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**COMMUNICATION: PLANNING COMMISSION**

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**MEMORANDUM TO:** Maryland Department of Planning

**FROM:** Planning Commission

**DATE:** January 7, 2016

**SUBJECT:** City of Gaithersburg 5-Year Master Plan Review Report

With the adoption of the 2009 Environment & Sustainability Element and the completion of the 2009 Master Plan update and in accordance with 2013 legislative changes made to the Land Use Article and the transition to a 10 year master plan review cycle, the City of Gaithersburg Planning Commission provides the following *5-Year Master Plan Review Report*. As this is the first five year report completed, the Planning Commission has reviewed all previous Elements to the City's Master Plan and not just the 2003 and 2009 update.

#### Summary of Growth 2005-2015

The City's population grew from 57,474 in 2005 to 66,360 in 2015, an increase of 15.5% over the ten year period, with most of the growth (72%) occurring after 2010. Similarly, the number of housing units grew from 22,846 in 2005 to 25,495 in 2015, an increase of 11.6%. Jobs are estimated to have grown 10.0% from 2010 to 2015, in contrast to the small decline in jobs from 2005-2010, which included the recession. Because Gaithersburg is located within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, growth is expected to continue through 2045, consistent with the regional forecast.

#### Housing Policy: Adopted July 1999

The Housing Policy recognized the link between housing and transportation and made recommendations for both, under an overall goal of ensuring that housing, transportation, schools, and parks were adequate, appropriate, and integrated with one another. Several of the housing recommendations, however, were predicated on the availability of new land for development rather than the redevelopment of existing areas, which is best exemplified by the goals of 50 percent of new residential units being detached single family houses, community-based schools that foster New Urbanism tenets (such as walkability), and a prohibition on residential communities composed entirely of townhouses or multifamily units.

Because the majority of new housing that will likely be constructed through 2030 is multi-family or towns and related to infill redevelopment, the 1999 Housing Policy recommendations may no longer be relevant, desirable, or reflect market or demographic realities. The Planning Commission recommends that this policy should be updated and included as part of a future Land Use Plan

update. The revised Housing Policy should be broadened to include other housing issues, such as affordability and inventory (rental vs. owned); unit type and proportion of total stock; replacement of older housing stock; and accessory dwelling units.

### Smart Growth Policy: Adopted July 1999

This document, adopted in 1999, is reflective of planning principles of that time. While many recommendations related to transportation projects and processes are antiquated or have been resolved through subsequent other Master Plan Elements, project approvals (CCT), or Zoning Ordinance amendments, The Planning Commission is of the opinion that the six principles presented remain valid. Because much of the document has been amended through subsequent policy, Master Plan recommendations, or included in the State's 12 Planning Visions, the Commission does not feel that this document needs amending as a stand-alone plan; instead the principles should be incorporated into an overall vision statement based upon the State's 12 Planning Visions.

### 1997 Land Use Plan: Adopted 1986-1997

The Plan divided the City into Six Neighborhoods. Comprehensive rezonings were approved with the adoption of the various Neighborhood Plans. The majority of the recommendations made have either been implemented or amended through subsequent Land Use or "special study area" plans. Those few unaddressed recommendations remain valid and do not need to be reviewed.

### Frederick Avenue Corridor Special Study Area Master Plan: Adopted January 2001

This Master Plan has been well reviewed. The creation of the CD Zone and a partial comprehensive rezoning were outgrowths of this Element; however, virtually none of the land use recommendations were ever implemented. The northern portion of the Corridor was never addressed. The majority of the map designations were subsequently amended through both the 2003 and 2009 Land Use Plans. The Planning Commission is of the opinion that the vision expressed for the Corridor remains valid and should be incorporated in any future Land Use Plan. The Commission recommends that the MD 355 Corridor be reviewed within a greater Land Use Plan and corresponding Transportation Plan and not as a new stand-alone "special study area."

### 2003 Land Use Element: Adopted December 2003; Special Conditions: March 2004

The 2003 Land Use Plan made recommendations for 57 Map Designations, some of which were included to re-affirm the recommendations from the 1997 Land Use Plan. Of these, 14 were superseded by map designations included in the 2009 Land Use Plan. In addition, the Plan made recommendations for five "special study areas" included in the document. (A sixth study area, G.E. Technology Park, was handled as a separate amendment to the Land Use Plan.) Five of the Map Designations and two of the "special study areas" include special conditions, which are legally binding rather than just recommendations or guidelines, and may affect the potential development or redevelopment of the properties.

The Planning Commission finds the recommendations that are unique to the 2003 Land Use Plan, as well as the recommendations for the most of the “special study areas” that were not amended through the 2009 Land Use Plan remain valid and may not need to be updated, but should be reviewed against conditions/forecasts present at the time of update. It may be desirable to include some of the 2003 map designations and “special study areas” in a future Land Use Plan update, if demographic or market conditions have changed such that a different land use or zoning recommendation is more appropriate or if special conditions need revision.

#### Environment: Adopted August 2004

This Element was revised and amended with the 2009 Environment & Sustainability Element. The Planning Commission finds no further action is needed.

#### Olde Towne District Master Plan: Adopted June 2005

This Plan addresses an area that remains a City priority. While some redevelopment has occurred in accordance with the plan, such as the Archstone apartment complex, other projects have been implemented, but not to the full extent envisioned by the plan. Many of the visionary elements expressed in the plan remain relevant; however, the Planning Commission is of the opinion that this area should be reviewed in light of changes since 2005 and should be included in a future Land Use Plan. The Planning Commission finds a stand-alone element is not warranted given the projects initiated since 2005.

