



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMPLETE STREETS DESIGN GUIDANCE

*Development Community Open House
May 21st, 2019*

SUMMARY NOTES

One facilitator was assigned to each table. Copies of the Street Typology Matrix, Street Component Chart, and writing materials were distributed to each group. There were approximately 7-10 people at each of the four tables. The table facilitator asked the group the following questions and helped guide the resulting discussion. A summary of the key points is provided below:

- 1. Introductions - What is your name? What organization are you representing? What is your role in the development review? Why are you in the room today? Why are you interested in being a part of the development of this guide?**

Table 1

- Less Powell, CPJA
- Timothy Hoffman, Soltesz
- Mark Etheridge, MCDPS
- Chris Conklin, MCDOT
- Patrick Butler, Planning Dept
- Atiq Panjshiri, MCDPS

Table 3

- Frank Bossong, Rodgers Consulting
- Bob Graham, Rodgers Consulting
- Jason Evans, VIKA
- Marie LaBaw, MCFRS
- Michael Paylor, MCDOT Traffic

Table 2

- Keely Lauretti, Soltesz
- Mark Morelock, Vika
- Kate (last name), Elm Street
- Sylke Knuppel, VIKA
- Steve Findley, Planning Dept
- Rebecca Torma, MCDOT
- Carrie Sanders, Planning Dept

Table 4

- Francine Carrier, BBS&G Attorneys
- Steve Aldrich, Planning Dept
- Chris Kabatt, Wells & Associates
- Andrew Bossi, MCDOT
- Tim Longfellow, GLW
- Robert Kronenberg, Planning Dept
- Dave Anspacher, Planning Dept

- 2. What are the current challenges you face with street design standards and guidance?**
 - Trying to comply with all the regulations.
 - Fitting all the regulatory requirements within the right-of-way. When all the needs don't fit, we are instructed to "work it out" by the agency / approval side without direction. Often the various agencies don't agree but we are required to comply with all.
 - Minimum and maximum widths would be appreciated for various street needs.



- Providing a clear answer is difficult due to consistency within agency and confidence in the correct answer for prioritization. Different agencies have different priorities.
- Area 2 is very challenging for design decisions due to the changing, urbanizing nature of the currently suburban area. Large arterials roads used for commuting are a large part of Area 2. The larger ROW widths trend toward all needs wanting maximum widths.
- Too many constraints. Want more flexibility.
- Curbless streets are desired – need guidance.
- Truck turning movements and utilities are the biggest challenges.
- Chapter 50 has not been updated to reflect current standards or desires of the county.
- WSSC and Pepco want an extra 16' in additional space in the easement outside of their right-of-way. No footings or furniture allowed in this area. Doesn't work, especially in urban settings. There should be conditions where this is allowed.
- Maintenance of utilities is key – everyone wants to be behind the curb so they can access things without closing traffic. They won't allow any encroachment and don't want overlapping or shared alignments for utilities.
- In CBDs they allow dry utilities to be in public right-of-way. This works better. (Applies in all zero lot line places.)
- Conflicts between grates, manholes, access panels and ADA access.
- No dead ends allowed, only cul-de-sacs. This is bad for two reasons: cul-de-sac dimensions are oversized, and if you're building up against a freeway or barrier (with no street access), a 90° corner created by two internal streets is considered a turn not an intersection, so curve requirements apply not corner radii. This doesn't work.
- Private streets are easy – they are more of a negotiation than a set of exceptions. They allow combined utilities and other rules are more flexible. Ultimately the developers would prefer public streets, but not if the requirements are too onerous.
- County needs to engage PEPCO and WSSC in creating typical sections. Show how utilities would fit.
- WSSC has certain excavator equipment that is driving discussions about width requirements. Couldn't they get a smaller piece of equipment for urban areas?
- Special paving materials / textures are desired in new town areas, plaza streets, shared streets....always a headache to get approved because of maintenance.
- Increasingly developments front onto a small street or promenade where pedestrian access is the focus and the vehicle, fire, and utility access is in an alley in the back. But the fire code is based on distance to the front door. In this case, the alley is the primary access for vehicles. We need better code language to support this type of development.
- There is a learning curve for developer's consultants with new bicycle designs, specifically how to treat them at intersections, around acceleration/deceleration lanes, site distances. Training is needed.
- Having enough soil volume for trees is a challenge. Also, guidance is needed on ensuring structural integrity of sidewalks where they are porous is tough.
- Truncation – placing buildings at corners. (Rebecca Torma can clarify what this comment was about)
- Guidance is needed for special conditions like right-in-right-out intersections.



