



111 Maryland Avenue | Rockville, Maryland 20850-2364 | 240-314-5000
www.rockvillemd.gov

October 11, 2017

Dear Mayor and Council,

The Planning Commission wishes to thank the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to review and comment on proposed Zoning Text Amendment TXT2018-00247 and proposed Sectional Map Amendment MAP2018-00116. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to implement policies adopted in the 2016 Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan. Below are our comments for your consideration:

Sectional Map Amendment

The Planning Commission agrees with the proposed zoning as shown in Attachment A and as described in Attachment B with the following exceptions:

1. Properties 10-16 on the map (Attachment A): All of the parcels are currently in the MXCD zone, which allows heights of up to 75 feet. The proposed map amendment would move these parcels into the new MXCT zone that, per the text amendment, would have a maximum base height of 55 feet. Except for #16, they are located adjacent to an RMD-25 zone on the west side of East Jefferson Street, where heights of up to 75 feet are allowed. Parcel #16 is located across East Jefferson Street from a single-family residential (R-75) neighborhood.

The Planning Commission recommends keeping all of these properties (#10-16 on Attachment A) in the MXCD zone rather than rezoning them to MXCT. For properties 10-15, we do not see a reason to reduce the heights below those permitted across the street. For property 16, the single-family homes are protected by the required layback slope, which would reduce the maximum height accordingly.

2. Properties 5 and 6 on the map (Attachment A): Parcel #5 is the Village Green condominiums and #6 is the Woodmont Spring condominiums. These properties are currently in the RMD-25 residential zone. The proposed text amendment would place them into the new Mixed-Use Corridor Transition (MXCT) zone. The Commission heard concerns from residents of these condominiums about how such a change would affect them. One notable impact is that the Zoning Ordinance requires a 50-foot buffer from motor vehicle and trailer sales uses to adjoining or abutting residential zones. This buffer protection would be eliminated if the condominium developments were removed from a residential zone and placed in a mixed-use zone. It is also highly unlikely that these properties will be redeveloped during the lifetime of the Pike Plan as they are condominium developments with multiple individual owners. As a result, the mixed-use zone would offer little or no benefit to the owners.

The Planning Commission recommends that the properties identified as #5 and #6 on Attachment A remain in their current RMD-25 zone.

3. Parcel # 17 on the map (Attachment A): Parcel #17 is currently located in the MXTD zone. The map amendment proposes to move it into the MXCD zone to correspond with the "Corridor" on the Pike Plan's land use map. This parcel is located across the railroad tracks from single-family homes on Lewis Avenue. A "downzoning" to MXCD would reduce the maximum building height on this site. However, the Pike Plan introduced a layback slope to areas that are adjacent to Metrorail and railroad right-of-way. These areas are not subject to a layback slope requirement in current zoning, but this text amendment would change that exemption. The addition of a layback slope would provide the Lewis Avenue houses protection from the negative impacts of very tall buildings across the tracks.

The Planning Commission recommends that the property identified as #17 on Attachment A remain in the MXTD zone rather than be re-zoned to MXCD.

In addition, the Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan refers to the area where Champion Projects (discussed further in the next section) may be located as the "South Pike," while the proposed zoning tools use the existing "Twinbrook Metro Performance District" identification. The Commission suggests, based on comments from a property owner representative, that the Twinbrook Metro Performance District boundary line be added to the Sectional Map Amendment, and that clarity be added to the definition of the Twinbrook Metro Performance District and within the definition of Champion Projects in the Zoning Ordinance to provide consistency between the planning and zoning documents.

Champion Projects (p.1, text amendment)

The Commission agrees with the criteria that a Champion Project must be located within the Twinbrook Metro Performance District (aka South Pike area, per the plan); contain five or more contiguous acres; and be a Project Plan that is subject to final approval authority from the Mayor and Council.

However, the Commission has some concerns with the language that begins: "2. Significantly advances one or more of the following goals:" followed by the goals, lettered as a, b, and c. The Commission is concerned that the language used to describe these goals is ambiguous and does not quantify the amount of affordable housing, public use space, and/or transportation safety measures that would be sufficient to achieve Champion status and thereby earn the advantages of greater building height and/or release from having to provide the access road on Rockville Pike. The Commission believes that there should be some assurance that the contributions will be substantial and meaningful. The Commission also suggests that developers should be required to meet more than one of the goals. The Commission suggests adding another bullet point (d) that would include securing a major employer as a fourth potential Champion goal. Encouraging more jobs in the planning area will help to better balance the mix of uses that, in the current market, is tilting toward residential over office and commercial uses. The Mayor and Council will need to decide whether,

and how, to quantify this goal, should you choose to include it. The Commission does appreciate the Mayor and Council's intention to provide flexibility so that any Champion Project may be judged by its own unique approach to achieving these laudable city goals. Such flexibility can potentially result in outstanding and creative development projects, but it is at the expense of predictability.

