Center Master Plan

Phillip Staub <ptstaub@gmail.com>

Fri 9/6/2024 4:40 PM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>; Jim Wasilak
<jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Good afternoon,

I am enthusiastically supportive of the draft Master Plan. The points in the executive summary hit all the right notes. The proposed measures are well-thought out to support those goals.

As a West End resident, my greatest wish is for a vibrant, walkable, and equitable town center. The Master Plan addresses these needs: dense, more affordable, and transit-friendly development. Downtown Rockville is full of potential, which the Master Plan seeks to unlock. The focus on housing over additional retail or office is well-placed.

As a daily transit user, I am excited about the train hall. Metro/MARC should be a welcoming entry into the town with great signage (also included in the plan). I hope a reimagined pedestrian bridge will more effectively funnel people into town center.

I'm also happy to see consideration of walkers and bikers and parking reductions. Safety is key to encouraging people onto their feet and pedals, away from cars. I've seen positive change from the recently installed road diets and hope those efforts will grow.

Park enhancement is similarly laudable. Town center could use a dog park, particularly as it welcomes more residents.

If, hopefully when, the vision comes to fruition, my sight-lines will change--buildings in town center will be visible over the trees. I welcome it. I chose to live in an area ideally suited to that kind of development. It's what Rockville needs and I want it to happen. A big part of living here is enjoying the amenities that development bring, and the quality of life engendered by a diverse, expanding population. The plan goes plenty far enough to address concerns about tall buildings walling off single-family neighborhoods like mine by including step-down requirements along our borders with the core. Any further height restrictions will frustrate town center's success.

Please let me know if there is any way I can further support this insightful plan. Happy to work on a commission or other citizen role.

Thank you for your fine work and great vision for Rockville,
Phill Staub
206 Upton St

revisions to Town Center plan

eksobarg@lycos.com <eksobarg@lycos.com>

Fri 9/6/2024 9:37 AM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>; Grabosket <grabosket@yahoo.com>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Folks,

I fail to understand the need for more density in the Town Center, especially without adding to the number of parking places. People, especially the disabled and elderly, need cars for their everyday lives. Who goes to a grocery on a bike? Or on the Metro?! It is impossible to carry a week's worth of food in less than 4 bags, so a car is necessary. Who takes a family trip to the Eastern shore on bikes? Whether you like it or not, Town Center residents will have cars, and they will park them in the nearby residential neighborhoods.

But, again, why increase the density? All I can think of is the new residents will provide more tax revenue. I don't believe the city is short of funds for the things it should be doing, such as police. Yes, there are many nice-to-do projects and programs, but these should be prioritized within the present budget. The new residents' children will flood the local schools, requiring expansion and new schools. Those construction costs, and teacher salaries, will eat up that revenue. You may retort that those costs are not paid by the city, and you will be correct. The Board of Education and the state will be on the hook. But, ultimately it is we taxpayers who will have to foot these bills.

Your changes aim to change the character of the center of the city, making it more like Bethesda. If I wanted to live in downtown Bethesda, I would be there now. Rockville need not, and should not, try to emulate Bethesda. Raising the height restrictions will not improve the quality of the environment for current residents in the Town Center area.

Frederick J. Graboske

Master Plan for Rockville Town Center

Trish Graboske <grabosket@gmail.com>

Fri 9/6/2024 11:44 AM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Fred <eksobarg@lycos.com>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

I protest the changes introduced to the Master Plan for Rockville Town Center (RTC) on August 14. These changes seriously affect the West End neighborhood, and the quality of life in Rockville. They were introduced at this time to circumvent public discussion by concerned citizens.

The Rockville Planning Commission knows that most citizens:

- do not want taller buildings and higher density in RTC,
- do not want the City's requirements for parking spaces eliminated and left up to developers, and
- do not want the RTC exempted from the City's normal Adequate Public Facilities Standard for schools.

The City of Rockville has standards for building height, parking spaces, and school capacity calculations for a reason. These 11th-hour changes ignore what the City of Rockville has put in place. But they are there because the City's citizens agreed on them!!

Best regards,

Patricia Jamison Graboske

Mayor and Council Public Hearings

Anusha Dharmasena <anusha1869@gmail.com>

Sat 9/7/2024 1:34 PM

To: Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Hello Katie

My name is Anusha Dharmasena and I live in the City of Rockville.

You said in an email to Aby who I'm working with that the most impactful way to get our thoughts across to the mayor and council would be to send something in writing in the absence of our presence at a meeting.

So, here I go!

It's the year 2020 and Covid came and the entire world changed.

The older generation with education and experience that built this country are on their way out. Now, the younger generation have to step up and grab the baton. I'm not confident that they will be ready or able unless they pursue paths of education. We will have let in immigration from countries of intelligence. This is my thinking from my field of economics and years at the Federal Reserve.

Now... where do we go from this perspective to redesigning our Town Center at extravagant costs and facing the passing of the older generations that are around us? It's a beautiful city that will soon be unaffordable to folks working for 18/- an hour and lack the education and thinking to take us to the century before us.

Having said that — I would like mayor and council to think about the following that I see with my eyes.

- * Rise in homelessness
- * Rise in crime rates
- * Rise in cost of living: Rent / Food

The older folk spend time in the Town Square while the younger generations enjoy a stroll with their babies. Only the council will have the data that show how many apartments are rented and what age category occupies it.

With all the building proposals that are being made I suggest thinking seriously about the following—

- * Age
- * Increasing mental issues
- * Public transportation (excellent)
- * Public safety
- * Public bathrooms for elderly who can only be in a diaper for perhaps 2 hours
- * Public parking
- * Homeless shelters to provide sleeping accommodation and laundry facilities as opposed to sleeping on

streets buildings we live-in and try to use our laundry rooms.

Thank you to all who read my concerns and thank the council for providing us with solutions to problems that will increase if we don't think of it now. With the ever changing political landscape we need to be always ready.

Thank You
Anusha Dharmasena

Sent from my iPhone

Rockville Town Center Affordable Housing Development and School Exceptions

AllThingsMCPS@gmail.com <allthingsmcps@gmail.com>

Mon 9/9/2024 6:49 PM

To:Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Commissioners,

The commission's plan to bring (a minimum) goal of 2,000 "affordable housing" units to Rockville will have an undeniably negative effect on the immediate area. Of upmost importance is the effect this will have on Rockville's schools. Under no circumstances should the Rockville Planning commission consider their plans a candidate for imposing exceptions to APFS.

Beall Elementary, Julius West Middle School, and Richard Montgomery High School are already crowded, 120% capacity as acknowledged by the commissioners during the most recent meeting. What Rockville needs first and foremost is the help of commissioners to install improvements for the existing students so that they can succeed in an already crowded facility. Overcrowded, unsafe spaces such as Gaithersburg High School should be the exception, not the norm.

The commission knowingly adding to already crowded local schools and busses for the sake of more 40 housing is an egregious error. The trajectory this housing conversation has taken is very concerning and disappointing. **Rockville schools being allowed to run in their current crowded state is the problem and the addition of 2,000 new units is insult to injury.**

The commission claims to be attempting to build a better Rockville, but the projection of a mere 100 students being added from the addition of 2,000 units is a wildly, knowingly, and destructively inaccurate figure. This projection gives pause to the real benefactors of this plan.

At times, the commissioners seem irritated by the very existence of regulatory standards. They have lost sight of what brings people to Rockville. Moratoriums are not placed in effect lightly. Projects like these are effected with good reason. School standards are in place for a reason and this project, for all its failings, should not be exempt from acting to protect the city's resident tax-payers.

Another example of short sightedness; minimizing available parking for the sake of increasing "affordable housing" units impacts the need for (school) busses, further

depriving current residents of resources. It will also effect surrounding communities as street parking becomes a commodity.

Rockville is a place people want to be because it is a uniquely safe place that offers a wide swath of thriving businesses, arts, access to safe and high-quality schools, and endless opportunities. Rockville succeeds because (and when) the planning commission addresses the problems at hand.

Put the horse back in front of the cart, no exceptions.

Not in support of increasing development around town center exempting the public standard

Laurie Fromberg <lauriefromberg@gmail.com>

Mon 9/9/2024 3:19 PM

To:Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

It was brought to my attention that at the previous meeting in August 2024, the city discussed excepting the Town center from the city's standards ensuring adequate public facilities including school capacity. Currently our school cluster is maxed out with Julius West being the largest middle school in FBS county and portables necessary at Richard Montgomery. This would be detrimental to the children and education and lower home values as our schools and family are part of the reason we chose to live in Rockville. It is vital to keep Rockville a good place to raise families and I urge you to not exempt the public standard.

-Dr Laurie Fromberg
Anderson Ave

Comments on Planning Commission's Draft Plan

Karen Folkart <kfolkart@hotmail.com>

Tue 9/10/2024 2:58 PM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Mike Folkart <mfolkart@hotmail.com>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Planning Commission,

We just yesterday learned of the Planning Commission's draft plan to establish a goal to develop 2,000 residential units within Rockville Town Center, and your discussions around exempting the Town Center area from the City's standards that ensure there are adequate public facilities for any new development.

As City of Rockville residents and parents of a child that has attended Beall, Julius West and now Richard Montgomery, we were distressed to hear this, and are NOT in favor of this exemption.

When we were at Beall it had numerous portable classrooms to support the students, because they could not be accommodated in the main building. This also meant that common areas (library, gym, & cafeteria) could not support the extra children, and it was impossible to have schoolwide assemblies, or even one back-2-school night, because of capacity issues. The opening of Rustin Bayard fixed this issue, but adding 2,000 new residences will likely put us right back to where we were a few years ago.

Now at RM, we again have portables and a lunch room that accommodates only about a third of the school's students. This is not ideal, especially as MCPS discusses changes for safety and security plans for the future that could include new protocols for students entering and leaving the buildings multiple times a day. We doubt adding more students to this mix would help. This year the class sizes also increased, and we lost seven teaching positions⁷⁵. We are at capacity, and the thought

of making exemptions that could impact the schools again seems irresponsible.

We have not had the opportunity to review the Commission's Plan given that we just found out about it, but we wanted to voice our concerns and opinion as a family impacted by this plan and any exemptions. We also feel the Planning Commission should be engaging more directly with the schools, principals, and families attending before making any final decisions or exemptions. In general, we feel there should be a compelling reason for any exemption, since the rules were put in place for a reason, and that reason should not just be more development.

Thank you for your time.

Karen & Mike Folkart

26 year City of Rockville residents



September 10, 2024

Rockville Planning Commission
City Hall
Rockville, Maryland

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for the hard work you do on behalf of Rockville residents, and for your recent consideration of the Town Center Master Plan Update.

At your August 14 meeting, you made significant changes to the plan draft that had been through a lengthy public comment period, a short time before the draft is scheduled to go to the Mayor and Council. These changes include:

- the creation of a third character area on the western border with allowable building heights much higher than the rest of that border
- eliminating parking minimums throughout the entirety of Town Center and
- making it easier for developers to obtain higher bonus heights without providing additional affordable or attainable housing units

These things would have major impacts, not foreseen in the original plan draft on which residents could comment. They would affect future residents of and visitors to Town Center and bordering neighbors, and could diminish achievement of some of the city's identified goals for Town Center.

These changes to the plan draft were made during summer vacation time in an untelevised meeting, and the resulting new draft has not been made available to the commenting public at the EngageRockville site created for community feedback. Under the current schedule, the plan draft with your final changes would be available to the public just days before the M+C public hearing on October 7.

Situations like these can lead residents to lose faith in the seriousness of the public review process and question the value the city places on community feedback. So that residents can digest and comment on the complete plan you will send to the Mayor and Council, and the M+C can consider and act on an openly vetted plan, we urge the Planning Commission to add a public comment period of several weeks or more on their final plan draft, before the M+C public hearing on the Town Center Master Plan Update.

With appreciation and best regards,

Margaret Magner, President
Ajay Khetarpal, Vice President
Heidi Liu, Vice President, Outreach
Darlene Pierro, Treasurer
Duane Rollins, Corresponding Secretary
Angela Geer, Recording Secretary

FW: Written Testimony #1 Submission AGAINST 'Recommendation to the Mayor and Council, Including Adoption of an Ordinance to Approve the Draft Town Center Master Plan '

Jim Wasilak <jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

Wed 9/11/2024 1:52 PM

To: Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

Commissioners, please see the attached testimony. Thanks, Jim

From: ANDREW SELLMAN <sellmana@verizon.net>

Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 1:06 PM

To: Jim Wasilak <jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: WECA Pres. <westendca.pres@gmail.com>; M. Magner <margaretmagner@nyc.rr.com>

Subject: Written Testimony #1 Submission AGAINST 'Recommendation to the Mayor and Council, Including Adoption of an Ordinance to Approve the Draft Town Center Master Plan '

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Submitted by: Andrew Sellman 411 West Montgomery Avenue Rockville, MD 20850

sellmana@verizon.net

I subject the attached file as a private citizen, not as a member of the West End Civic Association (WECA). However I am a member of the WECA Board, but at this point, I will not be speaking for WECA.

I am strongly opposed to the language dealing with new structure height limits proposed for the Rockville Town Center planning area, in particular this language and direction:

'At the August 14 work session, the Planning Commission directed staff to make several changes to the draft Plan. These changes include:

- Creating a mechanism to allow for increased height above 75 feet but below 200 feet for the properties on the west side of North Washington Street, south of Beall Avenue and north of West Jefferson Street.*

- Modifying the bonus height program to include community gathering space as an eligible community benefit that can receive a height bonus.*

- Eliminating parking minimums throughout the entirety of the planning area.*

And language that prescribes:

-Height Limits Commissioner Fulton proposed, and the rest of the Commission concurred, that the parcels of land west of North Washington Street, south of Beall Avenue and north of West Jefferson Street be granted a maximum height of more than 75 feet, but less than 200 feet as this is the area along the "edge" character area that is most likely to see redevelopment. The Commission discussed a maximum height of 100 feet in this area. The latest draft of the Plan proposes the creation of a third character area, called the "transition character area." The latest draft calls for a 100-foot height limit on properties within this 6character area with the possibility of an additional 20 feet of height granted through the bonus height program. '

My objection is these changes have very negative impacts on the adjoining Planning Area 4 (West End) neighborhood allowing such large buildings to dwarf the single structures that currently exist, many of the them in the West End Historic Districts and very close the Beall-Dowson house property.

What the West End needs, in my opinion, is height reductions as well as a continuous open-space buffer zone between Planning Area 4 and Town Center.

I'm attaching a file, created in 2020, that shows what happens when you mix or closely group older, smaller home and historic homes with large, multi-purpose buildings that dwarf the former. The former attachment show what happened to my own hometown, Towson, MD when this kind of development ruined the 'neighborhood'. The first photo more less says it all.

I will be submitting a SECOND written set of comments in a few hours as a more direct example. These deal with a specific example of what happened to the streetscape when smaller structures are replaced by large multi-unit residential housing. These changes happened when Aubinoe (Property) Management property on Arlington Road, Bethesda relocated to 107 West Jefferson Ave when their property was purchased in order to demolish the single properties and built a large residential bldg running right up to the curb of Arlington Road. I hope to be there to discuss these second comments in person and will provide hardcopy for the commissions.

Andrew Sellman
West End
301-610-5691

Submission to the Rockville Planning Commission for the Sept 11 Commission Meeting

Subject: Proposed structure height changes to the Rockville Town Center Master Plan

From: Andrew Sellman 411 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville sellmana@verizon.net

I'm strongly opposed to the Planning Commission proposed changes to increasing building heights in the Town Center, especially those areas that are west of North Washington Street and creep up to Planning Area 4 (West End). These changes will have a very negative impact on houses (residential and commercial) on North Adams and are so close to the Beall-Dawson historic property.

The offending language from the Commission saying:

At the August 14 work session, the Planning Commission directed staff to make several changes to the draft Plan. These changes include: □ Creating a mechanism to allow for increased height above 75 feet but below 200 feet for the properties on the west side of North Washington Street, south of Beall Avenue and north of West Jefferson Street. □ Modifying the bonus height program to include community gathering space as an eligible community benefit that can receive a height bonus.

AND

Height Limits

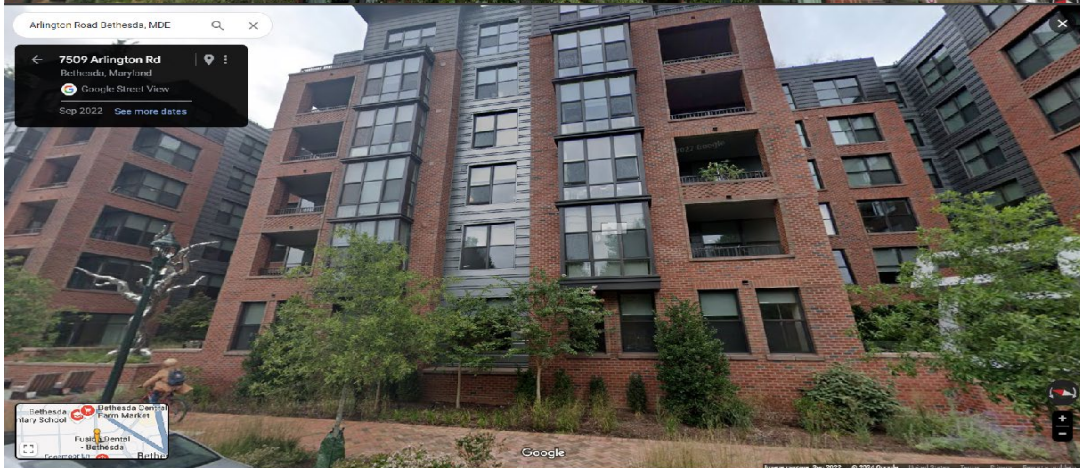
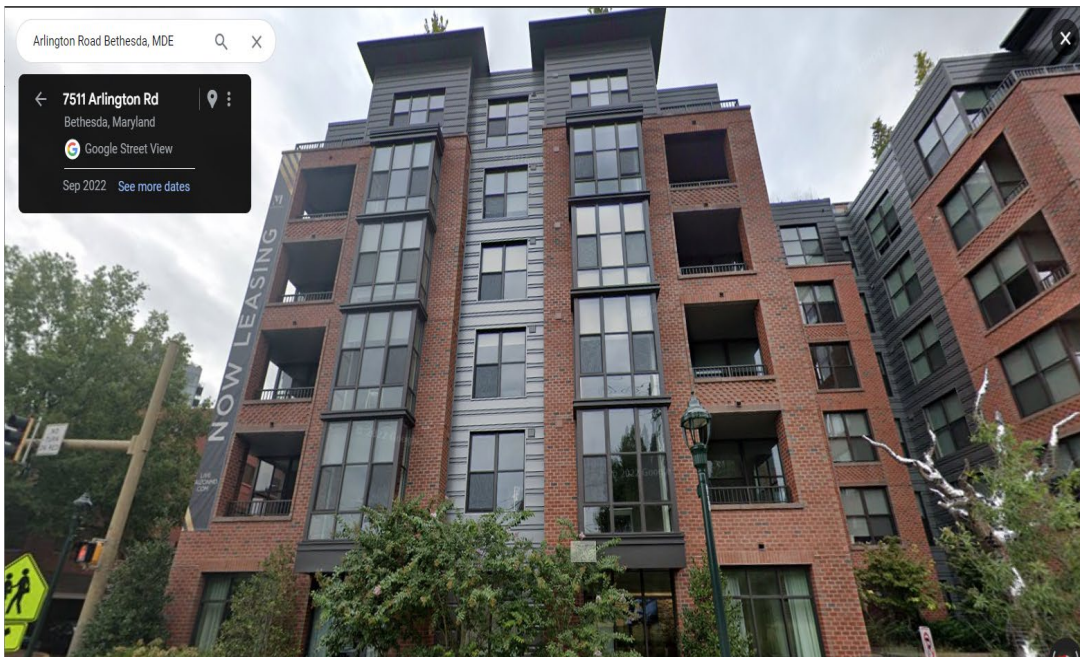
Commissioner Fulton proposed, and the rest of the Commission concurred, that the parcels of land west of North Washington Street, south of Beall Avenue and north of West Jefferson Street be granted a maximum height of more than 75 feet, but less than 200 feet as this is the area along the “edge” character area that is most likely to see redevelopment. The Commission discussed a maximum height of 100 feet in this area. The latest draft of the Plan proposes the creation of a third character area, called the “transition character area.” The latest draft calls for a 100-foot height limit on properties within this 6-character area with the possibility of an additional 20 feet of height granted through the bonus height program.

Any commissioners from 2020 (are there any members still present now??) who remember the controversy involving the property at 107 West Montgomery Ave. These relocation happened when Aubinoe (Property) Management property on Arlington Road, Bethesda relocated to 107 West Jefferson Ave when their Bethesda property was purchased in order to demolish the single properties for the entire block on Arlington Road and to build a large multi-use residential bldg of considerable height, running right up to the curb of Arlington Road. I hope to be there to discuss these second comments in person and will provide hardcopy for the commissioners if I can attend.

What the Commission most likely doesn't know is Aubinoe's commercial house and all the houses in that block of Arlington Blvd, Bethesda no longer exist. I provide photographs from 2020 showing the block as it existed in 2020 (single structures) and the 2024 7+ story multi-residential bldg(s) that now exists.

My fear is these type of structures will be built up to the very edge of properties on North Adams and simply destroy the value of the buildings (or cause their demolition despite being in the historic district) or will so degrade the appearance of these homes in the West End, and with the residential value of homes one or more block away being greatly diminished. And there is the issue of these towering buildings being less than ½ block from the Historic Beall-Dawson House.





Jonathan Thessin
514 Carr Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850
(617) 335-3797
Jonathan.thessin@gmail.com

September 11, 2024

Shayan Salahuddin, Chair
Planning Commission
City of Rockville
Rockville City Hall
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Chair Salahuddin and Members of the Planning Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Planning Commission's (Commission) draft plan for Town Center (Draft Plan).¹ I am a resident of the City of Rockville's West End, a cluster coordinator for the Richard Montgomery Cluster on the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA), and an MCCPTA delegate for Beall Elementary School. I write this letter in my personal capacity and not on behalf of any organization.

I appreciate and support the City's efforts to revitalize Town Center. But I am concerned that the City's analysis does not account for the true impact that development at Town Center would have on schools within the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) that serve students residing in our City. In determining whether MCPS schools have sufficient capacity to support new development, the Draft Plan has examined only whether sufficient seats exist within the City's MCPS schools – i.e., whether the proposed development would fall within the City's Adequate Public Facilities Standards (APFS). That approach ignores the overall size of the school. Julius West Middle School has approximately 1,350 students – the largest middle school in MCPS. Parents of Julius West students advise me that the school is much larger than the ideal size of a middle school. Yet, the Draft Plan does not examine Julius West's large size and instead focuses only on the APFS. Under the APFS, 367 additional students could attend Julius West before the City reaches the moratorium on new development, according to the Draft Plan.² But no parent would agree that Julius West would benefit from gaining 367 more students – for a total around 1,700 students. Every student added to Julius West will make an already large school even larger, to the detriment of existing students.

Similarly, under the APFS, 116 students could attend Richard Montgomery High School before the City reaches the moratorium on new development, according to the Draft Plan.³ But Richard Montgomery can only support its existing students through the use of portables – i.e., trailers.

¹ Planning Commission, City of Rockville, Agenda for Meeting No. 14-24, page 58 (Sept. 11, 2024), <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/09112024-7277>.

² *Id.* at 58.

³ *Id.*

Learning in trailers is far from ideal. It requires students to walk between the main building and the trailer and suggests to the students that their learning is not worth the funds needed for them to learn in a permanent building structure. We as a County and City should minimize – if not eliminate – the need for trailers. Our public policies should support that goal, not increase the need for trailers. The establishment of Crown High School may reduce enrollment at Richard Montgomery – and could lead to a reduction of students at Richard Montgomery and Julius West – but those outcomes are speculative at this point.

During the August 14, 2024 meeting of the Commission, one Member suggested that an exemption be granted from the APFS for the proposed development at Town Center. The Commission should reject this idea. The APFS helps to ensure that County and City services – including capacity in MCPS – are sufficient to support development in the City. It is not the only factor the City should consider in determining whether schools have capacity to support new development – but the APFS represents the minimum standards that must be met. Without adherence to the APFS, development could quickly lead to overcrowding in schools.

Thank you for your consideration of these views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jonathan Thessin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "J".

Jonathan Thessin

RE: Testimony at tomorrow's Planning Commission Meeting

Jim Wasilak <jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

Wed 9/11/2024 3:35 PM

To: ERCA President <president@eastrockville.org>

Cc: Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

Jeff, the Commission will take testimony at tonight's meeting. You may attend in person or online via Webex. Thanks, Jim Wasilak

From: ERCA President <president@eastrockville.org>

Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2024 8:31 PM

To: Jim Wasilak <jwasilak@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: Testimony at tomorrow's Planning Commission Meeting

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mr. Wasilak,

I represent the East Rockville Civic Association, and given tomorrow's focus on the Town Center Master Plan, I was hoping to give testimony in support of prioritizing the Metro Station Redesign project. The Metro Station acts as the literal and figurative bridge between East Rockville and Town Center, and any improvements to the station or its grounds would be met with resounding approval by our neighborhood.

Best regards,
Jeff

Jeffrey Asjes (he/him/his)

President

E R C A

East Rockville Civic Association



Re: Rockville Master Plan

From [REDACTED]
Date Mon 9/30/2024 7:00 PM
To Comprehensive Plan <comprehensiveplan@rockvillemd.gov>

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Please keep my recommendations anonymous

On Monday, September 30, 2024, [REDACTED] wrote:

Hello,

I just wanted to provide feedback reference the Town Center Master plan. Public safety is a big concern of mine and my families. Rockville is booming, King Farm, Fortune Terrace, and Town Center alike with new development every which way. With that populations will rise significantly. There is nothing in the Master Plan about Public safety and expansion of Police Services (City Police Camera system) things of the sort.

The police station was just built (2013?) and I've been told it was too small when it was built. The department had about 30 40 (77 includes commanders not street cops) there only about 7 9 on the street at a time I'm told, the mandatory minimum being only (5) Officers. My community group loves Rockville Police but everyone knows they are too small for the city as it is, especially with MCP no longer in the city.

Please add public safety recommendations into the master plan. The last HOA meeting this was the hot topic. We want more police.

Thank you!

[REDACTED]

Formal testimony Submitted to the Mayor and Council

October 2024 - January 2025

Sara Taylor-Ferrell

From: Claire Hannan <channan2530@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 24, 2024 10:55 AM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Fwd: Rockville Town Center

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Mayor Ashton and Councilmembers -

I wanted to share with you my concerns about the plans for Rockville Town Center. I know that you will be considering the Town Center Master Plan in your upcoming mayor and council meeting.

I have lived in Rockville for most of my life. I was raised here, and I chose to come back here and raise a family here after completing college. I love this city because of the quality of life. I love that Rockville has built Town Center and I want it to grow and thrive! But planning is critical, and growth that supports a thriving Town Center requires foresight.

My primary concern with the new plan that the planning commission passed is the lack of a parking requirement. I feel very strongly that any development in Town Center must be accompanied by parking, and I do not believe this should be left to the developer. The City of Rockville has a minimum parking space requirement for development anywhere in Town Center for very good reasons, and this requirement should not be eliminated or waived. Parking spaces cannot be added later. People who live in Town Center are likely to need a car, even years in the future. And most important, in order to have a vibrant and engaging Town Center it needs to be attractive to those in surrounding areas -- who will need to park to visit. Please don't throw parking out the window in hopes that downtown Rockville will become a self-sufficient community with no cars needed. If this does occur, something great can be done with the empty parking in the future. But again, lack of parking cannot be fixed easily.

I am also concerned about the proposed level of building height that could be much higher than what the City proposed in the original master plan that was made available for public comment. I understand the need for density and more people and more housing options. But the height budding up to the houses in the neighborhoods should taper down. And larger heights coupled with no parking requirement? This is a disaster.

Please add the parking requirement back into the Master Plan. And please be cautious and thoughtful about building heights. Make sure that schools can handle the additional students, and that pedestrian safety is paramount.

Thank you for your service on the council and for listening and supporting the voices of the City residents.

Sincerely,

Claire Hannan
533 Anderson Ave
Rockville MD 20850

Sara Taylor-Ferrell

From: Dutch Dunham <dutch.dunham@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 2:48 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Proposed Town Center Master Plan

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I have been a citizen of Rockville thirty-four years. I write to express several concerns with the September draft of the Proposed Town Center Master Plan:

First, the removal of requirements for parking spaces in relation to new construction worries me greatly. After reading the plan, I don't understand its purpose...unless that purpose is to benefit developers. As a resident of the West End, I believe that if inadequate parking is available in Town Center, the overflow will spill into the narrow streets of my neighborhood, which is unfair to us. It is especially unfair given the Additional Dwelling Units that can be built in our area, which will also strain the availability of on street parking.

Second, allowing developers to construct buildings of fourteen stories (albeit, only if they add additional affordable dwelling units) along the west side of Washington Street and then calling that area a "Transition Zone" is a bad joke. Given that the buildings currently located on the east side of that street run from four to six stories tall, the buildings in the "Transition Zone" have the potential of being over two times as tall as the buildings to the east. This is not a transition, it's an invasion. If taller building are required, they should be build first along Hungerford Drive. Replacing the remnants of the old Rockville Mall with such structures would make much more sense, especially since that area already includes two mid-rise mixed use building and the County and Court office buildings.

Third, the above two proposals were only added in September. They were not subjected to the rigorous review process that was performed on the April draft. Most particularly, residents have not had the opportunity to review and comment on the September plan prior to its submission to the Mayor and Council by staff. This is a bait and switch tactic in which residents were offered a plan and had the opportunity to comment on it and then a radically different plan is presented to you. A similar bait and switch was tried approximately ten years ago and residents roundly condemned the staff and Council Members who supported it.

Finally, I find no evidence that the impacts to power, water, sewage, and the school system have been discussed in any way with the affected agencies. While Rockville does have statutes that prohibit additional development without adequate public facilities, those issues should be examined and the feasibility and costs to the public of providing them should be considered before a plan of this scope is adopted.

I request that you send this plan back to staff to repeat the entire review process which was conducted beginning in April of this year and add a requirement that impacted utilities and services provide estimates of the costs of upgrading those facilities to meet the requirements of this plan. I recognize that this will involve additional costs. In this case, prior proper planning is worth the expense.

Best regards,

Robert "Dutch" Dunham
706 Anderson Avenue

Rockville, MD. 20850

14

2

Sara Taylor-Ferrell

From: Hummel, Phillip A. <phummel@MilesStockbridge.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 3:48 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Cc: Bob Elliott; Mike Alexander; Ricky Barker; Katie Gerbes
Subject: 10/28/24 M&C Meeting - Written Testimony for 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan
Attachments: Ltr to City re 2024 RTC Master Plan 10-25-24.pdf

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Good afternoon,

We represent 255 Rockville Pike LLC, which is the owner of 255 Rockville Pike located in the City of Rockville. Please find 255 Rockville Pike LLC's attached written testimony on the Planning Commission Draft of the 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan. Kindly include our letter in the legislative record for this item.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Phil

Phillip A. Hummel

11 N. Washington Street | Suite 700 | Rockville, MD 20850-4229
D: +1 301.517.4814 | O: +1 301.762.1600 | F: +1 301.517.4814



vCard | phummel@milesstockbridge.com



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October 25, 2024

Scott C. Wallace
swallace@milesstockbridge.com
301.517.4813

Phillip A. Hummel
phummel@milesstockbridge.com
301.517.4814

Mayor Monique Ashton, and
Councilmembers of the Rockville City Council
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan

Dear Mayor Ashton and Councilmembers of the Rockville City Council:

Our firm represents 255 Rockville Pike LLC (the "Owner"), which owns 255 Rockville Pike (the "Property") in the City of Rockville (the "City"). The Property is located within the boundaries of the draft Rockville Town Center Master Plan recently transmitted by the Planning Commission to the Mayor and Council (the "Planning Commission Draft"). The Owner is supportive of the objectives of the Planning Commission Draft, including providing additional housing within Town Center, incentivizing the adaptive reuse of outmoded office buildings, and removing unnecessary barriers to redevelopment. As discussed in greater detail below, the Owner requests certain modifications to the Planning Commission Draft that will advance these important goals.

