

MEMORANDUM

November 9, 2017

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Marlene Michaelson, ^{MM} Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan

This is the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee's second worksession on the Grosvenor Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan. A separate memorandum from Glenn Orlin addresses the transportation and school issues in the Plan. This memorandum addresses all other Master Plan issues.

Councilmembers should bring their copy of the Plan to the meeting.

BACKGROUND

The 117-acre Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan planning area is located along the Metrorail Red Line, just north of Interstate 495 and east of Rockville Pike. Other than the Music Center at Strathmore, the predominant land use is residential and the character is suburban. The goal of the Minor Master Plan is to allow the last 15-acre parcel to take optimum advantage of its location at a Metro Station while also fitting with the context and established character of the existing community. The 15-acre parcel includes the Metro Garage, a surface parking lot, bus loop, Kiss-and-Ride, a stormwater management pond, and a small grove of trees. The surface parking lot provides an opportunity for new development with parking spaces to be provided in a new parking facility or as an addition to the existing garage.

The Plan Vision is for the area to remain primarily residential, with a diversity of housing types. The Plan recommends a new civic green, public art, improved connections to Strathmore Hall, and mixed-use zoning that will allow for retail uses. The Sector Plan has two land use and zoning goals:

- Establish a primarily residential, walkable, mixed-use development at the Metro station.
- Maintain residential character of the area.

The following chart provides an estimate of the potential development in the Minor Master Plan area, based on the recommended zoning. The Plan Estimates column reflects Planning Department staff assumptions about possible development detailed in the notes below the chart.

GROSVENOR DEVELOPMENT				
	(A) Total Allowed by Existing Zoning	(B) Existing Development	(C) Addition to Existing Development Allowed by the Plan	(B+C) Total allowed by Plan
Commercial (sf)	~8,600*	8,600	158,776**	167,376
Cultural (sf)	173,246***	173,246		
Residential Dwelling Units	1,849	1,304	1,397****	2,701

* 3 parcels that were formerly part of the WMATA site were designated PD-25 zones, did not explicitly mention commercial. North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan called for a daycare and limited neighborhood serving retail on these sites. 8,600 sq. ft. of commercial have been built since the 1992 Plan.

**The amount of commercial square feet is based on the assumption that 0.25 FAR will be dedicated to commercial uses, and the remaining 2.75 FAR will be dedicated to residential development. Planning Staff expect a lower buildout of commercial development closer to 40,000 sq. ft.

***Strathmore Music Center

****Residential Dwelling Units based on the assumption that 2.75 FAR will be dedicated to residential uses. This is the maximum allowed Residential in the Zone. The number of dwelling units is based on and assumed 1,250 square feet per dwelling unit.

LAND USE, ZONING AND URBAN DESIGN

Land Use and Zoning are addressed on pages 19-24 of the Plan, and the Urban Design and Design Guidelines are on pages 26-46. Because they are so interrelated, they are addressed together here, followed by a summary of testimony and Staff recommendations.

A map of the proposed zoning is shown on page 23. The Plan confirms the R-60 zoning on the portion of the Plan north of Tuckerman Lane, which includes the Music Center at Strathmore and residential community to its north. It confirms the R-30 zoning east of Tuckerman Lane and converts the RT-12.5 and PD25 to comparable zones not eliminated in the Zoning Ordinance rewrite. These zoning changes are consistent with existing development.

The only significant change is on the Metro property where the existing R-60 and PD25 zones are converted to the Commercial/Residential (CR) zone. The zoning shown on the map on page 23 for area 2 (CR 7.25, C0.25, R-7.25, H-180) and on the southern portion of area 3 (CR 0.5, C-0.25, R-0.5, H-40) is consistent with existing development.

Area 1, the location of the existing parking for Metro, is the proposed site for most new development. The Plan recommends CR 3.0, C-0.5, R-2.75, H-300, but only allows the highest heights on specific locations identified on page 41 of the plan. Much of the height of area 1 is limited to 160 feet, but the

area closest to the existing 4-story apartments is limited to 85 feet, with specific recommendations for setback and building location.

The Urban Design and Design Guidelines chapter is unusually detailed for a Plan of this size and design guidelines, which are generally in a separate document the Council does not approve, are included. This is appropriate for this location to ensure that the Plan's recommendations are implemented. The goals in this section are as follows:

- Enhance pedestrian and bike connections to the area's key destinations to reduce reliance on cars to access these amenities.
- Create visually distinct "Gateways" into the Plan area.
- Create public spaces of the right size and character for the Plan area.
- Locate buildings to frame streets and open space.
- Ensure that the buildings along streets and open spaces provide a safe and attractive environment for pedestrians.
- Complement the public open spaces at the Metro site with a range of private open spaces and amenities.
- Ensure that the existing buildings surrounding the Metro site will not be adversely affected by the new development.
- Create a human-scale architecture with active ground floors, façade articulation, and appropriate transition between public and private spaces.
- Create building massing that limits shadows on the public realm, allows sky views, and also improves the quality of the indoor environment.
- Signature buildings should create an identity for the Plan area.
- Leverage the presence of Strathmore Hall as a unique asset adjacent to the Metro site
- Use short-term improvements and temporary uses for recreation, retail and entertainment events, and to test the viability of long-term, permanent installations.

