

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
Monday, March 19, 2007 – 7:30pm
Sandy Spring Bank, Olney Inn Room

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (“OTCAC”) members in attendance: Jim Smith, Sunita Bhatia (for portion of meeting), Walter Lee, Paula Kahla, Tom Gallagher, Helene Rosenheim, Mark Feinroth, Nancy DeLalio, Jim Wallace and Joe Fritsch. Prospective OTCAC member Gina Angiola was also present. Visitors were Mary Jane Heinbuch, Bill Caldwell of RTKL, and Bob Beard. Also attending was Khalid Afzal, OTCAC’s liaison from Park and Planning.

Chairman Jim Smith called the meeting to order at 7:35 P.M. The minutes from the February 26th, 2007 meeting were unanimously approved with changes as set forth therein.

Tom Gallagher recorded the minutes for the meeting currently in progress.

Bill Caldwell of the design, planning and architecture firm of RTKL made a presentation to the OTCAC regarding mixed-use and town planning and the assistance they could provide to the committee. Mr. Caldwell provided the committee a review of his personal and the firm’s experience in the town planning and mixed-use realm. Some of the projects with which he and RTKL have been involved included Downtown Silver Spring, Anacostia Waterfront project, Potomac Town Center, Blair Town Center, New Town in Williamsburg, Virginia, and Pentagon Row in Virginia. He also noted that he had reviewed the Olney Master Plan and had attended one of the Olney master plan meetings when that process was underway.

Mr. Caldwell began his presentation by noting that the primary objective for the redevelopment of Olney’s town center should be to create a “there” in the designated “town center” area and making it the center for the community. To accomplish this task he recommended that the group create a vision for the town center and focus on making a sense of place through the design of main and secondary streets, alleys, parks, mews, public and private spaces. He noted the importance of creating a variety of street types and including social and public space in the town center for community events.

Mr. Caldwell’s town center presentation then transitioned through four additional criteria. The first element focused on the importance of maximizing connectivity throughout the town center. This should be accomplished by calming traffic, reducing auto use by connecting contiguous neighborhoods via pedestrian and bicycle links, connecting

residents to employment and shops by encouraging mixed-use development and connecting individuals to one another by making the streets and intersections more pedestrian friendly, self-policing and walkable.

The next element focused on engaging people at the street level. Highlighting the fact that a street experience must be engaging and this can be accomplished by designing multiple entrances and storefronts, avoiding when possible blank walls and creating a system of streets and alleys that allows for commercial loading, services and parking access.

The next design criteria presented was the need to respect retail fundamentals. Design needs to acknowledge the need for retailers to have good exposure, parking for customers and signage in order for them to be successful. Mr. Caldwell noted that attention must be given to the factors that allow for proper retail mix, critical mass and merchandizing. Thought needs to be given to surface and structured parking, including amount, location and cost. Efforts should be made to mitigate traffic by encouraging mixed-use, maximizing public transit access and reducing impacts through traffic demand management (“TDM”) techniques (rideshare, van pools, subsidized transit fares, etc.).

The final element presented related to minimizing the impact of parking. This section focused on the importance of hiding structured parking by laminating buildings on such facilities, exploring off-site parking for employees and controlling separation between employees, commuter and customer/visitor parking.

Upon completion of his presentation, Mr. Caldwell took questions from those attending.

Chairman Smith inquired whether the OTCAC should focus on a specific plan for the town center plan or a concept plan that is a vaguer picture of what the ultimate build-out might look like. Mr. Caldwell responded that it is important to look at both a build-out that looks at the potential theoretical density as well as less intensive scenarios that take into account the potential for smaller build-outs due to existing uses and multiple owners. He also stated that one of the important design focuses should be on street design and connection issues between blocks and parcels.

Mark Feinroth inquired as to massing within the town center, while Walter Lee initiated a discussion on whether metered parking is required or appropriate. Mr. Caldwell responded that looking at massing is one of the key design considerations and that increased density calls for more regulation, including parking matters.

Khalid Afzal also took the opportunity to discuss some town center planning issues relating to further developing an illustrative plan for the area, noting that there are both benefits and liabilities associated with getting more specific with concepts (pointing out that you may spend time developing a concept plan and accompanying drawings that in the end do not come to fruition due to practical issues and an owner’s specific proposal).

This concluded the RTKL presentation portion of the meeting.

Jim Smith then initiated a discussion on the topic of creating an illustrative concept plan subcommittee to work with Mr. Caldwell and RTKL as additional work is produced.

After further discussion an Illustrative Concept Plan Subcommittee was formed with its members being, Helene Rosenheim, Mark Feinroth, Tom Gallagher, Jim Smith, Nancy DeLalio with assistance from Khalid Afzal. Mr. Caldwell also noted that Phil Walker from RTKL would be assisting him with the project.

Subcommittee Reports

Nominations Subcommittee— It was noted that formal action would be taken at the next meeting to bring Gina Angiola on as a member of the OTCAC.

Executive Subcommittee— Jim stated that he would be bringing up the work plan for review and discussion at the next meeting.

Website Subcommittee— Helene Rosenheim provided an update on the status of the website and asked for additional comments or direction regarding the fact sheet on website.

Logo Subcommittee— Paula was noted that the presentation to the logo contest winner would be made at the next meeting.

Unfinished Business

Template of Program of Requirements (POR)— With initiation by Jim, Khalid then presented some draft materials relating to the POR topic. Jim stated that he would be drafting up a template to distribute to project leads as they work through the specific uses contemplated. Khalid noted that some of the primary considerations would relate to square footage, circulation, delivery and parking requirements.

Hillcrest Avenue/Kirk Farm Proposal— There was discussion regarding the draft letter from OTCAC to Park & Planning regarding Preliminary Plan # 120070080, Kirk Farm, Olney Town Center, Olney, Maryland, aka the Sayag proposal. There was substantial discussion on whether or not to recommend that the stream valley buffer area be included in the ten percent public use space requirement. There was a vote with seven members in favor of the area not being included and one in favor of it being included (Tom Gallagher). There is to be language included in letter that there may be times when inclusion is appropriate, but this was not such a case. Further revisions would also be made to have the language in the letter be consistent with staff's recommendations and to remove the requirement that a fence be built on the property to screen the stream buffer, stating that landscaping should be used to address this issue.

New Business

None.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.