



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

To: Marlene Michaelson, Senior Legislative Analyst

From: Melissa Williams, Senior Planner
Area One

Date: October 4, 2011

Re: City of Takoma Park Exhibit A - (Resolution 2011-53) Recommended additional language to be added to the Urban Design section of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan.

BACKGROUND

On July 21, 2011, the Planning Staff was asked by the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee of the Montgomery County Council to negotiate revisions to the language in the Urban Design section of the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan with the City of Takoma Park. Exhibit A as transmitted by the City of Takoma Park represents the culmination of this negotiation.

STAFF RESPONSE

Staff agrees with the proposed language but would ask that the following clarifications and/or revisions be included if Exhibit A is included in the Sector Plan. Clarifications and/or revisions are highlighted in yellow.

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 - o 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 on center and designed in accordance with locally adopted streetscape standards.

Staff believes that this recommendation should reference the proposed Public Improvement Easements and should reference the Prince George's County plan for additional details on University Boulevard.

- o Sidewalks and landscape/tree strips in the Sector Plan area will be designed in accordance with locally adopted streetscape standards and have a cumulative width of 15 feet with shade trees 20-25 feet on center. Along New Hampshire Avenue and University Boulevard, the sidewalk and landscaped areas will be located within a Public Improvement Easement (P.I.E). These elements should be designed in accordance with any approved streetscape standards. For additional information on University Boulevard, please refer to the Approved

and Adopted Prince George's County Takoma /Langley Crossroads Sector Plan, November 2009.

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- 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.

Staff believes that this recommendation should reference the Prince George's County plan for details on University Boulevard.

- A shared-use pathway along University Boulevard will be constructed as a part of the construction of the Purple Line. Upon completion of the University Boulevard's streetscape construction the shared-use pathway will become a cycle-track. For additional information on University Boulevard, please refer to the Approved and Adopted Prince George's County Takoma /Langley Crossroads Sector Plan, November 2009.

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- Design buildings to enhance the pedestrian experience, community identity, and the viability of the commercial district.
 - Articulate large buildings so that the building and it's bays read as multiple building 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 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.

- On a building facing onto two commercial streets, orient the building entrance to the corner.
- Ensure gradual transitions in massing, height, uses and density between the three different districts.
 - Transition uses so 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 mutli-family housing or office.
 - Site buildings facing residential zoning with front yard setbacks that mimic setbacks found across the street.
 - Screen parking structures facing single-family and multi-family 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.

Staff believes that the aforementioned sub-bullets represent strategies rather than recommendations and should be noted as such.

- Design buildings to enhance the pedestrian experience, community identity, and the viability of the commercial district. **This should be achieved using the following strategies:**
 - **Articulate long building facades to read as multiple buildings through massing, materials, and detailing of architectural elements. (Staff edited for clarity)**
 - 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 combination of features such as lighting, awnings, recessed doorways, address number, plantings and windows (transom and sidelights) and other architectural details. (Staff edited for clarity)**
 - Illuminate entrances with direct shielded light.
 - Maximize the transparency of 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 confronting residentially zoned land, the preference is for windows that are vertical in character. *(Staff edited for clarity)*
 - On a building facing onto two commercial streets, orient the building entrance to the corner.
 - Ensure gradual transitions in massing, height, uses and density between the three different districts. This should be achieved using the following strategies:
 - Transition uses so the most intense uses face University Boulevard, New Hampshire Avenue, private streets, and Holton Lane east, and uses confronting or adjoining New Hampshire Gardens community or other residentially zoned land are residential or office. *(Staff edited for clarity)*
 - Site buildings confronting residentially zoned land with front yard setbacks that mimic setbacks found across the street. *(Staff edited for clarity)*
 - Screen parking structures confronting single-family and multi-family residences with greenery or architectural designs as appropriate to blend with adjoining residential community. *(Staff edited for clarity)*
 - For the first 25 feet (depth) of a building confronting or adjoining residentially zoned land, it's height cannot exceed more than 10 feet above the average height of surrounding properties. **(This recommendation was difficult to understand so an assumption was made regarding its objective.)*

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- 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 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 curb.

Streetscape standards are generally a separate document. Staff believes that the preparation of streetscape standards will have implications to the Planning Department's work program. Additionally, agreement will be needed from Prince George's County who may be unaware of this recommendation.

- Upon approval and adoption of the Sector Plan, coordinate with the city of Takoma Park and Prince George's County to prepare and adopt distinctive streetscape standards that visually unite the Takoma/Langley Crossroads while enhancing the quality of 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 curb.