There are several illustrations throughout this chapter that display the innovative designs they hope to encourage. Most significant are the building placement diagram on page 38 and the step back proposed along Tuckerman on page 41. As Planning Department staff will explain during their presentation, the step back recommendations ensure that properties that are 4 stories will face new development that is also 4 stories for a depth of 40 feet, and then gradually increase to a maximum of 85 feet in the transition zone.

The Minor Master Plan also seeks to leverage the presence of Strathmore by integrating public art throughout the Metro site and holding performances at the Civic Green and Metro entrance plaza.

Testimony: During the Council's public hearing, most speakers endorsed the Plan's recommendations, with many focusing on the new civic space and other public/recreational spaces, the Plan's recommendations related to public art and performances, and the addition of some retail uses. There was support for the Plan's ability to provide additional affordable housing, reduce energy consumption (on a per capita basis), provide additional affordable housing, and create a walkable community.

Most of the written testimony submitted after the hearing was in opposition to the Plan. The Council heard from numerous residents in the Strathmore Park, Stoneybrook, and Parkside communities opposing the heights and densities proposed for the Metro site. Among their many concerns are the likelihood that the density will be concentrated on the site so that the developed areas will be a 6.0 FAR,

that the heights are not compatible with existing development to the east (much of which are 3 and 4 story townhomes and garden apartments), the additional traffic which will make it difficult to enter or leave the area, the impact on the environment of additional traffic and development, that the civic green is not large enough, and public safety concerns of dealing with a fire in a 300 foot high building.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the height on the portion of area 3 on page 23 that is to the west of Area 1 have its height increased from 40 to 300 feet to allow a taller building to be placed as close to Rockville Pike as possible. Some of this area includes the train tracks, but Staff still believes it is appropriate to allow additional height as close to Rockville Pike as possible, even potentially using air rights to develop above the tracks. Staff recommends increasing the height at this location without increasing the overall density allowed on the site, which could allow density to be shifted here. Otherwise, Staff supports the land use and urban design recommendations in the Minor Master Plan and its vision for a new residential community directly on top of Metro. Staff recognizes that this is likely to impact the communities to the east, but believes that the Planning Department and Board have done everything possible to minimize impact and ensure additional amenities for existing and new residents.

SUSTAINABILITY

Pages 58-63 present the Sustainability recommendations in the Plan. This section of the Plan focuses on the following goals:

- Preserve, enhance and extend the natural resources throughout the Plan area (page 60);
- Reduce and slow untreated stormwater runoff to improve water quality in surrounding streams and creeks (page 62);
- Sequester carbon and reduce urban heat island (page 63); and
- Promote energy conservation and 63 (page).

For each of these goals, the Plan lists recommendations to achieve the goals. Since the primary area for redevelopment is a large impervious area with outdated approaches to treating stormwater management, redevelopment could improve water quality. At the same time, the Plan does preserve the existing green areas, including the nearly ten-acre forest conservation area. Maximizing density near transit and improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure helps reduce vehicle miles traveled, the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Pages 66-71 present the Plan's recommendations for Parks and Open Space. The Plan indicates that area residents "benefit from an abundance of private and public green space." Within a quarter-mile of the Plan area, there is significant open space with connections to the nearby Rock Creek and Bethesda Trolley Trails. Within the Plan area there are trails in a wooded area between Montrose Avenue and Tuckerman Lane, and the large lawn at Strathmore provides open space, a path, and a sculpture garden. Despite these resources, the Plan area lacks recreational amenities and spaces such as ball fields, civic greens, plazas, pocket parks, and connections to trail systems. Due to the limited size of the planning area, the Plan recommends some unconventional approaches to meeting these needs. For example, it recommends public recreational space atop the existing WMATA garage or garage expansion. In addition, it recommends:

- developing a central Civic Green Urban Park of 1.25 acres at the Metro site
- locating a dog park or other active recreation amenity for the community at the open space between the northern edge of the existing Metro garage and Tuckerman Lane
- preserving and improving access to mature wooded areas and the Rock Creek Stream Valley Park
- promoting the use of privately-owned open space
- creating a two-mile “Fitness Loop”.

Staff supports this portion of the Plan as submitted.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Pages 74-77 present the Community Facilities recommendations in the Plan. School issues are addressed in a separate memorandum from Glenn Orlin. Page 74 discusses Public Safety and Library recommendations, but does not address recreation centers, which are addressed in all master plans. Staff has asked the Planning Department to prepare an insert addressing this issue to be added to the Plan and they have suggested the following insertion:

The 2010 *White Flint Sector Plan* recommended a future recreation center at Wall Local Park/Kennedy Shriver Aquatic Center. This site would permit the co-location of the existing Aquatic Center, including an expansion, and an urban park. The Montgomery County Department of Recreation recommends that the Wall Park community center serve all of North Bethesda, including the Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan area.

Staff supports this portion of the Plan with the addition presented above.

IMPLEMENTATION

Pages 80-82 present the Plan’s Implementation recommendations. Page 82 lists the priority public benefits to be provided by new development. It includes Public Open Space, Exceptional Design, Connectivity, and Sustainable Development. At its last meeting, the Committee decided that the Grosvenor-Strathmore Minor Master Plan should have the same language regarding schools and moderately priced dwelling units as the Rock Spring and White Flint 2 Plans, so this language will need to be added to the Plan.