

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
Monday, October 15, 2007 – 7:30 p.m.
Olney Inn Room, Sandy Spring Bank, Olney, Maryland

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) members in attendance: Jim Smith, Chair; Sunita Bhatia, Vice Chair; Nancy DeLalio; Joe Fritsch; Paula Kahla; Dorothy Kane; Walter Lee, Michael Reilly; and Helene Rosenheim. **Others present:** Khalid Afzal, OTCAC's liaison from Park and Planning, Bob Beard, GOCA; Tom Gallagher, Esq; Mike Knapp, County Council, District 2; Anyesha Mookherjee, SHA, Dist 3; Barry Rosenfeld, Long & Foster Real Estate; Alan Wandell, Rollings & Associates; Stephanie Yanovitz, SHA

Chairman Jim Smith called the meeting to order at 7:45 p.m. The agenda was accepted with no changes. The minutes from the September meetings was approved with one additions relating to the discussion of the status of the program of requirements.

Helene Rosenheim recorded the minutes for the meeting currently in progress.

Proposed Building on Morningwood Dr

Alan Wandell reported that he and his associate, Karen Rollings are proposing to build a mixed-use building on Morningwood Dr with retail on the first floor, office space on the second floor, and residential on a third and possibly fourth floor. They have been talking with several business owners in the area who are currently paying high rents and might be interested in purchasing office space in a mixed-use building.

Solar Decathlon - Before moving to the presentations for the evening, Jim noted that there is a Solar Decathlon on the National Mall through Saturday, 10/19. There are sample houses using green design features that the public is invited to go through. Khalid noted that the houses would be closed on Wednesday while they are being judged.

Update on the Draft Design Guidelines: Laura Rydland, RTKL

Laura began by noting that Olney is not in the corridors of development identified by the Park & Planning Commission, but is a satellite community that will have a commercial center to support its own community. The town center fosters that concept with the surrounding area being more rural. The current town center is developed in the classic suburban pattern with large parking lots that do not create a pedestrian-friendly environment. The new mixed-use town center zone provides for, comparable to Bethesda Row

Jim noted that this document is not a blueprint for redevelopment of the town center, but is just a concept, a guideline for what could be done in different areas and size parcels. Things do not have to be exactly where shown on this plan, but this gives guidance to developers on what the community would like to see.

Laura went through the current version of the illustrative concept briefly describing the road pattern, some of the traffic calming approaches, and suggestions for the Rte. 97/108 intersection and each of the four quadrants. Khalid reiterated that the plan does not dictate how the town center should be developed, but will help guide that development as it occurs. He also noted that the pictures in the concept give a flavor of the development that is desired and will help people answer the questions of where it might be appropriate for different types of development. And, he suggested that Committee members need to be very familiar with where the plan suggests these might be appropriate.

It was noted that the Outreach Subcommittee has already had some experience at community events. Paula added that a list of comments and concerns was compiled at the Chamber's recent Community Night event. She noted that did seem to be some resistance to the mixed use concept which made her realize the importance of the Committee getting out and presenting the concepts, impacts, and value of this type of development.

Khalid and the others present made some suggestions for strengthening the language in the concept document and made some other observations and suggested changes. It was noted that maintenance needs should be considered when selecting landscaping. And, trees along the sidewalks should be trimmed up 12' from the sidewalk to provide for good visibility and an unobstructed path for pedestrians. Jim noted that landscaping, architecture, and signage are aspects of the design concept where the community can personalize the design for Olney.

Nancy Delalio asked that Committee members and others email any comments they ave to her prior to the next Subcommittee meeting which will likely be in about 3 weeks.

Discussion with State Highway Administration (SHA) on State road design in a town center area: Anyesha Mookherjee, SHA, District Engineer's Office, District 3; Stephanie Yanovitz, SHA, Planning Staff

Jim noted that he, Dorothy Kane, and Helene Rosenheim had participated in a tour that the Greater Olney Civic Association (GOCA) had arranged with Daryl Mobley, the District 3 Chief Engineer, and Anyesha Mookherjee, an engineer on his staff. Barbara Falcigno, the GOCA President, prepared a list of problem areas both within the town center area and outside of the town center along both Rtes. 97 and 108. He introduced Anyesha Moorkerjee, a Transportation Engineer with the Dist 3 Chief Engineer's Office, and Stephanie Yanovitz, the Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for SHA. The purpose at this meeting is to get a report from the District Engineer's office on information on and the status of possible solutions to issues presented during the tour and to begin a discussion with the SHA planning staff on issues relating to road design in the town center area.

