



Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan

10/11 Master Plan Advisory Team Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 11, 2018; 7:00 pm

The fifth and final Ellicott City Master Plan Advisory Team (MPAT) meeting was held Thursday, October 11, 2018, at the George Howard Building, 3430 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043.

Consultants present: Tom McGilloway, Jeff Dube, Ward Oberholtzer

Staff present: Valdis Lazdins (Planning and Zoning), Kate Bolinger (Planning and Zoning), Peter Conrad (Planning and Zoning), Amy Gowan (Planning and Zoning), Kristin O'Connor (Planning and Zoning), Beth Burgess (Planning and Zoning), Mark DeLuca (Public Works), Phil Nichols (County Administration)

MPAT present: Debbie Slack Katz, Ed Lilley, Gary Maule, Jean Sedlacko, Ben Barlow, Len Berkowitz, Don Reuwer (arriving after vote on minutes), Beth Woodruff (arrived after vote on minutes)

MPAT Absent: Allan Shad, Rob Brennan, Karen Besson

Kate Bolinger, Department of Planning and Zoning, opened the meeting at 7:00 pm and thanked everyone for coming. K. Bolinger described the evening's agenda to include a presentation of new and refined concepts from the master plan consultant team, followed by discussion. She reminded MPAT of their role as a sounding board, not only in terms of the substance of the concepts but also in terms of preparing the presentation for communication to the public.

K. Bolinger asked MPAT members to approve the March 7th meeting minutes. Len Berkowitz motioned to approve the minutes and Ben Barlow seconded. The motion carried (6 in favor, 0 opposed).

K. Bolinger presented the master plan vision, core goals/pillars, and strategy areas as developed prior to the May 2018 flood. K. Bolinger noted that following the flood, the core goals/pillars remained relevant – but with life safety added alongside the pillars of rebuilding, environment, preservation and economy.

K. Bolinger summarized the five-year flood mitigation plan, announced in August, as a combination of flood water conveyance and retention projects. She described how the five-year plan projects were prioritized based on their ability to address several metrics (life safety, urgency, feasibility/constructability and cost-effectiveness).

K. Bolinger described how originally, the master plan was to recommend projects as near, medium or longer-term. She noted that an accelerated concept was needed after the May 27th flood, and that the five-year plan is the near-term, accelerated action plan. She stated that the five-year plan includes the “Hudson Bend” concept of a widened, daylit stream channel and extends the concept from Ellicott Mills Drive to Maryland Avenue. She said that the five-year plan will be nested into the longer-term master plan, and that the master plan process will result in design guidance on the amenity space component of the widened, terraced stream channel.

Tom McGilloway, Mahan Rykiel Associates, presented new and refined concepts for Lower Main, Upper Main, the West End, the Courthouse area, and the Tiber-Hudson watershed.

For Lower Main, T. McGilloway described how the expanded stream channel would provide design opportunities for:

- Creation of an amenity
- Historic interpretation and flood awareness
- New commercial viability on Tiber Alley and lower St. Paul Street
- Expanded sidewalk space
- Enhanced visibility of the B&O museum

T. McGilloway described design challenges associated with the Lower Main expanded channel:

- Predominantly hard surface for hydraulic functionality
- Existing bedrock potentially not suitable as surface material
- Limited base water flow
- Constriction point at Maryland Avenue
- Maintenance of debris/sediment
- Human scale
- Accessibility

T. McGilloway described key considerations for the design of the expanded channel in Lower Main:

- Building material reuse and relocation sensitive to context
- Shade
- Flood hazard messaging
- Safe routes to high ground for pedestrians
- Accessible amenity space
- Channel flow to the Maryland Avenue culverts

T. McGilloway stated that an expanded stream channel could be designed using a variety of design approaches – subject to further design development at the detailed design/engineering phase. He presented several approaches through illustrative cross sections: large terraces, smaller terraces and steps, continuous steps, or a wide channel with expanded sidewalk. He said that the ultimate design (to be developed at the design/engineering phase) would more likely be a combination of all these

approaches – and that the ultimate design would ensure the flow of water to the Maryland Avenue culverts.