Property Background

The Property is the last remaining vestige of the Rockville Mall, which was constructed in the early 1970s as part of a federally supported urban renewal program that closed within a decade of opening. The Property was thereafter redeveloped in the 1980s as the Commons at Courthouse Square and then Rockville Metro Center. A significant portion of the Rockville Mall structure was demolished

by 1996 and redeveloped with the Rockville Center, Inc. (RCI) project starting in the late 1990s and with the Rockville Town Square project in 2007. The Property's improvements, however, remained and were used by Montgomery County government as office space. Montgomery County eventually relocated these offices to other locations and the Property has been vacant since 2021. The Owner purchased the Property at auction in 2024 and is in the process of preparing development applications proposing phased redevelopment with new multi-family dwellings and adaptive reuse of the existing structured parking facilities.

The Property has a prominent location in the City, as it fronts Rockville Pike (MD 355), is visible from the Rockville Metrorail/MARC/Amtrak station, and serves as the gateway to Town Center for those travelling across the pedestrian bridge above Rockville Pike.

Comments on the Planning Commission Draft

Bonus Height

The Planning Commission Draft allows building heights within the "core character area" of Town Center (which includes the Property) of up to 200 feet, with a "bonus height program" that allows 35 additional feet in height for providing 5% additional moderately priced dwelling units ("MPDUs") and/or 15 additional feet in height for providing 5% more open space or public use space than Zoning Ordinance requirements with "climate resiliency features to 'green' the area and address climate change impacts" (for a maximum combined bonus height of 50 feet) Planning Commission Draft, pgs. 41-43. As the previously approved development plans for the Property allow a maximum building height of 217 feet, application of the bonus height program as proposed in the Planning Commission Draft would permit a maximum bonus height of only 33 feet.¹

Although the Owner supports an "incentive zoning" concept of providing certain public benefits in exchange for additional building height, a maximum bonus height of 50 feet achieved through the provision of two separate public benefits (additional MPDUs and open/public use space) provides an insufficient economic incentive for comprehensive redevelopment given current and foreseeable market conditions (e.g., interest rates, construction and material costs). If the height incentive is insufficiently compelling, the desired public benefits will not be achieved.

The Owner requests the following modifications to the bonus height to realize the Planning Commission Draft's worthy goals. Specifically, the Owner requests increasing the potential bonus height from 50 feet to 90 feet in the "core character

¹ See Preliminary Development Plan Application PDP94-0001 (as amended).

area” for a potential maximum building height of 290 feet. Furthermore, the Planning Commission Draft should make the entire 90 feet of bonus height available for adaptively redeveloping a strategically important site such as the Property in recognition that doing so provides a valuable public benefit. This is wholly consistent with the Planning Commission Draft’s Action 12.1.1 to “encourage and allow flexibility for the adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of commercial properties as market demand changes over time. Work with property owners to find creative solutions to meet the city’s regulatory requirements when adaptive reuse projects are proposed.” *Id.* at 88.

Similarly, the entire 90 feet of bonus height should also be permitted for projects that provide 20% MPDUs or 5% more open/public use space with climate resiliency features (rather than providing smaller separate height bonuses for individual public benefits). This will increase the likelihood that property owners will be sufficiently encouraged to include these public benefits with redevelopment.

BRT Station

Action 5.1.1 of the Planning Commission Draft recommends the City to “[a]dvocate for the southbound Rockville Metro Station stop on the BRT to be located on the south side of E. Middle Lane.” *Id.* at 57. This action would support locating the BRT station (and accompanying infrastructure) on the Property. In response, the Owner observes that its Property is already a significantly constrained site, particularly along the Property’s frontage on the south side of E. Middle Lane:





Furthermore, the adaptive reuse of the existing structured parking facilities, as well the maintenance of ingress, egress, circulation, and drop-off functionality are tantamount to the economic viability of any redevelopment project for the Property.

Therefore, the Owner requests modifying Action 5.1.1 to state the City's preference for placing the BRT station on the north side of E. Middle Lane, which is consistent with Montgomery County's current BRT plans at 95% design. Action 5.1.1 should also be revised to state that if the BRT station is located on the Property south of E. Middle Lane, then it should then be designed in such a way that minimizes impact on the Property's redevelopment potential to the greatest extent practicable. This should include consideration of, among other things, decreasing the size of station features (such as stormwater management facilities), maintaining safe and efficient vehicular circulation for a variety of users (tenants, visitors, package/food deliveries), facilitating safe and efficient pedestrian access with a prominent lobby entrance along the Property's Rockville Pike frontage, and incorporating access to and from the existing structured parking facilities. These refinements to Action 5.1.1 appropriately balance accommodating BRT with supporting adaptive reuse/redevelopment of the Property.

Other Recommendations

The Planning Commission Draft places the Property within the “Area Vision” for Central Town Square, which notes preliminary discussions with the Owner have contemplated approximately 350 residential units that could be built onsite. *Id.* at 34. This should be clarified to reflect the Owner’s anticipated phased redevelopment of the Property, with an initial phase of approximately 300 multi-family units and a potential future second phase with a net increase of approximately 250 multi-family units, for a total development of approximately 550 multi-family units.

The Owner also supports the Planning Commission Draft’s inclusion of the Property in a list of “Focus Areas” for sites “having the ability for transformational redevelopment that serves as a catalyst for Town Center” with incorporating “flexibility in the regulatory environment, as necessary and appropriate, to achieve these shared visions.” *Id.* at 36. The Property is considered together with 51 Monroe Street as being “desired for high-intensity, mixed-use development and have a land use designation of office commercial residential mix.” *Id.* at 37. In recognition of the Planning Commission Draft’s general statement that “[t]here shall be no requirement for ground floor retail,” the specific “Focus Area” description for the Property on page 37 of the Planning Commission Draft should also state redevelopment of the Property is not required to incorporate ground floor retail uses as well. *Id.* at 42. Additionally, the Owner agrees with maintaining the Property’s current OCRM (Office, Commercial and Residential Mix) land use policy designation in the Planning Commission Draft.² *Id.* at 39-40.

Furthermore, the Owner also agrees with the Planning Commission Draft policies and actions to “create a flexible regulatory environment that allows Town Center to thrive by enabling development and allowing the market to dictate the ‘highest and best use’ land uses over the next two decades” (Executive Summary), “[a]ccommodate a variety of densities, scales, uses, and typologies of development that are sensitive to an urban neighborhood environment and flexible to the marketplace” (Plan Objectives), “[m]aximiz[e] flexibility in the regulatory environment [as] a key land use tenant for this Plan” (Land Use Policy Map), “adopt zoning ordinance standards for Town Center that meet the overarching land use goals for the planning area while streamlining and simplifying the development approval process” (Policy 1.1), “[m]odify zoning regulations within Town Center to allow and encourage innovative and creative development and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to redevelopment” (Action 1.1.1), “eliminate minimum parking requirements throughout the entirety of the planning area” (Action 2.1.1), “develop standards to unify and create consistent pedestrian-oriented building and site design that provide

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Conclusion

The Owner commends the City for formulating a thoughtful draft plan for an invigorated and vibrant Town Center. The requested modifications facilitate this goal while providing appropriate incentives for property owners to invest in comprehensive development and deliver the desired public benefits. The Owner looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the City on formulating a plan that achieves the future success of both the Property and the Town Center neighborhood.

Sincerely,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.



Scott C. Wallace



Phillip A. Hummel

cc: Bob Elliot, 255 Rockville Pike LLC
Mike Alexander, 255 Rockville Pike LLC
Ricky Barker, City of Rockville
Katie Gerbes, City of Rockville



October 25, 2024

Scott C. Wallace
swallace@milesstockbridge.com
301.517.4813

Phillip A. Hummel
phummel@milesstockbridge.com
301.517.4814

Mayor Monique Ashton, and
Councilmembers of the Rockville City Council
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan

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MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.



Scott C. Wallace



Phillip A. Hummel

cc: Bob Elliot, 255 Rockville Pike LLC
Mike Alexander, 255 Rockville Pike LLC
Ricky Barker, City of Rockville
Katie Gerbes, City of Rockville

Sara Taylor-Ferrell

From: Bob Elliott <belliott@lantiandevlopment.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 5:13 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Mayor & Council Meeting - Public Hearing Town Center Plan
Attachments: Ltr to City re 2024 RTC Master Plan 10-25-24.pdf

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Our letter on the Town Center Master Plan was submitted earlier today and I am happy to also testify either virtually or in person.

Please let me know what you prefer and what else I may need to do to sign up.

Thank you,

Bob

Bob Elliott

Chief Executive Officer

Lantian Development LLC

4341 Montgomery Avenue | Bethesda, MD 20814

Main: +1 (301) 388-5600 | Direct: +1 (301) 264-5020 | Cell: +1 (301) 980-0988

bob@lantiandevlopment.com | www.lantiandevlopment.com

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October 25, 2024

Scott C. Wallace
swallace@milesstockbridge.com
301.517.4813

Phillip A. Hummel
phummel@milesstockbridge.com
301.517.4814

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Councilmembers of the Rockville City Council
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The Property is the last remaining vestige of the Rockville Mall, which was constructed in the early 1970s as part of a federally supported urban renewal program that closed within a decade of opening. The Property was thereafter redeveloped in the 1980s as the Commons at Courthouse Square and then Rockville Metro Center. A significant portion of the Rockville Mall structure was demolished

by 1996 and redeveloped with the Rockville Center, Inc. (RCI) project starting in the late 1990s and with the Rockville Town Square project in 2007. The Property's improvements, however, remained and were used by Montgomery County government as office space. Montgomery County eventually relocated these offices to other locations and the Property has been vacant since 2021. The Owner purchased the Property at auction in 2024 and is in the process of preparing development applications proposing phased redevelopment with new multi-family dwellings and adaptive reuse of the existing structured parking facilities.

The Property has a prominent location in the City, as it fronts Rockville Pike (MD 355), is visible from the Rockville Metrorail/MARC/Amtrak station, and serves as the gateway to Town Center for those travelling across the pedestrian bridge above Rockville Pike.

Comments on the Planning Commission Draft

Bonus Height

The Planning Commission Draft allows building heights within the "core character area" of Town Center (which includes the Property) of up to 200 feet, with a "bonus height program" that allows 35 additional feet in height for providing 5% additional moderately priced dwelling units ("MPDUs") and/or 15 additional feet in height for providing 5% more open space or public use space than Zoning Ordinance requirements with "climate resiliency features to 'green' the area and address climate change impacts" (for a maximum combined bonus height of 50 feet) Planning Commission Draft, pgs. 41-43. As the previously approved development plans for the Property allow a maximum building height of 217 feet, application of the bonus height program as proposed in the Planning Commission Draft would permit a maximum bonus height of only 33 feet.¹

Although the Owner supports an "incentive zoning" concept of providing certain public benefits in exchange for additional building height, a maximum bonus height of 50 feet achieved through the provision of two separate public benefits (additional MPDUs and open/public use space) provides an insufficient economic incentive for comprehensive redevelopment given current and foreseeable market conditions (e.g., interest rates, construction and material costs). If the height incentive is insufficiently compelling, the desired public benefits will not be achieved.

The Owner requests the following modifications to the bonus height to realize the Planning Commission Draft's worthy goals. Specifically, the Owner requests increasing the potential bonus height from 50 feet to 90 feet in the "core character

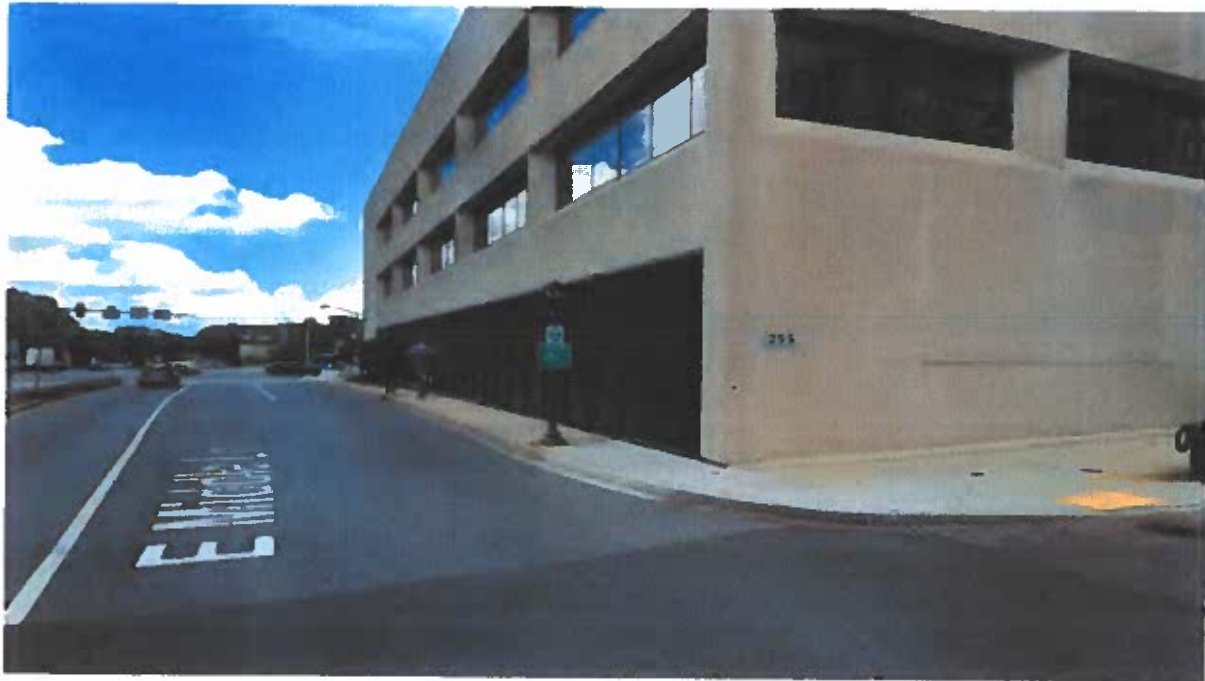
¹ See Preliminary Development Plan Application PDP94-0001 (as amended).

area” for a potential maximum building height of 290 feet. Furthermore, the Planning Commission Draft should make the entire 90 feet of bonus height available for adaptively redeveloping a strategically important site such as the Property in recognition that doing so provides a valuable public benefit. This is wholly consistent with the Planning Commission Draft’s Action 12.1.1 to “encourage and allow flexibility for the adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of commercial properties as market demand changes over time. Work with property owners to find creative solutions to meet the city’s regulatory requirements when adaptive reuse projects are proposed.” *Id.* at 88.

Similarly, the entire 90 feet of bonus height should also be permitted for projects that provide 20% MPDUs or 5% more open/public use space with climate resiliency features (rather than providing smaller separate height bonuses for individual public benefits). This will increase the likelihood that property owners will be sufficiently encouraged to include these public benefits with redevelopment.

BRT Station

Action 5.1.1 of the Planning Commission Draft recommends the City to “[a]dvocate for the southbound Rockville Metro Station stop on the BRT to be located on the south side of E. Middle Lane.” *Id.* at 57. This action would support locating the BRT station (and accompanying infrastructure) on the Property. In response, the Owner observes that its Property is already a significantly constrained site, particularly along the Property’s frontage on the south side of E. Middle Lane:





Furthermore, the adaptive reuse of the existing structured parking facilities, as well the maintenance of ingress, egress, circulation, and drop-off functionality are tantamount to the economic viability of any redevelopment project for the Property.

Therefore, the Owner requests modifying Action 5.1.1 to state the City's preference for placing the BRT station on the north side of E. Middle Lane, which is consistent with Montgomery County's current BRT plans at 95% design. Action 5.1.1 should also be revised to state that if the BRT station is located on the Property south of E. Middle Lane, then it should then be designed in such a way that minimizes impact on the Property's redevelopment potential to the greatest extent practicable. This should include consideration of, among other things, decreasing the size of station features (such as stormwater management facilities), maintaining safe and efficient vehicular circulation for a variety of users (tenants, visitors, package/food deliveries), facilitating safe and efficient pedestrian access with a prominent lobby entrance along the Property's Rockville Pike frontage, and incorporating access to and from the existing structured parking facilities. These refinements to Action 5.1.1 appropriately balance accommodating BRT with supporting adaptive reuse/redevelopment of the Property.

Other Recommendations

The Planning Commission Draft places the Property within the “Area Vision” for Central Town Square, which notes preliminary discussions with the Owner have contemplated approximately 350 residential units that could be built onsite. *Id.* at 34. This should be clarified to reflect the Owner’s anticipated phased redevelopment of the Property, with an initial phase of approximately 300 multi-family units and a potential future second phase with a net increase of approximately 250 multi-family units, for a total development of approximately 550 multi-family units.

The Owner also supports the Planning Commission Draft’s inclusion of the Property in a list of “Focus Areas” for sites “having the ability for transformational redevelopment that serves as a catalyst for Town Center” with incorporating “flexibility in the regulatory environment, as necessary and appropriate, to achieve these shared visions.” *Id.* at 36. The Property is considered together with 51 Monroe Street as being “desired for high-intensity, mixed-use development and have a land use designation of office commercial residential mix.” *Id.* at 37. In recognition of the Planning Commission Draft’s general statement that “[t]here shall be no requirement for ground floor retail,” the specific “Focus Area” description for the Property on page 37 of the Planning Commission Draft should also state redevelopment of the Property is not required to incorporate ground floor retail uses as well. *Id.* at 42. Additionally, the Owner agrees with maintaining the Property’s current OCRM (Office, Commercial and Residential Mix) land use policy designation in the Planning Commission Draft.² *Id.* at 39-40.

Furthermore, the Owner also agrees with the Planning Commission Draft policies and actions to “create a flexible regulatory environment that allows Town Center to thrive by enabling development and allowing the market to dictate the ‘highest and best use’ land uses over the next two decades” (Executive Summary), “[a]ccommodate a variety of densities, scales, uses, and typologies of development that are sensitive to an urban neighborhood environment and flexible to the marketplace” (Plan Objectives), “[m]aximiz[e] flexibility in the regulatory environment [as] a key land use tenant for this Plan” (Land Use Policy Map), “adopt zoning ordinance standards for Town Center that meet the overarching land use goals for the planning area while streamlining and simplifying the development approval process” (Policy 1.1), “[m]odify zoning regulations within Town Center to allow and encourage innovative and creative development and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to redevelopment” (Action 1.1.1), “eliminate minimum parking requirements throughout the entirety of the planning area” (Action 2.1.1), “develop standards to unify and create consistent pedestrian-oriented building and site design that provide

² The City’s Comprehensive Plan defines the OCRM land use policy designation as “the most flexible category, allowing a wide choice in mixing office, commercial, and residential uses.” Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan, pg. 20.

flexibility for innovative design, yet hold developments to certain architectural standards" (Policy 3.1), and "[e]ncourage and allow flexibility for the adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of commercial properties as market demand changes over time. Work with property owners to find creative solutions to meet the City's regulatory requirements when adaptive reuse projects are proposed" (Action 12.1.1).

Conclusion

The Owner commends the City for formulating a thoughtful draft plan for an invigorated and vibrant Town Center. The requested modifications facilitate this goal while providing appropriate incentives for property owners to invest in comprehensive development and deliver the desired public benefits. The Owner looks forward to continuing its collaboration with the City on formulating a plan that achieves the future success of both the Property and the Town Center neighborhood.

Sincerely,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.



Scott C. Wallace



Phillip A. Hummel

cc: Bob Elliot, 255 Rockville Pike LLC
Mike Alexander, 255 Rockville Pike LLC
Ricky Barker, City of Rockville
Katie Gerbes, City of Rockville

Judy Penny

From: Max van Balgooy <max.vanbalgooy@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 8:27 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Comments on FY 2025 Budget and Community Priorities

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to share my thoughts on the FY 2025 budget, particularly regarding how resident priorities align with the city's planned projects. The recent survey indicates that residents value parks as a top priority. However, initiatives such as RedGate Park and Arboretum and the King Farm Farmstead rank lower on the list. I recommend reframing these projects to emphasize their role as parks that benefit the entire city, which could increase their appeal and potential impact. For example, simplifying the names by focusing on "park" rather than "arboretum" might underscore their accessibility and value to all residents (an arboretum is a place where trees are cultivated for scientific and education purposes--which will not appeal to many residents nor is the intent of RedGate).

It's also worth noting that the survey may not fully represent the entire community's views, given its self-selecting nature; participation wasn't drawn from a scientifically random sample. Additionally, the survey does not capture the perspectives of our local businesses, which play a significant role in economic development, especially in the Town Center Master Plan and related efforts.

That said, the survey does offer useful insights into resident interests and can guide how we approach and communicate these projects to maximize citywide benefit--but it is just a starting point.

Thank you for considering these thoughts as we move forward with the budget and planning processes.

Best regards,

Max A. van Balgooy
313 Twinbrook Parkway
max.vanbalgooy@gmail.com

Judy Penny

From: Max van Balgooy <max.vanbalgooy@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 8:45 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Feedback on the Town Center Master Plan Goals

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to share feedback on the Town Center Master Plan and to highlight a few additional considerations. The plan makes a commendable effort to address long-standing challenges in downtown Rockville, yet I encourage the Council to **prioritize and refine its twelve goals**. Town Center is just one area of our city, and by focusing on a smaller set of goals, we can enhance both clarity and impact. Concentrating on a few critical initiatives often leads to stronger, more effective outcomes than attempting to tackle too many at once.

Moreover, I suggest **finding connections among the goals to foster synergies**. For instance, historic preservation can complement sustainability efforts by emphasizing the reuse of existing buildings, while linking zoning for parking and pedestrians with transportation and mobility goals can create a more cohesive strategy.

Two issues that seem to be overlooked in the plan are parking fees and the high property tax rate in Town Center. Many residents are frustrated by having to **pay for parking** in garages and on adjacent streets. While Council may wish to retain metered parking, addressing this topic in the plan would be valuable. Additionally, Town Center's **property tax rate** is among the highest in Maryland, a cost passed down to residents and businesses that makes the area less attractive compared to other parts of Rockville. This tax rate has significant implications for the plan's success, and while Council may wish to maintain it, being mindful of its impact on Town Center's competitiveness is essential.

Finally, I recommend that the **goals be made measurable and specific**. Broad goals like "establish Town Center as a well-known location brimming with diversity and activity" lack actionable clarity, making it challenging to track progress. Encouraging staff to revise these goals with concrete benchmarks would ensure the plan can be effectively implemented and evaluated over time.

Thank you for considering these suggestions.

Best regards,

Max A. van Balgooy
313 Twinbrook Parkway
max.vanbalgooy@gmail.com

Sara Taylor-Ferrell

Exhibit No. 7
2024 Town Center Master Plan
PUBLIC HEARING
Oct. 28, 2024

From: noreen bryan <noreen1945@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, October 28, 2024 9:49 AM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Testimony for Public Hearing re: Town Center Master Plan- 28 October 2024

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council:

Here is my testimony for the public hearing this evening regarding the Town Center Master Plan. Please give serious consideration to the questions that are being raised.

Sincerely,
Noreen S. Bryan
207 S. Washington St.
Rockville, MD 20850

Testimony for Public Hearing on Town Center Master Plan
28 October 2024
Submitted by Noreen S. Bryan
207 S. Washington St.
Rockville, MD 20850

A Thriving Town Center- Desired by all

From my experience working with neighbors of the West End. I know they love Town Center and want it to thrive. I believe that this is true for East Rockville and Lincoln Park, too.

On-going arguments say that Town Center can only thrive if more people and housing are added. That may have been true two decades ago, but what about today?

Let's look at the facts. Throngs of people, more than 50,000 vehicles, pass through Town Center every day on the Rockville Pike. In addition, nearly 2000 new housing units with approximately 4,000 residents, have been added to Town Center in the last two decades. That is more than a 400% increase in housing units. There are nearly 11,000 people living in the abutting neighborhoods. Combined, nearly one quarter of Rockville's residents are within walking distance of Town Center. Yet Town Center continues to fail to thrive. We have to ask why.

Why aren't people frequenting Town Center more? Why don't travelers on the Pike stop at Town Center? Why aren't businesses here thriving? Why aren't developers building along the Pike where the zoning allows heights of 100 or 120 feet?

First, Town Center is invisible to those who travel on the Pike. There is little signage or other attractions to draw them to restaurants and businesses in Town Center. Why don't commuters stop at Town Center on their way home from work? What about all the service and delivery folks that travel the Pike daily, what would

draw them in for lunch or a drink at the end of the day? What would make Town Center special and more appealing than all the other miles of stores and businesses along Rockville Pike? In the past it was suggested that Town Center become a center for local breweries. What kinds of financial incentives would it take to make this happen? If not breweries, what other business focus would be better?

Second, Town Center needs to meet the entertainment and shopping needs of those who live here. This means basic services and products. We have lost Dawson’s market. Still we do have Giant. But where is the hardware store that residents have been lobbying for for decades? Strosniders is the hub for three successful shopping centers in Kensington, Potomac and Bethesda. Let’s identify the core businesses needed for Town Center to succeed and figure out the financial and other incentives required to bring those businesses to Town Center.

Third, it is essential that the businesses and housing along Rockville Pike be integrated with the rest of Town Center. This means that businesses on the Pike and in the interior need to be connected through signage, transportation and walkability. Improved access, particularly safe and attractive walkways for residents of East Rockville and Lincoln Park, are urgently needed.

We have more homework to do. Let’s use our historic buildings to enhance the economy of Town Center as so many other successful cities have done. With climate change a reality, maybe we need to embrace more trees and plants into building designs to keep us cooler and our air cleaner. Rockville Town Center could become an urban oasis and set the example for all of Montgomery County.

The proposed Town Center Plan is premature and needs more thoughtful, innovative ideas to breathe vitality into the historic heart of Rockville. I ask that you table the proposed Plan and focus on answers to critical questions, some of which I have raised.

Adding more housing and raising the heights of buildings along North Washington Street are not panaceas that will make Town Center thrive. Clogging North Washington Street with traffic will not attract visitors or shoppers to Town Center. The West End Civic Association worked closely with the developers of the Bank America building, The Metropolitan and Bright view senior housing. All of these projects were approved with adequate parking and are thriving today. But Maryland Avenue extended has never been completed and leaves an ugly whole behind these projects. Let's get that street built!

Noreen S. Bryan

Supporting data and sources

Population of East Rockville, West End and Lincoln Park based on number of housing units per 2040 Comprehensive Plan multiplied. by 3 persons per unit.

Neighborhood	No. of Housing units*	Population
East Rockville	1099	3297
Lincoln Park	335	1005
West End	2160	6480
		10782

*Source: Neighborhood Plans from 2040 Comprehensive Plan

New Housing units in or near Town Center since 2006

Project	Housing Units*
Units when Town Square opened (Fenestre, Palladian, etc.)	644
New units since Town Sq opened	
Upton Apts (Duball 1)	263
Duball 2	400
Metropolitan	293
Brightview	194
Victory Court	90
Main Street Apts (50 Monroe St.)	?100
Total	1984

Total housing units in Town Center.

New since 2006.	1984
Victoria	143
Americana Center	425
Beall's Grant	60
Total	2672

Total population. 5611 (2.1 people per unit x 2672 units)

Town center and surrounding population is $5611 + 10782 = 16,393 = 24.4\%$ of Rockville's population (67,000)

The traffic volume on Rockville Pike in Rockville, Maryland is high, with an average daily traffic (ADT) of 53,000 vehicles passing the Saul Centers Inc. at 1500 Rockville Pike.



Mayor Ashton and Members of Council
City Hall
Rockville, Maryland

Exhibit No. 8
2024 Town Center Master Plan
PUBLIC HEARING
Oct. 28, 2024

RE: Town Center Master Plan Public Hearing

Good evening Mayor and Council,

I'm Margaret Wagner, President of the West End Civic Association (WECA). I am here to provide feedback on behalf of the approximately 45+ residents of our neighborhood who took part in a publicized discussion about the Town Center Master Plan at our last monthly neighborhood meeting on October 10. Clearly not all of the 1,600+ households from our neighborhood were represented, but there was lively discussion with many neighbors speaking about their individual thoughts on the Plan.

As you know, our neighborhood borders on Rockville Town Center (RTC), and West End residents consistently cite proximity to Town Center as a key reason they settle and stay in the neighborhood. They are experienced visitors to – and some are prior residents of – Town Center and want it to succeed and thrive.

At the October 10 meeting, four key topics emerged as concerns agreed on by most of the group and resulted in a strongly passed motion, originating from the audience, requesting that WECA testify on these points at tonight's public hearing. The four topics of most concern were: Parking, Building Height on the Town Center Border, Schools Capacity, and the challenge to residents of digesting and responding to major changes in the draft made near the end of the public comment process.

Below are specific points made by residents in the discussion:

1) Parking

Many neighbors simply can't understand the proposal in the Plan draft that the City of Rockville fully abdicate its role - and leave this entirely to housing market development forces - to ensure that parking is adequate for those who live, work and visit RTC. Most supported the goal to maximize proximity to public transit in the RTC core. But there was concern that those future residents who do use a car, and shoppers and diners who may need to be attracted to RTC retail from other non-walkable or non-transit-accessible parts of the City and County, may become too frustrated and give up on RTC.

Points made at the meeting:

- Many people such as the elderly and others with mobility challenges, cannot get along without a car. Shopping for basics, especially in 95-degree heat or very cold temps, is not possible for many members of the population that Rockville wants to empower and attract.
- People who have two jobs often can't rely on public transit to get from one to the other in time and need to use a car.
- The Plan draft cites several public or private garages that exist in the RTC area today, but most are on developable properties and may not be around as future parking options.
- The cost of contracting separately for parking is already a deterrent for some to choose RTC as their dwelling place. Rockville wants to provide more affordable and attainable housing but adding hundreds of dollars more to monthly costs for those who need a car can price us out of the market for those we seek to attract.

- A "culture change" to reduce auto usage may be coming, but it is not here yet. If we add density now without adding some parking, we can't go back and change that deficit; but if we build some parking into our Plan to grow, we can reconfigure and use that space for other purposes as the culture changes over time and demand sinks.
- Although the space that was formerly Dawson's is currently empty, the parking lot adjacent to that space is packed every day, with people waiting for spaces, even in the absence of an anchor merchant. When this space alone is successfully re-filled with an anchor tenant drawing more visitors, shoppers and visiting families could grow frustrated with insufficient RTC parking infrastructure under the current Plan draft.
- There is great concern about spillover of traffic and parking onto neighborhood streets. For example, one neighbor cited having experienced firsthand the result of large-scale commercial and residential developments in D.C., many of which were allowed to be developed with diminished on-site parking requirements. The spillover into neighborhood streets, even with a parking permit program, was why he moved to Maryland.
- If the assumption is that only dwellers and visitors who walk or bike can create the density and economic stimulus needed to sustain and grow RTC, is there data to support this? Do we know we're getting this right instead of creating too much frustration for a portion of the dwellers and visitors we need in RTC and in surrounding neighborhoods?

2) Building Height on the RTC Border

Most neighborhood attendees supported the need for additional height in the RTC core to meet the goals of increasing density and providing more housing. There was concern about the higher height encouraged by the Bonus Height feature added to the new Plan draft, for construction along the western edge of RTC - especially the 125 feet (13 stories) possible in the 3-block newly created "Transition Character Area" of Washington Street.