Stephanie noted that she is a contractor that has been working with SHA for about 10 years Her area of specialty is traffic engineering and pedestrian safety which has been a

big focus of her design work for a number of years. Some of the points she suggested we need to consider as we move forward were to:

- address transit, schools and accessibility
- consider wayfinding signage, maps, community gateway signage, community planting
- consider flexcar and commuter bicycling/racks
- prepare an access management plan
- identify heavy vehicle patterns.

And, she cautioned that on-street parking that may result in mid-block crossings, and cars sticking out into the adjacent travel lane.

Some things she suggested for traffic calming along MD 97 and MD 108 consider in Olney included: white edgelines, fatter lane lines, and modifications to lane use rather than eliminating pavement. And for pedestrian crossings: the high priority intersections indicated will be addressed first. She noted that Anyesha is already taking steps in this direction. She also talked about a variety of design features such as traffic circles, below grade intersections, and a good network of secondary streets.

In response to a questions from Khalid about whether SHA could help with reducing pavement on the State roads curb to curb and adding on-street parking to help slow down traffic in the town center, Stephanie noted that SHA is trying to reach a balance between pedestrian needs and SHA's goal of facilitating vehicular traffic on State roads; and that intersections can be balanced so they are fair to all users. There was some discussion of the kinds of things SHA would pay for and would not pay for, the idea of creating a "pilot" program in the Olney town center area, and some specific issues such as intersection turning radius' that the Committee should be looking at. Councilmember Knapp asked how to involve SHA in a dialogue of more specific ideas and approaches as designs are being considered by the County.

In response to questions from Jim, Stephanie and Anyesha discussed what the process is if the community comes up with ideas for the road design in the town center that the Committee wants to advocate. Councilmember Knapp noted that the Council recently upgrades the County Road Code with new provisions for making roads more pedestrian-friendly. Some of the street designs in the town center area may be affected by the changes. The new graphics implementing these changes are currently being developed. It was suggested that the Committee invite Bob Simpson from the Department of Public Works and Transportation to a future meeting once those graphics are complete to help us understand the changes.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach Subcommittee – Paula Kahla reported that the Subcommittee wants to prepare a display to put in the library to show the process the Committee went through in developing the illustrative concept from the master plan, They want to hold a series of meeting to present the concept to businesses through the Chamber of Commerce and to the public through GOCA. The consensus of the meeting was that the Subcommittee needs to develop a plan for a step-wise approach to presenting some of the things the Committee has learned over the last year and the ideas we are proposing for the town

center, such as where different types of development and uses might end up. It would also be useful to develop a 5-minute Powerpoint video outlining some of these ideas.

Nominating Subcommittee – Sunita reported that there is still one vacancy for an representative from the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board. Helene noted that a new representative for the Olney area had been selected and one addition Board member from Aspen Hill had expressed interest in serving on the Committee. So, the Board will have to select one of them to be the Liaison, hopefully at their next meeting. Once the Liaison is selected, they will be sent an application and be invited to the next meeting.

Website Subcommittee – Helene Rosenheim noted that she is working on getting some photos of the Rte. 97/108 intersection taken around 1975 that we had received onto the website. Nancy D. suggested taking some current photos and putting them up showing a progression from then to now and then with question marks for the future. It also noted that the list of members needs to be update and and yahoo mailbox set up for Mike Reilly who is replacing Tom Gallagher on the Committee.

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Dates for 2008 – Jim asked if the 3rd Monday was still a good day for the Committee meetings, particularly because of the conflict with several Federal holidays that fall on Mondays. After some discussion of a few alternatives, the consensus was to look at the 4th Tuesday of each month as the regular meeting night. Jim will provide the Committee members with a list of dates for the year that will also be added to the website, and he will update the work plan for discussion at the next meeting.

Committee for Montgomery Legislative Breakfast – Dorothy Kane noted that the Committee for Montgomery is holding its annual Breakfast with the County, State, and Federal legislators on Friday, December 14, at 7 am. at the N. Bethesda Conference Center. PROJECT CHANGE is purchasing a half table, at \$60 per seat. She noted it is a great opportunity to meet and network with all of our local legislators and suggested that some of the Committee members consider attending. She will email more information.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.