



# Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

## 10/30 Master Plan Advisory Team Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 30, 2017; 4:00 pm

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The third Ellicott City Master Plan Advisory Team (MPAT) meeting was held Monday, October 30, 2017, at the George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

**Consultants present:** Steve Brigham, Tom McGilloway, Megan Griffith, Tripp Muldrow, Ben Muldrow, Jim Burnett, Matt Thomasson

**Staff present:** Valdis Lazdins (Planning and Zoning), Phil Nichols (County Administration), Kate Bolinger (Planning and Zoning), Peter Conrad (Planning and Zoning), Karitsa Holdzkom (Planning and Zoning), Amy Gowan (Planning and Zoning), Kristin O'Connor (Planning and Zoning)

**MPAT present:** Allan Shad, Ed Lilley, Gary Maule, Beth Woodruff, Rob Brennan, Debbie Slack Katz, Jean Sedlacko

**MPAT Absent:** Len Berkowitz, Don Reuwer, Ben Barlow, Karen Besson

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Kate Bolinger, Department of Planning and Zoning, opened the meeting at 4:06 pm and thanked everyone for coming.

Steve Brigham, Public Engagement Associates, described the meeting agenda (several short presentations followed by discussions) and meeting purpose (to prepare for the November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> workshops).

K. Bolinger asked MPAT members to approve the July 11 meeting minutes. Beth Woodruff motioned to approve and Debbie Slack Katz seconded. The motion unanimously carried.

Tom McGilloway, Mahan Rykiel Associates, updated MPAT on work completed to date, the status of work underway, and plans for sharing findings at public workshops in November and early 2018. T. McGilloway noted that the November workshops would focus on downtown opportunity sites, transportation, parking, and the market assessment. At the early 2018 workshop, the consultant team would: revisit downtown opportunity sites with 2D model analysis results, cover recommendations for the West End, and present recommendations for the Tiber-Hudson Watershed.

T. McGilloway described work conducted since July 2017, including two rounds of zip code surveys. He highlighted a few key findings and informed MPAT that the full zip code survey results and market findings would be presented to Ellicott City Partnership in November. He described the pop-up engagement activity at Main Street Music Fest in September.

T. McGilloway described the master plan team's assessment highlights thus far:

- Market analysis: many customers from outside the region; opportunities for more retail
- Transportation and parking: on-street parking/loading is important; potential need for parking structures/garages if spaces are removed; parking management and traffic calming important
- Organization: Ellicott City can be lost within the larger county – a focused implementation entity is needed
- Community marketing: change the mindset from Ellicott City as a “pass through community” to a “park the car and spend the day community”
- Watershed-wide assessment: studying potential recommendations including an overlay district and connections from other areas of the watershed to the core
- Water resources: important to balance strategies for flood water retention and conveyance (movement); improvements should enhance water quality
- Urban Design and placemaking: art/lighting, stream daylighting, and greenspace can enhance the downtown core

MPAT members inquired whether any of the merchants had mentioned the need for an ATM. Tripp Muldrow, Arnett Muldrow and Associates, advised that he had not heard this observation from any of the business owners.

T. McGilloway described framework maps for the Tiber-Hudson Watershed and downtown core area. He indicated that the consultant team is developing Watershed-wide recommendations to be shared in early 2018. For the core, he noted that the team has examined opportunity sites and existing attractions to determine how they can be planned to work together.

T. McGilloway asked T. Muldrow to present a draft of the community brand statement. T. Muldrow explained the importance of a brand statement for a community and read the statement aloud. T. Muldrow explained that the brand statement is a narrative that serves as a guide for making decisions in Ellicott City; it acts as a preamble or introduction to a plan and helps to explain “what Ellicott City is.” T. McGilloway assured MPAT that the brand statement is not final and asked for reactions from the MPAT members. T. McGilloway encouraged MPAT members to share their reactions by speaking them aloud and/or writing them on worksheets provided. MPAT members had the following comments:

- Gives us a tool for future decision making.
- The last paragraph should be more about the community. Ellicott City is a lot more than the buildings and it shouldn't end with the structures.
- How does this statement overlay with the branding that Ellicott City Partnership has done? I don't see this as a branding statement; it helps set the tone but it isn't something that provides

a mission statement. The narrative includes the tag line that Ellicott City Partnership has been using.

- Different audiences have different languages and rationales – hopefully this statement helps people broaden their perspectives.
- The statement doesn't reflect the vibrancy of Ellicott City or the dynamic nature of the community. It should have a stronger people focus.
- We have to think of the audience – this isn't the right place to talk about the resiliency of the community.

T. McGilloway presented the emerging recommendations on transportation and parking. He highlighted the following topics to address: speeding in the West End, pedestrian enhancements, on street parking, and extending the name of Main Street to US 29.