Points made at the meeting:

- Concern that this much height will eclipse neighboring two-story structures (even without a direct border on those properties) and cast them into unwelcome shadow.
- The new total height limit of 125 feet could result in 13-story buildings there - more than double the height of the 65-foot-high buildings across on the east side of Washington Street, closer to the RTC core. This sudden bump-up in height at the edge would be the opposite of a "Transition" area from the core down to neighborhood two-story structures.
- Combined with the lack of parking minimums, this could result in 13-story buildings with no resident parking, one street away from neighborhood blocks. The demand this could create for street parking and traffic spillover into the neighborhood is a concern for residents.
- The "Transition Character Area" was identified in the Plan, but with no explanation given or consultation about what type of "character" is intended there, how this character will be achieved, and why additional height on these particular border blocks is in the public interest.
- The edge area identified for this additional bonus height is along the three blocks that contain the only structures remaining from Rockville's original downtown, including the Jerusalem – Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, its parsonage and the Hebron House printing press on Wood Lane that survived when Rockville's African American community was largely displaced by urban renewal. (The Plan recognizes (page 17) the detriment of urban renewal to the Rockville's Black community. The City now has an opportunity to honor and celebrate these structures in RTC rather than encouraging buildings up to 13 stories high precisely here.)
- The Bonus Height allowance on these three edge blocks is exactly the same amount (50 feet) as the bonus afforded to developers building in the RTC core, yet the proposed by-right heights are 200 feet in the core and 75 feet on the western edge. The bonus offered to those building in the Transition Character Area is therefore

a whopping 67% on the edge, while in the core it's a 25% bonus. Shouldn't this be closer to the inverse, for a transition area?

- Without a way to see the proposed height limit, residents don't have the ability to understand and digest the true impact of the higher heights they're being asked to opine on. A resident at the meeting described her involvement in multiple other projects that temporarily placed construction marker balloons at proposed new height limit levels, for residents and decision makers to be able to visualize in situ the actual height. Residents at the meeting requested that this method also be used here, before the Plan is approved, so the community and City leaders can better understand the impact of the proposed Transition Character Area building height limits to Washington Street and the adjoining neighborhood.

3) Schools Capacity

Thank you to the Mayor and members of Council who clarified, before the meeting, that the M+C members unanimously support keeping Rockville's school capacity testing and have instructed Staff not to pursue changes to the schools Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). Several residents at the meeting asked that WECA still reinforce the concern for the importance of retaining Rockville's current school capacity testing and policy, since there may be future changes to the Plan draft before it is adopted.

4) Recent Changes and the Feedback Process

Residents expressed concern about substantial changes being made in late September to the Plan, which had been available for nearly six months for public comment, without new outreach from the City and time to review and comment before the process continues to the next step before the Mayor and Council.

For example, the insertion of a complex new building height Bonus Program and a Transition Character Zone on the neighborhood border are major changes to the Plan that someone reviewing the draft available from April through September, could not have anticipated from reviewing the earlier draft and its comments.

A resident who came to the October 10 neighborhood meeting with her printed-out copy of the 177-page new Plan draft expressed the difficulty in:

- getting the news that there were new changes
- finding, and educating herself about, the changes and their impacts
- getting answers to new questions she had on the Plan, based on the changes
- preparing and communicating feedback about her views to the Mayor and Council,

all within the short period between publication of the new draft (September 25) and the public hearing (October 28).

Additional Information and Time Needed

WECA invited a senior member of the Community Planning and Development Services department to our next neighborhood meeting on November 14, for information about some of the new specifics and broader background on the Plan. We are grateful for the acceptance of that invitation, while cognizant that the M+C's process will by then have moved on and you will be preparing for your work session and instructions to the Staff.

Some of the questions which residents asked to cover in this discussion with a key draft-er of the Plan include:

- Is the Plan draft based on an assumption that RTC is in essence a self-sufficient area and its dwellers as a group will be sufficient to support the retail and economy of RTC? Or is there an assumption that RTC must increase both dwellers and outside visitors (shoppers, diners) to succeed? If the latter, more detail is sought in the Plan on how this will be achieved.

- The Plan draft states an Objective (on page 16) to accommodate a variety of densities and scales, uses and typologies of development. However, the bulk of the detail focuses on incenting high rise multi-family. Where are the areas planned for other types of development (such as townhouses or rowhouses) and an analysis of their place in a built environment with variety of scale?

Conclusion

The West End Civic Association, speaking for the 45+ residents at our October 10 neighborhood meeting, therefore asks the M+C to:

- retain reasonable parking minimums in the Plan, that anticipate the demand from future additional RTC residents and visitors, and prevent traffic and spillover parking in bordering neighborhoods
- define the need and purpose for the Transition Character Area and how this will be achieved
- require temporary construction marker balloons marking the by-right and bonus height limits proposed for the western edge in the September Plan draft
- confirm in the Plan that Rockville's current school capacity testing and schools APFO will not be changed as Town Center further densifies
- allow time for outreach, education and feedback on the amended Plan following your December 9 working session and a way for residents to provide feedback. A public hearing after your work session, or at least keeping the public record open into early 2025, would instill confidence and confirm the importance of the City's commitment to seeking feedback from all its residents.

Thank you, Best regards,

Margaret Magner
President, West End Civic Association

MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF ROCKVILLE

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

AGENDA NO. 10B

PUBLIC HEARING ON TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN

Monday, October 28, 2024

1 PARTICIPANTS:

2 Mayor and Council:

3 MONIQUE ASHTON, Mayor

4 KATE FULTON, Councilmember

5 BARRY JACKSON, Councilmember

6 DAVID MYLES, Councilmember

7 IZOLA (ZOLA) SHAW, Councilmember

8 MARISSA VALERI, Councilmember

9 ADAM VAN GRACK, Councilmember

10 Staff:

11 ROBERT DAWSON, City Attorney

12 JEFF MIHELICH, City Manager

13 SARA TAYLOR-FERRELL, City Clerk/Director
14 of Council Operations

15 Speakers:

16 RICK RINEHART

17 ROBERT DUNUM

18 JOHN BECKER

19 MARGARET MAGNER

20 BOB ELLIOTT

21 JAKE JAKUBEK

22 NOREEN BRYAN

NANCY PICCARD

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MAYOR ASHTON: We'll next transition to
3 our next public hearing. And I know there's a
4 presentation for this one. So we'll start with
5 the presentation and then I will open up the
6 community forum. I do want to ask Ms.
7 Taylor-Ferrell if this has been properly noticed.

8 MS. TAYLOR-FERRELL: Yes, Madam Mayor,
9 it has been properly noticed in the Washington
10 Post on October the 10th and the 17th and on our
11 City's website.

12 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Welcome, Ms.
13 Katie Gerbes.

14 MS. GERBES: Good evening, Madam Mayor,
15 members of the Council. It's nice to be here
16 tonight. We have a brief presentation to you all
17 about the draft Town Center Master Plan that
18 you're going to hear a public hearing on today.

19 Before we get started, I do want to take
20 a few seconds just to introduce the gentleman over
21 here to my right. This is Mr. Andrew Reidelbach.
22 He is a principal planner in our Comprehensive

1 Planning Division. He is a new employee to the
2 city. He started just after Memorial Day, so all
3 summer he's been getting caught up to speed on all
4 things that our division has going on. He's been
5 an integral part of our Town Center team, and this
6 is his first time attending a Mayor and Council
7 hearing. So he is new to you. You are all
8 relatively new to him. He's going to kind of
9 listen in, take some notes, answer some questions
10 tonight with the hopes that at future meetings
11 he'll be able to give this presentation himself.

12 With that, we'll begin. So we're here
13 tonight to talk about Town Center. The map that
14 you see on the right side of your page shows the
15 geography. When we say Town Center, this is the
16 area that we're talking about. This is the same
17 boundaries as the Planning Area 1 Chapter outlined
18 in the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan. We have
19 not changed those boundaries from that comp plan.
20 In total, the Town Square area is 0.4 square
21 miles. So it's really quite a small but dense
22 pocket of Rockville's neighborhoods.

1 Here's our project timeline. Many of
2 you have seen different iterations of this slide
3 in the past. We've simply moved our red box for
4 what phase we're in along. This is the first of
5 several meetings where we will bring this plan
6 before you for review discussion with the hope
7 that we will have adoption of the plan in January
8 2025 after the new years comes.

9 There are a few procedural requirements
10 I think are important to note just so you all are
11 aware. This is proposed to be an amendment to the
12 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Because it's an
13 amendment to a comp plan the State of Maryland in
14 the Land Use Article lists certain requirements of
15 processes and timelines that have to be adhered to
16 per state law. One of those is we're required to
17 have a public hearing before the Planning
18 Commission. That hearing has some noticing
19 requirements. That all has been satisfied. That
20 public hearing took place on July 10th of the
21 summer.

22 The other procedural element you should

1 be aware of is the Land Use Article sets forth a
2 90-day time frame from when the plan is
3 transmitted to you all. That date of transmission
4 was October 18th, the date you received this
5 packet that included this plan in it. There is a
6 90-day time frame by which you all have to make a
7 decision on this plan. Otherwise the Planning
8 Commission approved draft is considered adopted.
9 There is an option for a one time 60-day
10 extension. If we need to exercise that extension,
11 we'll have to pass a resolution. When we get to
12 the slide showing the timeline, we'll talk about
13 that time frame. Right now we are scheduled to be
14 within that 90-day window, so we shouldn't have
15 any issues. But should something need to slip,
16 should we need to add something in, that is a
17 timeframe that you all should be aware of that we
18 need to adhere to.

19 As far as community engagement is
20 involved, we've had very robust engagement
21 throughout the entire duration of this process.
22 Many of you have participated in several of these

1 meetings, whether in your role as an elected
2 official or several of you, before you became
3 elected officials, attended many of these
4 meetings. Our outreach and engagement period
5 lasted from April through September of last year.
6 In that process, we had approximately 50 public
7 meetings. We met with hundreds, probably nearly a
8 thousand individuals to learn what works well in
9 Town Center, what doesn't work well, what are our
10 goals and visions for the future. All of that is
11 summarized in the Community Engagement Report that
12 was published in October of 2023. So just about a
13 year ago from now. That's still online. You can
14 look that up on the Engage Rockville website.
15 That Community Engagement Report is also an
16 appendix to this draft plan. So it is, I believe
17 it's in your packet and it will be an attachment
18 to the draft.

19 Since we released the draft, we've also
20 continued with that community engagement effort.
21 The first draft of the plan was published in late
22 April of 2024. At the same time that we published

1 that on Engage Rockville and the City's website,
2 we also posted a feedback survey on Engage
3 Rockville. So that's an opportunity for members
4 of the community to tell us what they think about
5 the plan, what are the most important parts, what
6 is it missing, what would you like to change, what
7 is really important. We can keep things of that
8 nature. I looked this up right before I came
9 upstairs. We are at 31 responses on Engage
10 Rockville right now of folks who have completed
11 that survey. All of those surveys that were
12 completed as of the date of your packet are
13 included in the staff report. I want to say it's
14 attachment C.

15 In June of this year, we held two public
16 meetings to discuss the draft plan. We presented
17 the recommendations, the goals, the policies
18 within it and provided an opportunity for the
19 community to give comments and ask questions. We
20 had about 40 individuals attend those meetings.
21 Over the summer, we presented to five different
22 city commissions and committees, and we had five

1 meetings before the Planning Commission that went
2 from June and ended in September when they
3 approved their draft of the plan. Throughout all
4 of this, we've been using our pretty standard
5 outreach and communication tools, social media,
6 Rockville reports both the online digital version
7 and the printed version, Engage Rockville, sending
8 out blast of subscribers through that project, all
9 the things we can think of to make sure folks know
10 this is a draft that's out there. We want you to
11 read it. We want you to provide feedback, and
12 here are your opportunities to do so.

13 Going a little bit into how the document
14 itself is set up. It's rather large, so I think
15 this is important to orient you and any folks in
16 person or listening at home on how the document is
17 established. We have several sections that talk
18 about background. So our vision, what's the
19 process, the history of Town Center, the
20 demographics of the community, things of that
21 nature are in that background section. We also
22 have eight different thematic chapters. All of

1 the goals, policies, and actions are buried within
2 those thematic chapters. So things like zoning,
3 transportation, housing, economic development,
4 those are those chapters. And then last but
5 certainly not least, we have an implementation
6 section which talks about how do we create this
7 document and make it living. We don't want it
8 just to be words on a page. We actually want to
9 implement the recommendations that are within
10 there. That implementation chapter provides some
11 guidance and recommendations on how to do so.

12 Earlier I mentioned goals, policies, and
13 actions. So the goals are kind of those broad
14 overarching targets. We then have several
15 policies, one or more policies that are a bit more
16 specific. They provide more actionable steps of
17 how we can achieve those overarching goals. And
18 then our actions. Those are those tiny discrete
19 steps. Those are the actual tangible things that
20 we need to do in order to realize those policies
21 and ultimately those goals. The draft before you
22 tonight has 12 goals, 20 policies, and 61

1 recommended actions.

2 Going to implementation. This is small
3 text. You're not supposed to be able to read
4 every word on here. It's just to kind of
5 illustrate the implementation matrix that's
6 included as the final chapter to this document.
7 That matrix has every single recommended action
8 within the plan, and it establishes for each a
9 time frame by which that should be implemented.
10 It identifies who is the lead implementing
11 responsibility. Most times that's a city
12 department or even a division within a city
13 department, but there's some items on here that we
14 need to rely on our partners at the county, at the
15 state to implement. So that's identified. We
16 also identify the implementation vehicle. How are
17 we going to do this? Is this a capital
18 improvement that we need to budget for? Is there
19 a legislative action that needs to take place?
20 Maybe we need to do a study or some more research
21 in order to implement something. We've identified
22 implementation vehicles for every action within

1 that plan, and that's how we're hoping to take it
2 from being a static document that sits on a shelf
3 to something that's living and actually making a
4 difference in our community.

5 Now we're going to go into specifically
6 what is actually in the document itself. So the
7 vision for Town Center as established in the draft
8 before you tonight is that Rockville Town Center
9 will continue to grow as a vibrant, multicultural,
10 diverse, and inclusive community that celebrates a
11 high quality of life in place. A neighborhood at
12 its core, Town Center, will be a hub within the
13 region for sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented
14 living. To achieve this vision, the master plan
15 will create a flexible regulatory environment,
16 encourage the development of additional housing
17 units, promote higher density development, all of
18 which will strengthen the local economy and bring
19 this vision to life.

20 For the sake of time, we're not going to
21 go through all 61 actions. They are available in
22 attachment A, which is the draft plan itself. The

1 staff report lists all of the goals and all of the
2 policies that feed the goals. But for the sake of
3 time, we'll just quickly go through those 12 goals
4 that are established in the plan.

5 The first is to target areas for higher
6 density development with a specific goal of
7 reaching 2,000 new residential units within Town
8 Center.

9 Goal number two is to amend parking
10 requirements to be reflective of the transit
11 oriented neighborhood that Town Center is. We're
12 close to Metro. BRT is coming. We have plenty
13 bus stops currently here. How do our parking
14 requirements need to change in result or as a
15 result of that?

16 We want to create pedestrian oriented
17 building and site design standards. So when we
18 have this new development coming in, how can we
19 make sure that we're holding that development to a
20 certain design standard, a design minimum? We
21 want to make sure we're creating wide sidewalks,
22 that we're creating environments that people can

1 walk and gather and roll and do all of those
2 things that we want them to be able to do in this
3 community.

4 Making transportation related
5 improvements to enhance safety and user
6 experience. Some of those talk about roadways
7 themselves for vehicles. Other of those actions
8 talk about how do we make those areas safer for
9 pedestrians, for cyclists, for those who roll, et
10 cetera.

11 There's a goal to work with our partners
12 at WMATA and Montgomery County Department of
13 Transportation to enhance the bus system. Some of
14 the policies here talk specifically about bus
15 rapid transit. Others talk about the existing
16 network of buses that exist.

17 We want to implement a wayfinding
18 signage regime not only to bring people into Town
19 Center from some of our main thoroughfares like
20 355 and 28, but once you're in there, how can you
21 get around? How do you know about all of the
22 amenities that exist within Town Center and how do

1 you know the best way to get there and an
2 accessible way to get there?

3 We would like to strengthen visual and
4 physical connections between Town Center and its
5 surrounding neighborhoods, increase the number of
6 affordable homes, cultivate Town Center to be an
7 exciting and innovative place that's welcoming to
8 all.

9 Document and retain Town Center's
10 history, activate our existing retail spaces while
11 also bringing in new retailers and businesses, and
12 then encourage sustainable and resilient building
13 practices to recover from climate change impact.

14 Also included within this draft plan is
15 the Rockville metro station concept that you all
16 as a body endorsed, I believe, it was in May of
17 this year. So you've seen this image. This was
18 presented to you before. It's in this document as
19 well. This document kind of divides Town Center
20 into a few different quadrants and then has some
21 specific visions. So we do bring forward this
22 metro station concept as the vision for this area.

1 As you all know, because you discussed it last
2 spring, it's important to note that this concept
3 is still very much a concept. We don't have a
4 development plan in front of us. A joint
5 development solicitation has not yet been released
6 by WMATA to find a partner to develop this land.
7 So really, the Town Center Master Plan is
8 encouraging that we want to redevelop those
9 parking lots, the surface parking lots. We can
10 provide structure parking, but we can also bring
11 much needed housing units right on top of metro
12 and that's brought forth in this plan.

13 So all summer long, the Planning
14 Commission has been reviewing this draft plan and
15 making modifications and edits as they see fit.
16 Ultimately, September 25th, they approved a draft
17 plan. That's the plan that's in your packet and
18 that we're here to discuss today. There were
19 several changes that were made between that
20 Planning Commission approved draft and the draft
21 that was initially released to the community in
22 April. I would say the vast majority, upwards of

1 75-80 percent of those changes, are very, very
2 small. I would classify them as clerical edits.
3 Typos that we found, fixing commas, making sure
4 formatting is proper. But there are several major
5 changes that's important to bring up to you and
6 members of the community to make sure you're aware
7 of.

8 The first of that is we added an
9 adequate public facilities chapter. The draft
10 that was released in April did not have a chapter.
11 It had a chapter that was focused on water and
12 sewer specifically, but it didn't go into
13 transportation, and it didn't go into our school
14 system. So there is a new chapter that has been
15 added in there. We had lots of folks provided
16 comments saying, hey, we need to talk about that.
17 So that chapter is in there. And in that chapter,
18 we ran the 2,000-unit goal that we have of 2,000
19 residential units through all of our capacity
20 tests to see if there's adequacy in all of those
21 systems. And that analysis found that there is
22 capacity in transportation, in water and sewer,

1 and in our schools for the targeted growth goal we
2 have here in the plan. As a result, this plan
3 does not propose any exemptions or changes to that
4 adequate public facilities ordinance. We think,
5 as it is right now, it is sufficient for the type
6 of development we want to see here in Town Center.

7 Another change that you'll see in the
8 September draft versus the April draft is the area
9 that's proposed for the elimination of parking
10 minimum requirements has changed. Montgomery
11 County has established a law where within one half
12 mile of a metro station or within one quarter mile
13 of a bus rapid transit station, they have
14 eliminated all parking minimums. The April draft
15 of the plan proposed mimicking that regime here in
16 Rockville. So one half mile from metro, quarter
17 mile from the BRT stations. The Planning
18 Commission has reviewed and they expanded that
19 area to eliminate parking minimums from the entire
20 planning area.

21 In our work session, when we come back
22 in December, we'll have some maps that show you

1 the difference between those areas. It's three or
2 four blocks is really the area that's impacted by
3 that change.

4 When we talk about the elimination of
5 parking minimum requirements, it's important to
6 note that that does not necessarily mean no
7 parking will be built, but it means we are not
8 forcing and mandating an arguably arbitrary amount
9 of parking to be built. The market will decide.
10 In many cases we're seeing it elsewhere in
11 Montgomery County, and in the region we're still
12 having parking developed in suburban Maryland and
13 in suburban Virginia. It just might not be the
14 same amount of parking as a currently required by
15 code.

16 The Planning Commission approved draft
17 also created a third character area that this
18 document has called the transition area. The
19 draft that was in April had two character areas:
20 one called the core and one called the edge.
21 We've now introduced a third transition area. My
22 next slide has a map, and we'll talk about that

1 here in a moment.

2 And then the other change that you'll
3 notice between the April and September drafts is
4 an expansion to the bonus height program. So the
5 April draft proposed bonus height being available
6 if additional MPDUs were included, moderately
7 priced dwelling units were included in a house --
8 residential unit. The Planning Commission's draft
9 has expanded that, so additional MPDUs and/or
10 additional green space that has been improved with
11 climate resiliency features would also qualify for
12 a bonus height program. Again, on the next slide,
13 I have a chart that shows that difference here.

14 So if we look at the map that's on the
15 screen, the area that you see in purple, that is
16 the core character area. The boundaries of the
17 core have not changed between the April and
18 September drafts. The heights proposed have not
19 changed. So both drafts have the height at 200
20 feet for properties within the core and a maximum
21 bonus height of 50 feet. Again, that has been
22 consistent throughout the entire process.

1 Washington Street and then around
2 Richard Montgomery High School. The height there
3 is proposed as 75 feet. That is consistent. That
4 has not changed between both drafts. And then the
5 bonus height maximum is 25 feet. That has
6 changed. The April draft had 20 feet as the
7 maximum bonus height. This current draft has 25
8 feet as the maximum bonus height. So that's the
9 only change in those edge, the lighter pink color.

10 In the darker pink that you can see the
11 blue kind of hashed rectangle surrounding that is
12 this new transition area that was added by the
13 Planning Commission. In that area, the height is
14 75 feet. Previously, before there was this third
15 area that was edge, which is also 75 feet. So the
16 by right height for that area has not changed
17 between April and September. What has changed is
18 the bonus height is proposed as 50 feet in that
19 area that was previously 20 feet, which was what
20 the edge was in all of the April draft. So that's
21 kind of the best way we can describe all of those
22 changes. It's written out in the document. It's

1 a little bit word vomiting, admittedly, but
2 hopefully this chart can show you what has
3 changed. The two things that are underlined here:
4 is the 50 feet bonus height in the transition are
5 is something new and then the 25 feet for the edge
6 as bonus height. That's the other thing that has
7 changed here.

8 When we look at the edge character area,
9 that's kind of the lighter pink color that you can
10 see along North So moving on, staff's
11 recommendation is that the Mayor and Council do
12 indeed hold a public hearing this evening to hear
13 the community's thoughts on this plan. Assuming
14 that we do hold that hearing tonight, our next
15 steps are outlined on this slide. We are
16 scheduled to come back to you all on December 9th
17 for a work session. Staff have some specific
18 points that we would like to bring up to you all
19 to ensure we are all on the same page. We also
20 have some suggestions and modifications that we're
21 going to bring to you all as a body. And then we
22 are currently scheduled for adoption of the plan

1 on January 13th. If we stick to this schedule, we
2 are within that 90-day window. I think we're at
3 like 86, 85. We're cutting it close, but we are
4 within that period of time. If for whatever
5 reason the schedule needs to shift, we'll be in
6 communication with the City Manager and with the
7 city attorney, and we might need to add a
8 resolution here granting that one 60-day
9 extension.

10 And that concludes staff's presentation.

11 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much. I
12 know we're in listen mode to staff and to the
13 community at this time, and so I just wanted to
14 note to the public that the Mayor and Council will
15 be taking on this agenda item on December 9th
16 after we received all the community feedback that
17 we have for review, and we'll have a work session
18 that will be public.

19 I also wanted to note that Engage
20 Rockville is still live and we are encouraging
21 comments and we'd love to see more responses with
22 that.

1 With that, welcome to our public hearing
2 on the Town Center Master Plan. Individuals will
3 have three minutes to speak, organizations five
4 minutes. We ask that you stick to the time
5 allowed and be courteous. There's a time clock in
6 front of you. You will hear an audible beep at
7 the end of your time. Please, before you begin,
8 state your name and if you live in the city of
9 Rockville.

10 With that, we do have some folks who
11 were signed up in advance, and then we'll move to
12 anyone else who would like to speak. The first
13 person is Rick Rinehart. Welcome.

14 Mr. RINEHART: Mayor Council, Rick
15 Rinehart, 38 Maryland Avenue, Unit 501. You've
16 got me the day between two 15-hour shifts for the
17 Montgomery County Board of Elections. So I may
18 not be at the top of my game.

19 The Town Center Master Plan avoids
20 addressing what should be the number one priority
21 for Town Center. That is, how to convert empty
22 office buildings adjacent to the Rockville metro

1 station into market-rate and affordable
2 residences. The Town Center currently has four of
3 them. Anyway, our post-Covid economy really
4 requires city government to be in an
5 entrepreneurial mindset, figuring out what needs
6 doing and getting it done. Not sitting back and
7 waiting to receive developers plans if they ever
8 in fact materialize.

9 I've heard the argument that Rockville
10 Town Center should keep the empty office buildings
11 as inventory in case office users suddenly wish to
12 move to Rockville Town Center. But the recent
13 history is just the opposite has been happening.
14 The city has lost 1) its largest and 2) its most
15 high-profile private sector employers. Westat
16 moving to Bethesda, Choice Hotels moving to North
17 Bethesda. For whatever reasons, and it would be
18 good for the Council and the administration to
19 learn what they are, major private sector
20 employers are leaving our city, not migrating
21 towards it. But that's not the case with housing.

22 Three things I'd suggest that we do. 1)

1 Learn what other municipalities across the country
2 are doing to help create office to residential
3 development. 2) Figure out incentives to turn
4 each of these properties into residences with a
5 percentage of units being workforce affordable,
6 low income, or special needs. There could be
7 financial incentives, tax breaks, or expedited
8 approvals. 3) Collaborate with the county, the
9 state, and the Feds to help create these
10 incentives. All have shown a willingness to go
11 the extra mile to help create housing especially
12 affordable.

13 The Rockville Town Center Master Plan
14 discusses, at some length, as we've heard,
15 place-making walkability, bikeability, public art,
16 diversity, equity, and inclusion. All concepts I
17 really, really support. But the part of the
18 Master plan that deals with development,
19 investment, and tax base is noticeably lacking, as
20 is good data on Rockville Town Center.

21 I presented an hour and a half session
22 last week at the Joint Annual Conference of the

1 American Planning Association of Maryland and the
2 Maryland Planning Commissioners Association. A
3 colleague made an interesting observation that
4 planning, economic development, and housing all
5 seem to be in silos. It's up to this Council and
6 the administration to make sure that they work
7 together. Thanks very much.

8 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much.
9 Next, welcome Robert Dunum. Welcome.

10 MR. DUNUM: Mayor and Council., thank
11 you for letting me be here tonight. My name is
12 Robert Dunham. I have lived on Anderson Avenue
13 for 36 years. I am very concerned about the last
14 stage of the development of this plan. Staff did
15 an excellent job of communicating from April
16 through September. The plan as formulated as a
17 document as a great piece of project planning.
18 I'm a pro in that field. I compliment them on it.

19 What concerns me is that the change to
20 the parking regulations and the change to the
21 building regulations were effectively a bait and
22 switch. All of us who attended hearings

1 throughout the summer expected that what we were
2 looking at would be reasonably close to the final.
3 Instead, we now have a situation where the no
4 parking rules have been expanded. The likelihood
5 is if that doesn't work out, it will fall onto the
6 west end, where I live. We have a maximum
7 building height that, if my math is right, works
8 now to 14 stories, approximately three times the
9 height of the existing Town Center apartment
10 buildings. That is a radical change right on the
11 edge of our neighborhood.

12 We have not had time to adequately
13 consider this, to put our comments together, to
14 communicate them to you and to staff. I ask that
15 the plan be rescinded back to staff to redo the
16 hearing process because this change is so
17 substantial that it requires the community again
18 be able to review the plan in full. Thank you.

19 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Welcome, John
20 Becker.

21 MR. BECKER: Good evening. My name is
22 John Becker. I live at 148 Monroe street which is

1 across the street from the Rockville metro
2 station. Somebody slipped this underneath my door
3 tonight. Just want everybody to see that.
4 Apparently this has something to do with Town
5 Center. I do not know for sure, but we'll find
6 out later.

7 Part of the plan I approve and I'm going
8 to heartily support is the sidewalk widths in
9 Rockville Pike, Veirs Mill Road and East Jefferson
10 Street Route 28. This is a dangerous situation
11 where cars or trucks are literally feet from
12 people walking. It's not safe. It creates the
13 wrong environment. It is not conducive to a safe
14 walkability situation. And I'll be harping on
15 this as we go forward on this process.

16 Secondly, I asked for, as it repeatedly
17 over this past month, speed cameras on these
18 streets are essential because of the speeding on
19 East Jefferson Street, Rockville Pike, and Veirs
20 Mill Road. I understand tomorrow night there's
21 supposed to be some sort of a meeting, a virtual
22 meeting on Route 255, and yet there was a problem

1 with the login information or something like that.
2 So I would like for somebody to say, is this
3 meeting going to take place because the login
4 information was probably incorrect.

5 And the final thing I like to say is in
6 this plan it says that Americana Center
7 condominium, the current zone is residential
8 multi, and yet the new plan calls for it to be
9 OCRM, office, commercial, residential, multimix.
10 Americana Center is a historic property, and we're
11 probably going to try to obtain national
12 designation and to be zoned an office commercial
13 center while Sunrise Senior Living across the
14 street is residential multi. Something isn't
15 right about that. So we're going to go through
16 the process here in contacting whoever needs to be
17 contacted on staff and you guys and gals just to
18 be sure that you understand Americana Center is a
19 residential location. It is not an office
20 location. It is not a commercial location. And
21 it isn't going to be either.

22 And with that, thank you for your time.

1 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Next we
2 welcome Margaret Magner. Are you speaking on
3 behalf of the West --

4 MS. MAGNER: Yes.

5 MAYOR ASHTON: Okay. I just want to
6 note for Sarah Taylor-Ferrell, thank you. That
7 time clock has been adjusted.

8 MR. MAGNER: Thanks. Good evening. I'm
9 Margaret Magner from the West End Civic
10 Association. I'm here to provide feedback on
11 behalf of approximately 45 residents of our
12 neighborhood who discussed the Town Center Master
13 Plan at our regular monthly neighborhood meeting
14 on October 10th. Clearly not all of the 1,600
15 households from our neighborhood were represented,
16 but we have done a lot of outreach and community
17 emails and there was lively discussion with many
18 neighbors speaking about the plan and requesting
19 that WECA testify to their points.

20 Four key topics emerged as concerns
21 agreed on by most of the group and those were
22 parking, building height on the edge, on the

1 western edge, schools capacity, and the challenge
2 of responding to major changes near the end of the
3 public comment process as you've heard. Here are
4 some of the specific points that residents made.
5 I don't have time to share all of them, but my
6 written comments do.

7 Parking. Many neighbors can't
8 understand the proposal in the planned draft that
9 the city fully abdicate its role to ensure that
10 parking is adequate and leave this entirely to
11 housing market forces. There was concern that
12 those future residents who do use a car and
13 shoppers and diners who may need to be attracted
14 from non-walking or non-transit areas of the city
15 or the county might become too frustrated and give
16 up on RTC. Many people, such as the elderly and
17 others with mobility challenges, people with two
18 jobs who have to quickly get from one to the
19 other, can't get along without a car. The cost of
20 contracting separately for parking is already a
21 deterrent for some to choose RTC as their dwelling
22 place. Rockville wants to provide more affordable

1 and attainable housing but adding hundreds of
2 dollars more to monthly costs for demand sensitive
3 parking for those who need a car can price us out
4 of the market for those we seek to attract.

5 Although the space that was formerly
6 Dawson's -- this is another point -- is currently
7 empty, the parking lot adjacent to that space is
8 packed every day with people waiting for space
9 even in the absence of an anchor merchant. There
10 was great concern about spillover traffic and
11 parking onto neighborhood streets. A neighbor
12 cited having experienced personally the result of
13 large-scale development in D.C., many of which
14 were allowed with diminished on-site parking
15 requirements, and that was why he moved to
16 Maryland. If the assumption is that only dwellers
17 and visitors who walk or bike can create the
18 density and be the neighborhood and economic
19 stimulus needed to sustain and grow RTC, is there
20 data to support this assumption?

21 Quickly to building height on the
22 border. There was concern that the higher height

1 encouraged by the bonus feature was added to the
2 plan draft for construction along that three-block
3 western side transition character area. The total
4 new height of 125 feet could result in 13-story
5 buildings, nearly double the height of the
6 buildings across the street, which is the opposite
7 of a transition area. Combined with the lack of
8 parking minimums, this border bonus could result
9 in 13-story buildings with no resident parking one
10 street away from neighborhood blocks.

11 The edge area that was identified for
12 the bonus is along the three blocks that contain
13 the only structures remaining from Rockville's
14 original downtown. The plan recognizes the
15 detriment of urban renewal to Rockville's Black
16 community. The city has an opportunity to honor
17 and celebrate structures such as the Jerusalem
18 Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church on Wood
19 Lane rather than putting up 13-story buildings to
20 hide them.

