



**Agenda for Meeting 10-2015**

**CITY OF ROCKVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION**

Don Hadley, Chair

Anne Goodman      Charles Littlefield  
David Hill            Gail Sherman  
Jack Leiderman      John Tvner, II

**Wednesday, May 27, 2015**  
**7:00 p.m. Mayor and Council Chamber**  
**City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue**

Andrew Gunning, Staff Liaison  
Marcy Waxman, Senior Assistant City Attorney

*Planning Commission Agenda and Staff Reports online:*  
<http://www.rockvillemd.gov/AgendaCenter/Planning-Commission-4>

**I. REVIEW AND ACTION**

**Request for Street Name Change.** At the request of Choice Hotels International, a proposal has been made to change the name of Renaissance Street to one of four suggestions. Exchange Drive, Catalyst Drive, Synergy Road and Innovation Drive have been offered for consideration. Staff is suggesting New Exchange Place as an alternative. Planners: Margaret Hall, 240-314-8226 or Andy Gunning, 240-314-8206.

**II. COMMISSION ITEMS**

- A. Staff Liaison Report
- B. Old Business – [Report from Commission Sub-Committee addressing building heights in the Draft Rockville Pike Plan.](#)
- C. New Business
- D. Minutes
- E. FYI Correspondence

**III. ADJOURN**

## HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR STAKEHOLDERS AND APPLICANTS

### I. GENERAL ORDER OF SESSION FOR DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

1. Staff presentation
2. City Board or Commission comment
3. Applicant presentation (10 min.)
4. Public comment (3 min, or 5 min for the representative of a group)
5. Planning Commission Discussion and Deliberation
6. Decision or recommendation by vote

*Note: The Planning Commission may ask questions of any party at any time during the proceedings.*

### II. PLANNING COMMISSION BROADCAST SCHEDULE

- Watch LIVE on Comcast Cable Rockville Channel 11 and online at: [www.rockvillemd.gov](http://www.rockvillemd.gov)
- Replay on Comcast Cable Rockville Channel 11: Wednesdays at 7:00 pm (if no live meeting)  
Sundays at 7:00 pm  
Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 1:00 pm  
Saturdays and Sundays at 12:00 am (midnight)

III. Video on Demand (within 48 hours of meeting) at: [www.rockvillemd.gov/VideoOnDemand](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/VideoOnDemand).

### IV. FUTURE MEETING DATES

June 10, 2015  
June 24, 2015  
July 8, 2015  
July 22, 2015

### V. NEW DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

For a complete list of all applications on file, visit: [www.rockvillemd.gov/DevelopmentWatch](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/DevelopmentWatch).  
Applications filed since April 30, 2015:

**STP2015-00252**, 15955 Frederick Road to replace the pre-approved condition 6 with an alternate easement area;

**STP2015-00253**, 1601 Research Blvd, to amend existing approval to allow 117,890 sf of office use and 60,928 sf research laboratory use;

**STP2015-00254**, 15201 Shady Grove Road to create paved area for 32 patrons by adding a stone retaining wall, maximum height 2'.7" and adding 30" high hedge.

### VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RESOURCES

The following resources are available to anyone who would like more information about the development review process. City staff can be reached at 240-314-8200 and additional information can be found on the City's web site at: [www.rockvillemd.gov/cpds](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/cpds)

- Citizen's Guides to Development Review and Zoning
- Development Review Manual
- Planning Academy Information

Maryland law and the Planning Commission's Rules of Procedure regarding ex parte (extra-record) communications require all discussion, review, and consideration of the Commission's business take place only during the Commission's consideration of the item at a scheduled meeting. Telephone calls and meetings with Commission members in advance of the meeting are not permitted. Written communications will be directed to appropriate staff members for response and included in briefing materials for all members of the Commission.

## Building Height Considerations by the Rockville Planning Commission

Focus: These points illustrate how we arrived at our recommendations.

Basis for recommendations:

- The Planning Commission listened to everybody who spoke or provided testimony.
- The recommendations in the draft Pike Neighborhood Plan represent a long-term view that allows for shifts in demand for residential, office, retail, and present a vision of an appropriate mix of uses, including live/work.
- Considerations incorporated footprint size and potential for public space in all components of the mix of uses.

Planning principles - Current Master Plan vision statement says Rockville should reflect the characteristics in the first two bullets below:

- "...a small town community..."
- "...distinct positive identity tied to its community history..." (editor's note: not like White Flint, Bethesda)
- Participants at the May 9 Master Plan kick-off meeting were fairly uniformly in support of these principles and that they should remain as part of the upcoming revision.

Human considerations should factor heavily.

- Public comment from residents throughout the community, not just from the immediate neighborhoods, generally supported lower heights.
- A more human scale was preferable to maximum urbanization.
- Heights were seen by residents to affect quality of life, community identity, general atmosphere of the area. "Canyon effects" were dreaded.
- Atmosphere/identity should remain less urban.
- Rockville might be seen as an "oasis" between more urban (taller) sections of the Pike on the north and south in Montgomery County.
- Many are concerned about shadow from tall buildings. Some protection provided by layback for adjoining residential properties
- Mix/atmosphere should encourage new residents but not allow the numbers to overwhelm the existing infrastructure.

While recognizing that there are some caveats to it, an assumption was made concerning residential units that taller buildings have more residential units which results in increased population density, which could adversely impact:

- APFS/APFO – schools, water, sewer, traffic
- Traffic (e.g., failing intersections), including pedestrian safety
- Crime levels

The Planning Commission also recognized that there are factors over which Rockville has no control and development must be balanced to address this. Elements include the following:

- PEPCO
- METRO
- County/State Roads
- Schools

Stability and potential contribution to community issues are important.

- Renters and lessees are likely to be more transient and be less interested than owners in long-term community developments, and be less involved. This applies to both residential and commercial properties.

Exceptions to building heights specifications could be considered in the zoning ordinance to encourage more community amenities. Possible exceptions include the following

- Commercial, office, parks, green space, affordable housing, affordable commercial space.

Building heights should be addressed in the plan and not limited to the zoning code.

- Building heights are addressed in the existing plan
- Building heights are an integral component of the Pike vision (density, identity, atmosphere) and human considerations.

Structural considerations can help define a “breakpoint” for recommendations on building height.

- Stick built/wood residential structures are usually 5-6 stories whereas steel/concrete ones can be 12 stories or more. While neither type of structure is preferable from a Planning Commission point of view, the lower building structure reflects the considerations defined above.
- While 7 stories may not be possible currently, ongoing improvements in technology may allow taller stick-built structures in future.
- Seven stories is within range of this break point.

Draft for discussion at Planning Commission 5/27/2015 meeting

A. Goodman

J. Tyner

G. Sherman