

**DRAFT letter to MDP**

September 15, 2009

Richard Eberhart Hall  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Planning  
301 West Pratt Street #1101  
Baltimore, MD, 21201-2305

Dear Mr. Hall:

As required by Article 66B of the Maryland Code, the City of Rockville has recently concluded a 6-year review of the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP). Following the review the Mayor and Council, informed by a Planning Commission recommendation, has determined that the CMP should be revised using the two-phase process laid out below.

As part of the review of the 2002 CMP staff conducted an Audit. Input was solicited from all City departments, Boards and Commissions, and citizens. The results presented to the Planning Commission on June 24, 2009, with the following themes and ideas having emerged:

- Many of the broad goals, policies and recommendations from the 2002 CMP still appear to be relevant.
- There is general agreement that much of the supporting text of the 2002 CMP is out of date, in that it represented a “snapshot” in time of 2002 and frequently no longer reflects the Rockville of today. Some of the data is out of date simply because of the City’s growth.
- While many topics are covered well, there is not sufficient integration among them. For example, we all know that roads, parks, zoning and community facilities are best implemented and complementary when planned together -- but the 2002 CMP frequently does not cross issue boundaries. The review has also highlighted areas that do not appear to have adequate coverage in the 2002 CMP document. An example is economic development, which is an area specifically mentioned in State guidance documents but not well covered in 2002; and the interaction of the economy of the City, land use and fiscal sustainability. Another example is transportation, where the goals and objectives appear appropriate, but do not achieve the more strategic goal of integrating transportation with land use.
- Some topic areas, such as housing and historic preservation, clearly need updating.

Richard Eberhart Hall  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Planning  
September 15, 2009

- Problems that are identified as “neighborhood” issues do not appear to be confined to individual neighborhoods, and might perhaps be characterized as “City” issues. These include, but are not limited to: residential maintenance, pedestrian/bicycle connections, and traffic calming.
- The City has been very active since 2002, both in implementing recommendations from the 2002 Plan and in developing and implementing new initiatives that are relevant to a comprehensive master plan. These include neighborhood plans for the communities east of Rt.355: the East Rockville Neighborhood Plan (2004), the Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan and Conservation District Plan (2007) and the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan (2009). The Bikeway Master Plan Update was adopted in 2004. All of these plans became part of the CMP upon adoption by the Mayor and Council. Other key implementation steps have included the Complete Streets Policy, was adopted in 2009; and Rockville’s new Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map, which were adopted in December 2008, and became effective in March of this year, together with a new Development Review procedure that implements the new Ordinance.
- A number of additional projects are currently underway that will offer valuable direction for the CMP and are likely to be completed, or show significant progress, within the next year. These include, but are not limited to, the PROS (Parks, Recreation and Open Space) Plan, the Rockville’s Pike Plan, the Sustainability Initiative, and a number of significant infrastructure initiatives such as pedestrian safety, storm water management, water and sewer systems.
- As you know, the US Census will be conducted in 2010. We believe that having an accurate count of the City’s population will be a vital tool for our future planning as the City has undergone considerable population growth over the past ten years. In addition, American Community Survey neighborhood level data on the City’s community characteristics will be available on an annual basis from 2010 onwards. This new data source will have important implications for our future planning, CIP and budgeting. The Planning Commission stressed that their decision to recommend the two-phase revision process had been guided in part by the changes to the ways in which Census information is gathered and disseminated, as well as by the 2010 decennial census, and the new data that will be available to the City in 2011.

Following the Review, the Planning Commission recommended to the Mayor and Council that the Comprehensive Master Plan be revised using a two-phase process, as outlined in the following list of tasks.

Richard Eberhart Hall  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Planning  
September 15, 2009

***Phase 1: 2009 – 2011***

- Complete Review and transmit the decision to the Maryland Department of Planning.
- Complete the Development Capacity Analysis and adopt the State-mandated new elements:
  - Municipal Growth Element
  - Water Resources Element
- Complete the 2009 Strategic Scan of the City.
- Adopt a plan amendment to enable the City to become part of the Montgomery Heritage Area.
- Complete the Parks Recreation Open Space (PROS) plan, and make appropriate amendment to the CMP.
- Complete and adopt the *Rockville's Pike* plan.
- Identify Critical Sites and determine whether an amendment to update the Critical Sites is warranted.
- Update the *Housing Goals and Objectives*.
- Convene a discussion series on CMP issues.

***Phase 2: 2011 – 2013***

Phase 2a: 2011-2012

- Undertake revision of the goals and objectives of the CMP and rewrite the document, possibly using a different structure than in the past. This component will involve an extensive public/community participation

Phase 2b: 2012-2013

- Approval process for Planning Commission and Mayor and Council.

If you have any questions, or comments, please do not hesitate to contact our Chief of Long Range Planning, David Levy at [dlevy@rockvillemd.gov](mailto:dlevy@rockvillemd.gov) or 240-314-8272.

Sincerely,

Susan R. Hoffman, Mayor  
City of Rockville

cc: Councilmember John Britton  
Councilmember Piotr Gajewski  
Councilmember Phyllis Marcuccio

Richard Eberhart Hall  
Secretary  
Maryland Department of Planning  
September 15, 2009

Councilmember Anne M. Robbins  
City of Rockville Planning Commission  
Scott Ullery, City Manager  
Susan Swift, Director, CPDS  
City of Rockville Senior Staff  
David Levy, Chief of Long Range Planning and Redevelopment  
Ann Wallas, Planner III, Long Range Planning