21 The transition character area was
22 identified in the plan, but no explanation was

1 given or consultation done about what type of
2 character is intended for this place. How this
3 will be achieved or why the additional height on
4 these particular border blocks is in the public
5 interest.

6 Okay, I'm going to schools capacity. I
7 will have to skip, especially since you all have
8 confirmed that you will -- don't see changing that
9 the school capacity testing.

10 A resident who came to the meeting with
11 her printed out copy of the 177-page new plan
12 draft expressed the difficulty in getting the news
13 that there were changes, finding and educating
14 herself about the changes, getting answers to new
15 questions they raised about the plan, and
16 preparing and communicating her feedback to the
17 Mayor and Council, all within the period between
18 publication on the 25th of September and tonight.

19 So in conclusion, the West End Civic
20 Association speaking for those 45 residents asks
21 the Mayor and Council to retain reasonable parking
22 minimums in the plan, define the need and purpose

1 for the transition character area, require
2 temporary construction marker balloons, which I
3 didn't go into before, but marking the buy-right
4 and bonus height limits so people can see them --

5 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you.

6 MS. MAGNER: -- confirm that the plan's
7 current school capacity be -- and add some more
8 time for people to comment.

9 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you, I appreciate
10 it. Welcome Mr. Bob Elliott.

11 MR. ELLIOT: Hi. Good evening, Mayor
12 Ashton and City Councilmembers. My name is Bob
13 Elliott. I am a Rockville resident in the West
14 End, and I also represent the ownership of 255
15 Rockville Pike.

16 Our property has a prominent location
17 right across the street from the Metrorail station
18 and is a gateway to the Town Center. For those
19 that are traveling across the pedestrian bridge,
20 it's the property you arrive at when you cross
21 Rockville Pike. Our property is the last
22 remaining vestige of the 1970s Rockville Mall and

1 was most recently used by the Rockville City
2 government as office space until they vacated in
3 2021. We acquired this vacant distressed asset at
4 auction in early 2024 and are preparing a
5 redevelopment application that adaptively reuses
6 the existing building's footprint, sidewalk,
7 streetscape, and structured parking garage and
8 ultimately transforms it into a phased multifamily
9 redevelopment.

10 Overall, we are very supportive of the
11 objectives within the Town Center draft and for
12 providing additional housing within the Town
13 Center and incentivizing adaptive reuse of
14 outmoded office buildings. However, we have some
15 suggestions for improvement. My time -- I thought
16 I was only going to be given three minutes. I'm
17 happy to have five but I won't use it all. So I
18 will focus on two items. I might actually have
19 some time to talk about a couple other things.
20 I'm going to focus mostly on height and the BRT
21 station. But again, I am summarizing a letter
22 that I sent to you all via my counsel. You should

1 have received it on Friday. It's probably in your
2 package. It's about seven pages long.

3 First, we feel that you should actually
4 increase the height incentive. In our opinion,
5 the height incentive as proposed is insufficiently
6 compelling. The core character area as proposed
7 has a minimum -- or has a height -- of 200 feet
8 with a maximum bonus of 50. Our property was
9 previously entitled or granted a maximum height of
10 217 feet. That effectively caps our bonus at only
11 33 feet. We recommend a maximum height of 290
12 feet to address the need for potentially putting
13 20 percent ADUs and that that total height be made
14 available to us not necessarily for providing
15 green space but for adaptively redeveloping a
16 strategically important site because doing so
17 provides a valuable public benefit and does not
18 destruct the carbon component associated with
19 breaking down most of that building.

20 Second, the Planning Commission draft
21 recommended the city advocate for a southbound
22 Rockville metro station BRT stop to be located on

1 the south side of Middle Lane, which is
2 effectively our property. Our preference would be
3 to place that BRT station on the north side of
4 East Middle Lane, which is consistent with the
5 Montgomery County current 95 percent design draft
6 for the BRT. Our property is already
7 significantly site-constrained, and a successful
8 adaptive reuse of our property depends on
9 maintaining existing functionality.

10 In the event that the BRT station ends
11 up on our property, then we believe it should be
12 designed in a way that minimizes its impact on our
13 property's ability to redevelop to the greatest
14 extent practicable. This includes consideration
15 of, among other things, decreasing the size of the
16 station features, including its stormwater
17 management, maintaining access to an existing
18 parking structure, and allowing for vehicular
19 circulation for a variety of users, tenants,
20 visitors, food, package deliveries, all of which
21 exist today. We'd also ask for safe pedestrian
22 access to a prominent main lobby entrance along

1 Rockville Pike. Our building is named 255
2 Rockville Pike for a reason.

3 Other items I would just point out very
4 quickly in your Town Center plan, I think you
5 identified our site as possibly having 350
6 residential units. Our current plan, which we'll
7 be coming forward with tomorrow night, hopefully,
8 300 units in a first phase and 250 in the
9 subsequent phase. So that's hopefully 550
10 literally across the street from a metro station.

11 Within the focus areas of your plan.
12 While we strongly believe for the need in
13 supporting the retail components, we actually
14 believe that most of the retail should be
15 supported nearer to the Town Center and the Town
16 Square. We don't believe at this point that
17 retail survives on the periphery, unfortunately,
18 even if you are at the metro station. We support
19 the need for mixed use. We support the need for
20 activation along the street level, but not
21 necessarily as retail itself. You'll actually see
22 significant amount of retail along Monroe Street

1 today that has never been leased.

2 We generally agree with the Town Center
3 plan draft that includes flexatory, regulatory
4 environment, things that result in the highest and
5 best use for the land. Streamlining and
6 simplifying of development approvals, innovative
7 and creative developments, removing unnecessary
8 regulatory barriers to redevelopment. We're
9 actually supportive of parking minimums in the
10 appropriate areas, particularly when you're
11 opposite the metro station. Flexibility for
12 adaptive reuse and ultimately allowing developers
13 to meet the market demand.

14 Thank you very much for your time and if
15 I may, good night to my daughter Elizabeth, who's
16 watching at home.

17 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much.

18 MR. ELLIOT: Apparently intently at age
19 four.

20 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you.

21 MR. ELLIOT: Thank you very much.

22 MAYOR ASHTON: That exhausts the list of

1 those who were -- who have test -- who have signed
2 up in advance. Is there anyone else who would
3 like to speak? Welcome, Mr. Jakubek. Are you
4 representing RBAC or yourself? Okay, thank you.

5 MR. JAKUBEK: Good evening, Mayor and
6 Council. I live in East Rockville across the
7 railroad tracks from the Town Center. So for me,
8 the Town Center is like my downtown. I walk there
9 all the time I ride my bike to the, you know, the
10 square. I go to the library. I go to the
11 restaurants. I spend some time playing guitar in
12 Town Square with a friend of mine. So I feel that
13 I very much have a stake in all this. And it's
14 very important to me that the Town Center succeed.

15 After reviewing the plan, hearing
16 comments and such, I support what's been done. I
17 agree with the gentleman prior to me. I think we
18 should remove these height requirements. We
19 should have more people in the Town Center. As we
20 all know, it was established that we, as it
21 currently sits, we need a larger population and
22 Town Center for it to work. For the retail

1 business succeed and everything else. So in
2 support of that. I also support the elimination
3 of these parking requirements. Let the market
4 decide. We have 4 billion parking spaces in the
5 United States. I think we could do with a few a
6 little fewer.

7 So in summary, I support the plan. I
8 look forward to working on implementing it and I
9 look forward to having a nice downtown Rockville
10 just outside my neighborhood. Thank you.

11 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Would anyone
12 else like to speak? Welcome.

13 SPEAKER: Hey, I just wanted to say, I
14 guess, in response to some of the comments. So I
15 live in Rockville now, and I can walk to Town
16 Center, which is awesome. Before that, I lived in
17 Derwood, which was a 5-minute drive, and Potomac,
18 which was a 15- to 20-minute drive. I come into
19 Rockville all the time, and I never went to Town
20 Center. I went anywhere along the pike where I
21 could park. My mom lives in Derwood. My sister
22 lives in Derwood. They spend plenty of money in

1 Rockville, not at the Town Center because they
2 can't get there. And I think it's important if
3 you're building this now and you don't care about
4 parking for people that live maybe farther out in
5 Twinbrook or Aspen Hill or Olney or Derwood, then
6 you're building it only for the people who can
7 afford to live there, and they're just not going
8 to come. I think the plan mentions Rio a lot. We
9 love going to Rio. It's super easy to park. You
10 can walk everywhere, which is nice. So yeah, if
11 -- if people can't get there, who can't live
12 there, they're not going to come.

13 That's all. Thanks.

14 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much.

15 Would anyone else like to speak? Welcome. Noreen
16 Bryan.

17 MS. BRYAN: Good evening, Madam Mayor,
18 and members of the Council. I'm Noreen Bryan.
19 I've lived here for a long time, and I've worked
20 with a great many of the West End neighbors. They
21 love Town Center, and they want it to thrive. And
22 as the last gentleman just said, so does East

1 Rockville and Lincoln Park, to the best of my
2 knowledge. I'm very concerned because the focus
3 of this plan is almost exclusively on heights and
4 adding density when we've got a lot of other
5 issues to address.

6 Let's look at some facts. Throngs of
7 people pass through Rockville Town Center every
8 day. 50,000 people and more go right down
9 Rockville Pike. And the last, since 2006, we've
10 added nearly 2,000 housing units. That's 4,000
11 people. And in the neighborhoods adjacent, there
12 are approximately 11,000 people. When you add
13 this all together, nearly one quarter of
14 Rockville's population is within walking distance
15 of Town Center. So why isn't it thriving? And I
16 think we have to ask some really hard questions.
17 Why don't travelers stop here when they're going
18 on the Pike? Why don't most of the people who
19 live here shop here more? They want to shop here.
20 They want to go to entertainment here.

21 I'm going to give you a few suggestions.
22 One is when you go down the Pike, the rest of Town

1 Center is invisible. There's inadequate signage,
2 and there's nothing that attracts you to the
3 internal workings of the organization of Town
4 Center. Why don't the -- there's tons of service
5 and delivery people going down the Pike every day.
6 Why don't they come here for lunch? Why don't
7 they stop for a drink after work? Why don't they
8 shop here? We need to ask that question and find
9 out why.

10 We need this -- we need Town Center to
11 be integrated. We need the -- not just the heart
12 of Town Center which is off the Pike. We need the
13 Pikes part of it to be integrated with the
14 internal part, and it needs to have a focus.
15 People who live here want to shop here. That
16 means we need basic shopping capabilities. We've
17 just lost Dawson's. We do have Giant. But we've
18 asked for a hardware store for decades. And if
19 you look around the county, Strosnider's is
20 successful in Potomac, in Kensington. And I don't
21 know, off the top of my head, I forgot --
22 Bethesda. Strosnider's is working. I'm near the

1 end.

2 The last thing is we need much better
3 connectivity immediately for people in East
4 Rockville and Lincoln Park. They need safe,
5 attractive ways to get to Town Center so we can be
6 a whole and not just pieces. And so I strongly
7 suggest that you table this plan and look harder
8 --

9 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you.

10 MS. BRYAN: -- and get more inventive
11 ideas into this plan.

12 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you.

13 MS. BRYAN: Thank you very much.

14 MAYOR ASHTON: Would anyone else like to
15 speak? Welcome. Are you speaking as an
16 individual or as a Peerless lead. Okay. Welcome.

17 MS. PICCARD: I didn't want to go in
18 front of someone else. Speaking for Peerless.
19 Thank you.

20 MAYOR ASHTON: Okay. The clock will be
21 adjusted. Thank you.

22 MS. PICCARD: Thank you. Good evening,

1 Madam Mayor and members of Council. I'm Nancy
2 Piccard speaking on behalf of Peerless Rockville
3 about the Town Center Master Plan. Speaking to
4 advise thoughtful, detailed, and collaborative
5 planning in the development of Rockville's Town
6 Center. Planning that balances the needs for
7 growth and change with the needs of current and
8 future residents, visitors and businesses. And
9 that also protects and celebrates the unique
10 history, historic resources and sense of community
11 at the very heart of Rockville.

12 In your review of the current draft,
13 Peerless Rockville encourages careful
14 consideration of the newly added transition
15 character area on the Western Edge, which abuts
16 established neighborhoods and three historic
17 districts. While this part of our modern Town
18 Center warrants special attention and a detailed
19 vision, it is missing in the current draft. I
20 wish to be clear that Peerless Rockville supports
21 development, increased heights in the core,
22 additional density, and additional housing

1 opportunities, all of which are needed and will
2 bring depth, diversity, economic stimulus, and new
3 layers of history and character to the city core.
4 We enthusiastically embrace smart planning that
5 keeps historic buildings and communities a part of
6 the city's modern and future identity, with
7 additional resources to help the city thrive into
8 the future.

9 However, development should occur with a
10 mindfulness of the history and the character of
11 the city and in court -- in accordance with the
12 city's own stated planning goals as well as those
13 of the state. Embracing the historic character
14 and unique features of place is of itself smart
15 planning, as historic preservation and established
16 place identity are known economic drivers and
17 contribute to Rockville's draw as a special,
18 unique place to live. The current draft is
19 unclear for the overall planning area,
20 particularly on the critical Western Edge, on what
21 specific goals and vision is intended for the
22 transition area.

1 The Urban Land Institute Technical
2 Assistance Panel in 2019 generated the actionable
3 item to build density in the Town Center without
4 compromising character, but the current draft does
5 not address this aspect. Additionally, none of
6 the policies or actions in the historic
7 preservation chapter of the document address how
8 multiple historic sites and districts in or within
9 walking distance of Town Center will be protected
10 or utilized in establishing the area's identity or
11 encouraging heritage tourism.

12 For example, next year Christ Episcopal
13 Church will celebrate its 300th anniversary. This
14 historic church is barely a stone's throw from the
15 current new transition area. Thoughtful planning
16 that reflects Rockville's unique situation and
17 current needs should guide the redevelopment plans
18 in Town Center, not just blanket height increases
19 across the core. The plan calls for a mix of
20 housing types and densities, but then leans
21 heavily on building heights and an unspecified
22 bonus program. Current recommendations for North

1 and South Washington Street will likely overwhelm
2 the historic buildings from West Montgomery Avenue
3 to Bell Avenue, including the last surviving parts
4 of the African American community of Middle Lane.

5 At Peerless Rockville, I often view the
6 photos and records of urban renewal, a celebrated
7 planning endeavor that embraced the popular
8 planning maxims of the day. However, we now know
9 that the planning decisions made over a half
10 century ago forever adversely altered Rockville
11 and continue to impact the city today. With
12 strong new by right zoning throughout the draft
13 plan, the city will develop, it will grow, it will
14 add housing, but carefully transitioning from more
15 intense growth down to human-scale neighborhoods
16 will protect our sense of history and community
17 and also allow for commercial vibrancy, new
18 population growth, and hopefully better connection
19 between Rockville Town Center and the
20 neighborhoods across 355. Increased heights in
21 the core and along the Eastern edge will better
22 take advantage of multimodal modal transportation,

1 and existing densities.

2 In closing, I asked the Mayor and
3 Council to take this revised draft back to the
4 community to re engage residents and business
5 owners for a plan that is right sized for
6 Rockville now. Thank you.

7 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Is there
8 anyone else who would like to speak? Welcome.

9 MR. NELLIS: Hey, good evening. My name
10 is Christopher Nellis. I live at 263
11 Congressional Lane, apartment 604, Twinbrook.
12 Just wanted to testify in support of the proposed
13 downtown master plan. As a young person, such
14 people my generation who have moved to this area,
15 we need -- need more place to live. And this is
16 one of the -- one of the ways we can do that. I
17 lived in Rockville for three years. Three years.
18 And I really enjoyed it. I like -- I'd like to
19 make this my apartment home. Right now I can't
20 afford a house. A house right now in the city
21 limits. But I would love to buy a condo or live
22 in an apartment and the downtown master plan -

1 living downtown would be a dream for me. As there
2 have been many comments about parking, I will only
3 say my experience when I do drive into Walker Town
4 Center. I have not had a problem with finding
5 parking. Biggest compliment is it that you had to
6 pay for it. You had to go into a parking garage.
7 On Saturday, I realized that the parking garage A,
8 most of the places that were being used by a car
9 dealership for their inventory. So I do not
10 believe there are or believe that there is a
11 significant concern with parking.

12 I also attended the Planning Commission
13 meeting last month where they -- where they
14 expanded the parking minimum ban, -- another white
15 term terminology -- to the entire downtown massive
16 area. I would not describe it as a bait and
17 switch. I do not think it is sufficient to
18 rescind this -- ascend back to plan. I do not
19 think that is a correct course of action.

20 Thank you.

21 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Would anyone
22 else like to speak? Okay. Thank you to everyone

1 for your comments. Very thoughtful and we
2 appreciate them. I want to just, I know that
3 Mayor and Council is not going to go into the
4 specifics of the plan just yet. We're going to be
5 listening further, and we'll meet again December
6 9th. Just quickly, when will the public hearing
7 period end? And maybe that's something we can at
8 least clarify.

9 MS GERBES: So I think ultimately that's
10 up to you. Staff would recommend keeping that
11 open through the December 9th work session. So
12 for the next month and a half or so you can
13 continue to hear from members of the community and
14 then you can bring up what you've heard at that
15 work session.

16 MAYOR ASHTON: So colleagues, I let me
17 know what you think about this. I personally, I'm
18 open to hearing until closer to when we are
19 setting to approve this plan, which I believe is
20 in January, and I'm also open to adding another
21 public hearing. Just, we know we have some
22 important work sessions coming up. I -- I did

1 listen to the Planning Commission and they had
2 multiple work sessions and allowances for people
3 to come. So I just want to make sure we have
4 maximum opportunity for people to comment and for
5 be -- for it to be part of the public record.

6 Colleagues, what are your thoughts?

7 Councilmember Jackson? Yes. Okay.

8 Which part? All of it. How about my other
9 colleagues? Yes. Okay. Councilmember Van Grack.

10 MR. VAN GRACK: I mean my only comment
11 would be I don't want to push ourselves too close
12 to the edge to the extent there's issues. So I
13 want to make sure that we've got time if we're
14 going to adjust anything. I don't want us to be
15 running up and extending it for either multiple
16 times that we have to. So I'm all for, you know,
17 additional communication with the public,
18 additional feedback, as well as additional work
19 sessions. But I know that we're running up
20 against a clock and I don't want to have a
21 difficulty with us given the meeting schedules and
22 the things we already have.

1 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Just to show
2 what I was thinking, we could have an additional
3 hearing on one of the December meetings. Just a
4 thought for my colleagues consideration. I know
5 you don't have to answer this now because you may
6 need to go back to your staff and review, and then
7 we could also have if we needed. I know that the
8 -- that Mr. Mihelich has shared that we could
9 either extend the time or we could also add an
10 additional work session. There appears to be
11 sometime in December for that second meeting.
12 Councilmember Fulton?

13 MS. FULTON: So I'm in favor of keeping
14 the public record open until we get much closer to
15 deciding. Yes. Committing here and now to, like
16 another work session or when it might, I think, we
17 just keep that option available as things come.
18 But in terms of keeping the record open, yeah,
19 they very much support that.

20 MAYOR ASHTON: So I see -- well, we have
21 folks open to having the additional public hearing
22 as well before our next work session whenever

1 staff --

2 MR. VAN GRACK: I mean, again --

3 MAYOR ASHTON: Wait one second. Hold
4 on. Whenever staff can, if it fits in the
5 calendar. Councilmember Van Grack?

6 MR. VAN GRACK: I was going to say I'm
7 concerned about the number of meetings we have
8 going forward in our timeline. I want to keep the
9 record open. I want to hear from folks as much as
10 we can to the extent there's something that we can
11 fit in, that's fine. But I don't want to hear and
12 now commit necessarily to another home meeting
13 when we've got only one meeting in November
14 scheduled currently.

15 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilmember Valeri.

16 MS. VALERI: I concur. If it works out,
17 timing wise. I would be open to additional
18 hearings if there is strategic, targeted outreach
19 to get more feedback from residents who actually
20 live in Rockville Town Center. I think I've
21 stated this a bunch, and I don't mean to be a
22 broken record, but I feel that the community that

1 lives in Rockville Town Center should have the
2 opportunity to provide any sort of feedback. I'm
3 not getting a lot of that. I'm hearing a lot from
4 surrounding neighborhoods, which is equally great.
5 But for me, if the issues of people who live maybe
6 right next to or across the street from some of
7 these issues that we're discussing would be very
8 important to me.

9 So however we want to do that, whether
10 it is targeted outreach during the open comment
11 period or if there is another date that works, I'm
12 open to either way. But that's kind of where my
13 thinking is at generally.

14 MAYOR ASHTON: Can I just do a straw
15 poll on folks just because I want to be clear who
16 wants to allow an additional public hearing,
17 should it fit in the schedule? Just a straw poll.

18 Dr. Miles is here. Is it a question.
19 Are you -- okay. One, two, three --

20 MR. VAN GRACK: I'm in favor of
21 additional public hearing.

22 MAYOR ASHTON: Okay.

1 MS. VALERI: Well, mine had conditions
2 on it.

3 MR. VAN GRACK: Yeah.

4 MS. VALERI: If it was timing,
5 scheduling.

6 MR. VAN GRACK: Yeah. I mean, --

7 MAYOR ASHTON: Wait one second. Hold
8 on. Let me call the order. Councilmember Valeri?

9 MS. VALERI: My mine was conditioned on
10 outreach, but our schedule is as well.

11 MAYOR ASHTON: I agree, and the comment
12 was additional public hearings should -- should
13 the City Manager be able to find time for it.
14 Councilmember Fulton, I saw your hand.

15 MS. FULTON: I am very much open to a
16 different, an additional public hearing and
17 keeping the record open. I don't know that we
18 need to make that decision now. We need to see
19 what kind of input comes in and what the plan is
20 per what Councilmember Valeri says. I am open to
21 it, but not doing a straw poll in favor of
22 necessarily deciding that right now.

1 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. So our City
2 Manager, our next meeting is November 18th, and
3 our City Manager would just need our general
4 guidance so that he knows whether to go and look
5 for time. Councilmember Shaw.

6 MS. SHAW: I just have a quick question
7 around -- Councilmember Valeri made a really good
8 point around the residents in Town Center. And I
9 know that there was some outreach last year to
10 residents, so I would just ask about the
11 demographic data for residents in Town Center,
12 particularly there's a number of renters there
13 just to be informed of who has been engaged.

14 MAYOR ASHTON: I completely agree with
15 those comments, and a part of this is also seeing
16 that since the new plan has been released, there
17 hasn't been a significant change in comments or
18 the survey responses. So I completely agree that
19 we just -- I want to make sure that we're being
20 inclusive with the different parts of Rockville.
21 Councilmember Van Grack.

22 MR. VAN GRACK: I just wanted to add

1 that I want more feedback. I want to hold the
2 record open and I want to see if we can have
3 another hearing. But you -- but you -- when
4 you're called to the question momentarily, moments
5 ago you said to the extent we can fit it in time
6 wise. To me that's a huge caveat. That's not
7 just a minor caveat. We've got only one meeting
8 in November. You've got a timeline that we heard
9 -- we've heard some concerns from numerous members
10 of the public today regarding edits and different
11 sections that we might want to do with regard to
12 this plan. And we also heard that if we don't do
13 anything within 90 days, it passes as is. So I
14 don't want to push us too close to that edge
15 because we're looking to do too many things when
16 we've got a limited number of meetings.

17 Again, I want to hear from the public.
18 I want to keep the record open. I want to see if
19 we can have another hearing. But that issue of
20 timing to do so is a pretty critical issue for me
21 because I don't want to fall back on having this
22 by default passed when we've already heard from

1 the public regarding concerns.

2 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. I think
3 that's an important comment. I did specifically
4 ask staff, just when I was asking generally about
5 the plan, not about the hearing process, that
6 there is a process to extend the time of 90 days.
7 This is a really important plan for our city. It
8 has so many sections. Economic development,
9 housing, pedestrian safety. There's a lot to
10 cover. We have one work session and then one
11 planned approval time. And so I'm just getting a
12 sense of your -- of your temperature to see should
13 the City Manager be looking at adding additional
14 time or -- and he said two things. You can extend
15 the time or you could look at adding more meetings
16 between now and the January period. So I just
17 wanted to see where you all stand on that because
18 this is an important plan for our city. Mr.
19 Mihelich, did you want to say something?

20 MR. MIHELICH: I was just looking at six
21 month planning calendar, just see if there's gaps.
22 What I think I heard from the Commission though is

1 let's have the work session and then just go from
2 there. But I'll keep this in mind in case we have
3 to create time in a future agenda in December or
4 January.

5 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Yeah, and we
6 can get into this later, but like short term
7 rentals is not that time sensitive. Right? We
8 could move something if needed. Councilmember
9 Jackson, did you want to add any commentary?
10 Okay. Dr. Miles, did you want to say something?

11 MR. MILESH: No, ma'am. I was saying
12 I'm okay with adding --

13 MAYOR ASHTON: Adding. Okay, all right.
14 Councilmember Valeri?

15 MS. VALERI: If it's okay. This message
16 is for Ms. Gerbes. The initial deadline of when
17 the decision needs to be made by, is this because
18 of when the process began? I presume so. S under
19 code this is why we're constrained to this time
20 period.

21 MS. GEBRES: The start date is the date
22 of transmission, which is an authorized signature

1 from the chair of the Planning Commission to you
2 all. And that took place on October 18th.

3 MS. VALERI: Okay.

4 MS. GREBES: We were trying to be as
5 strategic as we could about that date and get that
6 as close to this meeting date as we reasonably
7 could, so as not to start the clock, say in
8 September, but have a month of wasted time.

9 MS. VALERI: Gotcha. And so the timing
10 is 90 days unless there is a con -- extension of
11 60 days?

12 MS. GERBES: Correct.

13 MS. VALERI: All right. I just wanted
14 to be clear in my brain where this was -- was
15 coming from. I was trying to figure out, I'm
16 like, where's the deadline? Okay, thank you.

17 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. I heard from
18 my colleagues that we're trying to get additional
19 types -- different parts -- of the city,
20 particularly Rockville Town Center engagement. I
21 think that's an important point. So I wanted to
22 echo those comments.

1 The other thing, the reason why I was
2 just trying to get a sense of my colleagues in
3 terms of adding the public hearing is that we meet
4 again November 18th. But you do have to notice
5 meet -- public hearings, and there's a period of
6 time. So with that, I think I heard that there
7 was enough support for additional public hearing.
8 But I want to just double check. Should the City
9 Manager be able to fit in the schedule? Can you
10 please just draw a poll if you are willing to add
11 an additional public hearing?

12 MS. VALERI: If it can be fit.

13 MAYOR ASHTON: Right. If it can be fed?

14 MS. VALERI: Only if.

15 MAYOR ASHTON: Yeah. Okay.

16 Councilmember Fulton.

17 MS. FULTON: I -- I struggle with how
18 that question is asked. I think we need more
19 public engagement. We absolutely do. We should
20 keep the record open, as my colleague said. We
21 should be doing things to try to get to Town
22 Center. We should be really pushing. I think

1 we've heard some asks about what are the changes
2 and we should highlight them for the community so
3 they can see them clearly and we can get their
4 input on them. All of that, I think, is really
5 important. I don't necessarily think that getting
6 that requires an additional public hearing. Like,
7 it forces people to come here. It's hard. There
8 are other ways to get feedback. We can accept
9 written records. We can go to the community. So
10 that's why I struggle with it.

11 Being centered on right now, deciding,
12 do we need another public hearing? Do we need
13 more feedback? Absolutely. Do we need to be
14 clear in out communication about what's changing?
15 Absolutely. But I don't know that we need another
16 public hearing.

17 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you for your
18 feedback. Councilmember Valeri.

19 MS. VALERI: I just had an idea, and
20 everybody can shoot me down. I will not take
21 offense at this. But we've been getting a request
22 for almost eight weeks now to be certain for a

1 town hall for Town Center. Is it possible to have
2 that -- excuse me, I'm losing my voice -- to have
3 that? Maybe there's a better time period, an
4 evening or a weekend, where that could also or
5 instead of be a public hearing for individuals in
6 Town Center to bring forth concerns. So
7 basically, two birds, one stone is what I'm
8 thinking.

9 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. I will ask
10 Ms. Taylor-Ferrell, and I'll just note that I
11 think there was majority support for public
12 hearing should it fit in the schedule. But I also
13 think that you have to find ways to get to people.
14 So go to people. I think that there would be a
15 good opportunity to have a meeting in Town Center.
16 We've been hearing requests for that. I know that
17 some of us talked about it this morning, that, I
18 know, Engage Rockville, the Engage Rockville
19 presentation to Mayor and Council has been moved
20 to Feb -- to January or February. But I do want
21 to make sure that we're thinking about the context
22 of this plan and the outreach to Town Center

1 residents as well. So I will also support an
2 additional idea like that.

3 Councilmember Shaw.

4 MS. SHAW: Just -- just as a resident in
5 Town Center, I think the city did a really great
6 job of reaching out to Town Center last year.
7 There's a particular part of Town Center, I think,
8 it's the Northern part of Town Center where the
9 city has the highest percentage of poverty. I
10 think it's almost like 25 percent. And I would be
11 interested in some type of like focus group or
12 some type of particular outreach to that
13 particular part of Town Center.

14 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. And to the
15 comment by my colleague on clarifying -- I'll go
16 to Dr. Miles next -- just what the changes were, I
17 think Councilmember Fulton raised it. I think it
18 would be important. I know we added a nice bar on
19 top of the Engage Rockville site. I think it's
20 important to post this presentation as well,
21 particularly the slide that highlights what are
22 the major changes that have been made so that

1 people who don't have time to get through the 100
2 plus page report can easily see, you know, what
3 are the major things that they should be looking
4 out for and commenting on.

5 Dr. Miles.

6 MR. MILES: Thank you, Madam Mayor.
7 Just voicing and support for that focus group for
8 folks who are economically challenged their in
9 Town Center Town Square, that's all.

10 MAYOR ASHTON: I support that as well.
11 I'm going to look to staff and see if you have any
12 clarifying questions in terms of the public
13 engagement process and next steps.

14 MR. MIHELICH: We heard clearly that you
15 guys wanted to have a special engagement for
16 residents in and around Town Center, including the
17 targeted area that has a greater preponderance of
18 levels of poverty. Heard that clearly. We'll
19 look for some dates and times that might work for
20 everybody and make sure that that gets publicized
21 to maximize attendance.

22 MAYOR ASHTON: Can you repeat the last

1 part again?

2 MR. MIHELICH: To maximize attendance.

3 MAYOR ASHTON: So you're going to do a
4 community meeting and then potentially look at it
5 scheduling a public hearing. There was majority
6 support for that. I saw at least four hands. If
7 someone wants to take their hand away, please feel
8 free. Yeah, there's Councilmember Shaw. I saw
9 your hand. Councilmember Jackson, maybe you want
10 to change, but I just wanted to clarify.
11 Councilmember Van Grack and Councilmember Shaw
12 after that.

13 MR. VAN GRACK: Again, I want to
14 reiterate, I think everybody here wants to have as
15 much engagement as possible. But if we're talking
16 about having a now multiple different in-person
17 meetings without an actual date that we've set,
18 we're going to be again running up against clocks.
19 I mean -- I mean, I don't know how many 60-day
20 extensions. I mean are we only allowed one 60-day
21 extension? So we've only got one 60-day
22 extension. We've got multiple hearings. I want

1 to make sure we're not getting into a point where
2 we're either defaulting into this plan or running
3 up against any clocks. Again, I want to make sure
4 we have feedback but I don't want to just have the
5 Council's wish list of a lot of different
6 meetings, multiple hearings, to which we are
7 running up against the clock, and we're having
8 trouble because I don't even know if we've got a
9 date for any of the above. So I just want to be
10 cautious in what we're instructing staff to do.
11 With regard to approval of the Town Center Master
12 Plan.

13 MAYOR ASHTON: I think we're asking
14 staff to go back and look at the schedule to see
15 what can be done within the time frame and then to
16 get back to us.