- The prioritization table is a great idea. It has to have teeth, i.e. if it says the pedestrian zone is the highest priority, then that might mean no new turn lanes. (Everyone at the table agreed)
- Loading and drop off zones for retail – at Pike and Rose this was done on a private street because if it was in the public right-of-way a franchise agreement would have been needed, and that requires County Council approval. (includes a financial agreement). Specialty benches, lights, etc...require maintenance agreements.
- Suburban standards are being used for urban development.
- Process issues– conflicts between different agency requirements/objectives.
- Development Review Committee. It is hard to solves issues in the room – too many meetings.

3. How could this guide more clearly communicate process and standards?

- The development community would like the street types, ROW and requirements of the street to be worked out as early as possible in the planning process. (Preliminary Plan, Sketch Plan, Master Plan phase, Pre-App Meeting)
- There is a real desire from everyone to provide a cohesive document that guides the user through the process and ties everything together.
- Guidance on what to expect for various stages and reviewing agencies.
- Flexibility in design is key, but justification and guidance on what is available for redesign would be helpful. There are virtually no roads being built using a non-modified standard detail.
- We do not want to squash the creativity in design.
- Will the guide provide any justification for decisions? It would be helpful to know the “why” because the consultant community could learn from it and it brings important perspective. Sometimes comments are received that seem arbitrary but if we push for the rationale, it make sense. (e.g., double driveways)
- It would be very helpful to document various institutional knowledge from Agency staff in some public way that the consulting community could have access to it. Staff agreed that documenting institutional knowledge would be great, but it is difficult to provide extensive justification on every comment. Additionally, the public or consulting community may use it to argue against them.
- Institutional knowledge document as a living, accessible document that could include contribution from outside (studies, reports, new findings).
- Typical sections would be helpful, but for intent not as regulatory / prescriptive requirements. Guidelines should be just that – guidance that informs the designs for each individual place.
- In VA, utilities can all be in the street ROW – this would be better.
- County/Pepco/WSSC should allow overlapping easements and think more vertically instead of just horizontally for placing utilities.
- Pike and Rose used silva cells as a test case. At the time, there was a credit for using them, but it no longer exists. Pike and Rose is a good model for managing utilities on new urban streets, but they loaded the utilities on private streets so they wouldn’t have to comply with all public requirements.



- SHA should be involved – SHA requirements are often contradictory to County objectives.
- Utilities must be involved. There is limited space – need to balance complete streets with utility requirements.
- Very challenging in urban conditions with very limited space. Always fighting for space – utilities vs trees vs SWM facilities
- Design Guideline needs: Lane widths, Sight distance, Drainage
- Subdivision code and Road Code often conflict with each other with regard to Geometry, FRS requirements vs DOT
- Engineers/clients often need to submit revisions to code
- Pages of docs cost time and money
- Must often submit design exceptions to DPS
- ADA Accessibility Design Requirements should be addressed
- Current standards do not meet ADA
- Crosswalks
- Grade breaks
- Cross slopes on sidewalk
- Clarify Bill 33-13 requirements
- Max 10/11 ft lane widths
- Marie – curb return widths are being addressed in their own guidelines currently under development i.e. – radii 25 ft vs 15 ft minimums. Do not want to limit ability to respond to any emergency.
- Need flexibility on Geometry
- Intersections
- Don't be afraid of superelevation
- Oversize lanes on sharp curves
- Okay not to meet AASHTO?
- Are bollards allowed in ROW?
- What truck design vehicles will be used
- Loading/unloading design (Reference loading management plan)
- 7 vs 8 ft width for parking lanes next to bike lanes
- Roundabouts
- Conflicts between agencies
- How do roundabouts accommodate bikes – street level, vs mid-level, vs sidewalk level
- Is back-in parking allowed?
- Design guide should be flexible, provide clarity, consistency in message & feedback. May need different standards in different areas.
- Will there be a point person?
- Needs to clarify how to make decisions that are appropriate for uses & land use.