T. McGilloway presented streetscape sections showing mountable curbs with removable bollards. MPAT members asked whether bollards could be moved to protect pedestrians when the mountable curb is being used as a sidewalk. MPAT members also suggested that different types of streetscape should be examined in terms of stormwater.

T. McGilloway described sidewalk materials that may be more resilient than brick sidewalk in areas prone to shear stress under flood conditions. He indicated poured concrete would be more resilient than brick and could be scored to fit the character of a historic district. He also showed an example of an aggregate concrete used in a historic district.

T. McGilloway presented recommendations for lighting and utility consolidation. He indicated undergrounding utility lines would be unlikely given cost and difficulty of moving individual connections. He suggested that decorative lights could be strung over Main Street between utility poles.

T. McGilloway asked for reactions from MPAT members on the streetscape, sidewalk material, and lighting/utility recommendations. MPAT members had the following questions and comments:

- Does the angle/pattern of the bricks matter in terms of shear stress?
  - T. McGilloway explained that the angle is important for vehicular travel but does not have as much of an impact on protecting from shear stress. He also said that some of the zones of shear stress may change based on flood mitigation improvements.
- I don't think brick is for Ellicott City. Brick is Annapolis and Frederick, not Ellicott City.
- Where would new sidewalk materials extend to?
  - T. McGilloway said that the scoring texture would extend through the West End.
- Light the town architecturally rather than with hanging lights over Main Street.
- What exactly does the consolidation of utilities mean?
  - Matt Thomasson, RK&K, explained that utility consolidation could mean removing unnecessary lines and/or keeping utility poles on only one side of the street.
- Is scored concrete cheaper than other options?
  - T. McGilloway answered yes.

- Do you still have drains on the mountable curbs?
  - T. McGilloway answered yes.
- I like the raised parking (mountable curb) – it takes back the street for the people.
- Flexibility is key.
- There are many different Ellicott Cities – Ellicott City during the week, Ellicott City during the weekend, Ellicott City during Music Fest, etc.

T. McGilloway described existing conditions that must be taken into consideration when planning strategies for flood mitigation and urban design enhancements in Ellicott City’s downtown core. These existing conditions include natural features: water and the underlying geology, landform and topography. He noted that the natural features informed the transportation network and built form/development patterns, and constrained the pedestrian network. He noted that these man-made interventions in Ellicott City resulted in changes to the drainage system that restricted water conveyance and resulted in flood water paths that flow down Main Street.

T. McGilloway said that because the downtown core is already largely built out, the sites that provide the most obvious opportunity for interventions to address water conveyance are the former Roger Carter Site, Lot E, Lot D, Lot F, the Courthouse site, and Lot A (in Baltimore County). He stated that the Wilkens-Rogers Mill in Baltimore County also should be monitored in case it ever becomes an opportunity in the long-term. He also indicated that there are many existing assets in Ellicott City, such as the Bernard Fort House, Patapsco Female Institute and Mount Ida. T. McGilloway noted a coordinated planning approach is needed for opportunity sites and existing assets.

T. McGilloway presented an emerging strategy to address flood water conveyance in the downtown core. He stated the strategy is built around the following goals:

1. Get all of the upstream water to reach parking Lot D without flowing down Main Street
2. Understand impacts and conveyance opportunities from Lot D to the Patapsco River

T. McGilloway also noted that the emerging strategy can address other goals, including:

- Stream daylighting,
- Meaningful open space,
- Environmental improvements,
- Placemaking,
- Expanded pedestrian experiences, and
- Additional active uses/economic development.

T. McGilloway described a phased approach to introduce a major water conveyance improvement area involving the former Roger Carter site, parking Lot F, and parking Lots E and D.

First, he said temporary parking should be provided at the former Roger Carter site to facilitate changes in parking lots F, D, or E (and allow parking to be temporarily taken “off-line” in those lots). He stated that in the short term, the former Roger Carter site could be a well-designed temporary parking lot that

could also function as an event space, incorporating a small gateway park. He suggested in the long-term the former Roger Carter site could be a larger park with more event space and underground water storage.

Second, T. McGilloway said that Lot F could be developed with a parking structure (which would enable construction of a major water conveyance area in Lots E and D). This structure could be located either within the existing surface parking lot footprint (a portion of which is in the floodplain) or moved slightly to remove it from the floodplain. He showed an option for a Lot F parking structure with an entrance directly from Ellicott Mills Drive, which would allow for a cleaner intersection at Fels Lane. He said that any parking structure in Lot F should provide for active uses – such as artist studio space – along the façade facing Main Street. Another option featured a parking structure wrapped with residential units fronting Ellicott Mills Drive and artist studio space along Main Street.