17 MR. VAN GRACK: That was --

18 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilmember Van Grack.

19 MR. VAN GRACK: -- because asking staff
20 to look to see what might be able to be done I can
21 support. As opposed to specifically saying that
22 we're going to do X, Y, and Z, and we're not sure

1 if we can fit into a schedule.

2 MAYOR ASHTON: That is dependent on
3 fitting into a schedule. Councilmember Shaw.

4 MS. SHAW: I just wanted to clarify my
5 request around the area of Town Center, around the
6 higher concentration of poverty. That not a
7 public hearing, more like a focus group or
8 something where we're likely not there just to
9 make it easier for people to share their feedback.
10 I think there was a focus group done last year and
11 I think that was a really good model.

12 MR. MIHELICH: Thank you for that
13 clarification. That's helpful.

14 MS. SHAW: Yeah.

15 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilmember Valeri.

16 MS. VALERI: And -- and thank you,
17 Councilmember Shaw. I was just thinking we're
18 really only looking at the addition of one in
19 person. It, I believe, and in Councilmember Shaw,
20 if I'm mistaken, please let me know. A focus
21 group would be invite only because you would want
22 a particular community to be -- that's the reason

1 why we do focus groups. And not that everyone's
2 not welcome. But you -- you want to make sure
3 that people from a targeted community are heard.
4 I am, basically, my suggestion was because,
5 frankly, we've had this request. We have not
6 moved on the request for a Town Center meeting,
7 and I believe that one meeting between now and
8 January should be feasible. Especially if we have
9 the flexibility of not having to decide on a
10 Monday night meeting. But I do defer to staff on
11 that.

12 MAYOR ASHTON: Mr. Mihelich, can you
13 please summarize what you understand the next
14 steps are?

15 MR. MIHELICH: So definitely identify an
16 area for a potential work session. 2) To have a
17 focus group discussion with areas with higher
18 levels of Poverty near Town Center. I don't know
19 that I heard from four of you that you want to
20 have a separate in-person Town Center meeting. I
21 think I saw four, but I wasn't positive of that.
22 So if we could clarify that, Mayor, I'd really

1 appreciate it.

2 MAYOR ASHTON: Okay. So the work
3 session is just generally potentially us talking,
4 right?

5 MR. MIHELICH: Yup.

6 MAYOR ASHTON: To break up the center
7 sections of the plan a little bit because I know
8 that there are multiple areas of, you know, the
9 zoning and housing is one thing, but there's also
10 public safety and transportation and other things
11 that are outlined in the plan. Let's just do a
12 straw poll on that. Who is in favor of additional
13 work session? Again, if it fits in the timeline
14 of the plan and we don't put ourselves at risk of
15 defaulting to the plan as is.

16 MS. VALERI: We're only talking about
17 work session, not additional.

18 MAYOR ASHTON: That's what he -- he's
19 asking about. We're going to go through all of
20 them.

21 MS. VALERI: Okay.

22 MAYOR ASHTON: Because I just want him

1 to be very clear. And there's some -- there are a
2 few people who have said some parts of it, not
3 others, but a work session. So this would be
4 right now we have a work session December 9th that
5 is to cover right now as it is the not only the
6 entire Town Center Master Plan, but also the WMATA
7 model plan. That's a lot for one each. We may
8 need more time. But I also, I'm asking this
9 question because I also know some people said,
10 well let's just leave a space for it, and if we
11 need it, we'll use it.

12 So just want to see does that -- do you
13 guys want the City Manager to look at the schedule
14 and potentially shift that, shift some things
15 around to hold a space for it? If we don't need
16 it, we don't need it. But are you all in favor of
17 allowing additional work session should we need
18 it?

19 MS. VALERI: Should we need it.

20 MAYOR ASHTON: Yeah. Councilmember
21 Jackson has a follow up. I mean Van Grack.

22 MR. VAN GRACK: I mean, I just want to

1 clarify. We only have one meeting in November and
2 we only have, I believe, two or three meetings in
3 December. We've already got this scheduled for
4 December 9th. We want to be able to exhaust --
5 exhaust this, but I'm not sure. And I ask the
6 City Manager, I mean, are we talking about
7 something? I mean, we're not talking about having
8 additional work session. We're talking about
9 having an additional hearing here in the chamber,
10 and then we're also talking about a Town Center
11 meeting. Which I'm all in favor of. I think
12 these are great. But we're also again, and I hate
13 to keep going back to this running up against the
14 clock that if we only get one extension and if we
15 don't act before then the plan that I think there
16 potentially could be some amendments to it would
17 be defaulted as accepted.

18 MR. MIHELICH: That's correct.

19 MAYOR ASHTON: So we do have a meeting
20 at December 16 that currently has short-term
21 rentals. It is scheduled for 90 minutes. We
22 could make a game plan should we need the

1 additional time that that gets moved and
2 additional timing for the Town Center plan could
3 be added, or we could actually extend the time.
4 Then, you know, we run the risk of just having one
5 extension period. But that is what could happen.

6 So, just to give the City Manager time
7 to look at this, are folks interested in pursuing
8 this if he can find the time? Again, contingent
9 on finding the time and contingent on this also
10 not running up against the clock and defaulting to
11 the plan as is. Where do you stand? Okay. All
12 right. So that's that. You got your
13 clarification on the work session. What else do
14 you need clarification on?

15 MR. MIHELICH: The in person meeting
16 generally in Town Center with residents who live
17 there.

18 MAYOR ASHTON: Okay. Now just for my
19 colleagues, we're looking at in-person meeting in
20 Town Center and then an invite only focus group
21 because that was -- that was -- there were two
22 different concepts discussed.

1 MS. VALERI: There were two different,
2 yeah.

3 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilman Shaw.

4 MS. SHAW: So I just -- I just want to
5 be clear. I do agree that there could always be
6 more engagement, particularly in Town Center. My
7 comment was just focusing on that particular area
8 and it being based on information or data and
9 demographic data. Have we already had a large
10 engagement with that particular community already?
11 And if not, then we -- when I would recommend
12 doing a focus group area there.

13 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilmember Shaw,
14 that's a question for staff. I heard a question.

15 MS. SHAW: Yes. And I think -- and the
16 reason why I'm saying it's a focus group as
17 opposed to us being there is I think it provides
18 more, as a focus group, it provides perhaps more
19 comfort for community members to share freely.

20 MR. MIHELICH: We have some data from
21 last summer. I would say it's a little bit dated.
22 If there's a desire to have a focus group meeting

1 for that same group, we would recommend having
2 that separately.

3 MAYOR ASHTON: So it sounds like you
4 need to look at your schedules and see what's
5 possible is what I -- I'm reading from you all as
6 staff.

7 MR. MIHELICH: Agreed.

8 MAYOR ASHTON: Could you -- you've heard
9 the interests of -- could you just check your
10 schedule and see what's possible and come back to
11 us with a recommendation based on your staff
12 expertise.

13 MR. MIHELICH: Yup.

14 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilmember Fulton and
15 Valeri did you have something you want to say?

16 MS. VALERI: I wanted to make sure that
17 I'm not -- were we at enough are interested in the
18 Town Center meeting given the parameters of
19 between now and January 9th, or am I thinking
20 December 9th? Whenever the deadline is. Did you
21 get feedback from enough of us that were
22 interested in it?

1 MR. MIHELICH: I don't know that I could
2 count to four to be crystal clear.

3 MS. VALERI: No, that's fine. Then I
4 would, then I would ask my colleagues if there
5 were -- if anyone else was interested. If not --

6 MAYOR ASHTON: So I'm reading from staff
7 that they need some time to look at schedules and
8 come back to us, but I think I know I will support
9 additional outreach for underrepresented groups in
10 particular as well as the Town Center piece. I
11 want all the public feedback. I feel like there's
12 a lot of new thing, new items in this that we need
13 to give people time to look at, but we also need
14 to be timely with our approval.

15 MR. MIHELICH: Yep. So what I'm going
16 to bring back, Mayor, is a potential schedule for
17 maybe an additional work session, definitely an
18 in-person engagement where people living in Town
19 Center, and a third focus group for the select
20 area that we talked about earlier. I'll look --
21 I'll look at dates, work with the team. We'll
22 come up with a plan for you guys to consider.

1 MAYOR ASHTON: Councilmember Shaw.

2 MS. SHAW: Could you also provide more
3 data that you --

4 MR. MIHELICH: Yes.

5 MS. SHAW: -- had for -- okay.

6 MAYOR ASHTON: Colleagues, are you okay
7 with allowing staff to go back and look at the
8 schedule and come back to us with a
9 recommendation? They get it. They get what we're
10 trying to do here. Get more community feedback.
11 All right, looking at Dr. Miles, you're good.
12 Okay. And then, just lastly, can we update the
13 website to include the key changes?

14 MR. MIHELICH: Yes.

15 MAYOR ASHTON: Okay, great. Thank you
16 everyone who has participated in this as we work
17 through this process. We really appreciate all of
18 your commentary. Again, if you're listening,
19 EngageRockville.com, you can go on there and
20 provide feedback on this plan, and then you can
21 also email the Mayor and Council should you
22 desire.

1 All right, thank you very much. We
2 appreciate this. So I know some of my colleagues
3 need a quick bio break and going to call for maybe
4 seven minutes if that's okay. All right, thank
5 you.

6 (Whereupon, the HEARING was
7 adjourned.)

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1 CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby
3 certify that the forgoing electronic file when
4 originally transmitted was reduced to text at my
5 direction; that said transcript is a true record
6 of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am
7 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by
8 any of the parties to the action in which these
9 proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I
10 am neither a relative or employee of any attorney
11 or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor
12 financially or otherwise interested in the outcome
13 of this action.

14 /s/Carleton J. Anderson, III
15
16

17 Notary Public in and for the
18 Commonwealth of Virginia
19 Commission No. 351998
20 Expires: November 30, 2024
21
22

Sara Taylor-Ferrell

From: Howard Jung <jazzmanpno2@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 13, 2024 8:42 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: No Redgate music festival

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

I was very disappointed to hear that there will not be a music festival this year at Redgate.
This is Rockville's premier summer music festival which draws thousands of people.
Town Center is not equipped to handle a similar event.

What is the reason for this?
Is this just for this summer?

I am very concerned.

Howie Jung
Rockville Cultural Arts Commission

Judy Penny

From: mbaccari99@gmail.com
Sent: Sunday, December 1, 2024 2:08 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Master Plan Changes

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Good morning,

I wanted to give some feedback on the proposed master plan updates. The lowering of parking minimums as well as increased height limits will provide much needed housing for more people. This area can be prohibitively expensive and a large portion of the people who work in local businesses and infrastructure such as public transport have issues finding housing in the area they support. There is a lot of resistance to new plans like this but this area has a housing crisis and it is necessary to pass policy that creates places for people to live, despite the potential changes this may bring. There have been a number of cities that lowered parking minimums and it creates so much more space for people to live and use while allowing the growth of alternate methods of travel.

Thanks,
Mike Baccari

Judy Penny

Exhibit No. 11
2024 Town Center Master Plan
PUBLIC HEARING
Dec. 9, 2024

From: Ryan P. Murphy <ryanpmurphy5@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 1, 2024 3:09 PM
To: cityclerk
Subject: Written testimony re. Town Center Master Plan Updates

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor & Council,

I write to you today in support of the updates to the Town Center Master Plan, and would be supportive of them going even further.

I live in East Rockville, less than a 10 minute walk from Town Center, and I walk to Town Center at least once or twice a typical day, whether it's walking my son to preschool, going to the library, picking up food, grabbing groceries at Dawson's (soon to be Trader Joe's), or enjoying one of the many great events in the Town Square. While Town Center is currently great, there is a lot of potential for it to be even better.

Like many others, I am disappointed to see the empty or struggling businesses in the area. If more people are allowed to live in the Town Center area, it can become the vibrant, thriving hub that Rockville's leaders surely originally pictured. It is a fantastic location to live, work, and play next to the metro, city and county government, and thousands of jobs, but unfortunately it is being held back because of artificial constraints on the number of people that can live there. This exacerbates the housing crisis, which is caused entirely by a lack of housing supply in high demand areas. It also worsens our climate crisis by encouraging sprawl and increased driving rather than public transit use.

Relaxing restrictions on parking minimums and height limits in the town center area will make building housing more efficient and affordable, at the same time as improving the prospects of town center businesses. Fears of "excessive shadows" and parking spilling over into nearby neighborhoods are completely unfounded. As someone that lives 2 blocks away, I welcome additional density which will benefit me directly through increased amenities and businesses, while at the same time benefiting my community through decreased housing costs and carbon emissions. Therefore, I urge the mayor and council to consider these factors when assessing the best path forward for Rockville Town Center.

Lastly, while these proposals are focused on the Town Center planning area itself, I urge the mayor and council to also consider further land use and parking minimum relaxation in nearby neighborhoods like East Rockville, which are easily walkable from Town Center, and can both benefit town center businesses through additional patronage, and further contribute to solving our housing affordability and climate crises through increased density near transit.

Thank you,

Ryan P. Murphy
107 Virginia Ave
Rockville, MD 20850
215-275-6969

Dec. 9, 2024

Judy Penny

From: Ethan Goffman <goffmane@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 8:31 AM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Town Center Master Plan

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing in support of the core elements of the new Rockville Town Center Pedestrian Master Plan. Most important is the need to address the lack of housing, which is a local, regional, state, and national issue. The greater DC region is short some 134 thousand homes according to a Zillow analysis (<https://www.zillow.com/research/affordability-crisis-missing-homes-32791/>). In practice, this means that young families simply cannot afford to live in Rockville, with a typical home value of \$619 thousand (<https://www.zillow.com/home-values/33714/rockville-md/>) and a rent of \$2020 a month for a 744 square foot apartment (<https://www.apartments.com/rent-market-trends/rockville-md/>).

Greater density of residential housing is the only way to alleviate this crisis. For those who do not already own a home, Rockville is becoming a city of the wealthy, and those few who attain affordable housing, with the middle squeezed out.

New residential units should be close to Rockville's Metro station, with an easy walk to Metrorail and numerous buses. This is the only way to reduce total vehicle miles travelled. In an era of climate change, in a region with poor air quality that leads to respiratory and cardiovascular problems, it's essential to reduce the amount of car use. Locating residences within walking distance of transit also reduces the need to own a car, alleviating economic pressure on families. The Rockville Metro station is an essential hub for rail, buses, and MARC trains—the more people using it, the better for our city and our region.

Adding residents also provides built-in customers to our beautiful town center. Currently, there are simply not enough people to support the local businesses, which struggle to remain open.

Increasing walkability and bikeability will help achieve the goals of lessening car traffic and drawing people to our town center. Lowering or eliminating parking minimums will allow owners to decide for themselves what amount of parking is best for a development, greatly reducing cost and alleviating the blight of excess parking lots.

One address greatly in need of a total rebuild is 255 Hungerford, an ideal location just across from Rockville Metro. It should be rebuilt as a multi-story residential building, perhaps with a restaurant on the ground floor clearly visible from Metro. This will encourage people to cross 355 and perhaps continue on to the rest of our town center.

Lastly, while it's critical to build more housing overall, it's also important to expand low- and moderate-income housing to help make Rockville a truly diverse city so that people from all backgrounds can enjoy the many educational, recreational, and transit benefits of living here. In short, the Rockville Town Center Pedestrian Master Plan, if not watered down, will be a bold step forward to a healthy, thriving Rockville and a better region.

Sincerely,

Ethan Goffman
523 N Horners Ln
Rockville, MD 20850

December 3, 2024

To: Mayor and Council, Planning Commission, and City Staff

RE: Town Center Master Plan Draft

Following are my comments on the Planning Commission Draft (9/24/2024) of the Town Center Master Plan.

Thank You to All

I would like to thank everyone who worked on this draft. It reflects a lot of work and there were many residents who took the time to contribute. I would like to thank the last Mayor and Council for mandating this revised Town Center Master Plan. I would like to thank the Planning Commission and City Staff for their diligence.

Overall Comments

Mayor and Council should be asking what success looks like. Where do Mayor and Council want to be in 5, 10, 15, and 20 years from now. Not only for Town Center key indicators, but for its populace. For the latter, for example, where should rental rates be for young adults and what should rental availability be for these people and how does Town Center contribute towards overall City objectives.

Second, it is necessary to ask: Who has the money, and who has the power? It is private interests (a. k. a. developers) who have the money, and the City that has power. The latter is mostly through the zoning ordinance and the associated regulations, as well as initiatives and priorities. The document should be more explicit about what the City as a corporate entity can do. It can allow, it can promote, it can incentivize, it can create partnerships, but it cannot anymore spend tens of millions as it has done in the past. The document should make this very clear. Town Center success depends on investment, and the City must attract investment.

I support the increase in allowed building heights that the draft proposes. I support proposed density increases. Increased density is a necessary but not by itself sufficient ingredient for success.

The Town Center history should be more detailed, especially about Town Square development and past City investments and decisions. The state of Rockville's Town Center is a tale of some good decisions as well as lost opportunities and misjudgments. What this Mayor and Council do with this Plan matters a lot.

Town Square should be its own planning area given the massive monetary investment and decisions that have been made over the years. If not Town Square by itself, then the Central Town Center vision area shown on page 31. This is the part of Town Center that is everyone's neighborhood.

Town Square and immediate surrounding area has seen massive City investment. I know of no final total estimate of the money spent on Town Square by the City. The specific investments include:

- Parking garages
- The part of the VisArts building that the City owns.
- Eminent domain expenses,
- Direct investments in infrastructure by the City
- Staff time.
- Additionally, there have been other Rockville investments, for example, the money spent to keep Dawson's in business for over 5 years.
- How much did it cost to tear down that old mall and who paid for it?

The first 2 of these are publicly known, and by themselves, are very large. The rest may or may not be discoverable.

Mayor and Council can instruct the City Manager to make a best-possible estimate of City money poured into Town Square since the tear-down of the mall.

On another topic, I was told that the Town Square has the second highest property tax rate in the State of Maryland. True? Someone should look this up. The impact is that the former Gordon Biersch space pays more in property tax than Panera across the street. This is all a part of the challenge.

Town Square is invisible from 355. This is a major flaw in its design.

Explicit competition and comparable areas should include the emerging Twinbrook Quarter. I would also include the new commercial area accessed on Research Boulevard and behind the Best Western Hotel, if for no other reason that this commercial development is so wildly successful and vibrant. There is a lesson there about visibility and being readily available off the highway.

The 2040 Master Plan section on Area 1 (Town Center) mentions the west side of North Washington as a focus area. This Town Center Master Plan draft does not include this area as a focus area. It does include it as an Area Vision area but spends only a brief paragraph on it. Further, this Western Edge is further distinguished as an Edge Character Area and a Transition Area Character (from Beall to West Montgomery). The reasons for this latter distinction should be clarified. In any case, the height limits for the Western Edge should be at least 75 feet (that is what the plan calls for, I read). North Washington should be seen as a crucial area for housing development that would support Town Square and other nearby area businesses.

Can the building at 112 North Washington, the pyramid, be rebuilt to its present height if it burns down? For this building, its current height should be the minimum allowed.

The Town Center Master Plan draft does a good job on heights, density, and parking. It could do a better job on housing. In addition to the populations already mentioned, the plan should state that we want residents in Town Center that have discretionary income that can support the businesses. The Plan should specifically mention these people that we take for granted, who have a few dollars to spend now and then.

The Town Center Master Plan should mention that there are a handful of business entities that control much of the territory, especially in the Central Town Center vision area. The draft mentions Morguard, but there are at least 3 others, including FRIT, Comstock, the owner of Regal Row, and probably a few others. They are in the situation of having to compete but also having to cooperate. That is a dynamic that should be clarified. Even if the individual business entities change, their successors will also likely be large outside corporations. Call them the Town Center Oligarchs.

Thanks for mentioning the TAP report and expanding on the theme that there is too much retail space for the population.

The Adequate Public Facilities section could be improved. For the purposes of Town Center, it should be mentioned that the multifamily structures more than pay for themselves for school capacity, and much of that money comes up front. The community should look upon these structures as a win-win. More money for school construction, more people in Town Center to make the entire place work better. Therefore, the APFO should not apply to the Town Center (or other multi-family housing) for school capacity, but rather seen as an investment.

For the upcoming zoning rewrite, the AFPO should recognize developments that more than pay for themselves, and in fact, actually contribute to solutions.

The text about retail occupancy rates is worrying. I wonder if in Town Square the occupancy rate is inflated by non-profits that take up space in lieu of better paying tenants.

The description of office vacancy rates is more than disturbing. There is a big problem here. Should this plan spend at least a paragraph or two describing how difficult it is to change an office building into housing? Or to tear down a building such as 51 Monroe? Do these stressed buildings represent a decades-long drag on Town Center. There are several such buildings that I know of.

In this Town Center Master Plan draft, I see little of the business community point of view. What will it take for them to pour money into the area? Rockville doesn't have the money to change things. We need investors.

Former Councilmember Onley and I submitted an ad-hoc report on Town Center way finding and signage. That report (mostly photographs with some text) documented that there is such a cacophony of signs in and around Town Center that it is all very confusing. It also found that many signs are old and too small or faded to be read.

There was a Town Center Summit II that was held for the area north of Beall Avenue. This was about 2010 or 2011. About 100 people attended. It brought out the challenge of working with a number of owners with different agendas and timelines. There is a summary of that event somewhere in City Hall.

There is a 2012 Rockville Summit report that does a good job of explaining the interactions between residents, businesses, non-profits, education, and government. That document anticipates many of the recommendations of this Master Plan. That was a year or more exercise in which many people participated. The report should be in the references.

Detailed Comments

Page 5, third bullet. We need *better* wayfinding, not *more* wayfinding.

Page 6, number 8 under housing, this should read that we need more housing including affordable housing in Town Center. There is a need for market rate as well as affordable homes.

Page 17, top line that starts with the text: “Despite receiving feedback through several different mechanisms”, this seems an awkward phrasing. The word ‘despite’ leaves me perplexed. What you found was different parts of the community reinforcing each other.

Page 37, map 13, Promenade Park should be pointed out.

Page 48, when speaking about MARC, it should be noted that this system would like to widen to another rail. It’s hard to know where this would fit. This plan, and any other Rockville planning document, should take a stand against a third rail through Rockville.

Page 63, the MPDU units are owned privately, but the program is managed by the City.

Page 63, second to last paragraph, this text “These units are mixed in with an indistinguishable” needs grammatical improvement.

Page 68, VisArts and the County’s business incubator should be mentioned as Community Facilities.

Page 68, Elementary Schools should include Ritchie Park and Twinbrook as both of these feed into Julius West Middle School and Richard Montgomery High School.

Page 69, first 2 paragraphs, Rock Terrace School was relocated. There is still a building on Manatee that has that name. I’m not sure what will happen there.

Page 71, point 9.2.4, this narrow parking lot is not a good place for a park due to the number of vehicles passing by. It would be too noisy and too polluted to be enjoyable. On the other hand, the Shell station location would be good for a park.

Page 75, the removed Confederate statue and the old Library building should be delisted from Historic Property status. Rockville blew it on the latter demolition and reconstruction.

Page 80, about Choice Hotels: "Choice Hotels, choosing to leave Town Center for newer office buildings elsewhere" . The former Choice Hotels building in Rockville Town Square is class A space and it is new. The building was constructed for Choice according to its specifications. The attraction of Choice Hotels International was a signal 'get' for Rockville and a huge loss. There are lessons to learn here, but not about the quality of its office space. There are many stories, too long to list here, that accompany the Choice Hotels saga, which did many things for Town Center including the presence of BLVD 44 and Ansel.

Page 82, about a specific brand for Rockville Town Center. Bravo! But it should be just for the Central Town Center focus area. This is our 'downtown'. This is the walkable part of Town Center. This is where Rockville has had successive failures.

Page 85, the text "The region's numbers on summer daytime temperature highs, heat index and heat waves are all expected to at least double in the upcoming decades.", is not well worded and scientifically incorrect. The heat index cannot double (or we would all be dead), but the number of days that it surpasses a threshold may double.

Page 88, stormwater management. It should be stated that any redevelopment of existing hardscape, built before a certain date, will improve stormwater management due to improved regulations and practices. It should be more explicit that water and sewer requirements impose no restrictions.

Page 94, Table 10, the rates should be per housing unit. (Make it explicit.)

Page 95, Table 12, list Ritchie Park and Twinbrook Elementary Schools.

Page 110, first row of the table on that page about more public art in Town Center. Town Center is already very dense with public art and doesn't really need more. Other parts of the City could use more public art.

Somewhere: The draft mentions putting parks on the tops of parking garages. Be aware that there are residences that overlook and are next to these top floors of the garages. Drive to the top of the one that is accessed off of 355. You will see what I mean. For these apartments, the visuals may improve if these were converted to parks, but would they like to have a dog park outside their window, or people peering in? Maybe this will work, but there should be a foot trip there first to see what the apartment dwellers will see and hear.

The Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee (RBAC) recognizes and appreciates the infrastructure improvements instituted by the City of Rockville. These projects have led to increased safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and motorized vehicles. They include, but are not limited to, the addition of bicycle lanes on East Middle Lane, North Washington Street, and Baltimore Road. We mention these specific projects because they relate to a program of which you should be aware.

Metro's Bike and Ride program provides free bicycle parking for Metro riders. Bike and Ride gives 24/7 access to Metro Card-controlled sheltered bicycle parking. Bike and Ride facilities are brightly lit (LED lighting) steel mesh structures monitored by video surveillance. They also provide protection from precipitation (unlike the current bike racks at the Rockville station). Each Bike and Ride has the capacity to accommodate 100 bicycles. These structures include repair stands equipped with tools and air pumps as well as Emergency Call Boxes. There are eight Bike and Ride facilities in the Metro system. Only one of the eight (Grosvenor-Strathmore) is located on the Red Line.

RBAC believes it would be most appropriate and beneficial for Metro to establish a Bike and Ride facility at the Rockville Metro Station. There are many factors supporting such action:

- Rockville is a vibrant city with business establishments and headquarters, office buildings, governmental and judicial complexes, residential density, and the Rockville campus of Montgomery College.
- Rockville Metro has higher ridership than most stations with bike and rides according to WMATA's 2024 Ridership Survey
- The Rockville Metro Station is a transit hub with 20 Metro bus routes, Metro Rail, MARC and Amtrak service, private interstate bus routes, and future planned Metro Bus Rapid Transit.
- A free bicycle parking facility would support all Rockville area residents and particularly benefit low-income residents to have access to public transportation options.
- Rockville's system of bicycle trails, paths, on-street bike lanes, and protected bike lanes provide easy access to the Rockville Metro Station from all directions surrounding the station.
- There are bicycles regularly parked at the station. A Bike and Ride would avert the current concern of theft of bicycle parts such as seats, bags, and accessories (even though the frame and wheels may be securely locked in the bike racks).

RBAC recently learned that Metro is planning to replace existing Rockville Metro bicycle parking facilities with similar equipment by the end of 2025. RBAC believes that the establishment of a Bike and Ride facility at the Rockville Metro Station would be a far more effective and efficient use of Metro funds. If Metro cannot fully fund Rockville's Bike and Ride, then we would like to ask the City of Rockville to work together with WMATA to garner the necessary funds (from whatever source is available) to create such a facility to benefit residents, dovetail with existing and future transportation planning, and contribute to climate defense.

RBAC is unanimous in our support of a Rockville Bike and Ride facility at the Rockville Metro Station.

Thank you for your consideration.

Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee

Judy Penny

From: rtreinhard@aol.com
Sent: Friday, December 6, 2024 5:53 PM
To: mayorcouncil; mayorcouncil
Cc: Comprehensive Plan
Subject: written remarks re: Rockville Town Center Master Plan update

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Mayor and Council:

I have four reactions to the Rockville Town Center Master Plan update:

1. In general, the update goes in the right direction, toward density and livability.
2. The City and Rockville Economic Development Inc. should strongly consider incentives to turn currently empty Class B and C office buildings, especially those adjacent to Rockville Metro, into market-rate, workforce, and affordable housing. Even those projects currently announced, or about to be announced, by developers may need such assistance in this challenging economic environment. The City and REDI should examine closely other cities' programs to incentivize office-to-residential (and office-to-hotel) development, including grants, loans, and tax breaks. The City should aggressively reach out to Montgomery County and the State of Maryland to assist. The many empty and under-tenanted buildings just west of I-270 could use the same. And partnering with WMATA, as well as the county and state, to develop on the WMATA land around the Rockville Metro, also should be a priority.
3. I continue to be appalled by the lack of data in the update. It is clear to me that the City prefers to make assertions based on intuition rather than to rely on data. Where data are cited in the update, the data are used incompletely or incorrectly, e.g., comparing and contrasting Rockville Town Center retail on square footage rather than on retail sales. Below is a list of data the City and REDI should regularly collect, analyze, and distribute. Open data is the wave of the present, never mind the future.
4. Rockville Town Center needs a business improvement district or urban district. The mayor and city manager should get together the half-dozen or dozen or so major property owners for informal discussions immediately. The Downtown Bethesda Partnership is a well regarded example and the Friendship Heights Alliance is promising. The Silver Spring and Wheaton urban districts are not.

Under the current city leadership--mayor, council, and city manager--Rockville Town Center has a good chance of succeeding. I say that as a Rockville Town Center resident and property owner and Rockville voter, as well as an urban development official with almost 40 years of experience in six cities.

Rick Reinhard
38 Maryland Avenue, Unit 501
Rockville MD 20850
202-669-2205 (cell)

List of Needed Data

Housing

- Number of units

By type—single-family vs. townhouse vs. condo; ownership vs. rental

Occupancy numbers

Average cost and cost per sf

Average numbers of residents per unit

All of these over time

Office

Square feet

Cost per sf

Occupancy numbers

By types of use

By classes—Class A, B, C

By districts (Town Center vs. Shady Grove vs. west of I-270)

All of these over time

Retail

Square feet

Cost per sf

Occupancy numbers

By types of use

By districts

All of these over time

Arts and entertainment

Square feet

Cost per sf

By types of use

Attendance numbers by venue

All of these over time

Investment

Development projects under way

Development projects planned

Crime

Current

Over time

Transportation and parking

Metro patronage

WMATA bus patronage

Ride On patronage

Traffic counts

Pedestrian volume counts

Parking spaces

Off-street

On-street

Occupancy numbers

All of these over time

Phillip Staub
206 Upton St., Rockville
Re: Draft Town Center Master Plan
Hearing Date: December 9, 2024

Good evening Mayor and Council members. Thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding the Draft Town Center Master Plan.

I'm Phill Staub. I first became a Rockville resident in 1993, and have lived on Upton Street in West End for the past 7 years. Since moving to Upton Street we have become a one car household since we don't need one for most of our commuting, shopping and dining. This walkable lifestyle must be appealing because we have many new, young homeowners on our street who are as enthusiastic about this lifestyle as we are. They want to make Rockville their long-term home.

We want the Master Plan to be a vision for building on this appealing walkable and sustainable lifestyle, and do so equitably.

Town Center is different from Pike and Rose, Downtown Crown, and Rio. The master plan should be tailored to Rockville's strengths. We believe it is.

Town Center has something other developing communities can only dream of: it is adjacent to Metrorail and bus, Marc trains, and Amtrak. The master plan recognizes we are in the midst of a transit hub. It presents a more welcoming station and a better connection to Town Center, a win-win for residents and visitors alike. A must for a growing community.

Rockville is community oriented. Town Center is bordered by largely single-family neighborhoods. This is both a boon—for instance, we saw our neighbors at Dawsons and soon will again at Trader Joes—and a bust: we lack the housing to match our enviable location. The master plan gets this. It concentrates development around Town Square, while recognizing that won't be enough. It cleverly uses limited space to provide adequate housing while limiting impact on existing housing. Planners must have gone parcel-by-parcel to see, for example, that lots bordered by Adams St, Wood Lane, Washington St., and Jefferson—currently parking lots and underutilized office and retail—are sited lower than nearby housing and can therefore be built higher. This is inspired community-focused planning, not just numbers on a page. Importantly, the master plan encourages affordable housing through measures like bonus height for more affordable units. Yes, if this comes to pass we may see these buildings from our homes. We welcome that. We want to share our great community and be consistent with our values of diversity and sustainability. In the same vein, we welcome the proposed missing middle housing, and hope the final plan will maximize that development. The plan could provide greater density than currently drafted. There are a few omitted locations for missing middle housing, like along the 200 block of N Van Buren. I know that stretch well as it is adjacent to my home. It has multi-family units to its north and east, and seems a good location for more. It

would be better for West End and Town Center than the knock-down million-dollar homes going in now.

