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April 1, 2015

Dear Chairman Hadley and Planning Commissioners,

The Mayor and Council wish to extend our gratitude to the Planning Commission for the opportunity to review and comment on the Commission's June 2014 draft Rockville's Pike Plan in advance of your transmitting a formal recommended plan. Furthermore, we greatly appreciate the significant amount of time and effort that the Commission exercised in producing this well-considered document.

The Mayor and Council fully support the draft plan's emphasis on creating appealing parks, public spaces and architecture, promoting a mix of residential and commercial uses, and encouraging density proximate to the Twinbrook Metro Station while maintaining lower building heights close to existing residential neighborhoods. We are pleased that the draft plan is in sync with the City's policy of creating "complete streets" with safe and accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure and providing efficient public transportation options. We appreciate all of the work that the Planning Commission accomplished in creating a cross-section for Rockville Pike and a new street network that breaks block sizes down to increase connectivity and movement choices.

As you are aware, the Mayor and Council opened the public record for written comments on the draft plan on July 14 and subsequently established five public hearing dates. Our review began with a briefing by Chairman Hadley and staff on July 21. On September 16, the Mayor and Council hosted an open house at City Hall to engage the community in a discussion about the draft plan. On November 1, the Mayor and Council, staff, and members of the public toured the plan area by bus and on foot to observe existing conditions and consider potential impacts of the draft plan's policies.

The fifth and last public hearing was held on March 9. During these hearings, testimony was provided by residents, representatives of civic and neighborhood groups, members of boards and commissions, property owners, legal counsel, developers, and others. In addition, we received many items of written testimony, all of which can be found on the project website at www.rockvillemd.gov/rockvillespike. We also held many work sessions, including our productive joint session with the Commission, to discuss the contents of the draft and develop our comments to you.

After considering all of the testimony and following much discussion, we have developed a list of changes, enumerated below, that we encourage you to consider making to the draft plan before it is formally sent to the Mayor and Council for approval.

1) Building Heights – draft plan, page 4-25

The Mayor and Council suggest removing the first sentence in the second full paragraph that reads "Community input to the planning process suggests that no more than 10 stories is suitable for Rockville within proximity of the Metro Station."

MAYOR
Bridget Donnell Newton

COUNCIL
Beryl L. Feinberg
Tom Moore
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Julie Palakovich Carr

CITY MANAGER
Barbara B. Matthews

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We are in favor of providing general guiding language in the plan and leaving the details of maximum building heights to the Zoning Ordinance, to which we will be turning once a plan is adopted.

2) Fleet Street Extension – draft plan pages 4-16 – 4-17

The Mayor and Council suggest removing all content referring to the Fleet Street extension from the draft plan. We received a great volume of testimony from the Richard Montgomery High School community against this extension.

We recommend that this content be replaced with language that 1) clarifies that the extension is also removed from the Proposed Transportation Improvements list on page 4-37 of the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan, and 2) the City should retain the right-of-way for pedestrian and bicycle access and water and sewer infrastructure.

3) Edmonston Drive intersection at Rockville Pike

We suggest that language be inserted into the draft plan recognizing the particular challenges of this intersection with a recommendation that potential alterations should be examined and evaluated to improve conditions.

4) Vision Zero

Vision Zero is a policy that countries, states and local governments can establish that sets a goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries on their roadways. We would like to see a reference to this goal in the plan, along with acknowledgement that the City is already engaging in many practices that conform to a Vision Zero strategy. Such language could read: "The concepts of Vision Zero should be considered in the design of roadways and implementation of the plan toward a goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries on Rockville's roads."

5) Pedestrian walk signals

Please consider adding language in the transportation discussion in Chapter 4 to ensure that traffic signals are timed to allow sufficient time for pedestrians to cross the Pike.

6) Pedestrian access over railroad tracks

Please consider adding language to indicate that providing such access would be desirable as it would improve connectivity, accessibility and inclusion.

7) Bicycle parking

Please consider adding language that bicycle parking should be provided at or near Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations and that other potential locations for bicycle parking be identified in the Streetscape Plan that is called for in the Implementation chapter.

