

MEMORANDUM TO: Planning Commission  
VIA: Lauren Pruss, Planning Director  
FROM: Eliza Voigt, Planner  
DATE: April 2, 2009  
SUBJECT: 2008 Annual Planning Report

Attached is the 2008 Annual Planning Report. This report was prepared pursuant to Article 66B, Section 3.09 of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The purpose of the Annual Report is to review the planning and development work over the past year and to report our activities to the Maryland Office of Planning.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments concerning this report.

cc: Greg Ossont  
Trudy Schwarz

attachment

# **ANNUAL PLANNING REPORT 2008**

## **MASTER PLAN**

During 2008, the City of Gaithersburg continued working on various elements of the 2003 Master Plan update. The primary goal of the 2003 Master Plan is to balance, on a citywide basis, the competing issues and interests that affect future growth and development patterns within the corporate limits of the City. The 2003 Master Plan follows a “theme” based approach. Nine themes outline the vision of the City; Identity, Redevelopment, Town Centers, Environment, Transportation, Community Facilities, Housing, Economic Development, and Education. Each theme describes characteristics and traits that make up the vision for a sustainable Gaithersburg and includes objectives and actions that will set land use policy.

In 2008, the City adopted two new amendments to the Master Plan and conducted the first public hearing on another. The City completed and adopted the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District Special Study Area. This plan addressed the re-alignment of the future Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT), the CCT transit station location along Great Seneca Highway, and the establishment of a vision for future growth within the commercial district as a Smart Growth, transit oriented development.

Following the Kentlands, the City then finished and adopted the Community Facilities Element of the Master Plan. The City ended 2008 by conducting the first public hearing on the newly required Municipal Growth Element. Adoption of this element is expected in spring 2009. At that point the 2003 Master Plan will be complete and staff will begin work on the 2009 Master Plan update.

## **OLDE TOWNE**

The City of Gaithersburg is in the midst of a comprehensive Olde Towne Revitalization effort aimed at transforming the Olde Towne Central Business District (OTCBD) into a thriving economic and cultural hub. The Gaithersburg Olde Towne District Master Plan seeks to develop a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly urban center capable of sustaining a thriving business and residential mix. In an effort to facilitate mixed-use development, the City pursued and received State Enterprise Zone designation in 2008, making Olde Towne the 29th Enterprise Zone in the State and the third in Montgomery County. The Olde Towne Enterprise Zone program provides a variety of tax incentives to property and business owners whose development, redevelopment or business expansion projects qualify.

The boundaries of Olde Towne's Central Business District (CBD) were expanded in 2008 with the redevelopment project, Residences at Olde Towne. This redevelopment project proposes to demolish two older apartment complexes with a 191-unit, four-story multi-family building with two levels of underground structured parking. Community onsite amenities include a passive public pocket park and a larger active public park and

playground. The Residences at Olde Towne received preliminary site plan approval in December of 2008.

The development company, Archstone-Smith, received final site plan approval in 2008 to redevelop an assemblage of seven parcels along East Diamond Avenue into a five-story building with ground floor retail and four stories of apartments above. There will be 18,000 square feet of retail and 389 apartment units, with a 728-space parking garage. A major component of this project is the construction of Teacher's Way, a new public street, which will be a collaborative effort between Archstone, the City, and Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) using state funds. This was a multi-faceted project, using planning tools such as alley abandonments, master plan recommendations, historic preservation, road code and height waivers, and land exchanges.

Another redevelopment project in the heart of Olde Towne includes a currently under construction, four-story, 8,535 square foot building. It is expected that Class A office uses will occupy the second through fourth floors and retail/restaurant uses will be located on the first floor. Directly adjacent to this property, the Guatamalteca Bakery received concept plan approval by the Planning Commission for a second-story addition to its original, one-story structure.

The City entered into contracts with developers for the sale of two parcels within Olde Towne, 315 East Diamond Avenue, and 200 Olde Towne Avenue, commonly known as the "Y" site because of its railroad history. Douglas Development's concept plan for 315 East Diamond Avenue proposes replacing the existing two-story building with a three-story, mixed-use development. The proposed building will provide approximately 25,000 square feet of ground-floor retail with two stories of office use on the upper levels. A 129-space underground garage will provide dedicated, on-site parking for office workers during regular business hours and serve as additional retail parking in the evening.