Another Rockville strength is being family friendly: it offers programs at Vis Arts, the library, and the Science Center. Teens frequent the library, taco joint, and burger place. Families go to the movies. We enjoy a splash park in the summer and a skating rink in winter. Casual, family restaurants and treats find success in Town Center. The nearby swim and fitness center is also a hub for family activity. The master plan sees this. It ensures the most reliable Town Center users—neighborhood residents—have safe ways to walk and ride into town. It builds on the wonderful recent bike lanes and traffic calming measures. The master plan also helps us move away from the old car culture, by right-sizing parking. Giving developers more control over parking will contribute to a safer, more sustainable community. Less land reserved for parking also helps future-proof Rockville, by adding useful development space and advancing walkability. Town Center's ideal location will not be a secret forever. It will grow with or without a master plan. We much rather have a Town Center with vibrant street life and transit than one clogged with cars going nowhere.

For these reasons and more we enthusiastically support the master plan. It has the right vision for Town Center. It builds on Rockville's strengths: location, communities, and families. We hope the master plan remains at least as bold and forward-thinking as it is now.

Thank you for the terrific work in preparing the plan. Thanks also for so actively seeking and considering public input.

Judy Penny

From: Ryan P. Murphy <ryanpmurphy5@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 1, 2024 3:09 PM
To: cityclerk
Subject: Written testimony re. Town Center Master Plan Updates

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor & Council,

I write to you today in support of the updates to the Town Center Master Plan, and would be supportive of them going even further.

I live in East Rockville, less than a 10 minute walk from Town Center, and I walk to Town Center at least once or twice a typical day, whether it's walking my son to preschool, going to the library, picking up food, grabbing groceries at Dawson's (soon to be Trader Joe's), or enjoying one of the many great events in the Town Square. While Town Center is currently great, there is a lot of potential for it to be even better.

Like many others, I am disappointed to see the empty or struggling businesses in the area. If more people are allowed to live in the Town Center area, it can become the vibrant, thriving hub that Rockville's leaders surely originally pictured. It is a fantastic location to live, work, and play next to the metro, city and county government, and thousands of jobs, but unfortunately it is being held back because of artificial constraints on the number of people that can live there. This exacerbates the housing crisis, which is caused entirely by a lack of housing supply in high demand areas. It also worsens our climate crisis by encouraging sprawl and increased driving rather than public transit use.

Relaxing restrictions on parking minimums and height limits in the town center area will make building housing more efficient and affordable, at the same time as improving the prospects of town center businesses. Fears of "excessive shadows" and parking spilling over into nearby neighborhoods are completely unfounded. As someone that lives 2 blocks away, I welcome additional density which will benefit me directly through increased amenities and businesses, while at the same time benefiting my community through decreased housing costs and carbon emissions. Therefore, I urge the mayor and council to consider these factors when assessing the best path forward for Rockville Town Center.

Lastly, while these proposals are focused on the Town Center planning area itself, I urge the mayor and council to also consider further land use and parking minimum relaxation in nearby neighborhoods like East Rockville, which are easily walkable from Town Center, and can both benefit town center businesses through additional patronage, and further contribute to solving our housing affordability and climate crises through increased density near transit.

Thank you,

Ryan P. Murphy
107 Virginia Ave
Rockville, MD 20850
215-275-6969

Judy Penny

Exhibit No. 14
2024 Town Center Master Plan
PUBLIC HEARING
Dec. 9, 2024

Subject: FW: Town Center Master Plan

From: Ethan Goffman <goffmane@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 8:31 AM
To: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>
Subject: Town Center Master Plan

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing in support of the core elements of the new Rockville Town Center Pedestrian Master Plan. Most important is the need to address the lack of housing, which is a local, regional, state, and national issue. The greater DC region is short some 134 thousand homes according to a Zillow analysis (<https://www.zillow.com/research/affordability-crisis-missing-homes-32791/>). In practice, this means that young families simply cannot afford to live in Rockville, with a typical home value of \$619 thousand (<https://www.zillow.com/home-values/33714/rockville-md/>) and a rent of \$2020 a month for a 744 square foot apartment (<https://www.apartments.com/rent-market-trends/rockville-md/>).

Greater density of residential housing is the only way to alleviate this crisis. For those who do not already own a home, Rockville is becoming a city of the wealthy, and those few who attain affordable housing, with the middle squeezed out.

New residential units should be close to Rockville's Metro station, with an easy walk to Metrorail and numerous buses. This is the only way to reduce total vehicle miles travelled. In an era of climate change, in a region with poor air quality that leads to respiratory and cardiovascular problems, it's essential to reduce the amount of car use. Locating residences within walking distance of transit also reduces the need to own a car, alleviating economic pressure on families. The Rockville Metro station is an essential hub for rail, buses, and MARC trains—the more people using it, the better for our city and our region.

Adding residents also provides built-in customers to our beautiful town center. Currently, there are simply not enough people to support the local businesses, which struggle to remain open.

Increasing walkability and bikeability will help achieve the goals of lessening car traffic and drawing people to our town center. Lowering or eliminating parking minimums will allow owners to decide for themselves what amount of parking is best for a development, greatly reducing cost and alleviating the blight of excess parking lots.

One address greatly in need of a total rebuild is 255 Hungerford, an ideal location just across from Rockville Metro. It should be rebuilt as a multi-story residential building, perhaps with a restaurant on the ground floor clearly visible from Metro. This will encourage people to cross 355 and perhaps continue on to the rest of our town center.

Lastly, while it's critical to build more housing overall, it's also important to expand low- and moderate-income housing to help make Rockville a truly diverse city so that people from all backgrounds can enjoy the many educational, recreational, and transit benefits of living here. In short, the Rockville Town Center Pedestrian Master Plan, if not watered down, will be a bold step forward to a healthy, thriving Rockville and a better region.

Sincerely,

Ethan Goffman

523 N Horners Ln

Rockville, MD 20850

Judy Penny

From: Jake Jakubek <jjakubek@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 5:34 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Town Center Master Plan

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Madame Mayor and City Council,

My name is Jake Jakubek and I live at 319 Grandin Ave. Regrettably, I am unable to come speak in person tonight due to a mild illness and am providing my comments on the Town Center Master Plan in writing.

I live in Croydon Park and walk to Town Center regularly, going to the library, the dentist, Town Square, Little Miner Taco, and other destinations as it is now my downtown. There are regular events such as the tree lighting and the summer concert series which I've always enjoyed. Town Square is also a wonderful third place where one can just hang out watching life go by. My friends and I take our acoustic guitars to Town Square sometimes to jam together.

I like many others, want to see Town Center succeed. It has had its difficulties with business vacancies and with the recent departure of choice hotels, now has a large amount of office space vacant. A solid plan will help reverse this course and make Rockville Town Center a vibrant place to live and work.

For the plan to achieve that goal, we need more people to live in and around Town Center and we need to maximize the use of available space by building dense housing. Two ways of making this possible are by repealing height limits and parking minimums. There is no need for height limits in downtown Rockville. Allow development of taller buildings to provide more dwelling units for those people who clearly want to live here. Eliminating parking minimums will reduce the price of construction by a significant amount as prices for underground parking spaces range from 20,000-50,000 per space!

The DC metro area has not built sufficient housing for the amount the population grew in the past two decades and that is reflected in housing costs. Between 2004 and 2011, the area population grew by 750,000 people and the housing stock did not grow by that amount. If Rockville maximizes housing development opportunities in Town Center, it will also help us achieve the goals set by the COG. We all have to do our part.

I did want to offer an anecdote from a conference I attended last week in Baltimore. It was the TEDCO Expo, a conference of scientists and entrepreneurs in Maryland. Attendees included people from all over the state who were interested in commercializing research from government and university laboratories. At the keynote speech, one of the speakers stated that one major challenge that small technology and biotech companies have in Maryland is that their prospective employees cannot afford to live here. Housing costs are too high for people and they move to other places. With biotech being an important part of the Maryland economy, this is a critical point. If we wish to maintain our status as a biotechnology hub, we need to make it more affordable for people to live here so they can build companies, develop technologies, and help us solve human challenges.

My wife and I intend to live here for a long time and we look forward to seeing the plan come to fruition.

Thank you for listening.

Subject: FW: Support for updated town center master plan

From: Michael Dutka <ditko86@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, December 9, 2024 10:34 AM

To: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>; Planning Commission <Planning.Commission@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: Support for updated town center master plan

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council Members and Planning Commission,

I want to voice my support for the new Town Center Master plan, but also urge it to go further in terms of increasing density and include some financial incentives in order to facilitate the plan becoming reality. Specifically I think parking requirements should just be eliminated throughout the entire planning area (preferably the entire city but that's beyond the scope of this plan) rather than just in areas close to the metro station. I think the "core area" by right height should be increased to at least 300 feet to bring it in line with other urban areas in MoCo. Ideally we wouldn't limit height at all, because that would create more architectural flexibility which would result in a more interesting skyline, as well as maximizing the use of the limited space within town center. For the edge areas the by right height should be increased to at least 85 feet because that is a typical height for a 5 over 1 apartment building (<https://www.archdaily.com/978264/in-praise-of-5-over-1-buildings>) which is a cost effective way to provide desperately needed housing.

On the finance side I think a property tax incentive would be too small to move the needle on a developers decision to build or not build (Rockville's rate is a small component of the total). What I do think we should do is help finance the demolition of 255 Rockville Pike and prepare the land for high rise redevelopment, assuming we can write a contract that says in no uncertain terms construction will begin shortly after the land is cleared. I'm sorry but we just can't have that 2 floor concrete brick sitting there any more, it's an eye sore and a severe underutilization of that metro adjacent space. Redevelopment should also be granted "champion" status like Twinbrook Quarter, and allowed to be whatever height works, the bigger the better.

-Mike Dutka
713 Shetland Street
Rockville MD 20851

https://rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/54939/Town-Center-Master-Plan-Draft?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR3m52DNmDR3AEYQj27STQjmhNikVPuo5wPTVkdIqnSRWqpgQC2oooFehZ0_aem_AQkQ95NcecOStX3Z9rK_8Y05aNZ7-qt0ja8el35Jtdcn-lebT_CgcAcfrmCHPL4nLWKMYoPHAvSR54VqQtXjR5gd

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Dr. Michael S. Dutka
US Navy (civilian)
USNO Phone Number- 202-762-0242
Cell- 301-996-3588

MAYOR AND COUNCIL OF ROCKVILLE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

PUBLIC HEARING ON TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN

Monday, December 9, 2024

1 PARTICIPANTS:

2 Mayor and Council:

3 MONIQUE ASHTON, Mayor

4 KATE FULTON, Councilmember

5 BARRY JACKSON, Councilmember

6 DAVID MYLES, Councilmember

7 IZOLA (ZOLA) SHAW, Councilmember

8 MARISSA VALERI, Councilmember

9 ADAM VAN GRACK, Councilmember

10 Staff:

11 ROBERT DAWSON, City Attorney

12 JEFF MIHELICH, City Manager

13 SARA TAYLOR-FERRELL, City Clerk/Director
14 of Council Operations

15 CHRISTOPHER DAVIS, Community Planning and
Development Services Department

16 Speakers:

17 STEVE VANGRACK

18 PHILLIP STAUB

19 MISHA CLIVE

20

21 * * * * *

22

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MAYOR ASHTON: We'll now move on to our
3 Public Hearing on the Town Center Master Plan.
4 City Clerk, has this been properly noticed?

5 MS. TAYLOR-FERRELL: Madam Mayor and
6 Councilmembers, it has been properly noticed. It
7 was noticed in the Washington Post on Thursday,
8 November 21st and Thursday, November 28th, and
9 also on our City's website.

10 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much. We
11 will allow folks to proceed. I'll call those who
12 have signed up in advance, and if those who want
13 to speak after, please feel free to raise your
14 hand, and we'll call on you. All persons
15 addressing the Mayor and Council shall speak in a
16 civil and courteous manner, and members of the
17 audience shall be respectful of others. Each
18 individual will be allowed 3 minutes to speak, and
19 organization groups representing community members
20 can speak for 5 minutes. We ask that you stick to
21 the time allowed. There will be a time clock in
22 front of you, and you will hear an audible beep at

1 the end of your time. Please state your name and
2 if you live in Rockville for the record.

3 With that, welcome, Steve VanGrack.

4 MR. VANGRACK: Good evening, members of
5 Mayor and Council. Always a delight to be here.
6 Steve VanGrack and I live in the City of
7 Rockville. I have appeared before prior Mayor and
8 Councils many times on the issue of the Town
9 Center, and in each instance, probably for the
10 last 30 years, it's been critical of the actions
11 of the Mayor and Council. Tonight is different.

12 I do want to tell you that when I was
13 mayor, we had a thing called Rockville Mall. And
14 Rockville Mall was part of a project in 1973
15 called Rockville Town Center. So I don't want
16 Rockville Town Center's name to cause any
17 problems.

18 But tonight I want to appear before you
19 in a very positive way, letting you know that the
20 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan that was
21 approved by the Planning Commission is the finest
22 document I have seen on the Rockville Town Center.

1 I commend the City staff. The City staff did the
2 most extensive outreach program that I'm aware of,
3 maybe forever. They provided great information to
4 the Planning Commission. I also want to commend
5 the Planning Commission. They thoroughly reviewed
6 it, and they came up with great recommendations.

7 I would like to spend some time, but I'm
8 not going to, telling you about the great parts of
9 this plan. I just want you to approve it. Much
10 more housing, affordable workforce housing,
11 reduction of parking requirements, expedited
12 approval process, better signage, more events, but
13 the most important sentence from that whole report
14 says, where people can live, work, and play for
15 years to come.

16 The real reasons that I'm here is not
17 only to thank those who have done it; it's to
18 encourage you to vote for it and approve it. But
19 there are some suggestions I'd like to present to
20 you. You should make or seek to make the Town
21 Center the safest it can be. Security cameras
22 should be all over. There should be signs for

1 security cameras. There should even be a
2 volunteer public safety officers. The previous
3 chief of police thought all these were good ideas.
4 There should be incentives to office building
5 owners to redevelop with affordable housing.
6 There should be an organization of the property,
7 the landowners, to form a business government
8 improvement district. And I think that the City
9 should bring together the major interested parties
10 together for future planning. Could be Montgomery
11 County government. Could be Montgomery College.
12 Could be the courthouses. Could be WMATA. Could
13 be the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department. There
14 should be one entity that works on the future.

15 But the most important thing that I
16 share with you tonight is I have lived and worked
17 in Rockville for almost 50 years, and this is the
18 best plan that has been presented for the
19 Rockville Town Center in that time period. Thank
20 you all.

21 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you. Well, I know
22 that Philip Staub spoke already. Ms.

1 Taylor-Ferrell, can we just make sure that his
2 comments are included in this public hearing?
3 Okay.

4 MS. TAYLOR-FERRELL: Sure.

5 MAYOR ASHTON: Oh, did you not speak?
6 Sorry. All right.

7 MS. TAYLOR-FERRELL: Yeah, I was like I
8 don't know.

9 MAYOR ASHTON: There's another Philip,
10 sorry. Welcome.

11 MR. STAUB: Thank you.

12 MAYOR ASHTON: Yes.

13 MR. STAUB: Thank you, Mayor,
14 Councilmembers, and staff, for this opportunity to
15 testify. I'm Phillip Staub, as you've already
16 said. My wife and I have lived on Upton Street in
17 the West End for the past 7 years. We love
18 walking and riding for all of our commuting,
19 shopping, and dining, as do our neighbors.

20 The Master Plan should be tailored to
21 and is tailored to Town Center's strengths.
22 Proximity to transit, community, and families.

1 Town Center has some -- something -- other
2 developing communities don't. It is adjacent to
3 Metrorail and bus, MARC, and Amtrak. The Master
4 Plan presents a more welcoming station and a
5 better connection to Town Center. A win-win for
6 visitors and residents alike.

7 Rockville is community oriented. Town
8 Center is bordered by largely single-family
9 neighborhoods. This is both a boom, we enjoy our
10 green neighborhoods and seeing each other a lot,
11 and a bust. We lack the housing to match our
12 enviable location. The Master Plan gets this. It
13 recognizes that development around Town Square
14 won't be enough. It cleverly uses limited space
15 to provide adequate housing while limiting impact
16 on existing housing.

17 In another step toward appropriate
18 housing density, the Master Plan encourages
19 affordable housing through measures like bonus
20 height. Yes, if this comes to pass, we will see
21 these buildings from our front yard. We welcome
22 it. We want to share our great community and be

1 consistent with our values of diversity and
2 sustainability. In the same vein, we welcome the
3 proposed missing middle housing, and we hope the
4 final plan will go even further toward encouraging
5 that type of development.

6 Another Town Center strength is being
7 family friendly. For instance, it offers programs
8 at VisArts, the Science Center, the library. The
9 Master Plan sees this. It encourages the most
10 reliable Town Center users, neighborhood
11 residents, by having safe ways to walk and ride
12 into town. It builds on the wonderful recent bike
13 lanes and traffic calming measures. The Master
14 Plan also helps us move away from car culture by
15 right-sizing parking. It allows developers more
16 control over parking and will help future-proof
17 Rockville by adding useful development space.

18 Town Center's ideal location will not be
19 a secret forever. It will grow with or without a
20 Master Plan. We much rather have a town center
21 with a vibrant street life and transit than one
22 clogged with cars going nowhere.

1 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you.

2 MR. STAUB: We hope the Master Plan
3 remains at least as bold and forward-thinking as
4 it is now. Thank you.

5 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much.
6 That exhausts the list of those who have signed up
7 in advance. Is there anyone else who would like
8 to speak? Welcome.

9 MS. CLIVE: Hi, this is Misha Clive.
10 I'm a Rockville resident and a resident of Town
11 Square. I love Rockville Town Center. It is what
12 brought me to live here after a difficult
13 experience with a corporate landlord in Silver
14 Spring, and I absolutely love this place. I feel
15 that it's the hidden gem of Montgomery County and
16 would love for it to become unhidden. So I just
17 wanted to share to the point that Mr. VanGrack was
18 making about going forward in the future of
19 Rockville Town Center for talking about future
20 ongoing organized stakeholders to continue to
21 invest in Town Center over the years; that renters
22 and folks who live here absolutely have to be key

1 stakeholders in that. So we'd want to make sure
2 that folks who live here are represented along
3 with businesses and other stakeholders in the
4 community. Thank you.

5 MAYOR ASHTON: Thank you very much. Is
6 there anyone else who would like to speak? Thank
7 you. To our staff leads here, I wanted to just
8 ask and if you could clarify to the public how
9 long comments will be accepted so that they're
10 aware of when they can continue to send emails
11 through.

12 MS. GERBES: So we don't have an
13 official closing date at this point. Staff's
14 recommendation is that we keep the record open
15 until the date of adoption of the plan which is
16 currently scheduled for January 13th.

17 MAYOR ASHTON: Team, are you okay with
18 that? I support that as well. Thank you. Great.
19 All right, so we will now end this public hearing
20 but please feel free to send your comments into
21 staff and to the Mayor and Council.

22 (Whereupon, the HEARING was

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adjourned.)

* * * * *

1 CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

2 I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby
3 certify that the forgoing electronic file when
4 originally transmitted was reduced to text at my
5 direction; that said transcript is a true record
6 of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am
7 neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by
8 any of the parties to the action in which these
9 proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I
10 am neither a relative or employee of any attorney
11 or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor
12 financially or otherwise interested in the outcome
13 of this action.

14 /s/Carleton J. Anderson, III
15
16

17 Notary Public in and for the
18 Commonwealth of Virginia
19 Commission No. 351998
20 Expires: November 30, 2028
21
22

Judy Penny

From: Peter Lovell <plovell@mac.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 12, 2024 3:46 AM
To: Katie Gerbes
Cc: Peter Lovell; Louise Lovell; Comprehensive Plan; mayorcouncil; Monique Ashton
Subject: Re: parking and ADA

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Hi Katie,

unfortunately I was not able to attend the special meeting on Monday but was able to be there earlier and addressed several comments to the Mayor and Council. These were specifically for the transition area issue, and I would like to add some more general comments for your consideration.

We already discussed the issue with handicapped parking at the WECA meeting so I won't belabor that here.

But several other thoughts arose after the meeting and I would like to share them with you, as I did at the Council meeting. These apply to the concerns about the transition zone rather than the considerable area covered by the Master Plan.

The first is that people buying condominiums are often in unfamiliar neighborhoods and have a limited appreciation for parking issues. They gain that with time but by then they're locked in with their purchase and it's very expensive to move. Therefore I suggest that buildings without any parking should be for rent or lease only. That way the market will adjust pricing to recognize the ease or difficulty of parking.

A second idea is to require parking but not necessarily in each building in the transition zone. One developer might, for example, have more parking in his/her plan and make that available to her developers who choose to not build their own parking facilities. That would probably be more cost-effective than requiring each structure to have parking. As an aside, I tried to find out whether there was any long-term parking available in the vicinity and it seems that there is none at all close.

A third suggestion is to include parking availability in the "height bonus" criteria. That is, you get more bonus if you provide parking, either directly or through the sharing approach mentioned above.

Switching to look at the Plan in general, I am impressed with its scope and depth and appreciated the section on the history of the "urban renewal" and the aftermath. I knew much of this but recognize that many readers do not have that background and perspective.

With regard to the parking proposal however, the position stated is unrealistic:

Eliminating parking minimums does not mean no parking will be built; instead, it allows the market to respond in real time to live parking demand within the area.

Building lifetimes are on the order of decades, typically 40 years or so. Once constructed there is no possibility to "respond to market demand", especially with regard to parking for residential usage. We well know that developers will build to their best interest - which might not be the best interest of the community generally. After all, that is why parking requirements have been in place for many years. These may well need to change but to eliminate them entirely and ask the market for "real time response" is naïve.

The comparison with Rio/Crown and Pike&Rose is significant and informative. P&R is a FRIT development, a single-company project similar to the Saul development at Twinbrook Quarter. As such there is a level of control over the entire development that we in Rockville have not been able to achieve. We can propose a great plan but we must face the reality that each developer will design and build individually. The Town Square North redevelopment cries out for a unity of purpose that cannot be achieved with multiple parcels being done independently. The Plan looks at these various parcels individually rather than, as at Twinbrook Quarter, using an overall, integrated development. That is fine but the overall redevelopment needs to have a cohesion of vision that just is not yet apparent.

Another notable difference with Town Center is that, unlike Rio/Crown, Pike & Rose and Twinbrook Square, Town Center has close-in residential areas. None of the other developments are like this - housing is at a considerable remove. A forest of tall buildings, such as at the core of Pike & Rose, would be fine in Town Center North. After all, the GE building, now Emmes, at 401 N Washington St was the tallest building in Rockville when it opened in 1974. Full disclosure - I worked there for several years and that is the reason I moved to Rockville. However such tall buildings in the Western Edge are not appropriate adjacent to one or two-story residential areas.

Another concern, separate from but related to parking, is the provision for EV charging facilities. Almost everyone needs a car sometimes and P&R offers "Tesla Share" to residents as an easy shared-car facility. But for those who need a car every day for commuting, as I did except for a brief period, how is Rockville's EV plan going to deal with the no-parking-requirement proposal? For a gas-powered vehicle, I could park each night somewhere nearby - a public parking garage or similar. That doesn't work well for EVs because they charge for an hour (level 3) or five or six (level 2) and then I need to move so that some other vehicle can use that charge point. A point often overlooked is that plug-in hybrids typically do not use the level 3 fast-charging capability (standard for full-electric vehicles). So a daily charge time is 2 - 4 hours either at home or at a public charger. At a public charger, you then have to move. Doing that late at night, every weeknight, will get "old" very quickly.

There is a great opportunity available which the Plan touches on but which is beyond its reach. That is to establish a development consortium for Town Center North, and hopefully other parcels elsewhere, to handle integrated development for the disparate tracts. This is a task for the Mayor and Council, to corral and cajole the various property owners to come together - whether to sell or just cooperate - to facilitate an integrated development. Having lived through the "Bunker" and the subsequent missteps, I do not want to see this opportunity slip away again.

Regards.....Peter Lovell

On Nov 19, 2024, at 11:52 AM, Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov> wrote:

Hi Peter,

Thanks for your patience. I appreciate you speaking up about this to ask the question during last Thursday's meeting and taking the time to follow up via email. You bring up a very fair point. I've directed my team to look into this and see the impact this proposal would have on handicapped parking spaces. We're going to do some digging, and I'll follow back up with you once we know a bit more.

All the best,

Katie



City of
Rockville
Get Into It

www.rockvillemd.gov

KATIE GERBES, AICP

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING MANAGER

Community Planning and Development
Services

111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

DIRECT EXTENSION: 240.314.8273

OFFICE MAIN LINE: 240.314.8200

How was your experience with us? Take a quick survey and let us know - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JD9CWXC>

From: Peter Lovell <plovell@mac.com>

Sent: Thursday, November 14, 2024 10:44 PM

To: Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: Peter Lovell <plovell@mac.com>; Louise Lovell <louiselovell@mac.com>

Subject: parking and ADA

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Hi Katie,

thank you for addressing the WECA meeting this evening. The discussion was very helpful.

As I mentioned there, I wish to raise the issue of parking for disabled people. My fear is that if the plan eliminates the requirement for parking, developers will be loath to provide even a few spaces for the handicapped.

That's not to say that every building has to contain spaces. They can be shared in the same way that parking is shared with the Town Center garages. But those are too distant for some of the new areas being discussed, such as the transition zone.

I hope the requirements can be adjusted to accommodate the needs of those with handicaps.

Thank you.....Peter Lovell



GREATER
ROCKVILLE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Empower
Amplify
Elevate

December 11, 2024

The Greater Rockville Chamber of Commerce **supports** the adoption of the 2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan (RTCMP) which was recommended by the Planning Commission. This proposal came from an extensive outreach program by the Community Planning and Development Department and was thoroughly reviewed by the Planning Commission.

This Plan will result in dramatic positive changes to improve the Town Center. It includes additional residential development, affordable housing and an expedited approval process. More planned events and 5 new parks are also part of the plan. Major improvements to the Rockville Metro Station and access to the Town Center are included. As a result, Town Center will become a location "where people can live, work and play for years to come."

Marji Graf
President & CEO
Greater Rockville Chamber of Commerce

Judy Penny

Exhibit No.21
2024 Town Center Master Plan
PUBLIC HEARING
Dec. 9, 2024

From: Lyla S. Fadali <lfadali@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, December 28, 2024 3:15 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Cc: Comprehensive Plan
Subject: Eliminate parking minimums!

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

I strongly support eliminating parking minimums, especially in Rockville town center. The council should consider imposing parking maximums. Far too much space is dedicated to cars in Rockville and particularly near Metro stations, priority should be given to pedestrians, bicyclists, and other people outside cars.

Thank you,
Lyla Fadali



January 3, 2025

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation Board of Directors, I write to you today about Rockville's Town Center Master Plan, to advise thoughtful and detailed planning that also protects the unique historic resources in the development of Rockville's Town Center, one of the City's most central and sensitive areas. I wish to specifically address the Western Edge of Rockville's downtown, abutting long-established neighborhoods and historic districts. While these streets are part of our modern Town Center, the area warrants special attention and careful consideration to the historic landscape it borders. Peerless Rockville calls for a more detailed vision of the character and usage in this area before proceeding with such dramatic zoning changes.

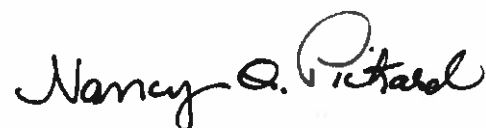
I wish to be clear that Peerless Rockville does not oppose development, moderate height increases, density, or housing opportunities in Rockville's downtown. We enthusiastically celebrate adaptive reuse of buildings and smart planning that keeps historic places as a vital part of the City's modern and future identity, and welcomes more residents to Rockville. Historic Preservation is a part of the economic engine of Town Center, as attractions, as education, and as something that highlights Rockville as a special and unique place to live, work, and visit. Development should occur with mindfulness of the history and character of the City, in accordance with its own stated Planning goals.

A blanket increase in height of buildings on North Washington street **disrupts the small-scale character of historic buildings from West Montgomery Avenue to Beall Avenue, including Wood Lane, the last surviving pieces of the African-American communities** of Middle Lane and North Washington Street without a concrete vision of the consequences to the character and heritage of the area or even a detailed picture of the intended outcome.

Peerless Rockville advises that the development in this area feature step downs in building heights and utilize green space to provide a buffer between some of our City's oldest homes and streets. We ask that the plans for the Western Edge of Town Center respect the size and scale of historic resources that make our City unique and tells its story, prioritizing protection and preservation. Engage the community, residents, and business owners to determine what specific growth here will serve all of Rockville, build its identity, and benefit the City

and Town Center by honoring and embracing the history here. Peerless Rockville looks forward to working with the City to improve our future while preserving our past.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy A. Pickard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nancy" being the most prominent.

Nancy Pickard
Executive Director

Judy Penny

Subject: FW: support of Master Plan Update

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

To Mayor Ashton, Councilmembers, City Manager, Planning Department:

I support the Rockville Town Center Master Plan Update and thank the Mayor, Council, Planning Commission, City Manager, and Planning Department for their hard work. What an excellent step in the right direction!

The City of Rockville needs immediate continuing work on:

- * Developing incentives for converting underused and empty office buildings into residential development.
- * Partnering with WMATA, the county, and state on significant development above and surrounding the Rockville Metro station.
- * Enlivening of the first floor of the library where it meets Town Square.
- * Creating a business improvement district or urban district.
- * Instituting a citywide culture of data collection, analysis, and distribution.

I write as a Rockville Town Square property owner, resident, taxpayer, and voter with 40 years of experience at urban development and policy.

Best wishes for the new year.

Rick Reinhard
38 Maryland Avenue 501
Rockville MD 20850-0346
202-669-2205 (cell)

From: Mark Pierzchala <mark@mmplive.com>
Sent: Monday, January 6, 2025 1:46 PM
To: mayorcouncil
Subject: Town Center Master Plan

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

January 6, 2025

Dear Mayor and Council,

Following are my thoughts on the Town Center Master Plan agenda item this evening.

1. I agree with most of the direction that the Mayor and Council gave in its last session on Town Center. I do have some cautions and opinions, however.
2. **MD-355 character area:** I agree with the staff recommendation for **Scenario 2** for the MD-355 character area. For scenario 3 in particular, the very tip of that area, the triangle bordered by MD-355 and North Washington, is particularly unsuited for intensive residential development. There is not enough road access to support construction, move-ins, move-outs, deliveries, etc., especially by very large trucks. Additionally, this part of Town Center is the part that is closest to existing homes along Martin's Lane and neighboring streets, and depending on how parking is accounted for, there could be overflow parking in those neighborhoods.
3. **On parking, the term 'no parking minimums' begs for definition.** I hope it does not mean no parking requirements at all. I agree with Mayor Ashton that there should be a parking plan for each new development, and further, I believe that the plan should take care of legitimate parking needs of the building residents. In the last term, there was a resident who could not park in the building garage of an affordable building. The resident cited reduced parking minimums as a reason. One thing that I learned was that even those of lesser means or those with differing abilities have cars, and they want to be able to get to them easily.

Further, the entire issue of parking has been dogged over the years by **absolutist positions**. We used to have to deal with the belief that apartment renters need the same number of cars and have the same driving needs as single family homeowners. This was very difficult to overcome, but eventually we made progress in allowing new buildings with fewer spaces required. I'm not claiming this is totally fixed, but the City has made strides to reduce parking requirements.

In Town Center, on almost a case-by-case basis, it is possible to come up with plans for each new residential building that indeed does make use of existing parking facilities. A required parking plan would allow for flexibility needed for each property.