8) Page ES-4

Under the heading *Multimodal Transportation*: We recommend that the numbering be re-ordered so that "Safe and accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure" is #1 and "Smooth and safe vehicular flow" is #5, to emphasize priority on pedestrians and bicyclists.

9) Page ES-5

#3: We suggest adding the word "safely" before "accommodate."

10) Page 1-2
Second paragraph. Please consider removing "...and it lowers the maximum building heights near the Twinbrook Metro Station from the 2009 ordinance's Mixed-Use Transit District (MXTD) maximum heights."

11) Pages 1-2 and 4-1
Please include another paragraph to describe the Mayor and Council process.

12) Page 1-3
Under the heading *Why a Plan, and Why Now*: Please consider adding language stating that the vast majority of development in Rockville in the future will be re-development and infill; much of the City's growth will be concentrated along the Pike corridor and master plans need to adjust to this new reality.

13) Page 1-3
Second line from the top, staff should change "more than 20 years old" to "more than 25 years old."

14) Page 1-5
Under the heading *The Plan Area*, second paragraph, third line: typo – staff should change eastern edge of Jefferson Street to western edge.

15) Page 2-4
#11 – We suggest changing the introductory sentence to read "Bicycling along the Pike is uninviting and unsafe due to the road's design, speed, and heavy traffic volume." [Delete "perceived to be"]

16) Page 2-4
#10, 6th bullet – staff should fix the spacing typo "pedestri an-friendly."

17) Page 2-7
Under the heading *Market Demand*, #4: We suggest removing the second sentence related to the office markets in the I-270 corridor vs. Pike locations.

18) Pages 2-9 – 2-10
Under *Schools* section: Staff should update the numbers on Table 2.2 and related text to reflect the most current data.

19) Page 3-3
Under heading #5, last sentence: please consider adding "and reduce climate impacts" after "air quality."

20) Page 3-4
We suggest changing #2 heading to read "Safe and accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure and experience" to indicate that it is more than the physical structures that are important.

21) Page 3-5
Under the heading *Economic Viability, #1,* second sentence: please consider adding the words "small and" between "supports" and "locally."

22) Page 3-5
Under the heading *Economic Viability*, #2, please consider adding a statement that the plan seeks to make the best use of land closest to mass transit and that redevelopment will support and increase the City's tax base.

23) Pages 4-2, 4-15 and 4-17
We advise changing the wording from "Make all Streets Complete" to "Make New and Re-Constructed Streets Conform to the City's Complete Streets Policy."

24) Page 4-7
Under Middle/North Pike – east side: second paragraph, fourth line: staff should fix the typo by replacing second "pedestrian" with "automobile."

25) Page 4-7
Under Middle/North Pike – east side: third paragraph – we recommend removing the sentence "However, a sidewalk adjacent to the main lanes of the Pike may be acceptable, given site constraints in this area."

26) Page 4-10
Option 2, second bullet: staff should fix the spacing typo "di rectly."

27) Page 4-22
Land use map: Please consider changing "Center" frontage on east side of the Pike to "Corridor" to provide for more consistent treatment with properties to the immediate north and south.

28) Page 4-24
Last line on page: Consider removing "but generally mid-rise" from the sentence.

29) Page 4-24
Fifth paragraph, after the first sentence, we think a sentence should be added that states that if the public sidewalk is located adjacent to the Pike, there must be a buffer between the sidewalk and the travel lanes.

30) Page 4-25
We suggest combining and editing the first two full paragraphs to read "Taller buildings are acceptable in the Core, close to the Twinbrook Metro Station. The maximum potential height of buildings should taper down towards the west side of the Plan Area and be lowest in proximity of existing residential uses. Zoning that generally adheres to these objectives should be considered compliant with this plan."

31) Page 4-26
Under *Minimum Building Heights* heading, second paragraph: Please change the sentence to read: "Accessory buildings are allowed throughout the Plan Area, but their locations and uses should be clearly subservient to the primary building." [Delete "but their height should be limited to a single story"]

32) Page 4-32
Under heading *Plan Policy*, second paragraph, 6th line: typo – staff should remove "the" before "Montgomery County's."