T. McGilloway suggested that building foundation materials, or foundation lines, could potentially be incorporated into the stream channel design. He indicated accessible ramps could possibly be part of the design, in addition to steps. He said the consultant team is looking at whether on-street parking should stay on Lower Main or be limited to loading/unloading.

T. McGilloway stated that MDE requires that the base of the channel include natural material. He said the consultant team designed a meander for the base flow so that if there is a significant flood event, the base material will be perpendicular to the flood flow and therefore more likely to stay in the channel.

Prior to showing more developed conceptual designs, T. McGilloway presented design precedents from around the globe, including various stream channel designs and site features. He described existing design influences from Ellicott City that could inform the stream channel design: bedrock, stone walls, terracing, steps, fencing, architectural remnants, and scale.

T. McGilloway presented precedents for heritage interpretation, including:

- Reuse of building foundations
- Pavement markings to indicate foundation lines
- Metal framing to outline where significant buildings or facades stood
- Lighting – either temporary or permanent – to outline where significant buildings or facades stood
- Shade sails to mimic roof lines

T. McGilloway described site elements that would be explored as part of further detailed design development to enhance the Lower Main stream channel as an amenity space. These site elements included:

- Single-stem, small shade trees – located where they would not impede hydraulic function
- Planters and pots – with plantings that may be washed out in a flood and would be replaced
- Railings – which could either use the existing style or introduce a more modern style
- Shade elements – which could be associated with debris catchers or metal framing
- Rock or stone cobble – potentially embedded into the stream channel

T. McGilloway described how flood-related messaging could be used to bring awareness to flooding. He said that public art can be used to bring awareness to potential flood depths.

T. McGilloway presented two scenarios for the Lower Main stream channel. He described the first scenario as a terraced channel that would:

- Maintain the existing curb/sidewalk configuration
- Introduce terraces, steps and/or walls

T. McGilloway presented a second scenario for the Lower Main stream channel that included:

- A reconfigured, widened sidewalk (potentially 20 feet wide)
- A wider channel with stairs and ramp

He noted that the illustrations of each scenario were meant to communicate design intent, and that the actual stream channel configuration would be determined through subsequent detailed design development and hydraulic testing. He described how the detailed design development phase would test potential locations for pedestrian bridges to connect Main Street to St. Paul's Street over the stream channel.

T. McGilloway recommended that concrete be used rather than pavers to rebuild the sidewalk. He said scored concrete could be used in a rectangular London paver pattern or a simple rectangular slab. He suggested Maryland Avenue could be paved differently and a mountable curb be used for the on-street parking spaces. The mountable curb design would allow the on-street spaces to function as parking spaces most of the time but as expanded sidewalk space during special events. He presented a stamped concrete pattern designed to look like stone or cobble as an option for Maryland Avenue.

T. McGilloway recommended a rear façade grant program for buildings on St. Paul Street that will be more visible with the removal of the buildings on the south side of Lower Main. He suggested that as the Lower Main stream channel becomes an amenity space, there may be interest in converting some of the buildings to commercial uses with decks overlooking the channel.

T. McGilloway concluded the presentation on Lower Main with recommendations for:

- A parking garage in Lot A
- A riverfront park in a portion of Lot B
- A pedestrian-bicycle bridge over the Patapsco River

For Upper Main, T. McGilloway re-described concepts associated with the "Hudson Bend" widened stream channel that he presented in March. He reminded MPAT that the Hudson Bend concept called for the removal of the LaPalapa restaurant building and the Ellicott Mills brewery annex building. He reminded MPAT of the concept for a new Lot D garage wrapped with active uses. He said the wrapped garage would be an opportunity to accommodate businesses displaced by stream channel widening but also an opportunity to attract new businesses.

