



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission



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January 9, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Prince George's County Planning Board

VIA: Lakisha Hull, AICP, LEED AP BD+C; Planning Director *LH*
James R. Hunt, MPA; Acting Deputy Planning Director of Operations *JRH*
Tony Felts, AICP; Division Chief, Community Planning Division *TF*

FROM: Sarah Benton, AICP; Supervisor, Long-Range Planning Section, Community Planning Division *SB*
Thomas Lester, Planner IV; Master Plans and Studies Section, Community Planning Division *TEL*

SUBJECT: **Recommendation to Remand the Second Draft West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan and Proposed Sectional Map Amendment**

The first Draft West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan and Proposed Sectional Map Amendment were remanded by the Planning Board on December 15, 2022, to evaluate the impact of Prince George's County Council bills CB-77-2022 and CB-97-2022 on plan implementation. After staff analysis was completed on these bills and they were subsequently repealed, the second Draft (Staff Draft II) West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan ("Sector Plan") and Proposed Sectional Map Amendment ("SMA") were released to the public on May 2, 2024, with revisions that address both the testimony received by the close of the record on October 26, 2022 as well as a letter received from the Department of the Environment commenting on the first draft Sector Plan and its conflicts with the County's Climate Action Plan. Opportunities for the public to review and comment on the Sector Plan followed in June 2024, when two public meetings about the second Sector Plan and SMA were held, as well as at the October 1, 2024, Joint Public Hearing. However, as further internal analysis has revealed several areas of concern with the Sector Plan and SMA, including those pertaining to existing strategies and policies as well as events external to the Sector Plan, per Section 27-3502(f)(4), staff recommend the Planning Board remand the Sector Plan and SMA back to the Planning Director for further evaluation to address the following issues:

Displacement

Despite intentions to create more housing within the Sector Plan area, including affordable housing, strategies LU 2.10 and HN 1.8 may have the undesired consequence of displacing existing residents from either subsidized or naturally occurring affordable housing as the total number of existing affordable housing units could potentially be reduced. A remand would allow staff to conduct further analysis to better understand the possibility and impact of displacement, revising sector plan strategies as needed to ensure the sector plan area sees no net loss of affordable units.

Sustainable Development and Mitigation Strategies for Floodplain Development

The Sector Plan strongly discourages development within the floodplain, particularly through policies LU 2 and NE 1 and their accompanying strategies; however, it does not fully consider future technologies and building strategies and materials that may allow for development in the floodplain that is

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environmentally sensitive and better safeguards health and safety than what exists today. Rather than issuing a blanket statement that dissuades new development within the floodplain that may be appropriate for both the Sector Plan area and the immediate setting today, further research and evaluation is needed into emerging building technologies and strategies that may make development in the floodplain appropriate under certain circumstances. A remand would allow staff to conduct further investigation into this area and re-evaluate policies and strategies pertaining to floodplain development, particularly allowing for the possibility of sustainable development within the floodplain and the implementation of mitigation strategies that may lessen the impact of development.

Single-Family Neighborhood Zoning

Strategies LU 9.3 and HN 1.6 recommend rezoning the Queens Chapel Manor neighborhood from predominantly Residential, Single-Family-65 (“RSF-65”) to entirely Residential, Single-Family-Attached (“RSF-A”) in order to add more two- and three-family “Missing Middle” homes within an area that is easily accessible to two Metro stations. However, limiting the rezoning to just the Queens Chapel Manor neighborhood disregards other neighborhoods in which a rezoning to RSF-A may be appropriate, especially those that are of an equivalent proximity to either the West Hyattsville Metro station or the Hyattsville Crossing Metro station, as well as solely places the burden of adding Missing Middle housing on just the Queens Chapel Manor neighborhood. A remand would allow staff to reevaluate existing zoning and density in single-family residential portions of the Sector Plan area and reexamine where it is appropriate to allow for additional density and housing types.

HB 538

On April 25, 2024, Governor Wes Moore signed HB 538 into law, which goes into effect January 1, 2025. This bill, also known as the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, is intended to address housing shortages and affordability throughout the state of Maryland through a variety of methods; the most pertinent to the Sector Plan and SMA is the establishment of a qualified project category to include new construction or substantial renovation within 0.75 miles of a rail station and providing those projects certain statutory benefits. A remand would allow staff to analyze the potential impacts of HB 538 on the Sector Plan and SMA and, if necessary, to revise existing sections of the Sector Plan and SMA that may conflict with HB 538.

CB-15-2024

On July 16, 2024, the Prince George’s County Council adopted CB-15-2024, taking effect on September 3, 2024. Adoption of this bill led to significant changes to procedures and regulations within the new Zoning Ordinance, and a remand of the Sector Plan and SMA would provide staff additional time to analyze and address the bill’s impacts on these two documents.

If the plan is remanded, the testimony received at the 2024 joint public hearing on the second draft Sector Plan and SMA will also be evaluated for incorporation into a revised draft plan; staff’s goal will be to move through the plan process expeditiously in 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Staff recommend the Planning Board remand the Staff Draft II West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan.
2. Staff recommend the Planning Board remand the Proposed West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sectional Map Amendment.

Attachment (Electronic):

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(1) [Staff Draft II West Hyattsville-Queens Chapel Sector Plan and SMA](#)

cc: WHQC Project file

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