Clark Realty's concept for the "Y" Site proposes development of two four-story, retail/residential buildings linked by a common atrium lobby. The buildings are comprised of approximately 212 multifamily residential units and approximately 17,500 square feet of first floor retail. The generous plaza-like courtyard and wide sidewalks welcome residents and visitors alike. The plan also includes a 252 space parking garage that abuts the City garage and features secure, "card-key controlled" access to residential units at each level.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

As a vibrant suburb of the nation's capital, the City continues to move forward with many development and redevelopment plans, in other parts of the City besides Olde Towne, focusing on the importance of high standards, environmental sensitivity, smart growth and mixed use developments. However, some projects which have received City approvals have slowed development plans due to the downturn in the economy.

An important future project in the City, the Crown Farm Project, is comprised of a mix of uses, including 2,250 residential units and 320,000 square feet of future commercial uses on approximately 180 acres of land. The Crown property will be divided into six (6) neighborhoods based upon the sketch plan approvals. Crown Neighborhood 2 was approved in 2008, as was the infrastructure plan for Neighborhood 1. As a result of the real estate market decline, currently the project is not moving forward.

The Fairfield at West Deer Park Phase I is under construction and includes 315 multi-family units, an integrated garage, a community pool, several courtyards, a forest conservation area and the construction of all public roads.

The final residential portion of Quince Orchard Park, The Vistas, was granted final site plan approval in May 2008. The 11.68-acre site was approved for 83 dwelling units, including 13 single family detached houses, 38 townhouses, and 32 multi-family (two over two) condominium units. The plan includes active and passive recreation areas and rights-of-way for the future Corridor Cities Transitway. A majority of units are sited around two greens that provide open space for the community. In addition to the two greens, the plan includes an active recreation area to include a tennis court, volleyball court, multi-purpose court, horseshoes pit and a one-half acre open area, designed for informal recreation. A third playground, a gazebo, a picnic shelter and public art are also scattered throughout the site, providing a range of community gathering spaces.

In 2008, the City approved an amendment to the schematic development plan and final site plan for a 250,000 square foot office and laboratory building and associated structured and surface parking on the Medimmune 22-acre corporate campus. The new building brings the total square footage of the Medimmune campus close to the 750,000 square foot cap on development.

The City approved a rezoning and sketch plan for a 6.58-acre parcel, known as the Summit Shopping Center, from C-2 (General Commercial) Zone to the Mixed Use Development (MXD) Zone. This proposal includes demolishing an existing commercial strip center and building 3 to 5-story residential structures containing 300 multiple-family dwelling units, 20,000 square feet of commercial/retail space and structured parking. The applicant will be required to receive schematic development and final site plan approvals prior to construction.

St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church received approval for an amendment to final site plan to construct a one-story convent on their 3.8-acre property. As the property is situated within a residential neighborhood developed with traditionally designed homes, the Church and the City worked closely with the neighbors and the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (HPAC) to ensure compatibility with the existing character of the surrounding area. Additionally, the Planning Commission approved the creative re-use of a former 27,000 square foot "big box" retail space into a full service veterinary clinic; as well as the re-use of a portion of a mixed-use building into the Kentland's School for the Performing Arts which will offer specialized dance, music and vocal classes.

The Holiday Inn, located at a major entrance to the City and one of the more visible hotels in Gaithersburg, completed an extensive exterior renovation which included replacing the current brick facade with EFIS and a sand pebble finish, revised signage and increased landscaping. The Summit Woods Apartments on West Deer Park Road received final site plan approval to renovate and re-occupy a vacant 198-unit, 1970s apartment complex and site.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The City's Historic District Commission (HDC) designated the England-Crown Farm as a local historic site in 2008. In addition to the England-Crown Manor house, eight other structures and an established environmental setting are included in the historic designation. The England Crown Farm site is the last example of a farm complex remaining in Gaithersburg. The main farm house and the associated outbuildings contribute to the understanding of the City's late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20th century agricultural history and residential architecture.

Plans to improve the property of the Gaithersburg International Latitude Observatory, the City's only National Landmark property, into a passive park were reviewed by the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee (HPAC) and HDC. The City approved the plans for a park as did the Maryland Historical Trust which holds an easement on the property. Replacement of the roof and guttering system on the B&O Railroad Station, one of the City's National Register properties, was also approved by the City and the Maryland Historical Trust.

The HPAC provided courtesy reviews for a variety of projects in the Olde Towne area such as the Archstone-Smith multi-family redevelopment; a second story addition to the Guatamalteca Bakery; the re-use of a vacant building at 17 North Fredrick Avenue; and the relocation and alteration of a former residential structure which is planned to be donated to, and re-used by a local non-profit. In addition, ten historic area work permits were reviewed by the Historic District Commission.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

In 2008, the City of Gaithersburg continued to strive to be a multi-modal community and improve the overall transportation network. The adopted Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District Special Study Area Master Plan placed emphasis on the re-alignment of the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) and a relocated transit station. These actions will further foster the goals of a transit-oriented development.

