

Minor Master Plan Information Session Questions Not Addressed During the Meeting August 16, 2023

During the Information Session, there were more questions than could be addressed in the meeting. The following unanswered questions come from the Zoom participants and in-person participants. Anonymous questions and comments were not included.

The recording of the Information Meeting is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suWpKtiKXdE>

Zoom Q&A

Commenter: Heather Mayes Gleason

Is WAU closing?

Answer in Chat: City staff have heard no plans for Washington Adventist University to close. They are currently under an active campus planning process to explore ways to modify and expand their campus.

Commenter: Kolya Braun-Greiner

Can we submit more than one comment to the County?

Answer in Chat: Yes - residents are welcome to submit as many comments as they would like. You may email testimony to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org, fax testimony to the Planning Board Chair at 301-495-1320, or mail written testimony to: Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board, 2425 Reedy Drive, 14th Floor, Wheaton, MD 20902.

Commenter: Beth Baker

Will zoning for Opal Daniels Park be maintained as is—you mentioned community gardens. Any other changes?

Answer in Chat: Page 16 of the Draft Plan lays out the proposal to confirm (retain) the zoning on Opal Daniels Park as R-60. No changes are proposed.

Commenter: Richard Masterson

AMI means _____

Answer in Chat: AMI means Area Median Income.

Commenter: Elizabeth Thornhill

Is middle income housing included in affordable housing? What specifically defines middle income?

Answer: Nationally, affordable housing is defined through the lens of Area Median Income (AMI). Set annually by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), AMI looks at the midpoint income distribution in every US geographic region by family size. Traditionally, 80%-120% AMI can be viewed as 'middle-income housing.'

Commenter: Elizabeth Thornhill

What are plans for transportation? Great to give up parking lots, but how will people get around -- for example how to get from Adventist campus to Metro? Is transportation planning included in the work?

Answer: The Plan discusses transportation systems in a number of locations, but especially in sections 3.2 (pages 30-50). Per the analysis from the County, the Minor Master Plan area has good access to public transportation: “3.2.5 Transit: The Plan Area is well-served by existing Metrobus and Montgomery County Ride-On local bus transit routes, offering connections to nearby Silver Spring and Takoma Park Redline Metrorail stations, historic downtown Takoma Park and two future Purple Line light rail stations located nearest the Plan Area, at Takoma Langley Crossroads and Arliss Street in Long Branch. Most bus stops include shelters and seating.”

The issues of a development project’s impact on traffic are addressed in the development review process when a specific proposal is submitted for approvals. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/TPMMA-Public-Hearing-Draft-Final-6.21.pdf> To learn more about development review, visit <https://montgomeryplanning.org/development/>. To learn more about how to participate in the process, see the County’s development review brochure: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/11/DevelopmentBrochure.pdf>. There is also a short video about the Development Review Process available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yACIH-fQIMO>.

Written Cards Q&A

Commenter: Kacy Kostiuk, Ward 3

Does the Plan include anything related to setbacks or height step-downs, or does that get handled in the development review process?

Answer: The details about setbacks and height step-downs are not in the Minor Master Plan; they are a standard part of the zoning code requirements. During the development review process, the plans are checked to make sure they conform to the requirements. The [Montgomery County Zoning Code, Division 4.5](#) provides more detailed information on required minimum setbacks and other development requirements. Buildings with CR zoning types that abut residential neighborhoods have additional height and setback requirements to decrease their impact on neighbors, as described in [Montgomery County Zoning Code, Section 4.1.8](#).

Why is the FAR and height on the WAH property lower than along Maple?

Answer: Recommendations around land use and zoning within the Public Hearing Draft were developed by the Montgomery County Planning team to best meet the broad vision of the draft plan. Pages 15-18 and 81-82 of the Public Hearing Draft outline the proposed vision for the Maple Avenue District and speak to the ultimate zoning recommendations.

Could the Council require a higher # of MPDU units in new buildings if re-developed (as part of this plan or the development review process)?

Answer: The Council could request a higher percentage of MPDUs as a requirement in the plan area.

Are the market-rate (rent-stabilized) properties along Maple Ave currently nonconforming to the existing zoning, or are they part of the group zoned for R-10 or R-20? Are they currently developed at the maximum level allowable within those zones, or are they less dense?