Maximum Building Heights and Heights for Champion Projects

The Planning Commission received abundant testimony on the topic of building heights while drafting the Pike Plan. We continue to have difficulty arriving at "optimal" height limits. The Commission took a "straw vote" at our September 27 meeting regarding agreement with the base maximum heights for the zones in the planning area (which are the same as current zoning) and maximum heights for Champion Projects, as they are currently proposed in the text amendment. Four commissioners felt that the heights in the proposed text amendment are appropriate (with one commissioner comfortable with even higher heights, two who felt there could be a small amount of flexibility, and one who felt that the heights, even for Champion Projects and as a matter of fairness, are appropriate as long as they do not exceed those currently allowed in Rockville Town Center) and three felt that they are too high. This exercise illustrates our difficulty settling on the "right" heights. We expect that building heights will also be a polarizing topic at your October 16 public hearing, with testimony likely to be split between those who are concerned about potential negative impacts of tall buildings and those who feel added density will help to make this part of the city an exciting and distinctive place.

Land Use Tables

The Planning Commission suggests the following change to the land use table in the proposed text amendment: Change S (permitted only by special exception) to N (not permitted) in the MXCT zone for "outdoor commercial recreational establishment."

In addition, the Commission requests that the Mayor and Council ensure that existing uses are still allowed after re-zoning.

MXCT Zone Description

The Planning Commission suggests adding "parks" to the description of the MXCT zone on page 3 of the proposed text amendment so that it would read: "Intended for areas that are located between areas currently developed or recommended for development as medium to high-intensity development and areas developed or recommended for residential development **or parks within residentially zoned areas**. This zone allows for moderate-density development of residential and office uses, as well as neighborhood-serving retail and service uses."

We trust that the Planning Commission's input will prove helpful in your final decisions. Please let us know if we can be of additional assistance in this very important matter.

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Sincerely,

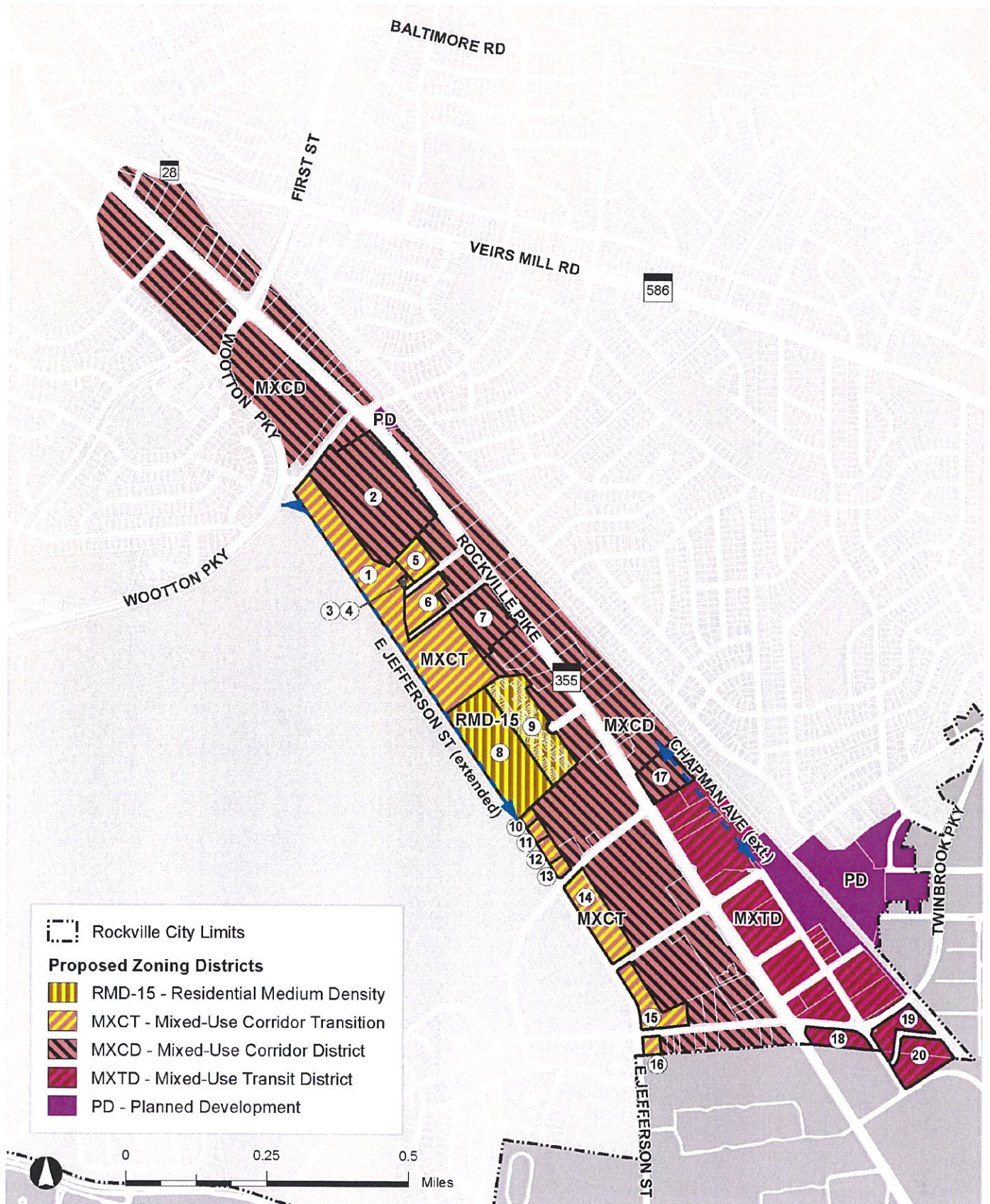
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Goodman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anne Goodman, Chair, Rockville Planning Commission