4. Even though I agree with most of the Mayor and Council direction given so far, I note that the Mayor and Council have made **vast changes** to the Planning Commission draft. Whatever decisions are made this evening will be on top of already given Mayor and Council direction. There will be less than a one-week

period for residents to consider whatever is put before the Mayor and Council on January 13 for adoption. I would give at least 2 weeks after the next full plan is put together by City Staff.

Unless I am missing something, I still don't see a summary of comments given by the public in your agenda item. These include comments I made at length to your previous meeting on Town Center.

The version of the Town Center Master Plan that is included in this evening's agenda item is still the Planning Commission draft of September 25, 2024. The public needs to see the entire rewritten proposed Town Center Master Plan and have time to consider it before adoption due to the magnitude of changes.

The entire Town Center Master Plan is already 5 years too late (as I noted in the last term). At this point, a few more weeks won't further harm anything.

Yours,

Mark Pierzchala

FW: Rockville Town Center Master Plan

From Judy Penny <jpenny@rockvillemd.gov>
Date Mon 1/13/2025 2:23 PM
To Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Kind regards and stay safe!!

Judy Penny

Executive Assistant

City Clerk Office/Director of Council Operations

City of Rockville

111 Maryland Avenue

Rockville, MD

Direct: (240) 314-8281

Main: (240) 314-8280

jpenny@rockvillemd.gov

"In order to be in compliance with the open meetings act, please do not reply to all. If you would like to discuss a matter in an open meeting, please let me know and we can have the matter placed as an agenda item for discussion"



From: Paul Newman <newman1259@live.com>

Sent: Monday, January 13, 2025 2:18 PM

To: Monique Ashton <mashton@rockvillemd.gov>; Kate Fulton <kfulton@rockvillemd.gov>; Barry Jackson <bjackson@rockvillemd.gov>; David Myles <dmyles@rockvillemd.gov>; Izola Shaw <ishaw@rockvillemd.gov>; Marissa Valeri <mvaleri@rockvillemd.gov>; Adam Van Grack <avangrack@rockvillemd.gov>

Cc: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: Rockville Town Center Master Plan

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Mayor Ashton and Councilmembers

Thank you, and thanks to the Planning Commission and City Staff, for the tremendous effort and hard work to develop, publicize, solicit inputs, and repeatedly review and update the **2024 Rockville Town Center Master Plan (RTCMP)**. The decision to enhance our town center with high-density residential development, while also ensuring a pleasant, walkable, inviting and connected community core with retail and transit amenities, is a bold and productive step toward reinvigorating this critical space.

The core of our downtown, especially along Rockville Pike and near Metro, should have the residential density and recognizable skyline signifying the importance of Rockville as the County seat and critical transportation hub that it is.

That said, we do need to ensure this exciting step for our community also respects and demonstrates sensitivity to the various suburban neighborhood styles, and historic character, that make Rockville a great place to live, work, play, explore, raise families, and retire.

To do this, please ensure this plan, and our zoning code, explicitly requires that buildings on the **Town Center's western edge step down in height** as they approach 2-story residential and/or historic properties. In particular, the properties in the area of Wood Lane, North Adams, Beall-Dawson, Haiti, and Martins Square Lane should be protected from 6-10 story buildings at their doorstep. Perhaps even include in the plan credits toward bonus height allowance along North Washington St if those projects step down significantly as they approach historic properties to the west.

And, to ensure we do not burden adjacent neighborhoods with overflow parking, please ensure that our Town Center development includes some amount of **short- and medium-term** parking to (at least) support visitors, carry out, deliveries, and pick-up/drop-off activities. While structured parking may be a significant expense to build, it is much more difficult to add later.

Thank you, again, for your hard work on this effort!
Paul Newman

FW: Town Center Master Plan updates

From Judy Penny <jpenny@rockvillemd.gov>
Date Mon 1/13/2025 1:49 PM
To Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

fyi

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Kind regards and stay safe!!

Judy Penny

Executive Assistant

City Clerk Office/Director of Council Operations

City of Rockville

111 Maryland Avenue

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Direct: (240) 314-8281

Main: (240) 314-8280

jpenny@rockvillemd.gov

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From: Judy Penny
Sent: Monday, January 13, 2025 1:48 PM
To: Ryan Murphy <ryanpmurphy5@gmail.com>
Cc: cityclerk <cityclerk@rockvillemd.gov>
Subject: FW: Town Center Master Plan updates

Mr. Murphy,

On behalf of the Mayor and Council, thank you for your comments on the Town Center Master Plan.

Your comments have been added to the Community Forum Written Comments List for Monday, January 13, 2025.

Please continue to follow the City's website at <http://rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter> for more information.

The Mayor and Council appreciate your comments.

Kind regards and stay safe!!

Judy Penny

Executive Assistant

City Clerk Office/Director of Council Operations

City of Rockville

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Rockville, MD

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jpenny@rockvillemd.gov

"In order to be in compliance with the open meetings act, please do not reply to all. If you would like to discuss a matter in an open meeting, please let me know and we can have the matter placed as an agenda item for discussion"



From: Ryan P. Murphy <ryanpmurphy5@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, January 13, 2025 11:38 AM

To: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>

Subject: Town Center Master Plan updates

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor & Council,

While I am broadly supportive of the proposed updates to the Town Center master plan (I would have preferred eliminating parking requirements throughout the entire planning area), I believe the proposal to require "layback slopes" in the areas adjacent to the West End could be a mistake because it would reduce the potential density of new housing which could be built in the town center area.

In a complete vacuum, protecting the sightlines of residents of the West End would be worthwhile. However, every decision comes with tradeoffs, and when the tradeoff is allowing less housing to be built, I don't know how a reasonable person would make that trade in the middle of a housing affordability crisis.

I hope the council prioritizes building more homes over sightlines and shadows.

Ryan P. Murphy
107 Virginia Ave
Rockville, MD 20850
215-275-6969

FW: A vote for the Town Center Master Plan

From Judy Penny <jpenny@rockvillemd.gov>

Date Mon 1/13/2025 1:46 PM

To zlarsonrabin@gmail.com <zlarsonrabin@gmail.com>

Cc cityclerk <cityclerk@rockvillemd.gov>; Katie Gerbes <kgerbes@rockvillemd.gov>

Mr. Larson-Rabin,

On behalf of the Mayor and Council, thank you for your comments on the Town Center Master Plan.

Your comments have been added to the Community Forum Written Comments List for Monday, January 13, 2025.

Please continue to follow the City's website at <http://rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter> for more information.

The Mayor and Council appreciate your comments.

Kind regards and stay safe!!

Judy Penny

Executive Assistant

City Clerk Office/Director of Council Operations

City of Rockville

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jpenny@rockvillemd.gov

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From: Zachary Larson-Rabin <zlarsonrabin@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 13, 2025 9:54 AM
To: mayorcouncil <mayorcouncil@rockvillemd.gov>
Subject: A vote for the Town Center Master Plan

WARNING - External email. Exercise caution.

Dear Mayor and Council Members,

I strongly support the TCMP, including the recent Update, and look forward to having increased urban development and housing capacity in our area.

Sincerely YIMBY,
Zach Larson-Rabin

--

Zach Larson-Rabin, Ph.D.
214 Harrison St.
Rockville, MD 20850
410-458-8257 - zlarsonrabin@gmail.com

Engage Rockville Feedback Form Responses

April 2024 - January 2025

Survey Responses

22 March 2021 - 12 January 2025

Town Center Master Plan Draft - Feedback Form

Engage Rockville

Project: Town Center Master Plan



VISITORS					
263					
CONTRIBUTORS			RESPONSES		
35			38		
35	0	0	38	0	0
Registered	Unverified	Anonymous	Registered	Unverified	Anonymous



Respondent No: 1
Login: wanstett
Email: will.anstett@gmail.com

Responded At: Apr 29, 2024 16:47:42 pm
Last Seen: Apr 29, 2024 23:45:47 pm
IP Address: 173.73.43.168

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Overall favorable. I am glad that one of the most emphasized items was to increase dense housing stock in the city.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Dense housing, additional medium to high density housing on the periphery of town center. More connected.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

not answered

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Housing, zoning.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 2

Login: Hannah14

Email: hannahevogel@gmail.com

Responded At: Apr 29, 2024 16:56:02 pm

Last Seen: Apr 29, 2024 23:52:16 pm

IP Address: 71.163.164.6

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

I'm looking forward to the exciting new changes.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I appreciate the addition of more low-income housing, improving library programming, adding more parks, and doing it all in an environmentally sustainable manor.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

When considering public transportation, biking, and walking improvements, is there a focus on those who walk, bike, or use non-school busses to get to Richard Montgomery HS?

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Increased housing, and environmental concerns

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Keep up the hard work!



Respondent No: 3
Login: bcperell
Email: bcperell@gmail.com

Responded At: May 05, 2024 10:45:18 am
Last Seen: May 05, 2024 17:30:36 pm
IP Address: 173.79.21.92

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Overall, I like the direction but seems a little ambitious. It sounds like parking will still be problematic. Terms like not constructing expensive new parking (except for EV) and a focus on bike lanes and transit lead me to believe there will be no new parking. Rockville is a suburb where many people drive and will continue to drive.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

We need more housing density to support the businesses and provide affordable options. But schools are already overcapacity and should be developed in concert with MCPS to avoid further crowding.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

A focus on retail/restaurants. There is mention that there are 2 strong competitors nearby both with a mix of types of stores and restaurants. Town Center should either go all in on international food and shop destinations or get some chains/big menu restaurants so there are more options for groups. Parking at Rio and Pike and Rose is also dreadful but people go because of what's there. Also, add another breakfast restaurant. First Watch is great but often has an hour wait.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Increasing economic development to attract and keep businesses.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Town Center is a great, safe, accessible hang-out for teenagers. RMHS is nearby. Kids can walk to the library to study or to Golds Gym to exercise after school, but many of the options there are expensive for them. There are the few restaurants nearest to the school (Guissepis, Potbelly) that the kids love for open lunch, but then it's Marble Slab, Five Guys, and pricey bubble tea on the actual square. There are things for them to do like ice skate or listen to music or just hang out with friends. I'd love to see that we keep teens as one of the audiences for this area.



Respondent No: 4
Login: cmceig
Email: cmceig@hotmail.com

Responded At: May 07, 2024 12:20:39 pm
Last Seen: May 07, 2024 19:18:17 pm
IP Address: 172.56.3.6

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

There is no mention of green space, play space, outdoor meeting (friendship bench) or all the children and dogs that are in the area

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Add housing density. More people helps the retail

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Festivals and events that attract a wider audience and create "destination" flair

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 5
Login: shannonbshea
Email: shannonbshea@gmail.com

Responded At: May 13, 2024 20:43:48 pm
Last Seen: May 14, 2024 03:22:01 am
IP Address: 72.83.240.219

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

I strongly support all of the goals of the plan, especially those that focus on affordable housing and bicyclist/pedestrian safety. I also strongly support the efforts to shift towards more sustainable buildings that save energy and money for users / residents.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Taking a lens of equity on all of the sections is essential, especially considering the oppressive history of urban planning.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

It would be good to improve connections to the Lincoln Park neighborhood by improving the walk and bikability of the area near the Unity Bridge. Currently, reaching any other part of Rockville safely from there requires walking or biking through a parking lot. The entrance of the Unity Bridge isn't great, but the sidewalk and parking lot is a bigger issue.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

The focus on affordable housing and including important policies that allow for it to be built (such as reducing minimum parking requirements and the bonus height program) is extremely important. Improving bicycle and pedestrian safety is key for both sustainability and retail success.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

On page 18, planning is spelled incorrectly in the chapter title. Also, the road diets applied to East Middle Lane and North Washington Street have made a major difference in the walkability and bikability of those roads. Anything that can build upon those improvements would be great!



Respondent No: 6
Login: jcan
Email: juliancantella@gmail.com

Responded At: May 20, 2024 11:36:45 am
Last Seen: May 19, 2024 17:01:20 pm
IP Address: 100.36.104.106

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

A lot of work clearly went into the plan, and it is well-written and reasonably thorough. Overall, I am concerned about the emphasis on development as a solution to many issues. As the plan itself notes, past development efforts have been incomplete, unsuccessful, or even caused some of the issues the city is facing today. Development is not a panacea, and it must be done carefully and with considerable forethought.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I appreciated the sections focused on climate resiliency. The idea to use cultural events and diversity as a draw for the area resonated well with me.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

There is no mention of crucial rent stabilization and associated requirements to limit fees for renters. These regulations are needed to reduce tenant turnover and reduce turnover in the neighborhood. To feel invested, residents need to have long-term prospects for living in the area. Rapidly rising rents and the attitudes of many housing providers can make Rockville Town Center seem like a "transitional" place to live. Related to this: page 57 should be revised. Here, the plan says that there are low renter vacancy rates, but it also states that only 74.7% of units are renter occupied. This vacancy rate is actually quite high – as a comparison, in 2021, the Baltimore area rental vacancy rate was only 8.6%. With vacancy rates at this level, it seems clear that increasing the number of rental units without instituting rental controls and other relevant policies will not address the housing issues.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Its plans related to housing and climate resiliency.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

1. If increasing the number of long-term tenants (residents and commercial businesses) is a priority, it will also be necessary to address ongoing issues like crime and noise violations. Businesses in the square regularly violate noise regulations and have been warned numerous times, but they generally act with impunity. Similarly, commercial tenants have cited crime as an issue. Businesses and citizens alike need to be held accountable for coexisting productively and making the area a desirable one to live, work, and play. 2. Are there plans to study/validate that the road diet has improved safety for all parties (pedestrians, drivers, cyclists, etc.)? It seems like it would be prudent to look at the results of recent work before extending it to other areas.



Respondent No: 7
Login: raabdent
Email: raabdent@yahoo.com

Responded At: May 21, 2024 03:17:51 am
Last Seen: May 21, 2024 10:14:14 am
IP Address: 172.58.244.3

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

not answered

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Would like to see a adult calisthenics or parkour setting. This being for older teenagers & adults to train/exercise.
Possibly next to Public Library or Metro Station. For quick accessibility.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 8

Login: Mchibbaro

Email: FireMarshal993@gmail.co

m

Responded At: May 21, 2024 12:35:12 pm

Last Seen: May 21, 2024 19:18:00 pm

IP Address: 163.116.146.119

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

good overall

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

More entertainment opportunities in town square

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

There are 2 things that I have discussed with both recent mayors and city staff. First, the return of Hometown Holidays to Town Center where it belongs and where it has been historically held, better for residents (especially disabled) and businesses alike. Ironically, the lead photo in the draft plan shows HTH on Courthouse Square. There still is room, because the last time it was held in Town Center, the Ansel building was under construction, so the space issue is no excuse to keep this event elsewhere. As an aside, Red Gate could be used for many other events - if infrastructure were to be upgraded, it could be like Merriweather Post Pavilion. Secondly, you cannot expect a vibrant Town Square when its centerpiece is a sleepy library. We frequent this area almost every day and see many people coming to the library and leaving without any other stops. This location, being the only building in RTS without residences, is perfect for a performing arts/music venue. Maybe the Anthem (which closed in Pike & Rose) or something similar, can be attracted. Sadly the library's former location, the Grey Courthouse, and 255 Rockville Pike are all good locations for a library but those opportunities have passed.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

turning it into action

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Thanks for the opportunity to provide input



Respondent No: 9
Login: egoffman
Email: goffmane@yahoo.com

Responded At: May 22, 2024 07:47:44 am
Last Seen: May 22, 2024 14:46:14 pm
IP Address: 173.66.126.179

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

This is a huge step forward for Rockville and is long overdue.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I support the new master plan's goals of increased density near transit, increased low-income housing, elimination of parking minimums near transit, more walkability and rollability. All are essential for an equitable, environmentally friendly city accessible by everyone from the very young to the very old to the disabled.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

It would be particularly helpful to equity and health goals to have an integrated network of separated bike lanes that seamlessly connects 355, Rockville Metro station, Montgomery College, and other destinations to the town center. A comprehensive network would greatly boost the number of people biking, drawing in those who currently feel unsafe. A visible bicycle shop in the town center area would support and be supported by a truly safe and comprehensive network of separate bike lanes and paths. Additionally, a center for local arts, including community theater and musical performances, would be a tremendous asset supplying an outlet for the surplus of talent in the region that has limited space to perform and display art. Such a center would also provide an economic boost to town center.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Increased density near transit and walkability.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 10
Login: nathanlhess
Email: nathan.hess@gmail.com

Responded At: May 25, 2024 06:31:36 am
Last Seen: May 25, 2024 12:47:13 pm
IP Address: 72.66.106.238

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

High-level, I like everything I'm seeing. Hitting on major points of land-use, parking minimums, retail space, community space, activities, etc. These are all things that my neighbors and I have been talking about. Prioritizing housing, retail, and how people move between those is a recipe for success. I also like the mention of a community center in the town center area. Not something I had thought about previously, but would be a fantastic addition in my opinion.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Parking minimums - This is something that has been getting more press nationally, and glad to see it in the plan. Parking minimums really constrict small towns in developing vibrant areas with mixed use buildings. We have parking garages, busses, metro, etc. The idea of MORE parking lots as a requirement for more retail/housing is frustrating and I'm glad to see it addressed. Retail/commercial - Seeing empty storefronts is always depressing and concerning as a resident. The idea of using those spaces for pop-up retailers as temporary solution is a neat idea and I like the flexible thinking going on here with that. I think more long-term solutions are needed, and I'm wary of grants/subsidies as the solution BUT as long as we are all focused on the issue, then we are moving in a good direction. Increasing density - great. More people, can support more business, makes for a more vibrant community. Vision for areas outside the "center" - I liked the ideas for the north east and north west and west of the center. Those areas feel a little dead and not appealing, but they could be great!

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Addressing blight. I know that there is mention of pop-up shops, and grants/subsidies in the plan. However, when these buildings/developments are owned by private entities, it should be their responsibility for getting tenants. And that might mean they need to lower their rents to attract business. I don't think the answer is to use taxpayer money to subsidize a business to help them pay rent. The answer is to create a regulatory scheme (fines, etc.) that makes it clear blight will not be accepted. A property owner should not be allowed to simply sit on vacant retail space without some pressure from the local government. Blight is negative, there is no upside to the community. And giving money to a business, to hand it to the owner of the property, is simply rewarding the owner for failing at their job of attracting and maintaining businesses for their space.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

The focus on increasing residential units, and addressing the vacancies and diversity of retail space. In my opinion everything else is downstream of that. If we can improve those 2 things, it sets the city up for success with good economic foundation.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

I really appreciated the demographic, income, and land use charts and statistics. I was not aware of the income and education levels of residents. And that really shows how much better the area could be with the amount of money in the area. On the note of statistics, I was a bit shocked with the massive amount of office space in town center compared to Gaithersburg and Pike & Rose. Also the vacancy rate is alarming. Maybe I missed it in the plan, but I wasn't seeing specific plans for how to address this. Reducing the amount of office space and updating or replacing existing seems necessary based on the information in the plan. This also goes back to blight. Empty retail or empty office, it's bad for the community and is a terrible visual for anyone visiting the area.



Respondent No: 11
Login: Lynnman
Email: rlrinchina@yahoo.com

Responded At: May 27, 2024 16:25:02 pm
Last Seen: May 27, 2024 23:06:28 pm
IP Address: 100.15.254.214

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

It is ambitious and has lots of wonderful proposals.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Affordable housing and improved parks, but we need to keep the post office in the Town Center area!

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

How to renovate or repurpose excess office space. Need space for nonprofits that help the community.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Proposals that will lower the retail vacancy rate.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Dawson's has announced that they will be leaving at the end of June. A proposal is needed about what to do about this specific anchor location that has no entrance either on N. Washington Street or Beall Avenue.



Respondent No: 12
Login: kathleen2614
Email: seah0rse@yahoo.com

Responded At: May 28, 2024 08:10:59 am
Last Seen: Jun 23, 2024 23:56:56 pm
IP Address: 173.79.17.199

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Remove cobble stones or create accessible path through the cobblestone areas.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Remove cobble stones or create accessible path through the cobblestone areas

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Remove cobble stones or create accessible path through the cobblestone areas

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Remove cobble stones or create accessible path through the cobblestone areas

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Remove cobble stones or create accessible path through the cobblestone areas



Respondent No: 13
Login: ekmanb
Email: bob.ekman@att.net

Responded At: May 28, 2024 12:06:52 pm
Last Seen: May 28, 2024 18:36:26 pm
IP Address: 73.129.213.123

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

It is fragmented. It contains many ideas and bits and pieces, but no commitment to revitalize and make the major changes needed to stop the deterioration of the town center.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Not much. Lots of detail and documentation.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

You need a serious assessment of what should remain and what should be knocked down. The buildings were not maintained during the Pandemic. They are deteriorating.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

It tries too hard to be everything for everyone.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

The county controls and uses much of the Town Center. You need to bring them into the plan.



Respondent No: 14
Login: hoffman.ken
Email: hoffman.ken@gmail.com

Responded At: May 28, 2024 12:13:02 pm
Last Seen: May 28, 2024 18:17:32 pm
IP Address: 73.135.213.68

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

It is an excellent analysis of strengths and problems, also providing a historical context as to why we are where we are today. Admirable were the attempts to capture as much as possible from all interested in having input into the plan. Goals and implementation timelines seem reasonable.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

The most critical element is to increase population density by providing affordable living opportunities at the lower-middle income levels. A specific goal might be to have people living near where they work - providing a positive work-life balance. Taking MPDU to the next level - perhaps thinking about 'income adjustable' housing matching the projected incomes of Montgomery College students, employees, and likely incomes of those graduating or receiving certificates related to workforce development from Montgomery College. This would lead to a vibrant town center, residents would have greater financial security, able to save for retirement/emergencies, and support small businesses that would naturally develop and be sustained by those living in and near town center. A dream at this point: Housing could also be a national example for energy efficiencies - possibly incorporating geothermal heating/cooling, solar energy with battery back-up - provided by electric cars that could be borrowed when needed by housing residents.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Montgomery College seems to be relatively disengaged - yet should be a critical contributor to the plan. In the 2040 Master Plan, there is a new Planning Area 7: functionally creating the opportunity for a true "college town" district, centered around Montgomery College, along 355, and connecting to Town Center. Planning Area 7 and Town Center linking the land between Shady Grove Metro and Rockville Metro. With the bike and pedestrian master plan, without borders, the college becomes part of the community, and the community becomes more strongly connected with the College.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

A clear vision for the future that captures elements important for the cultural, educational, and work-life balance for which Rockville should be seen as a national model.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

With a vision for building - and renovating unused office space - into highly energy-efficient (LEED platinum or zero) - affordable housing built for lower-middle income with income-adjustable rent, would be designed to attract a working population able to receive the education leading to available jobs in or near town-center, with a lifelong choice to remain in Town Center or move as income changes over time.



Respondent No: 15
Login: phubble666
Email: paulahubble@gmail.com

Responded At: Jun 02, 2024 08:53:42 am
Last Seen: Jun 19, 2024 19:11:50 pm
IP Address: 174.172.118.194

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

not answered

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

more green space to sit. There are very few places around town square to sit and chill out. You can't really count in front of the library since that isn't even real grass.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 16
Login: kevinrcarter
Email: kevinr.carter@gmail.com

Responded At: Jun 04, 2024 09:56:42 am
Last Seen: Jun 04, 2024 16:41:32 pm
IP Address: 136.226.107.16

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

The plan is not nearly aggressive enough. 2,000 new residential units in the Town Center by 2040 is 10 new units a month over the next sixteen years. That should be significantly increased to doubled. Assuming Rockville has 70,000 residents and 2 residents per unit, the housing production goal of 8,600 new units is less than 1.4% annual growth. That is not enough to sustain growth or drive the sort of development we need to see. I would like to see a target of 12,000 new residential units with 1/3 to 1/2 being in the town center. While there should be a diversity of options at all price levels for housing, we should prioritize market rate rents and sales that can be set and met by the free market. We need to attract high income individuals who can bring spending. One person's spend is another person's income and the number of closed business in the town center speaks to both the lack of spending and lack of density.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

not answered

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 17
Login: jjakubek
Email: jjakubek@gmail.com

Responded At: Jun 19, 2024 13:05:28 pm
Last Seen: Nov 08, 2024 19:08:23 pm
IP Address: 173.66.3.52

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

I think that the goals of the plan are laudable and the plan provides a reasonable framework to use to help the Town Center.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Removing parking requirements when within a half mile of metro is great. Planning for cycling and walking are good. The city knows where the issues lie. The closing of entire streets to cars.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Consideration of narrowing E Jefferson St. Discuss removal of parking spaces in areas. Replace them with traffic calming devices like bioswales and other environmentally friendly elements. Narrow the sightlines on roads forcing people to slow down while driving. Maximize residential density everywhere within a half mile of metro. The city ought to consider removal of some of the patio space from restaurants in the Town Square. The space feels a little crowded for the events that take place. Pride was great but crowded.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Planning for more housing. I am happy to see that the need for more people in the immediate area to make Town Center successful is understood. Placemaking.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Maximize the amount of residential development. That will help businesses in Town Center and elsewhere in Rockville.



Respondent No: 18
Login: richardtreinhard
Email: rtreinhard@aol.com

Responded At: Jun 20, 2024 15:51:40 pm
Last Seen: Jan 04, 2025 16:50:06 pm
IP Address: 173.79.33.60

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

N/A

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

N/A

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

N/A

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

N/A

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

I am writing to you my thoughts on the Rockville Town Center Master Plan, as I was unable to attend this past week's online meeting and will be unable to attend next week's meeting. In general, I support the direction of the Master Plan and the efforts of the Rockville City Government to...

1. Lack of data. The plan lacks a high quality and quantity of data. The Planning Department and Rockville Economic Development Inc. should be charged with collecting and analyzing an array of data not included in the draft master plan. Examples: The plan includes vacancy rates on retail for the Town Center, Pike and Rose, and Rio but not retail sales. The vacancy rates (which are specious to begin with because of the presence of low-intensity public uses) make it appear that Town Center is competitive with the other two when, measured by retail sales, we would be crushed by them. The plan points out the gross number of parking spaces but not occupancy rates. Perhaps I am missing it, but I cannot find data on crime or homeless persons. These are just a few examples of lack of data and accompanying analysis. I would suggest that city leaders examine the Downtown DC Business Improvement District's 2022 State of Downtown report, released in 2023, which features 55 pages of detailed data and analysis. I had a role in producing the report annually when I was Deputy Executive Director 2007-2015. The net result of the lack of data in the Town Center Master Plan is that it is a "soft" report, with conclusions not backed by facts and a focus on soft "placemaking" as opposed to more rigorous financial and economic-development goals.
2. Residential goal. The goal of 2,000 additional residential units by 2040 is low. Such a goal would be equivalent to building one new BLVD/Ansel development every four years, with no additional residential development. Certainly the sites above and adjacent to the Rockville Metro station should be built upon with BLVD/Ansel-like development. The empty office buildings at 51 Monroe, 255 Rockville Pike, 21 Church Street, and perhaps others should be transformed into residential units--some affordable or workforce housing-- with incentives from the city, county, and state.
3. Pre-BID. The Mayor and new City Manager need to establish a different and more positive relationship with Morguard and the other major property owners than the city has had under the former leadership. I don't understand the resistance to forming a business improvement district or urban district. One works well for Bethesda and okay for Silver Spring and Wheaton. They work well for more than a dozen communities in the District and Northern Virginia. But what really needs to happen is for the Mayor and City Manager to reach out and convene the CEOs or regional directors of the top handful of property owners on a regular basis to work collaboratively. If the group decides to form a BID or Urban District, that's great; if not, that's okay, too. High-level communication is what is critical. I make these suggestions after a 30-year career running downtown organizations such as business improvement districts and redevelopment agencies and serving as a mayoral chief of staff in a city of 300,000 residents. Thank you for your hard work.



Respondent No: 19
Login: jennyag
Email: jagurney@gmail.com

Responded At: Jun 21, 2024 08:12:29 am
Last Seen: Jun 21, 2024 14:01:57 pm
IP Address: 74.96.252.155

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Heading in the right direction with some great ideas!

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I applaud the proposal to turn 301 Hungerford Drive and the Shell station into parks and to connect trails/create green networks.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I would like to see more emphasis on an overarching theme. For example, I heard on the radio recently that there is a town in Florida whose goal is to become the healthiest town in America. What if Rockville adopted a similar overarching goal? For example, Rockville and the surrounding is known to be extremely car-centric, given the adjacency of Rockville Pike, as well as the town center being a cut-through for travelers driving east-west to and from I-270. How about adopting a goal to make the "City" of Rockville once again more like a "Town," with cars, trains, pedestrians, bicycles, trees and green spaces living more harmoniously? Regarding green space, I understand that the city operates several small parks within the town center boundaries, but how about proposing a plan to better connect these parks to the other surrounding parks, including Welsh Park, Woodley Gardens Park, Upper Watts Branch Park, etc. to the west and Rock Creek Regional Park to the East? Can the City consider creating "greenways" that would include walking, cycling and sitting areas that would create a better overall network? One of the biggest differences I've observed since moving to this area from Prince George's County is the lack of greenways in Rockville. Joggers and cyclists have to run and cycle on busy streets, but if they had their own greenways that took them more easily to the surrounding parks along the way, they wouldn't have to navigate the roadways as much. I use the new Middle Lane bicycle path regularly as part of my commute from the West End to the MARC and back - thank you for installing it! Middle Lane is still very car-centric, and I understand that by necessity it may always be. I assume there are plans to extend the Middle lane bike lane across the Pike? I still feel very unsafe when crossing Rockville Pike. The boundary between the end of the town center on the east side and the beginning of Rockville Pike is abrupt and scary. There is very little that protects the pedestrian and cyclist from the zooming heavy traffic on the Pike. I don't see many folks trying to cross here because it is not safe and not at all at the pedestrian scale - cars rule. I understand that there is an overpass but this is an outdated, inaccessible, inconvenient solution. How can the transition from the town center to the east be moderated and better scaled for the pedestrian? It would have helped if there had been more restrictions on the developers who built massive buildings up to the very edge of the sidewalk and weren't required to have setbacks and green space around their buildings. How can these areas be improved despite their looming geometry? How can the sidewalks that run north-south along the way boundary of the town center be made safer for pedestrians? Can any buffer of green and attractive railings be added? Also, the overhead power lines at the northeast corner of Middle Lane and the Pike look like they are about to fall down, and are an eyesore. Can these be buried or otherwise improved? If someone arrives for the first time and enters Rockville from the east as a pedestrian, they would not have a good impression and would not feel welcomed. They are greeted by large walls with power lines and poles everywhere, and trying to safely navigate speeding traffic and hope that cars don't hit them on the narrow sidewalk. Again, speaking of green space, in addition to the aerial map that is included that illustrates the parking lots in the town boundaries, can you include the overall square footage of these and also all of the other hardscapes? I think there is a strong case to be made for Rockville's existing hardscapes contributing to excessive stormwater runoff. How can this excessive amount of parking spaces (many that surround what were once green spaces around historic buildings - I'm not sure how and why this happened), and many hardscapes adjacent sidewalks be converted to more green space? Can the master plan include goals that align with the EPA and climate goals for reduction of storm water runoff? The town square development seems too cut off from the rest of the city. The portals that one has to walk through to get to the square inside are not pleasant spaces. How can the inside square be turned inside out and opened up? Going back to the theme of making the city feel more like a town, how can small businesses thrive more in the town center? Kensington has been extremely successful in this way - the antique stores are still thriving, but more diverse small businesses have emerged in recent years, including a local brewery, bakery, art and

music venues, etc. Part of this is scale - people enjoy visiting smaller buildings because they are more approachable to the human scale. Rockville is a much bigger city/town, but how can the smaller scale and wonderful treasure of historic buildings be celebrated more and not pushed aside by larger neighbors? Again, a smaller version of a Central Park could have helped, but the town green in the town square development is somehow very cut off from the rest of the town and the smaller scale surrounding buildings. Are there opportunities for vacant buildings to be demolished or renovated? For example, the building at the corner of Monroe and E Jefferson is vacant. What if this were removed and turned into a park or small cafe or restaurant with outdoor space? Can the farmers market be year-round and have a better space? Speaking of E Jefferson, this is a cut through for cars going to 270, and I understand it is a necessity, but these kinds of car-centric cuts tear through the very fabric that could unite the town and make it a more pleasant place. Unfortunately the newer court buildings were built right up to the sidewalk, even with grand stairs that almost spill out in the street, but with not enough green pedestrian safe space around them. How can both sides of Jefferson be activated to knit the town together? Finally, I know that aesthetics are subjective, but when one approaches the town from the south, travelling north on the Pike, one is greeted by an odd mix of brown, boxy buildings. The worst buildings are those on the north side of Monroe. Is there anything that can be done to renovate or even re-clad or refinish the exterior of these buildings? There are many examples of above ground parking structures that are clad in decorative metal or similar materials with interesting patterns and colors. The other problem is the geography itself - the roadway at the intersection of Rockville Pike, Viers Mill and East Jefferson is higher than the apartments below. I understand that burying this intersection would be a big undertaking, but something similar was done at Montrose. Are there any ideas about how to improve this southern gateway to the town center? To the southeast, how can the historic train station become more visible and reconnected with the town? It is currently blocked by a tall building, so how does Antone know it is there? Even if we know it is there, how can the journey to access it be improved?

