



Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

10/24/2019 Master Plan Advisory Team Meeting Draft Minutes

Wednesday, October 24, 2019; 7:00 pm

The second meeting of the Ellicott City Master Plan Advisory Team (MPAT) created by Executive Order 2019-06 was held Thursday, October 24, 2019, at the George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Consultants present: Tom McGilloway, Jeff Dube, Matt Thomasson

Staff present: Peter Conrad (Planning and Zoning), Kate Bolinger (Planning and Zoning)

MPAT present: Tom Coale, Alicia Jones-McLeod, Lori Lilly, Gary Maule and Beth Woodruff

MPAT Absent: Simon Cortes, Rob Brennan, Ed Lilley, Barry Gibson, Debbie Slack Katz and Ben Barlow

Peter Conrad, Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ), opened the meeting at 7:03 pm and outlined the agenda for the evening. He thanked the MPAT members for their attendance at the October 15 master plan public workshop. He said that DPZ released a survey to collect the public's feedback on the October 15 presentation, and asked MPAT members to encourage their peers to complete the survey.

Tom McGilloway, Mahan Rykiel Associates, facilitated a discussion with MPAT members to get their reaction to the October 15 presentation. MPAT members provided comments and posed questions on various topics.

In discussing the plan guidelines included in the October 15 presentation, MPAT members offered the following:

- The intent of the guidelines should be described in the plan, including the purpose they will serve in project implementation.
- P. Conrad suggested that the guidelines would be adopted as policies in the master plan, which would be adopted as an amendment to the general plan. The current general plan contains policies. He noted the master plan would include long-term concepts and an approach to implementation.
- T. McGilloway said the long-term timeframe for the plan is 20 to 30 years.

- Items in the plan could be described as either policies, which carry more weight, or guidelines, which carry less weight.
- The plan should clearly identify guidelines and policies.
- As projects come about in the future, the plan will be a reference tool for county agencies and the community.
- The plan should address adaptation in implementation, keeping in mind the potential for future floods, climate change, and new technologies for dealing with flooding.
- T. McGilloway noted that an annual summit could be a forum to discuss changes and opportunities to adapt.
- An annual summit should be timed to occur prior to the budget cycle in November.

In terms of the West End, MPAT members said:

- Sidewalk materials and furnishings (such as light poles) should be consistent with downtown.
- Sidewalks should be contiguous.
- The traffic circle is a popular concept.
- There are concerns about parking being lost if sidewalks are bumped out.
- Opportunities to provide off-street parking on county-acquired property should be explored.
- Wayfinding signage should be provided in the West End so residents don't have to direct tourists into town.

On the topic of parking, MPAT members suggested that:

- There are many concerns about the concept for a parking garage in Lot D.
- People would prefer a garage in one of the parking lots on the periphery of town instead of a garage in the center.
- Parking garages on the outskirts of town would force people to walk past more Main Street businesses.
- There is concern that a garage in Lot D would hurt the area's economic viability.
- Ellicott City will never be a convenient place and it's ok if parking remains a challenge.
- There are other places where parking is inconvenient, yet businesses are successful.
- If a garage is built, it should feature higher floor-to-floor heights to allow future conversion to usable space.
- If the courthouse lot is redeveloped, it should include public parking.
- The Wilkins Rogers flour mill site seems like an opportunity for parking.
- Shuttles are very popular with the community, and business owners think they would be used if they were frequent.
- T. McGilloway noted that privately-operated shuttles are used in many communities. People pay to use these shuttles. There are also shuttles with advertising that are free.

In discussing the streetscape, MPAT members offered the following:

- Many people support the mountable curb and bollard concept. Bollards could be removed if there was threat of a flash flood.
- T. McGilloway noted that the mountable curb concept would work in locations with adequate width to allow passengers to exit onto flat surface (and not rolled curb). These locations include Lower Main (after flood mitigation is in place) and Maryland Avenue. He said locations further up Main Street would not be sufficiently wide to allow for mountable curbs, even with relatively narrow 11-foot travel lanes.
- Instead of a mountable curb, removable items like planters can be used to temporarily restrict on-street parking and expand the sidewalk area during events.
- The idea of replacing on-street parking in Lower Main with loading zones and wider sidewalks is becoming more acceptable because of some recent vehicular accidents in Lower Main.
- Loading zones will be more conducive to the growing popularity of ride-hailing services.
- Signs restricting parking are an inexpensive near-term solution.
- T. McGilloway noted that 15-minute parking could help customers see the benefit of paid parking (that promotes turnover of spaces).
- Enforcement of any parking restrictions will be important.