cc: Planning Commission
Andrew Gunning, Acting Director, CPDS
David Levy, Chief of Long-Range Planning
Jim Wasilak, Chief of Zoning
Deane Mellander, Zoning Administrator
Cindy Kebba, Principal Planner

Rockville Pike Neighborhood Plan

Proposed Zoning Districts



**PROPERTIES SUBJECT TO REZONING
WITHIN THE ROCKVILLE PIKE PLAN AREA**

Revised 9/7/2017

Parcel Identifier	Property Description	Land Area	Zoning Action
1	P. N740, Parcel A, Block A Plat 23336 Woodmont Country Club 1201 Rockville Pike	±21.9 ac.	R-400 to MXCT
2	P. 430 Woodmont Park, Inc.	18.56 ac.	RMD-25 to MXCD
3 & 4	P.590 & 591, 700 Talbott St. City of Rockville	12,188 sq. ft	RMD-25 to MXCT
5	Village Green Condominium, Inc. Plats 2343-2347	2.022 ac.	RMD-25 to MXCT
6	Woodmont Springs Condominium, Inc. Plats 2265-2268, Lot 14, Block 2, Autry Heights	2.967 ac.	RMD-25 to MXCT
7	P. N740, Parcel A, Block A Plat 23336 Woodmont Country Club 1201 Rockville Pike	±5.2 ac.	R-400 to MXCD
8	P. N740, Parcel A, Block A Plat 23336 Woodmont Country Club 1201 Rockville Pike	12.196 ac.	R-400 to RMD-15
9	Woodmont Place Townhouses Lots 103-132 & Parcel E, 134-153 & Parcel C, 154-191 & Parcel D	8.0861 ac. Total	RMD-10 to RMD-15
10	1500 E. Jefferson St. Lot 1, Block O, Montrose Sub.	17,532 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXCT
11	1530 E. Jefferson St. Lot 4, Block O, Montrose Sub.	27,843 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXCT
12	Lot 2, Block O, Montrose Sub. 1570 E. Jefferson St.	36,499 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXCT
13	Lot 3, Block O, Montrose Sub. 1580 E. Jefferson St.	21,750 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXCT
14	Ownership Lot 3-D and pt. of ownership lot 3-C, Block Q, Montrose Sub. Plat 22321 Congressional Plaza 1620 E. Jefferson St.	±5.243 ac.	MXCD to MXCT

15	P.565, pt. of Parcel 2, Token of Love 199 Rollins Avenue	3.52 ac.	MXCD to MXCT
16	P.5, Block A, Montrose Park Sub. 174 Rollins Ave.	27,517 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXCT
17	Plat 8037 P.N054 The Pike 1500 Rockville Pike	4.67 ac.	MXTD to MXCD
18	Lot 24, Block 7, Lot P.1 Block 7, Halpine Sub. 123030 Twinbrook Pkwy. Lot 1, pts. of lots 2, 3, &4 Lot P.5, Block 7 Halpine Sub. 1910 Rockville Pike Lot P.5, Block 7, Halpine Sub. Mayor and Council	44,406 sq. ft. 39,779 sq. ft. 1,600 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXTD
19	Pt. of abandonment of Rollins Ave. Lot P.6, Block 6, Halpine Sub. 12401 Twinbrook Pkwy.	456 sq. ft. 104,544 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXTD
20	Par. E, Washington-Rockville Industrial Park, 975 Rollins Ave, Block 7, Lot 19 Halpine Sub. 979 Rollins Ave	91,512 sq. ft. 71,032 sq. ft.	MXCD to MXTD

Properties Rezoned R-400 to MXCT	21.9 ac.
Properties Rezoned R-400 to MXCD	5.2 ac.
Properties Rezoned R-400 to RMD-15	12.196 ac.
Properties Rezoned RMD-10 to RMD-15	8.0861 ac.
Properties Rezoned RMD-25 to MXCT	5.269 ac.
Properties Rezoned MXCD to MXCT	11.773 ac.
Properties Rezoned MXTD to MXCD	4.67 ac.
Properties Rezoned MXCD to MXTD	<u>8.11 ac.</u>
Total Area of Rezoning	77.2041 ac.