Answer: The non-conforming uses currently in existence along Maple relate to buildings that exceed the maximum height limit for their zoning and is independent from any consideration of ownership or market-rate vs. subsidized housing. For example, the maximum height limit in an R-10 zone is 100' and in an R-20 zone it is 80'. The non-conforming properties currently exceed that maximum height limit.

Ira talked about our low market-rate being a protective factor, and I had trouble understanding what the impact of that was. Are developers precluded from charging above the average market-rate in an area for rents (assuming there are people from other neighboring jurisdictions with higher market rates)? Or is there another way that this low rate was protective?

Answer: A property owner is free to charge whatever they would like in base rent for a market rate unit (at least for the first five years, until rent stabilization kicks in). However, the City currently has a very low market rate rent (as you can see in the information provided in our recent housing blog post: [Minor Master Plan and Protecting Affordable Housing on Maple Avenue](#)), which will likely impact the initial price point of any new development.

For properties that are non-conforming and are in the plan area, is there a requirement to update zoning to match at least their current use, or could the plan maintain zoning that is not in line with the current use? (I don't necessarily think this would be a good idea -- just trying to understand what the parameters are.)

Answer: It is the County's preference to bring non-conforming uses into conformity when conducting Master Plans. However, so long as the properties remain in active operation, they would remain an allowable use under any zoning, though they would not be able to make significant changes or renovations if non-conforming.

Commenter: Judy Rosenthal, Ward 2

Following up on Denise Jones' comment that all this audience tonight is white – suggest you track which wards are being represented by people attending tonight and then make a plan to target people from the wards NOT represented to help them understand the zoning considerations and the impact of them. Thank you.

Answer:

The County did extensive outreach during the process, including canvassing the multifamily buildings on Maple and Lee Avenues, as well as the university campus and other members of the community. In total, the County heard from over 550 individual respondents. <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/TPMMA-Community-Engagement-Update-Report.pdf>

The Council members of Ward 4 and Ward 5 held a meeting in July for the residents of the impacted wards.

Commenter: Saul Schniderman, 306 Lincoln Ave

A canyon is a deep narrow valley with steep sides. The Mont. Cty Parks and Recreation Dept refers to Sligo Creek in the area under discussion as a canyon.* We always need to remember these words steep slopes.

* go to Carroll Ave Bridge and look downward.

Answer: Thank you for your feedback. Please be sure to submit all comments to the Minor Master Plan public comment process to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org, or fax testimony to the Planning Board Chair at 301-495-1320.

Commenter: E. Porter, Ward 5

Maple Ave is in danger of overdevelopment – tear downs for profit. Why. I thought we were just developing the hospital grounds.

Answer: The Minor Master Plan scope and plan area was approved by the City Council ([Resolution 2021-22](#)) and recognized that “the enhancement of critical civic, economic, and housing resources in the surrounding neighborhoods along the Maple Avenue corridor” is an important extension of the Washington Adventist Hospital campus redevelopment process. Please see the blog post about the ways in which the City has protections for affordable housing in place: [Minor Master Plan and Protecting Affordable Housing on Maple Avenue](#).

Commenter: Roy Kahn, Ward 2

Its only been in the past 5 yrs that houses started going for \$1 million +. Current rents reflect older buildings. Finding comfort in historic rents and property values seems really shortsighted and seems to favor developers over preserving the nature of our community.

Answer: Thank you for your feedback. Please be sure to submit all comments to the Minor Master Plan public comment process to mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org, or fax testimony to the Planning Board Chair at 301-495-1320.

Commenter: A. Elefante, Ward 3

What’s to keep anything zoned CR from being torn down and redeveloped into an office building or some other commercial use if a developer sees profit in it? Can the council be expected to discourage or prohibit that simply b/c it abuts residential? Especially concerned with tear-downs.

Answer:

For information about what types of uses are allowable in the CR zones, please see the [Montgomery County Zoning Code Use Table, Chapter 59, Section 3.1.6](#). Buildings with CR zoning types that abut residential neighborhoods have additional height and setback requirements to decrease their impact on neighbors, as described in [Montgomery County Zoning Code, Section 4.1.8](#).