33) Page 4-32
Under the heading *This plan endorses the following approaches:* first bullet. We propose that the sentence be changed to: "Residential uses, other than single-unit detached houses, may be located anywhere in the Plan Area." The purpose of this change is to avoid excluding townhouses and other attached residential units.

34) Page 4-32
Last bullet on the page: We suggest rephrasing this to read "Most office and retail uses are allowed everywhere in the Plan Area" and removing the second portion of the sentence that continues to the top of page 4.33.

35) Page 4-33
Remove two bulleted paragraphs at the top of the page that start with "Automobile service stations..." and "Certain uses..." We prefer that these items be addressed by zoning rather than in the plan.

Also, please remove the fifth bullet from the top of the page that begins "More building stories are allowed in the Core..." The purpose of this change would be to not differentiate height limits based on use.

36) Page 4-34
Last line on the page, staff should fix the spacing typo "than11,000."

37) Page 4-35
Fourth paragraph: After the first sentence, please consider adding another sentence that reads "These new parks will also serve existing neighborhoods adjacent to the Plan Area, where currently there is a lack of parkland."

38) Page 4-37
Under heading #10, second paragraph, first sentence. We recommend rephrasing to read "Fee-in-lieu funds should support parks located in or within a short walking distance (generally no more than 1/5 mile) of the Plan Area."

39) Page 4-38
Under the heading *#11 Stategically Locate and Right-Size Parking*, fourth paragraph, consider adding a sentence that reads: "While the burden for providing the required amount of parking will lie with private property owners, the City should periodically assess parking conditions within the Plan Area to ensure that City needs are being met."

40) Chapter 5, Implementation
We suggest adding language to this chapter that states that businesses may find it in their interest to participate in a special taxing district for enhanced public services such as maintenance, security, marketing and other activities relevant to a thriving commercial area. If interest in such a district is indicated by the business community, the City should consider working in partnership with those businesses to enable the special taxing district.

41) Page 5-13
Under the heading *Revise Development Regulations*, please remove section b., Chapter 21 of the Rockville City Code (Road Code), as this has already been accomplished. Also remove it from the Implementation Chart (Table 5.1) on page 5-16.

42) Page 5-14
Second paragraph under heading *Acquire Parkland*, staff should fix the typo (remove stray quotation mark) before the word "livable."

43) Page 5-15
We agree with Planning Commission comments made during our joint session that language under heading #5, "Allocate Resources for Evaluation of Properties That May Qualify for Historic Designation" should be augmented and we suggest that this recommendation be added to the Implementation Chart (Table 5.1 on page 5-16).

44) Page 5-16
Table 5.1 - Implementation Actions, 7th line down: staff should change the 2017 date to 2018 and add that the City should advocate for larger school capacity.

45) Page A-12
First paragraph, last line: typo – staff should change the date from June 7, 2014 to June 7, 2013.

46) Page B-8
Under heading Bus and Rapid Rail Service, second paragraph: Both the Rockville and Twinbrook Metrorail Stations opened on December 15, 1984. Staff should make this correction.

47) Page B-8
Third paragraph, first two lines: the figure of 80,000 cars appears to be inaccurate. We suggest removing the sentence.

We sincerely appreciate having had the opportunity to review the Commission's draft Rockville's Pike Plan. We respectfully request that you transmit the Planning Commission's draft of the Rockville's Pike Plan to the Mayor and Council after consideration of these suggestions. Thank you for all the work that you do for Rockville.

Sincerely,

Bridget Donnell Newton

Bridget Donnell Newton, Mayor

Beryl L. Feinberg

Beryl L. Feinberg, Councilmember

Tom Moore

Tom Moore, Councilmember

Virginia D. Onley

Virginia D. Onley, Councilmember

Julie Palakovich Carr

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The Mayor and Council of Rockville

cc: Barbara B. Matthews, City Manager
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