#### Special Study Area 10: G.E. Technology Park: Adopted and Amended 2006

The recommendations of this Study Area Element became moot with the acquisition of the primary parcels by Montgomery County Government. The City-owned (aquatic center site) parcel was subsequently amended through the 2009 Land Use Plan.

#### Historic Preservation: Adopted October 2007

This was the first time the City addressed Historic Preservation through the Master Plan. The Element contained an inventory of resources at that time. Many of the procedural statements made referred to HPAC or to State Article 66b, neither of which remain valid. The objectives expressed in the Element remain valid; however many of the action items have either been completed or may no longer be preferred. The Planning Commission is of the opinion that this Element be revised in the next update to reflect changes since 2007 and better align with the State Planning Visions; offer strategies to address planning challenges to a city balancing redevelopment pressures; and to address historic preservation and a sustainability tool.

#### Community Facilities: Adopted March 2008

The Community Facilities Element is divided into two major parts: City facilities and non-City facilities. The 2003 Element made recommendations for both City and non-City facilities, but has more influence on the City-controlled facilities. The majority of the City facilities discussed in the

Element are related to services offered by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture. The recommendations for the remaining City facilities, as well as for all of the non-City facilities, remain valid and do not need to be updated. The Planning Commission supports a separate Master Plan Element focused on public parks and recreational/cultural facilities.

### Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District Special Study Area: Adopted May 2008

The CCT was realigned and the City's APFO Schools test was amended to facilitate this Plan. The Planning Commission is aware that both Beatty and Saul, the primary property owners, are exploring longer range planning efforts in accordance with this Element and therefore recommends no review of this plan is warranted as part of the initial 2016 Update, but should be addressed as part of the *2021 5-Year Master Plan Review Report*.

### Municipal Growth: Adopted April 2009

This Element, required by the State, evaluates whether there is adequate infrastructure and land to support development in the future. The Planning Commission recommends that no changes are needed to this Element because the methodology used an optimistic "full build out" growth scenario, which demonstrated that adequate water, sewer, and land capacity exists through 2030, and none of the underlying assumptions about infrastructure and land capacity have changed, while the amount of actual expected growth has remained substantially below the forecast used for the Element. Further, the Planning Commission is of the opinion that no changes to the City's Maximum Expansion Limits are warranted in the next update.

### Water Resources: Adopted February 2010

The Water Resources Element evaluates how potential new growth through 2030, as depicted in the Municipal Growth Element, will impact drinking water supply, wastewater infrastructure, and stormwater and nonpoint source pollution. Specifically, the Element explores whether water and wastewater supplies are adequate to meet current and future needs; and what, if any, impacts will meeting these needs have on water resources. The analysis of the Element determined that the capacity and infrastructure to accommodate Gaithersburg's future demand already exists or has been planned for by WSSC. Specific sections of the Element were amended through the Environment & Sustainability Element to reflect most recent legislative and policy changes. Due to the lack of identified water and sewer capacity issues in Gaithersburg through 2030, combined with the recent update to the Environment & Sustainability Element, the Planning Commission recommends no review of this plan is warranted in the next update.

### 2009 Transportation: Adopted September 2010

This Element defined geographically-targeted areas and included a revised bicycle master plan. Many of the preliminary recommendations regarding bicycle/pedestrian facilities have been addressed through the City's CIP process. Larger State and County projects of City concern have progressed in the project planning process (CCT, MD 355 BRT) and the Watkins Mill Interchange has been fully funded for construction. As additional studies have been completed and projects

move forward, the Planning Commission recommends that the Transportation Element be reviewed in conjunction with a revised Land Use Element in the next update to strengthen the connection between the two. The next Transportation Element should not focus as much on existing infrastructure, but focus on “next step” changes to incorporate in redevelopment and/or advocate for to the City’s State and County partners. The planning design recommendations remain valid and should be reaffirmed.

## 2009 Land Use: Adopted December 2011

The 2009 Plan amended specific Map Designations from the 2003 plan; the Frederick Avenue Plan; and added new designations to reflect the impact of the 2008 economic downturn. This plan employed a less prescriptive tone to land use and zoning recommendations as an outgrowth of the uncertainty resulting from 2008. Certain Map Designations such as Crown and the Johnson Properties will be developed by the end of 2016. The Planning Commission recommends that this Element be reviewed in the next cycle with a focus on incorporating specific transportation related infrastructure being included in recommendations. A further sensitivity to data such as the “Frederick Avenue Corridor & Vicinity Capacity Study” and others should be reviewed during the development of recommendations. The approved PlanMaryland designations and MWCOG Activity Centers should be a geographic focus of this Element. The structure of this Element should afford the opportunity of a comprehensive rezoning following adoption. Emphasis should be placed upon identifying any regulatory changes needed to facilitate implementation of this plan.

The Commission notes that while the 2009 Land Use Plan addressed some properties outside of the City limits, not all of the properties within the Maximum Expansion Limits were given a land use and zoning recommendation.

## Environment & Sustainability: Adopted March 2015

This Element was recently adopted and the City is only beginning to address recommendations made, such as funding the comprehensive Urban Forestry Inventory. This Element should remain valid through the 2016 Update cycle, but should be addressed as part of the *2021 5-Year Master Plan Review Report*.