MPAT members advised that the active use spaces should be flexibly developed with spaces that could accommodate different uses if the market changes.

T. McGilloway presented concepts for Lots E and D including a major water conveyance area, expanded stream channel, daylighted stream and pedestrian amenity space. He stated the expanded stream channel could be limited to Lot D or extend from Lot D into Lot E. He said that in a future phase, Lot D could be developed with a parking structure wrapped with active uses.

MPAT members responded to the concepts with questions and observations:

- Would the former Roger Carter site work for a parking deck?
  - T. McGilloway said that the Roger Carter site is too far from lower Main Street to be feasible as a parking deck location
- Would you make the lower half of Fels Lane two way to access the parking area?
  - T. McGilloway answered yes.
- The phasing makes a lot of sense and a park (at the former Roger Carter site) would be an amenity for that part of town.
- The first option for Lot F (a parking garage within the existing surface lot footprint) does not infringe onto Ellicott Mills Drive as an entrance to Ellicott City.
- The green spaces do not have to be large – a small space can still make a difference. The former Roger Carter site might make sense at some point for a parking structure.
- Have you looked at the George Howard building lot as an option for overflow parking?
  - T. McGilloway answered that the lot only works as overflow for events when there is a shuttle during peak periods.
- The former Post Office space (the Visitor Center) has green space around it. If multiple sites worked tighter they could provide all the public community outdoor space that we need while providing access to the river through daylighting.
- Some of the properties on Old Columbia Pike may be willing to cooperate and work with the County to make a larger amenity area possible.

- The consultant team should look at changing the lower right corner of the Lot F option 1 parking structure (within the existing surface parking lot) to allow a sight line to the Bernard Fort House.

T. McGilloway presented options for the Courthouse site. He described one option (which could be a short-term phase) as a surface parking lot with landscaping and green infrastructure/stormwater management. Another option showed active uses wrapping a parking structure and taking advantage of views. He described an option featuring additional active uses and a stronger frontage for Mount Ida.

T. McGilloway presented concepts for the Riverfront, showing a bike and pedestrian bridge over the Patapsco River and an option for a parking structure in Lot A in Oella. He noted such structure would require a partnership with Baltimore County.

T. McGilloway presented concepts for lower Main Street, noting they were currently under hydraulic study to understand their potential flood mitigation benefits. These concepts included a below-street culvert under lower Main Street to augment stream channel water conveyance described for Lots E and D. He noted a dam had been studied across the New Cut branch, but determined not be worth the risk it would pose to nearby buildings. T. McGilloway noted that the constructability of a culvert under lower Main Street was a concern, and that the street disruption would have an impact on businesses. He said if the hydraulic model indicated a culvert would be beneficial, and a culvert was pursued, a phased approach to construct it would be needed along with a strong marketing campaign to keep visitors coming to Main Street.

MPAT members offered reactions:

- Do not discount opportunities just because they require some engineering creativity
- All decisions should be based on risk vs. reward
- A lot A parking garage would require partnership with Baltimore County
- Consultants should consider the impacts proposed improvements would have on nearby structures

T. McGilloway said the options presented hinge upon the presence of an organizing entity. A special benefits district could be set up. The district could have different sections (i.e., downtown and West End). T. Muldrow explained that there needs to be an entity that addresses Ellicott City's residential needs, commercial needs, parking, etc. T. Muldrow said that Dundalk Renaissance Corp. could be a good model to explore because it has the same components as Ellicott City, fewer county resources and yet is able to operate a community development organization effectively. T. McGilloway stated that in November the consultants would meet with Ellicott City Partnership and county staff for more detailed discussions on organization.

MPAT members provided insights and suggestions:

- Since the county owns most of the opportunity sites, it does not seem a redevelopment corporation would be appropriate. During the post-flood recovery, the attention of all County

agencies was on Ellicott City. The county should assign dedicated staff to Ellicott City. The town is different from the rest of the county, which is suburban.

- T. Muldrow said that in a disaster response scenario, the county responded well but needs to find a way to support long-term economic strength and stability.
- An MPAT member asked T. Muldrow how the recommended organization would be different from Ellicott City Partnership.
  - T. Muldrow said that Ellicott City Partnership follows the Main Street model but the recommended entity would be an umbrella organization that accomplishes a wider range of functions and oversees other organizations such as a parking authority or redevelopment corporation. T. Muldrow encouraged MPAT to consider and mull over the ideas regarding organization.
- An MPAT member reminded consultants that the Flood Workgroup continues to meet and work diligently.

T. McGilloway described the next steps in the Master Plan process:

- Two public workshops on November 14th and 15th covering the same content
- January public workshop and MPAT meeting to be scheduled

K. Bolinger asked MPAT members to help promote the November workshops to ensure a good turnout from the community.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.