

City of Takoma Park

Office of the Mayor

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7500 Maple Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

The Honorable Bruce R. Williams
Mayor

September 27, 2011

The Honorable Valerie Ervin, President
Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, Room 501
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Subject: Transmittal of City of Takoma Park Resolution No. 2011 - 53

Dear President Ervin, *Valerie*

The City of Takoma Park is extremely concerned that we cannot find "the details" we need to guide new development in our community. They are not in the Commercial Residential Zones; they are not in the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan; nor are they in the Urban Design Guidelines. We endorsed the Sector Plan with the belief that these details would materialize. They have not. The design guidelines recommended by Planning Department staff are nonexistent, barely going further than the recommendations included in the Sector Plan. The Zoning Code only provides parking standards – how apt for a community that values sustainability and is actively working to increase the use of bikes and public transportation.

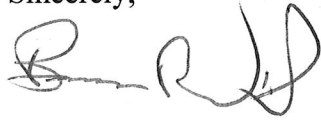
This lack of clear guidance on our expectations for development wastes the time and money of both the developer and the community. More importantly, it erodes our confidence in the County's understanding of our vision for the Takoma/Langley Crossroads and diminishes our expectation that our goals will be achieved.

Last evening, the City Council passed a resolution recommending the County Council not approve the Sector Plan until such time as our concerns for "the details" are addressed.

In the place of clear guidance, specific to our community, the Planning Department appears to be intent upon providing developers with generic direction at best and, at worst, offering no guidance whatsoever. At every opportunity for Planning Board staff to discuss the incorporation of the details

in the Urban Design Guidelines that would allow us in good faith to support the Sector Plan, we have been told, "we can't." For this reason, we are turning to you and to the County Council to address our concerns and support the incorporation of additional design recommendations in the Takoma Langley Sector Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Williams", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce R. Williams
Mayor

/enclosures/

Introduced by: Councilmember Schultz

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

RESOLUTION NO. 2011-53

**RECOMMENDING THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL NOT APPROVE THE
TAKOMA/LANGLEY SECTOR PLAN UNLESS ADDITIONAL URBAN DESIGN
LANGUAGE IS INCLUDED**

WHEREAS, the Takoma/Langley Sector Plan is a bi-county plan developed by Montgomery and Prince George's Counties' Planning Departments, to enhance the community character and provide for transit-oriented development around planned transit facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma/Langley Sector Plan contains policies, objectives and recommendations that will guide future growth and development around proposed transit facilities in both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties; and

WHEREAS, the City Council and the Takoma Park community have reviewed and discussed the plan and its impact on future growth and development of Takoma Park; and

WHEREAS, the Takoma Park City Council supports the development of the New Hampshire Avenue corridor and the Takoma/Langley Crossroads as an urbanized regional center which is environmentally and financially sustainable and enhances the quality of life of area residents; and

WHEREAS, for many years, the City has worked to plan for, coordinate, implement and support design improvements to this area, regardless of jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the City has had the expectation that design detail would be forthcoming in the Urban Design Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Council Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee is recommending that development proposals *address* rather than *be consistent with* the Urban Design Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Urban Design Guidelines provides minimal guidance to developers as they prepare for site plan review and each revision, due to poor guidance, adds to the development costs; and

WHEREAS, each successive version of the Urban Design Guidelines presented by the Planning Department staff is more generic, contains less guidance, and is less specific to our community and the City's vision; and

WHEREAS, the community has met, discussed future zoning and design, and elected to embrace the vision espoused by the Sector Plan contingent upon assurances of quality development that improve the overall pedestrian and aesthetic experience; and

WHEREAS, neither the CR Zone nor the Urban Design Guidelines provide these assurances as they lack details and clarity on design expectations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Takoma Park strongly recommends that the Montgomery Council not approve the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan until the document has been updated to incorporate amendments contained in Exhibit A in its entirety, except where editorial changes would facilitate improved clarity of the meaning of the recommendation.

Adopted this 26th day of September, 2011.

ATTEST:

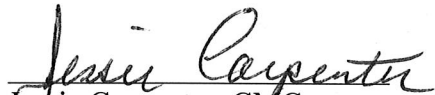

Jessie Carpenter, CMC
City Clerk

EXHIBIT A

RESOLUTION 2011-53

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONS TO TAKOMA / LANGLEY SECTOR PLAN

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Design is a key element in defining neighborhoods and promoting lively, pedestrian-friendly development. The Plan recommends ~~guidelines~~ urban design that celebrate and strengthen the community's multicultural identity.

- Upgrade and build sidewalks and bike paths in each district to encourage walking and biking as a viable means of transportation.
 - Sidewalks and landscape/tree strips in the Crossroads and New Hampshire Corridor Districts will be 15 feet wide with the exception of University Boulevard which will be 25 feet wide with shade trees 20-25 feet on center and designed in accordance with locally adopted streetscape standards.
 - Design New Hampshire Avenue as a multi-way boulevard that accommodates on-street bike travel lanes within the proposed service lanes. These service lanes, with parallel parking, will have far slower travel speeds than the heavy travel lanes in the middle of the boulevard.
- Use gateway design treatments to celebrate the entrances to the commercial district for drivers, transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians to the commercial district through gateway treatments at street intersections, transit stops and where residential neighborhood streets and pathways approach the commercial area.