4. Based on the draft outline of the content for the design guidelines presented, are there any major gaps you observed?

- Driveway design and access
- Alley widths and needs (used often in townhome communities)
- Dry utilities (P.U.E)



- Is it possible to have a master plan of utilities?
- Maintenance
- Cost explanation
- Design speed needs to meet AASHTO, which dictates horizontal and vertical curvature, site distances.
- Lower design speeds are good. Need design guidance for slowing speeds on larger streets.
- Driveway access: spacing, proximity to intersections, lining up across the street, street tree, sight lines, ped and bike design at driveways.
- Smaller ROWs/street sections are the developer's preference. They mean more developable space. So the intent of the guide and the goals of developers are probably very aligned.
- Chapter 50 has minimum intersection spacing. Alleys don't count. Developers want this to be less....they are too far apart in some instances
- Applicants, engineers and agency review personnel must be educated in the guidelines
- 2008 Standards were contentious due to competing agendas of agencies, engineers and developers
- How to resolve prescriptive code
- Local Area Transportation Review (LATR)
- ADA
- Coordinate with Ride On and WMATA
- Conflicts with bikes
- Narrow corridors
- Bus Stop requirements
- Private roads vs public roads
- Setback is an issue on private roads
- Process
- Alley – function & priorities
- Solutions that can work tomorrow.
- Private roads – WSSC
- How do we balance guidelines w/ master plan row
- Parking garages
- Competing interests – trade off & balance of mode.
- How to address tradeoffs.
- Master plan says, how do we use this guide?
- The design process.
- Space
- Priorities
- Users

5. Review the Street Types in the matrix on the table. What are your initial thoughts, questions, and/or concerns regarding the content included?

- Most Common Street Types: Tertiary Residential. Commercial business district and Mixed Use
- Most challenging: Not a street type in particular. The fundamental problem always comes down to space allocation and grading.



- Business District Section was used recently. Worked pretty well (only a few exceptions). Everyone at the table agreed...doing a street with no exceptions is nearly unheard of
- Challenge – suburban blvd, land use context.

6. Review the Design Parameters in the table. What are your initial thoughts, questions, and/or concerns regarding the content included?

- The focus is only between the curbs. There is a need to see all street elements together because that is how we determine space within ROW and building frontage.
- Include curb elements and outside ROW elements as applicable.
- Can spaces be shared? Example: Utilities and bike lane or Utilities and Parking lane? Provide justification too (because parking can be temporarily removed for utility maintenance)
- Lower design speeds are good. Tuckerman Lane is an example – more design treatments needed to ensure people are driving lower speeds. Montrose Parkway is another example.
- Need to consider how these target speeds interact with design speed.
- What about the future – connected and automated vehicles, new mobility devices, should the guide consider those?
- It is important for the Complete Street guide NOT to lead to wider streets. Can't fit everything on to every street. Area plan process will be key for prioritizing at a district scale.
- Parking and drop off zones – need to land carefully for this.
- Why is 8' the minimum for on street parking? Should be lower.
- How do we have streets w/ higher speeds than present? This is a concern.
- Target Speed – what if there is a range?
- Parking used to be 7' - we should allow that.

7. In the past few years the development community has increasingly requested waivers to construct private streets in Montgomery County. From what you learned today, do you feel that this guide will provides sufficient flexibility to reduce the requests for private streets? If not, what more can be done?

- What is motivation for private streets?
 - Control of design.
- What specific design elements would do you generally want more control over?
 - Priority of elements / motivation is different in different areas
- Historically the reasons have been:
 - Setback from ROW yielding more lots (more lots = more profit)
 - Private structure under road
 - Enhanced furnishing
- Staff does not like private roads. The developer builds the site plan, sells the lots and leaves. The homeowners do not understand that they are responsible for the street and gets upset when it's not maintained or plowed. The public complains to the County and demands the County take ownership of the road which was never approved of as a public road. When the HOA doesn't take care of the road or can't afford it, it also creates an EMS access issue.
- Developers do not want to have a maintenance agreement for private streets. Includes hiring a lawyer and more liability.



- County Code clearly prioritizes Public Roads.
- Because you can put things under them.
- Elements w/in ROW – stormwater mgmt.
- Public water & sewer – easements, what can you do, setbacks
- Flexibility
- Design – narrower lanes, turning radius issues.
- Density – smaller/ higher minimums
- Bigger sidewalks & space for trees
- Need to change ROW.