T. McGilloway said that if facades from Lower Main buildings were to be reused on a garage in Lot D, such reuse would have to be sensitively done to not appear two-dimensional. He said a garage in Lot D would have to be wrapped with appropriately scaled active uses. He showed an image of a parking garage in Staunton, Virginia wrapped with appropriately scaled development. T. McGilloway suggested the removal of the LaPalapa building could create an opportunity for a relocated business to locate along Merryman Street.

T. McGilloway indicated that Lots F, D, and A could all accommodate a parking garage. He said a shuttle could also connect people to remote lots like the Courthouse lot. He showed images of private shuttles

used in other locations. In reference to community members who had expressed interest in a funicular, T. McGilloway suggested the shuttle could be branded as the “funicular.”

T. McGilloway said the Department of Recreation and Parks plans to renovate the Barnard Fort House with interpretive space, classrooms and offices. He suggested the Log Cabin could be relocated to a location within the Barnard Fort grounds and identified two possible locations (A and B).

For Lot F, T. McGilloway suggested the surface lot either be reconfigured in a smaller footprint shifted to the west or replaced with a multi-level garage accessed at two different levels (taking advantage of site topography). He said that if a parking garage were developed, the Log Cabin should be located at Location A for visibility – at grade with the top of the parking garage. He indicated a garage in Lot F could be screened with a green/vegetated wall.

For the West End, T. McGilloway re-presented an optional concept for the West End Service Center shown in March. He reminded MPAT that the concept was presented as an option, should the owner ever desire to redevelop, but stated the owner has no current plans to change the property. He re-presented concepts for raised speed table crosswalks and a traffic circle at Rogers Avenue and Main Street. For flood mitigation in the West End, T. McGilloway described projects under study including widening the stream channel, addressing constriction points, and redirecting water into the channel.

For the Courthouse area, T. McGilloway re-presented recommendations from March that included issuing a solicitation for redevelopment of the surface parking lot and adaptive reuse of the courthouse building. He recommended the surface parking lot be redeveloped with a parking garage wrapped with active uses, and that the garage include both public and private parking.

T. McGilloway re-presented key master plan considerations that should be incorporated into a developer solicitation:

- Connectivity between the Courthouse redevelopment and the Patapsco Female Institute and Mount Ida
- Connectivity to Main Street
- Organization of the site around streets
- Maintaining views and vistas of Mount Ida and the historic Courthouse

For the Watershed, T. McGilloway recommended:

- Small-scale green programs for homeowners to allow everyone in the watershed to participate
- Special watershed protection district for the Tiber-Hudson Watershed
- Debris management planning, including a debris management master plan
- Active tree management to remove vulnerable trees at stream edges and replace trees with lower, herbaceous material that still provides shade and root mass
- Debris catchers to include log snares in the upper reaches of the watershed and metal (corten steel) in lower reaches of the watershed

In response to the presentation, MPAT members provided feedback by topic.

Watershed and Debris Management

- The broader community – beyond the watershed – needs to buy in and support Ellicott City. The watershed boundary should be used for hydrology but not to define the community.
- The design of debris snags should be done carefully to avoid an obtrusive appearance.