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- Create a network of roadways, streets, mid-block pedestrian connections, and sidewalks that will link all three districts.
 - Improve the existing network and construct additional streets in each district. Divide the large existing super blocks of 1000 feet or more into more pedestrian-friendly blocks of 300-400-~~600~~ feet, making pedestrian travel a more practical as well as pleasant experience.
 - Provide a street grid that allows automobile traffic to move more efficiently with more route choices.
 - Connect the three districts to adjacent neighborhoods in Prince George's County through coordination of future roads, bike paths, and pedestrian routes.
 - Construct new private roads around the Purple Line station and Transit Center on University Boulevard that will be pedestrian links between the future civic green, transit service, and area retail.
 - Provide improved pedestrian crosswalks and median refuges for University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue.

- Provide a shared use pathway along University Boulevard with the construction of the Purple Line; with the construction of the Boulevard's streetscape this will become a cycle-track.
- Locate Public Utility Easement within the right-of-way or Public Improvement Easement.
- Locate parking on the street, in mid-block structures, or in structures lined with street activating uses. Surface parking, where necessary, should be located behind or to the side of development. Discourage circular, U-shaped and other driveway pull-in features. Do share access to parking lots and loading on adjoining sites.
- Organize building- mass, orientation and outdoor spaces to enhance pedestrian access from transit, streets and adjoining neighborhoods.
- Design buildings to enhance the pedestrian experience, community identity, and the viability of the commercial district.
 - Articulate large buildings so that the building and its bays read as multiple buildings through a combination of massing changes, material changes, and vocabulary changes in detailing the doors, windows, roofline, and other architectural elements.
 - Emphasize institutional and corner buildings with a unique and high quality design treatment.
 - Concentrate design complexity on the ground floor using higher quality materials and extra detailing for the entrance, windows, sign band and other features.
 - Highlight main entrances with a minimum of three features such as lighting, awnings, recessed doorways, address number, plantings and windows (transom and sidelights) and other architectural details.
 - Illuminate entrances with direct shielded light.
 - Maximize the transparency of the ground level of buildings.
 - As appropriate, use materials that are recycled, eco-friendly, and that provide an aesthetic value exceeding the quality of the surrounding housing and commercial building stock.
 - On any building facing residentially zoned property, the preference is for windows that are vertical in character.
 - WhereOn a building facing onto two commercial streets, orient the corner-building entrance to the corner.
- Support vibrant commercial streets by building blocks containing a variety of business entrances; blocks occupied by only one or two business will not enhance the adjoining public realm.
- Ensure gradual transitions in massing, height, uses and density between the three different districts.
 - Transition densities in the Crossroads District from the highest densities closest to New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, to lower densities adjacent to New Hampshire Gardens and the single-family densities in Prince George's County to the east and Hillwood Manor to the south.

- Transition uses so that the most intense uses face University Boulevard, New Hampshire Avenue, private streets, and Holton Lane east, and uses facing or adjoining New Hampshire Gardens homes are low impact uses such as multifamily housing or office.
 - MassSite buildings facing residential zoning- so they have similar yard setbacks from the sidewalk with front yard similar setbacks to that mimic setbacks found across the street. residential zoning
 - Screen parking structures facing single-family and multifamily residences with greenery or architectural designs as appropriate to blend with adjoining residential community.
 - Step up heights facing residentially zoned land by limiting the first 25 feet of such buildings to no more than 10 feet more than the average height of the facing or adjoining properties.
- Expand the open space system to include a series of Green Streets that connect the stream valley parks with the built environment. Designated throughout the Sector Plan area, these streets will use planted panels, design elements, traffic calming and other unique features to make them more attractive and environmentally friendly to pedestrians and cyclists in areas that have dense residential uses.
- Comply with dark sky best practices for lighting fixtures.

P. 26 – Green Hierarchy

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PlaceMaking

Create an identity for the TLC community and further define the neighborhoods using visual cues, unique architecture, landmarks, and focal points.

Recommendations

- Incorporate the International Corridor theme into the redevelopment strategy to strengthen and reflect this community's cultural identity.
- In the Crossroads District, locate activating uses at the street level and along priority retail streets New Hampshire Avenue, Holton Lane east, private commercial streets and University Boulevard.
- Create defined street corridors by placing buildings along on both sides of the street with a setback along or within a few feet of build-to lines to form a uniform street frontage wall.
- Coordinate with the City of Takoma Park and Prince George's County to prepare and adopt distinctive streetscape standards that visually unite the crossroads while enhancing the quality of the pedestrian, bicycle and transit user experience; at a minimum, provide streets, avenues and boulevards with a streetscape located between the build-to-line or back edge of the sidewalk and the curb. Generally, streetscapes are to be 15 feet in width, with the exception of University Boulevard which is 25 feet in width.
 - Provide higher quality paving to provide identity and comfort.

- Provide consistent site furniture including pedestrian oriented lighting, benches and trash/recycling receptacles to increase comfort, safety and provide identity.
- Provide shade trees to enhance pedestrian comfort and improve the microclimate and air quality.
- Include stormwater infiltration
- Include engineered tree boxes to ensure survival of the urban forest canopy.
- Include landscaping.
- Coordinate with the City of Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Commission for the selection and placement of art in public spaces.
- Prepare design guidelines that illustrate, in detail, the Plan's urban design recommendations, including:
 - green design, sustainability, and Smart Growth
 - international theme
 - built form
 - CPTED principles.