

Olney Town Center

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee
Monday, August 20, 2007 – 7:30 p.m.
Rockville Public Library & Rockville Town Square
Rockville, Maryland

Olney Town Center Advisory Committee (OTCAC) members in attendance: Jim Smith, Paula Kahla, Tom Gallagher, Helene Rosenheim, Dorothy Kane, Nancy DeLalio, Gina Angiola, and Joe Fritsch. Present from the Montgomery County library system were Joseph Eagan from the Olney Library, Khalid Afzal, OTCAC's liaison from Park and Planning attended.

Chairman Jim Smith called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Tom Gallagher recorded the minutes for the meeting currently in progress.

Tom Gallagher also advised the committee that he had resigned his position with the Freeman Companies and would be leaving the firm on September 21st, 2007. Tom made note that Michael T. Reilly, Vice President and Division General Manager of Carl M. Freeman Commercial Real Estate, was interested in joining the OTCAC as a member. Tom recommended Mike's appointment both to continue to maintain the connection with the Freeman Companies work in Olney and to take advantage of Mike's ten-plus years of experience in the commercial real estate realm. Jim Smith advised that this matter would be taken up at the September 17th, 2007 OTCAC meeting.

The meeting then turned to the presentation by Mayor Giammo. The Mayor inquired of the group what people were looking to gain from his presentation that evening. The various responses from the OTCAC members included desires to understand the following: the process that the City of Rockville went through as the project developed; what type of coordination and cooperation took place at City, county, state and private sector levels as things progressed; how the City developed the zoning criteria needed to move the project forward; the type of community outreach that was completed; and what other things the OTCAC should think about and look out for as they continue with their work for Olney.

Mayor Giammo, with the assistance of PowerPoint (a copy of the slides of which are attached as Exhibit A hereto), took those present through his presentation. The Mayor stated that his intent for the evening was to provide some context for the new Rockville Town Center ("RTC"), including information on the process, zoning matters and the various partnerships that were formed to accomplish the City's goals. He also planned on providing some historical basis to understand from whence the City had come as it sought to create a new town center.

The Mayor then highlighted a number of concerns and criteria that the City grappled with early on in the process as it sought to formulate its vision. Those elements included the following: what was the market they would be responding to (both residential and commercial demand); the project completed would have to be connected to the surrounding community; they would need to create a critical mass in terms of density and activity; they would need to maintain flexibility to honor market conditions; and the city should seek to competitively differentiate the new RTC from other similar projects in the area marketplace (e.g., Downtown Silver Spring and Bethesda Row). As an aside, the Mayor noted that a good book on some aspects of revitalization of urban areas is Jane Jacobs – *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Mayor Giammo noted that the Regal Cinemas was in some ways the market-driven step in the renewal of Rockville's town center area. The City went through a long and well thought out process as it sought to build upon that element. Through the use of zoning and public/private partnerships it implemented an 18-month long process to develop a master plan for the approximate 70 acres that would make up the RTC area. The master plan development process included an extensive public outreach program. The City also spent considerable time working on town center design guidelines (both the master plan and town center design guidelines are available on-line at City website at www.rockvillemd.gov).

The first phase of the RTC was made up of approximately 15 acres and surrounded by Beall Avenue on the north, Middle Lane to the south, North Washington Street to the west and Rockville Pike to the east. As part of the first phase plan, a new street, Gibbs Street, was designed going south to north, and Maryland Avenue was extended to connect Middle Lane to Beall Avenue. Working with the assistance of planners and Walker Parking consultants, a thousand public parking spaces were planned for that area. Given that Rockville Pike and North Washington Street act as primary vehicular routes, the first phase was centered between these two roads.

The first phase of RTC is made of the following mix: 600,000 square feet of office space; 170,000 square feet of retail and restaurant uses; a visual arts space and business incubator section; and 640 residential units. The new library and a grocery store were also designed and built as anchors for the redevelopment. All of the buildings were constructed of steel and concrete, the majority of it be built utilizing the Hambro construction system.

Partnerships and involvement included both public and private entities, including, the City, Montgomery County, DANAC, Ross Development, the federal government, and the State of Maryland. Approximate costs from governmental agencies were as follows: City of Rockville - \$60,000,000 to \$70,000,000; Montgomery County - \$40,000,000 (\$27,000,000 on library, \$13,000,000 on parking and other infrastructure); State of Maryland - \$5,000,000 to \$6,000,000 and federal government \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000. The mayor noted that approximately 70–75% of the costs were covered by private sector dollars, with the balance being provided by public sector monies. The Mayor also stated that tax incentive financing was a key to making the project feasible.

Some of the concepts that the City sought to address or promote were the “Urban Village Environment,” and enhancing the pedestrian nature of the area by focusing on sidewalk design (Mayor felt that 25’ was ideal width in environment). While green building standards were not incorporated into first phase, mayor stated that such concepts would be more fully addressed in future phases. Building heights went up to 120’ with setbacks being addressed at various points.

The Mayor then concluded the presentation in the library and took the group outside for a short tour of the area.

While standing in the RTC plaza area the Mayor pointed out a number of items that impacted the site. He noted that Street Works, a retail planning and design firm had assisted the City with its work. He stated that the plaza area was approximately 2/3rds of an acre and that leasing to restaurants on the plaza was key to creating the appropriate activity level envisioned. He also pointed out the use of balconies within the residential units overlooking the plaza was a benefit to sense of place. The Mayor referenced that the City would be obtaining a more permanent bandstand for the plaza to replace the wooden structure currently in place. He finished up by noting that the roof of the business incubator building was designed to accommodate catering events in the future and that honoring the City’s history, through the use of street naming and other media (i.e., placards and posters) was an important detail.

Being no further questions from the group the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.