The Watkins Mill Interchange remained a top priority for the City. To help further this project, the City has secured approximately 75 percent of the necessary right-of-way for this interchange at no cost to the State. Efforts are underway to secure the remaining right-of-way in the McGowan property and the Humane Society property.

The City continued to work with Montgomery County on a number of projects impacting both jurisdictions. The City helped its citizens by refocusing the intent of the Longdraft Road project from expanding to a four-lane arterial to concentrating on safety issues and spot improvements. The City also commented on its position regarding the alternatives retained for further study in the M-83, Mid-County Highway project.

City staff, in concert with the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee, continued work on the development of an updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the City, to be incorporated in the City's 2009 Transportation Element. The City enlisted Toole Design Group to help formulate the plan. City staff and the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee continue to review the completed draft plan.

The City continues to work with SHA, MTA, and Montgomery County on the various projects including the CCT, I-270, Watkins Mill Interchange, and the Midcounty Corridor Study. The City continues to address transportation in all new projects, be it requiring improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities for smaller scale projects or promoting transit-oriented developments for larger projects.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Gaithersburg continues to expand our green buildings programs and promote environmentally sensitive design stormwater management practices.

Several new green buildings are in the works in Gaithersburg. First, Monument Corporate Center I became Gaithersburg's first commercial green building, achieving LEED® Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The building features a "cool" roof, low flow plumbing, 93% of onsite construction waste diverted from landfills, and special measures taken to promote indoor environmental quality. Second, the Summit at Washingtonian started construction on an 8-story office building that is anticipated to achieve the LEED Gold standard. A combination of state-of-the-art strategies are employed to maximize water and energy efficiency while minimizing the building's ecological footprint. Third, the City of Gaithersburg completed the design of the new Olde Towne Youth Center that is intended to meet LEED Silver certification. Construction began on this new 6,500 square foot facility and the center is anticipated to open in the fall of 2009. The design incorporates a green roof, photovoltaic cells, recycled and locally manufactured materials, low-flow plumbing fixtures, window and insulation upgrades, and a geothermal heat pump.

Following the success of these green buildings, Gaithersburg's Mayor and City Council approved a commercial green building ordinance, which became effective on October 6, 2008. The commercial green building ordinance applies to commercial and high rise multifamily (4-story+) structures. Commercial and high rise residential structures between 10,000 and 99,999 square feet are required to achieve basic LEED certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. Buildings in excess of 100,000 square feet must achieve the more stringent Silver certification level. In addition, multifamily buildings

that are four stories or less in height must now comply with the City's residential green building requirements, which were adopted on October 15, 2007.

Gaithersburg also began to explore more sustainable stormwater management practices. In response to Maryland's 2007 Stormwater Management regulation requiring environmental sensitive design (ESD) techniques to be applied in all new development and redevelopment projects, Gaithersburg created a green street pilot program to determine the implications of this new State requirement and the best way to design and maintain these structures. Modeled after Portland, Oregon's program, green streets use a natural approach to manage stormwater flows, improve water quality, reduce heat in urban areas, recharge groundwater, and enhance watershed health. Through the use of curb extensions, plants, swales and pervious pavings, green streets not only handle stormwater on site, they also have the added benefit of reducing runoff, enhancing streetscapes with their native landscaping, and calming traffic by reducing street widths.

After careful evaluation of over 20 extra wide streets throughout the City's older neighborhoods that lack SWM, the City selected Rabbitt Road as the pilot project. This green street pilot project will narrow approximately 164 feet of roadway by 6 feet on each side. The project is anticipated to be completed in April of 2008. If this pilot program is successful, other green streets, both municipal and developer-implemented, may be considered in the future.

Finally, Gaithersburg is currently developing the Water Resources Element of the Master Plan to address drinking water, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management issues associated with future planned growth. The City is currently coordinating with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to model and analyze the potential impacts of future growth scenarios on watersheds. Upon the completion of this analysis and the adoption of the City's Municipal Growth Element, the City will release the draft Water Resources Element for public comment in 2009.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Each year, Gaithersburg receives CDBG funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Since becoming a direct recipient of CDBG funding in FY04, Gaithersburg has received on average \$475,000 in CDBG funds each year. HUD regulations allow Gaithersburg to use up to 15 percent of its total CDBG award for public service activities. In its first three years as an entitlement community, the City allocated the full 15 percent to nonprofits for public service grants and the remainder to eligible capital projects. Recent projects include: child and adult services counseling to low-income elderly at the Oaks at Olde Towne; Liberty's Promise civics education and internships to eligible students at Gaithersburg High School; the B&O Railroad Station/Freight House roof replacement; Olde Towne Youth Center construction; and the Wells/Robertson House (a transitional housing facility) interior upgrades and exterior painting.