In response to concepts for Lot D, MPAT members said:

- The precedent images for new retail buildings should be subtle and sophisticated.
- T. McGilloway noted that new buildings should not mimic historic design but complement it. He mentioned Dresden, Germany as an example where modern buildings complement historic buildings. He said that any examples MPAT members could share would be appreciated.
- Ellicott City has many different histories and should have many different futures.
- The master plan will need to include the right language to describe new buildings.
- Ingress and egress is challenging in Lot D, particularly to and from Main Street.

With regards to Lower Main, MPAT members suggested that:

- The guideline *'Provide access to high ground where possible'* should be edited to *'Provide access to high ground.'*
- There is disagreement with restricting public access to the channel.
- It will be difficult to prevent people from being in the channel.
- People can get into the culvert now.
- There should be intentional access to the channel for cleanup.
- There's a difference between inviting people into the channel versus leaving it ungated.
- If there were signs telling people to stay out of the channel, the restriction might need to be enforced.
- A staircase down from the alley (near 8141 and 8155 Main Street) to the Tiber-Hudson-New Cut confluence would be helpful.

- Outdoor dining on a second story deck behind Caplan's (8125 Main Street) would be a nice experience, with the view of the New Cut tributary and surrounding trees.
- With the Lower Main channel's 13-foot wall (to street level), the channel bottom may not be an enjoyable space.
- There's a great opportunity to showcase the B&O museum.
- There should either be gating on both sides of the channel or none.
- The channel should be as visually open as possible.
- The public art example with blue dots (from Boulder) was too playful; an art feature with a signpost marking flood levels would be more appropriate.
- Art in Lower Main would be very attractive to bring visitors.
- There should be rotating public art in the B&O plaza.
- There should be a guideline suggesting Lower Main is a focal point for visual and performing arts; the plaza should be an area where visitors return because there's programming.
- There should be more focus on Tiber Alley buildings to make them look like storefronts.
- The scale of the Lower Main channel area is preferable to the 2018 larger channel area.

In discussing the Patapsco Riverfront area, MPAT members suggested that:

- Lot B would not make great park space and should remain a parking lot.
- The tunnel should be completed, and then Lot B re-evaluated, before any changes are made.
- The pedestrian bridge would be a destination and provide a cool experience.
- Most visitors do not experience both the Patapsco and Main Street.
- Opportunities should be pursued that extend the time people spend in Ellicott City.
- It's not necessarily compatible to go into the Patapsco and then dine.
- Wilkins Rogers may own some of the land along the riverbank where the Oella garden park is located and where the abutment of the bridge sits.
- Charles Wagandt is the owner of much of the Oella land along the riverbank.
- The riverbanks should be public land.
- To discourage people from getting into the channel, include signage to get people to experience the Patapsco Riverfront.
- Lot A is underutilized, the more people that start on Main Street from Lot A the better.
- There's an opportunity to create a trail that would go up the Baltimore County side, across Route 40 and across, and through Patapsco state park, then to Park Drive, then Church Road.
- Market Ellicott City to nature people, hikers, and bicyclists.
- Celebrate the granite rail ties.
- Include a trail along the riverfront by Wilkins Rogers to connect to the Grist Mill trail.

In terms of general discussion, MPAT members said:

- The master plan forces people to look at Ellicott City comprehensively.
- Projects like wayfinding will come together in the future.
- There is opportunity to jointly market Catonsville and Ellicott City.

- The county should celebrate and document the process of public outreach and involvement.
- The county should take the plan on a “dog and pony show.”
- The outreach work that began before the master plan should be documented.
- The planning process before the second flood should be documented.
- The town’s 250th birthday in 2022 is an important milestone to look toward.

T. McGilloway thanked the MPAT for their feedback and said key next steps would be completion of the fall 2019 survey, drafting of the plan, submission of the draft plan to the county, and release of the draft plan to the public.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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