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Expansion of green space and connection to existing green spaces via trails and paths, rediscover treasure trove of historic buildings and reanimate them by removing paved over surroundings, bring more small businesses to the town.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Thank you for your efforts!



Respondent No: 20

Login: GaryGill

Email: avantgardemzk@msn.com

Responded At: Jul 06, 2024 05:31:17 am

Last Seen: Jul 06, 2024 12:20:46 pm

IP Address: 69.140.125.212

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Same old stuff. Nothing new.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

High density and mass transit oriented.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Incentives for redevelopment.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

What is left out. The need to right the wrongs.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

No need for moderately priced residential units unless integrated with new development like MOCO does as MPDUS. City wrongly allowed age restricted and developmentally restricted housing rather than integrating. City should allow higher densities and include MPDU units. Need more youthful communities and uses



Respondent No: 21

Login: Hetrilm

Email: jeffandlauren@gmail.com

Responded At: Jul 06, 2024 07:11:45 am

Last Seen: Jul 06, 2024 13:59:12 pm

IP Address: 71.191.68.73

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

No need to further boost residents in town center proper. The density is more than adequate for those seeking to live there. Rather more important to develop infrastructure around housing to encourage residents to live there.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Better retail and life style focus for Rockville residents to use town center. Better linkage to public transport to encourage nonRockv residents to visit Rockv.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

No cost and readily accessed public parking should be the norm and publicized as a reason to come to town center. It's easy to be in Rockv.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Support for businesses and transportation. City must get new businesses to open and help them stay. Otherwise just more of the same old center.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Town center should be the cultural hub of all things Rockv. Use it for many more events to boost foot traffic. There has been a significant intentional move away from that in direct opposition to master plan efforts.



Respondent No: 22

Login: jaredrussell04

Email: jaredrussell04@gmail.com

Responded At: Jul 06, 2024 18:40:22 pm

Last Seen: Jul 07, 2024 01:22:25 am

IP Address: 173.73.43.119

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

It's conflicting interests and lacks hierarchy with the different interests.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Retail planning and organizing is terrible and is in consistent decline.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Rockville town center retail mix is directly correlated to the high affordable housing mix. The low end retailers for taking up space of retail square footage and lack of proper selection of retailers.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Rockville town center retail and the over supply of affordable housing consumer mix to the retail.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

It's anywhere plans. DEI objectives at the expense of economic growth and recovery. The first mistake was lack of height in the buildings at town center and then high ratio of affordable housing and low quality retail mix.



Respondent No: 23
Login: ditko86
Email: ditko86@gmail.com

Responded At: Jul 10, 2024 09:23:00 am
Last Seen: Jul 10, 2024 16:11:40 pm
IP Address: 214.9.103.7

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

I think it's ok but it could go further in terms of allowing more residential density

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I think the focus on walkability and eliminating parking requirements are spot on.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I think the "core area" by right height should be increased to at least 300 feet to bring it in line with other urban areas in MoCo I think parking requirements should just be eliminated throughout the entire planning area For the edge areas the by right height should be increased to at least 85 feet because that is a typical height for a 5 over 1 apartment building

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

The most important aspect is making sure we are drawing new residents and new investment into town center, we have a lot a cahllleges with both office and retail vacancies there now and fixing those issue should be a key priority.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

my full comments to planning commission and mayor and council: "I want to voice my support for the new Town Center Master plan, but also urge it to go further in terms of increasing density and include some financial incentives in order to facilitate the plan becoming reality. Specifically I think parking requirements should just be eliminated throughout the entire planning area (preferably the entire city but that's beyond the scope of this plan) rather than just in areas close to the metro station. I think the "core area" by right height should be increased to at least 300 feet to bring it in line with other urban areas in MoCo. Ideally we wouldn't limit height at all, because that would create more architectural flexibility which would result in a more interesting skyline, as well as maximizing the use of the limited space within town center. For the edge areas the by right height should be increased to at least 85 feet because that is a typical height for a 5 over 1 apartment building (<https://www.archdaily.com/978264/in-praise-of-5-over-1-buildings>) which is a cost effective way to provide desperately needed housing. On the finance side I think a property tax incentive would be too small to move the needle on a developers decision to build or not build (Rockville's rate is a small component of the total). What I do think we should do is help finance the demolition of 255 Rockville Pike and prepare the land for high rise redevelopment, assuming we can write a contract that says in no uncertain terms construction will begin shortly after the land is cleared. I'm sorry but we just can't have that 2 floor concrete brick sitting there any more, it's an eye sore and a severe underutilization of that metro adjacent space. Redevelopment should also be granted "champion" status like Twinbrook Quarter, and allowed to be whatever height works, the bigger the better."



Respondent No: 24
Login: edamtoft
Email: edamtoft@gmail.com

Responded At: Aug 01, 2024 09:07:26 am
Last Seen: Aug 01, 2024 13:55:50 pm
IP Address: 173.66.158.148

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Overall I think this is a very good plan. The overall goals of increasing density and focusing on active transportation and transit is the right path for the city to be on. The plan objective of "Minimize the divisive impact of Rockville Pike" is especially important.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I really like the idea of repurposing space on the thin strip east of MD-355 between the road and the railroad tracks to include park space. This strip is the first thing that many people see and think of in the town center area. It currently doesn't do much for the city and it's proximity to Rockville Pike makes it largely a host to car-dependent uses (car washes, tire stores, drive thru businesses, and parking lots). The master plan has a number of improvements that would affect this strip, but I think this could be expanded to fully articulate a goal of having a low-stress pedestrian/bicycle greenway providing a connection between Rockville Metro, Giant Foods, Montgomery College. The plan includes a number of elements of this: 5.1.2 (shared use path along the east side of 355), 7.1.3 (improvements to the west side of Unity Bridge), and 9.2.4 (convert metro surface parking to a park). I think if those elements were coalesced and expanded to include a full vision of a greenway/walk/bike corridor, it would solve a major connectivity issue for active transportation in the city. The elements as described would provide an improvement alone, but could also end up just being a curb-tight (slightly wider) sidewalk mostly next to heavy traffic and parking lots.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I think the most notable problem with the plan is the scope of the plan. Rockville Town Center can be either remain a marginal shopping center in a sea of low-density suburbs, or a vibrant self-supporting dense transit-oriented downtown. The plan has a lot of great ideas for moving it towards the latter. However, when you look at the map, the actual Town Center area which this plan applies to is not centered around transit. The Rockville Metro station is on the edge of the map, not the center. The plan describes an intent to minimize the effect of the split created by 355 and metro/CSX tracks, but that split also is also literally the border of the plan area. Given the scope of the plan, I really like the vision, but I have some concern that scope itself may make it difficult to have Rockville overall be a transit-oriented community with gradual and diverse gradient of housing options.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Housing is probably the most objectively important thing Rockville needs. More density lets the city support itself financially and bring in business and increasing housing supply is a key part of solving the housing affordability crisis. Rockville needs a variety of housing options and missing-middle housing, not just large development projects. The hard part of this will be designing the city to support the density. The growth Rockville needs won't be compatible with automobile-centric design. Rockville needs to be all-in on transit oriented development and active transportation. I think that transforming the MD-355 corridor is crucial to the success of that. It should be easy and low stress to walk/roll, bike, or take transit to access groceries, regional transportation, and education, and all of these are crucial things that are along 355.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

I read through this and kept nodding as I read it. I can't highlight everything I liked in the plan, but I think this plan hits on a ton of good points, and I really hope that the vision of this plan becomes a reality.



Respondent No: 25
Login: Johannes van Dam
Email: johannesvdam@gmail.com

Responded At: Oct 01, 2024 09:51:46 am
Last Seen: Oct 01, 2024 16:30:37 pm
IP Address: 71.191.68.245

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Overall, I really like the draft plan. It is comprehensive, seems balanced, and well thought-out.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I really like the focus on pedestrian and bike mobility, on increasing local public transportation options (although I have some concerns about viability), and on increasing pedestrian and road traffic safety.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Especially as we are increasingly moving toward a future where climate change-related events will be more common and more severe, I would like to see a strengthened focus on green spaces within the town center area (I acknowledge there is attention to the issue in the draft plan) and creating a viable tree canopy. Also, I encourage you to think boldly about building (or incentivizing) EV charging spots. When I was in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, earlier this year, I was astounded by the number of publicly accessible charging points with most city blocks having two charging stations at each end of most streets. With prices of EVs coming down gradually, the single most important limiting factor in the transition away from gas-powered cars is the lack of easily available charging options.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

A balanced focus on livability, housing, and economic development - the latter to include a focus on retail, restaurants, and entertainment.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Two things: 1) mention of the low utilization of WMATA parking does not correspond with my own experience, although that was largely pre-COVID. Assuming that gradually more people will be expected (or forced) to return to their offices in DC, I would expect the demand on metro parking to pick up again, so I hope and trust that the 'mixed use, transit-oriented development' proposed will include sufficient parking. Without parking near the metro station, I would not have used metro as often as I did to commute to and from DC. 2) Whenever I read about a commitment to increase pedestrian (and bicyclist) safety and reduce traffic deaths and injuries, I am struck by the singular disregard for traffic laws related to speeding and red lights, especially on thoroughfares such as MD-355, East Gude Drive, and MD-28. Enforcement of such laws through speed and red light cameras is perhaps not part of a Town Center draft plan, but deserving of your attention if pedestrian and bicyclist safety are to be taken seriously.



Respondent No: 26
Login: 1040
Email: cshort5@verizon.net

Responded At: Oct 01, 2024 17:52:18 pm
Last Seen: Oct 02, 2024 00:12:53 am
IP Address: 96.231.22.78

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

The plan certainly reflects a great deal of effort and transparency. However, having viewed or been part of several town center studies, it appears to repeat what has already been said for many years. The plan lacks a bold centerpiece. What about an arena? A county history museum, a large civic engagement building like Silver Spring, a center for nonprofit development and collaboration, a intergenerational activity and maker center. Traditional private developers will not provide the creative and family friendly thinking needed.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

More density and sense of place. Recognition of parking issues

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

A big idea! Bold parking solutions not rhetoric, need to address perception of public safety. Clear language regarding addressing divisive presence of 355 and metro. How can Rockville Pike and Stonestreet become town center "main streets" and be at the center of activity rather than at the border. Would be great to see the plan seek specifically to make the town center a leading and welcoming place for people with disabilities and the elderly to work, play and live.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

It's all important. The goal of multi-income housing is great.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Thanks for your work!



Respondent No: 27
Login: JAC
Email: jcheilik@hotmail.com

Responded At: Oct 01, 2024 19:33:53 pm
Last Seen: Oct 02, 2024 00:51:27 am
IP Address: 172.56.32.76

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

The same as I felt before, I find it highly dubious that residents of the area want more density in terms of building, that sounds like something only Builders and Developers want. Also, for those who do not live directly within walking distance of the Town Center area, it is extremely difficult to access on any weekend or when there is any festival or anything else because of the lack of parking and the difficulty of Ingress and egress with tight streets and already dense building. If you are trying to revitalize the Town Center then the goal should be to open it up and create more parking on at least the outskirts so that people who are not living in the Town Center can actually get in. Creating more density just means less people are able to get in to more tightly packed businesses that will suffer

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

More green spaces always resonates, a better variety of tenants and less vacancies is always good. There is just a complete lack of reality about what it will take to Revitalize the Town Center area. My family and I have essentially boycotted since it has been built and the old library and old Rockville was completely torn down

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Less density, much more parking, preferably free of charge because it is ridiculous to charge people in the middle of a suburb for parking to access businesses that they are not all that excited about going to anyway, and better ease of access both on foot and Via car which should result if there is more available parking within the Town Center itself or right at the periphery where it is easy enough to walk. The mistake is that everyone assumes that more people will be either living right next to it or taking the metro there and that is just simply not the case

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 28
Login: Ychang1234
Email: ychang1234@gmail.com

Responded At: Oct 03, 2024 14:13:26 pm
Last Seen: Oct 03, 2024 21:11:21 pm
IP Address: 44.200.129.209

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

I am opposed to increasing height limits west of Washington Ave. Dense development should stay on the other side to avoid encroaching on the low density West End neighborhood.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

not answered

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 29
Login: Jeloy
Email: jwilsong@gmail.com

Responded At: Oct 14, 2024 07:06:42 am
Last Seen: Oct 14, 2024 13:52:41 pm
IP Address: 173.66.175.163

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

I largely concur with master plan, with a few concerns.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I concur with the focus on green space, increasing retail, and a focus on maximizing proximity to public transportation.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I have grave concerns that the City of Rockville is providing waivers for zoning considerations related to new housing and how it counts towards considerations for school enrollment. I believe the waivers are misguided and allow for quick building, but will result in overcrowded schools which are therefore not serving our community. It has proven time and again that due to housing costs, significant numbers of children reside there and attend public schools. Bayard Rustin was built and overcrowded within two years of opening. Montgomery County attracts residents due to the high quality public schools, which will no longer be so when most are over-crowded.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Additionally, the city is not considering the aspects of increased automobile traffic as a result of the Town Center and is dramatically under-estimating the number of people who will have vehicles even when living close to retail and the metro. These residents still reside in a suburban area that lacks efficient, cost-effective, and wide-spread public transportation. Most will still maintain at least one vehicle. Continuing to build high density housing with insufficient or no parking only increases parking issues in our neighborhoods.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Financially, it makes sense to build high density housing, but you lose the ability for residents to spend a lifetime in Rockville. Young professionals who live in apartments will quickly leave Rockville as they wish for more space and there is insufficient single family homes and/or they are too expensive. Those people will make roots somewhere else. We need to make sure we allow for single family homes. And that we keep Rockville the small town that makes it a lovely place to live. We need to make sure we do not push too far forward on progress with too much housing and retail that cannot be supported. Therefore I would like all new dwellings to account in the school counts, continued height restrictions in the town center, a focus on single family homes and parks, and continued assessment on parking, vehicles, and traffic.



Respondent No: 30
Login: ashalota
Email: anikahalota@gmail.com

Responded At: Oct 27, 2024 19:43:14 pm
Last Seen: Nov 21, 2024 22:07:25 pm
IP Address: 173.79.22.120

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

not answered

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

not answered

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Please do not build more tall imposing walls along 355. Please consider accessibility for people not in walking distance to town center. You can't be a destination if people from derwood, Gaithersburg, Potomac, twinbrook are not able to easily access it.



Respondent No: 31
Login: ashalota
Email: anikahalota@gmail.com

Responded At: Oct 28, 2024 12:00:39 pm
Last Seen: Nov 21, 2024 22:07:25 pm
IP Address: 173.79.22.120

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

It doesn't seem too different from what we have now.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Biking and walkability.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Playground! Heard it mentioned a lot for the many seniors with visiting grandkids. Having a safe car-free space to let kids play is a HUGE draw. If you create a spot with adequate parking, no cars, outdoor seating, and a unique playground that appeals even to older kids, you will create a destination. The small parks shown aren't really noticeable right now, if you plan to incorporate a nice park it should be big enough to be noticed. Somewhere you can walk to after picking up food from a nearby restaurant would be great. Parents are really looking for a place that you can relax with kids, buy food and snacks if needed (and use the restroom somewhere), and not worry that it will cost a lot every single time you go out.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Trying to replace the many parking lots with *anything* useful is a good start, and focusing on connectivity between the these. The more pedestrian-friendly the connections, the better. Make it a park-and-walk destination so that everyone can enjoy it, not only those who are able to afford living in walking distance.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

As far as encouraging metro use - The metro is simply too expensive on weekdays. For two people from Rockville to DC and back would be 27 dollars on a weekday. It is not an affordable option, especially if you have a family and kids. Until there are reduced group fares and free kid fares, it is prohibitive financially to use metro public transportation. Driving is always the financially responsible choice. If you can get them to move away from distance based fares and not overcharge people living in the suburbs, it may be more feasible to encourage travel both ways. By the way, the Hot Pot spot next to the movie theatre is actually a destination spot that Chinese people from DC metro into Rockville for.



Respondent No: 32
Login: ashalota
Email: anikahalota@gmail.com

Responded At: Nov 11, 2024 19:07:27 pm
Last Seen: Nov 21, 2024 22:07:25 pm
IP Address: 173.79.22.120

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

The plan is very dense, it's hard to focus on reading it all. Would be great to assign some of the city's GIS staff to create a more accessible format, such as a webmap that highlights all of the current conditions and suggested changes. Having a 3D rendering of the suggested heights would be very helpful. Also it would be easier to locate the suggested parks, bike paths, etc. It could be linked on hover with tooltips that include the exact wording and a link to the location in the actual master plan proposing this change.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

not answered

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

9.2.3 and 9.2.4 suggest placing parks across busy streets from where most people will be, at the fringes. These don't seem very valuable. Suggest trying to focus on a large park more in the center, such as part of the Maryland-&Dawson ave extension. I can't tell from the plan if this is meant to be a pedestrian only road. Would be great in that case. Also the many requests for parks/playgrounds came from seniors who live in Brightview so they can go outside to play with their visiting grandchildren - those suggested park locations are too far away to be of use to this population. 9.3.1. - of all the parks, THIS one should be more on the fringes. Dogs are dangerous and scary to many children and people of different cultures. We should make sure to create a safe and comfortable space for everyone and not have people feel unwelcome in the main portions of town center due to high volume of dogs. Since dogs like to go for walks anyways, it would be less of an imposition to have them go farther away for this dog park. 9.3.2 The library already acts as a community center. It's unclear what the added benefits here are, as many of the residential buildings have such spaces for their residents, and for others living outside, they already have community centers in their own communities. 9.3.3. Love this one. Other than losing your soccer ball 4 stories down the parking garage... The parking lot attached to 401 N. Washington is so sad and empty looking and seems like it would be a really fun spot for some outdoor seating at a small restaurant with a view and an attached park for kids to play. Retail Vacancy: I ran a very basic traffic analysis to try and determine from/to where visitors are going as far as shopping (rio/town center/p+r). City of Rockville should have access to this same data via their contract with UMD's CATT Lab and be able to run something more deliberate and precise for further analysis. First pass results showed that people simply don't want to travel far - if at all possible, they will drive to the closest location. As mentioned often, paid parking simply does not "count" as parking for many people. Therefore anyone in Gaithersburg/Derwood/North Rockville will tend towards Rio for an evening out. The 2 hour limit for free parking does not encourage lingering (and therefore additional shopping), and the lack of nice parks for walking simply makes Rio more attractive. None of the suggestions in the plan seem to address this, which is fine, if that is the intended result (focusing only on people living within walking distance of town center). Places such as Courthouse Square charging for parking or requiring tickets + validation is simply mind-boggling, and most people will just go anywhere else on Rockville Pike for a restaurant, as it becomes a hassle that's not worth it when there are so many other options. This also makes city events held in Rockville Town Center feel unwelcoming to those not living within walking distance. While those who can walk there are able to enjoy these events for free, for all others it feels like there's an entrance fee. I got as far as page 90 this time. The document is just too long :(



Respondent No: 33

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Email: basilio.teixeira@gmail.com

Responded At: Nov 12, 2024 12:33:14 pm

Last Seen: Nov 12, 2024 20:15:34 pm

IP Address: 72.66.117.248

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

disrespecting traditional neighborhoods zoned as R-75 and RMD-25 with many dead end streets to change them to RMD-25 and RMXD respectively is totally unacceptable for the community given already cluttered streets and traffic pattern. Next thing we know Rollina Ave becomes a real Ave with traffic flowing through it to access MOntrorse Rd through the back streets of the community, eventually.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Rollins Ave east of East Jefferson Rd are very old beat up business buildings that are overdue an upgrade so that makes sense but you don't need to re-zone that as it is already zoned for any building upgrades as done elsewhere along the Rockville Pike and Pike and Rose areas, but stay away from the residential (RMD-25) area on the west side of E Jefferson St as many mid/low income families rely on the rental condos and more importantly the R-75 areas. They are R-75 and not R-50 nor R-25 for a reason. It is a neighborhood. No big developers here please.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

respect to old zoning. Improve where it is within the original scope, such as done for the Wegman's building major construction that replaced run down shopping strip shops. Stick with the original Rockville 2040 main objectives. You are deviating way too deep into areas you have no business rezoning

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Keep all in the neighborhood involved and informed. Do not only send letters to affected residences and the house next to them within 100 ft (typical house front footage).

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

Montrose neighborhood must buy into any rezoning. You cannot shove this down while trying to revamp drastically the zoning for quiet and safe neighborhoods. This has the potential to have severe impact to all in Montrose Community during and more importantly after constructions. The impact on home prices, besides safety, road congestion will not be trivial nor beneficial for most involved and not just the neighbors. It is amazing that suddenly the community was flooded with letters from Real estate "investors" offering to buy houses as is.



Respondent No: 34
Login: ericjensen
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Responded At: Nov 18, 2024 17:48:01 pm
Last Seen: Nov 19, 2024 01:49:46 am
IP Address: 173.79.25.12

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

The document is too long for the average person to read, understand, and engage with effectively. Instead of presenting over 100 pages of background, history, and other details—important as they may be for some—it would be more effective to provide a summary focused on the Goals and Action Steps. This way, citizens can more easily offer feedback without getting bogged down in unnecessary information.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

Increasing visibility of Town Center from MD-355. Improving Promenade Park as a welcoming entry point from the Metro Bridge. Revitalizing 255 Hungerford, the Choice Hotels building, and other properties along 355 to make it clear that Town Center is a vibrant destination for dining, shopping, and entertainment.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Shouldn't the question be, "Are there specific elements that the draft plan got wrong?" I believe there are several areas where the draft Master Plan has missed the mark, including the changes to building height requirements, the creation of the new "Transition" zone in late September, the introduction of "Bonus Heights," and the elimination of parking space requirements. From what I understand, as you move from the center of Town Center to the surrounding neighborhood, the building designations should transition from Core (highest) to Edge (next highest) to Transition (which should be lower than Edge, but higher than the adjacent two-story homes). However, this is not how the Planning Commission has described these zones. With the bonus heights, if the Core can reach 250 feet and the Edge 100 feet, the Transition zone should have a lower height allowance. At 75 feet, it would be appropriate to serve as a transition from the Edge to the neighboring homes. Additionally, I think the draft Master Plan makes a significant mistake by not requiring parking for any new development in Town Center. Quoting parking statistics that claim it is underutilized is misleading, especially when many shops are vacant, there is no grocery store, large restaurant spaces (like Gordon Biersch) remain empty, and using 24-hour data to support the claim of underutilization is deceptive. Models should be based on the assumption that all shops, restaurants, and the grocery store will be fully occupied, and then calculate parking demand during business hours—when people are actually shopping and dining—not overnight when the area is empty. All new buildings should be required to provide parking spaces, particularly if they are mixed-use buildings with residential units. Allowing developers to build without additional parking means that only people without vehicles are welcome in Town Center. This policy effectively excludes anyone who owns a car from living in downtown Rockville. While many support public transportation, some may also choose to own a vehicle, and without adequate parking, they will be discouraged from becoming residents of Town Center.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

I live in the West End neighborhood and deeply care about preserving the small-town feel it still maintains. I am strongly opposed to the proposal that would allow developers to build structures towering over the two-story homes behind the buildings on Washington Street. I hope that common sense will prevail in ensuring that the so-called "transition" area truly serves as a buffer between the historic neighborhood and the vibrant downtown. I would like to understand the reasoning behind the creation of the "transition" designation, specifically why it was applied only to the buildings on South Washington Street. Was there any discussion with developers requesting this designation to provide more incentives for development in that area? It seems unusual that this change was made at the last minute, with no clear explanation provided as to why it was introduced so suddenly.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

To attract more people to Town Center, it's crucial to make it more appealing to everyone and increase its visibility along 355. First impressions matter, and when entering Town Center across the Metro bridge, it currently gives the impression of a run-down and neglected area, which is far from the vibrant Town Center we want to showcase. The lack of visibility from 355 only adds to the problem, as many people drive by without even realizing there's something exciting to explore behind the large block of buildings blocking their view of Town Center. I hope someone is studying successful examples from nearby areas like Downtown Crown, Rio, Pike & Rose, and downtown Bethesda to understand what works and what doesn't. We should apply those insights to improve Rockville Town Center.



Respondent No: 35
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Responded At: Nov 19, 2024 06:21:40 am
Last Seen: Nov 19, 2024 14:00:06 pm
IP Address: 96.255.138.32

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

- (1) Plan needs to have a much more easy to understood executive summary to highlight the key “bottom lines” for residents
- (2) While there are some good aspects of the plan’s move to revitalize the Town Center towards a vibrant mixed use business district and neighborhood, I do have some concerns around the elimination of parking requirements and the specifics of the transition zones that start to bleed into the surrounding neighborhoods

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I completely agree with the initiatives aimed at increasing occupancy rates and revitalizing empty space in the heart of the town center. When compared to other successful neighborhoods such as Rio or Pike & Rose, it does feel like there are too many empty storefronts, etc. Recent wins such as the upcoming addition of Trader Joe’s need to keep coming.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I’d like to see far more in depth analysis of why the City doesn’t feel the need to require additional parking spaces to accompany the planed growth. In addition, I have some concerns about the new height permits in the “Transition Zone” changing the historic feel of West End. There should be specific meetings scheduled to give additional details regarding the planners thinking on these two issues and invite more community dialogue.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Revitalizing the Core of the Town Center—this is where we constantly seem to come up short. Rockville has so much potential if we can reach a “critical mass” of businesses, restaurants, bars, etc. that make people want to come and spend 3-4 hours in the Town Center.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 36
Login: ashalota
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Responded At: Nov 21, 2024 14:17:07 pm
Last Seen: Nov 21, 2024 22:07:25 pm
IP Address: 173.79.22.120

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

not answered

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

not answered

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

Is there any incentive for condominiums versus apartments, or anticipated/expected proportion of the ratio? With the recent criminal investigations into large apartment owners for price collusion via RealPage (<https://www.propublica.org/article/yieldstar-rent-increase-realpage-rent>), it seems that having the town center being built up by these companies (who own many of the apartment complexes along Rockville Pike), will not help to properly address housing costs. Many apartment tenants face insecurity around their housing, not knowing when the costs will rise. This will make town center feel more like a temporary home, and not offer people the opportunity to put down roots. If we could incentivize building condominiums that will be *owned* by the inhabitants, this seems like it could be a longer term solution and not risk more parts of Rockville being primarily owned and managed by external forces who are not personally invested in the area. The development on 41 Maryland avenue sounds very nice! I'm very interested as well in this project: <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/07/nx-s1-5119633/housing-crisis-solution-public-housing-mixed-income-maryland>, It seems clear that we can't trust external developers to be good stewards of land in Rockville for the benefit of its citizens, and perhaps a project like this would be a good candidate for some of the proposed increased housing density in Rockville Town Center.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

not answered

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 37

Login: sabell84

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Responded At: Nov 29, 2024 09:54:02 am

Last Seen: Nov 29, 2024 16:51:44 pm

IP Address: 96.255.138.32

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

It would be helpful to include an executive summary. I agree revitalizing the town center and eliminating vacancy rates should be prioritized. However, I think it is imprudent to add a brand new apartment building without requiring some allocation of additional parking spaces. I also think it is important for there to be a public hearing regarding the transition zone and the height requirements for the transition zone.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I appreciated the attention paid to vacancy rates of the town center and the comparative data that was provided. I also agree that Promenade Park should be improved and the visibility of the town center from MD-355 should also be improved.

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I did not see sufficient justification for the proposed changes to building height requirements, creation of a new transition zone, or the introduction of bonus heights, all of which would pose a threat to the small town feel the residents of surrounding neighborhoods currently enjoy. I also did not see a sufficient justification for the elimination of parking space requirements. I believe the data used was misleading in part because it does not account for full capacity, the addition of a Trader Joe's, or the additional residential units.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

I think it is imperative to both revitalize the town center while preserving the character and historic charm of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

not answered



Respondent No: 38
Login: Leo
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Responded At: Jan 04, 2025 14:52:59 pm
Last Seen: Jan 04, 2025 22:39:20 pm
IP Address: 165.123.230.41

Q1. What are your overall thoughts on the draft plan?

Overall, I am pleased with the draft plan, and hope it can be aligned with sources of public investment to create a high-quality built environment that realizes the plan's vision as opposed to a piecemeal approach done entirely privately without additional public oversight/support. I am pleased with the language present in the plan that supports policy and infrastructure changes to support additional residents and businesses in Town Center.

Q2. What does the draft plan get right? Are there specific elements that resonate with you?

I like much of the draft plan update's key elements, including: -new housing options, particularly affordable, highlighted-- necessary to include more housing to support existing and desired retail in the study area -allowing the market to use land to its "highest and best use" -prioritization of transit, walking, biking -important to acknowledge a need to better knit together the Town Square development with Town Center as a whole, work towards that with progressive private and public sector-led urban redevelopment -good to reaffirm existing language and proposals in current plans -in support of proposed upzoning of low-density residential plots, particularly in the Institutional Zone -As far as the proposed elimination of parking minimums are concerned, I am in wholehearted support in order to streamline development, lower costs in a way that can meaningfully impact rents/prices, and incentivize use of sustainable travel patterns -in support of proposed land use changes (simplification of center to make the majority ORCM allowing for more versatile land use, easier re-conversions/adaption of properties), proposed zoning recommendations, including proposed density bonuses for exceeding base affordable housing inclusionary zoning requirements

Q3. Is anything missing from the draft plan that you'd like to see added?

I think as far as recommendation 9.2.4 is concerned, land at 301 Hungerford Drive could be used as a public park, but could also serve as additional bus bay space (particularly if the Flash system is upgraded overtime to have higher-quality ROW and alignment and is in need of a separated station, loop, and staging facility), though some sort of versatile pocket park/bus facility/farmer's market space could also be considered. Given the land's proximity to Rockville Metro and the concurrent Metro Station visioning study, considering multiple potential uses, particularly transit-related given the plot's shape limiting its use for private development as noted in the plan, should be paramount.

Q4. What do you think are the most important aspects of the draft plan?

Increasing allowable density and ensuring that development contributes to a walkable, urban, transit-supportive built environment, while mitigating housing costs for the city and region as a whole through building more housing affordable for multiple income levels, is paramount. Rockville Town Square has not succeeded in attracting and maintaining retail tenants with the existing commercial rents on offer and limited area residents. Ensuring future development works towards creating a cohesive urban fabric throughout Town Center, as opposed to solely turning inward (as is seen with the surface parking lot facing Washington Street, or the limited retail options off of Maryland Ave or Gibbs St in RTS), will be key in ensuring people do not view the area as discrete clusters of "drive-to urbanism" but instead as a single, unified neighborhood, albeit developed by multiple private actors.

Q5. Is there anything else you'd like to share with staff about the draft plan?

One thing I am sure staff have considered, but that did raise some concern with me when looking through the plan was the recommended adaptive reuse of offices, particularly in the Southeast Corner of Town Center and other areas immediately near Metro. This is understandable due to current market and societal trends, but should be done carefully as it is important to continue having some office uses in Town Center such that employees remain located along transit and thus drive them to use transit, as opposed to commuting to more suburban office counterparts. Thank you for creating the Engage Rockville as a civic engagement platform!