The Maryland State Highway Administration selected Gaithersburg's Olde Towne Rolling Stock Restoration Project to receive Transportation Enhancement Program funds (TEP) funding. This project involves renovating and refurbishing historic rail cars in the center of Olde Towne, replacing a third car with a more suitable caboose, and completing repairs to several baggage cars and to the City-owned "guest" track to host visiting trains for special events. The City will also make the area handicapped accessible and replace existing decking materials, thereby enhancing public use and attracting more visitors. The Rolling Stock project will not only emphasize the central role of the railroad in Gaithersburg's history but showcase Olde Towne as a source of civic pride.

Although the City's Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program was approved by the Mayor and Council in late 2006, to date, no MPDUs have been added to the City's housing inventory. As a result of the downturn in the housing construction market, new developments have been slow to move forward. Several new rental projects, currently underway, will include approximately 60 MPDUs by the end of 2009.

The City undertook two revitalization projects in Olde Towne during 2008, both of which were funded under the State's Community Legacy Program. These projects were tied to enhancing access into Olde Towne, a priority of the Olde Towne Master Plan. A multi-use trail was installed along North Summit Avenue and sidewalks along Russell Avenue in one of the City's Historic District were widened to encourage greater pedestrian activity.

## **GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYTEMS (GIS)**

The City of Gaithersburg's Geographic Information System (GIS) continued to evolve in 2008. Most of the City's GIS data is housed in an enterprise SDE server. All data, with the exception of the property layer, is being maintained in the geodatabase model within the SDE environment. The GIS viewer, ArcMap, is used on a daily basis by the Planning Department, both as a record-keeping resource and as a public information tool. The City regularly shares data with and provides updates to other municipalities, outside agencies, and independent GIS data providers.

The City's GIS has become an integral component of many City planning and permitting procedures. These include the City's permit management software, 2003 Master Plan update, site plan index, general planning notifications, and mailing label generation. All City maps are now produced exclusively with GIS, and the volume of maps created has increased since 2004. City GIS data is also used to assist with the review of outside agency projects, such as the MD Department of Planning tax centroids and tax maps, adjacent development proposals submitted to M-NCPPC, and the US Census Bureau LUCA and related Census 2010 projects.

New data sets added in 2008 include the 2008 scanned Tax Maps and Tax Centroids, Pipeline Development, Foreclosure Events, Population/Housing/Jobs by Parcel, index of Historic Area Work Permits, Enterprise Zone, and various layers for the Municipal Growth Element. The City continues to maintain its core set of data, including

stormwater management and related maintenance system, stream valley buffers and other environmental layers, voting areas and polling places, parks and other points of interest, property boundaries, easements, zoning, site plan index, subdivision index, and plat index. The City purchased a new GPS unit for data collection in 2008 and continues to use GPS to update and quality control and assure several GIS data sets, including street lights, natural resource inventories, street trees, and stormwater management infrastructure.

During 2009, the City will continue to quality assure, control and maintain its existing data sets and create new data sets as needed. The City expects to upgrade its GIS software to ArcGIS 9.3.1 and AutoCAD Map 2009. The City will investigate the process of converting its address database to an SDE geodatabase and will continue performing quality assurance and control for residential and business addresses. The City will explore the creation of web-based mapping applications for City departments and the general public, which will ultimately provide seamless access to the City's GIS, document management system, and permit management system.

## **ORDINANCES**

The City, in 2008, adopted text amendment T-385, informally known as the Mansionization Ordinance. This text amendment created new requirements that would create Planning Commission oversight of potential tear downs or large scale additions within Gaithersburg's older established neighborhoods. Text Amendment T-384 was adopted which allows bed and breakfasts to expand their services to include other uses such as small wedding receptions or teas, when specific requirements are met. Gaithersburg's Mayor and City Council approved a commercial green building ordinance, which became effective in October 2008. The commercial green building ordinance applies to commercial and high rise multifamily structures.

## **CAPITAL FOR A DAY**

Gaithersburg was the seventh stop on the Governor's tour of eight municipalities in 2008. Gaithersburg Mayor and City Council welcomed Governor Martin O'Malley, Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, and members of the Maryland cabinet as Gaithersburg became Capital for a Day on November 6, 2008. This is an initiative to visit and conduct business in local municipalities by the State officials. During the visit, elected officials, cabinet secretaries, City staff, business and community leaders participated in a variety of meetings, briefings and tours.