Lower Main

- Historic cobblestones should be incorporated into Tiber Alley.
- The design options for the channel, with different terracing options, are positive.
- The columns and one wall at Great Panes should be considered for salvage and reuse.
- Connect the New Cut branch with the new Tiber river walk.
- Help the public understand the scale associated with concepts by comparing to a local reference point – like Lot F.
- The entire facades of Lower Main buildings might not necessarily be reused, but perhaps parts of buildings can be salvaged (such as a stone outline).
- Do not keep facades in current location.
- Along Beale Street in Memphis, giant steel structures hold up facades.
- Two twin culverts are proposed for the south side. The presentation did not include a tunnel for the north side.
- Add a drawing showing the view to St. Paul's (up the hill) to help the public understand possibilities.
- Describe how much the open channel will raise surrounding property values.
- The channel could include a wall with trompe l'oeil painting that gives a three-dimensional appearance.
- Stone outlines would be preferable to metal framing.
- The channel design option that is most effective from a hydraulic option should be pursued.
- The open channel could include rain-absorbing plants and serve as a sustainable demonstration area.
- The design of the channel can be enhanced with foundations of removed buildings, color variations, and mosaic set in surface.
- Emphasize the natural material to be used in the base flow.
- Maintenance of vegetation will be very important, as will removal of built-up sediment.
- Avoid metal framing if the structures could be washed away in a flood event.
- Buildings on the north side of the street will need to be flood proofed. Buildings can be protected from 4-6 feet of water with slower velocity and less debris.
- Begin the presentation to the public with the rendering of Lower Main, then describe the details of how the design was developed. Conclude with the same rendering.

West End

- Let the graphics speak for themselves when presenting the long-term concept for West End Service Center.

Courthouse

- When presenting concepts for the courthouse site, emphasize that redevelopment brings the opportunity to reduce existing impervious asphalt and add stormwater management.

Zoning

- Zoning for both St. Paul's and the courthouse site should be evaluated to allow a broader range of uses. A character-based code is recommended for the zoning code rewrite.

Streetscape and Parking

- Present one recommended sidewalk material to the public: the rectangular scored concrete design that mimics London pavers (2x4-foot rectangle design). The example shown from the Remington neighborhood in Baltimore should be presented to the public.
- On-street parking should be removed from the street, since flood water can float vehicles.
- A parking garage in Lot A will be important to support businesses and events in Lower Main.
- Lots A and F are important "intercept points" to capture vehicles before they enter town. Both Lots A and F could accommodate parking garages.
- Be strategic with parking – twenty years from now parking demand will be different.
- Use a shuttle system and create more open space in former parking lots.
- There are different options to develop a wrapped parking garage. A public-private partnership could be used to develop a parking garage wrapped with commercial spaces. In downtown Rockville, Montgomery County developed a parking garage and the new uses were privately developed.
- Showing an expanded sidewalk with a few tables on the north side of Lower Main will help people envision possibilities for more restaurants.

Alerts, Warnings and High Ground

- Describe plans for an alert system. One element of an alert system can be a light system to signal a flash flood watch. The overall alert system needs to be thought through. The Howard County Department of Public Works has partnered with the Department of Homeland Security and the National Weather Service to install stream gages in the watershed. The data collected by the gages will help the National Weather Service better understand how weather patterns affect stream dynamics. That knowledge can inform NWS products and predictions.
- Add description of plans for emergency evacuation, routes to high ground, and awareness of flood risk.
- Communicate distances to bridges to higher ground. Signage in Lower Main could indicate "you're never further than X feet from a bridge to higher ground."
- A parking garage in Lot D would include stairs and an elevator, providing a route to high ground on Old Columbia Pike.
- To communicate flood risk in Lot D under current conditions, paint parking spaces based on flood zone location (red for in the flood zone, white for out of the flood zone).
- Evacuation routes are important, but until it is safe to evacuate, people should shelter in place. An alert system could incorporate a light system to indicate when to shelter in place.

- Route planning should include accessible routes.
- Advertise that steps are being taken to make Ellicott City a safer place to visit.
- Stress that there are plans for alerts and warnings underway parallel to the master plan effort.

Master Plan Vision

- At the end of the presentation, revisit the master plan vision. State that all the small elements together can create a beautiful place that advances all the pillars (protecting lives, environment, etc.).

Following the discussion, V. Lazdins distributed certificates of appreciation to the MPAT members. K. Bolinger encouraged the MPAT members to continue to stay involved in the master plan effort, by attending the October 25 workshop, encouraging peers to attend October 25, participating in the online input option following October 25, attending the draft plan open house in early 2019, and participating in the subsequent plan adoption process.

The meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.