

Approved
City of Mount Rainier
Mixed-Use Town Center Zone Development Plan
November 2010



Abstract

PROJECT: Approved City of Mount Rainier Mixed-Use Town Center Zone Development Plan

AUTHOR: The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)

SUBJECT: Approved City of Mount Rainier Mixed-Use Town Center Zone Development Plan

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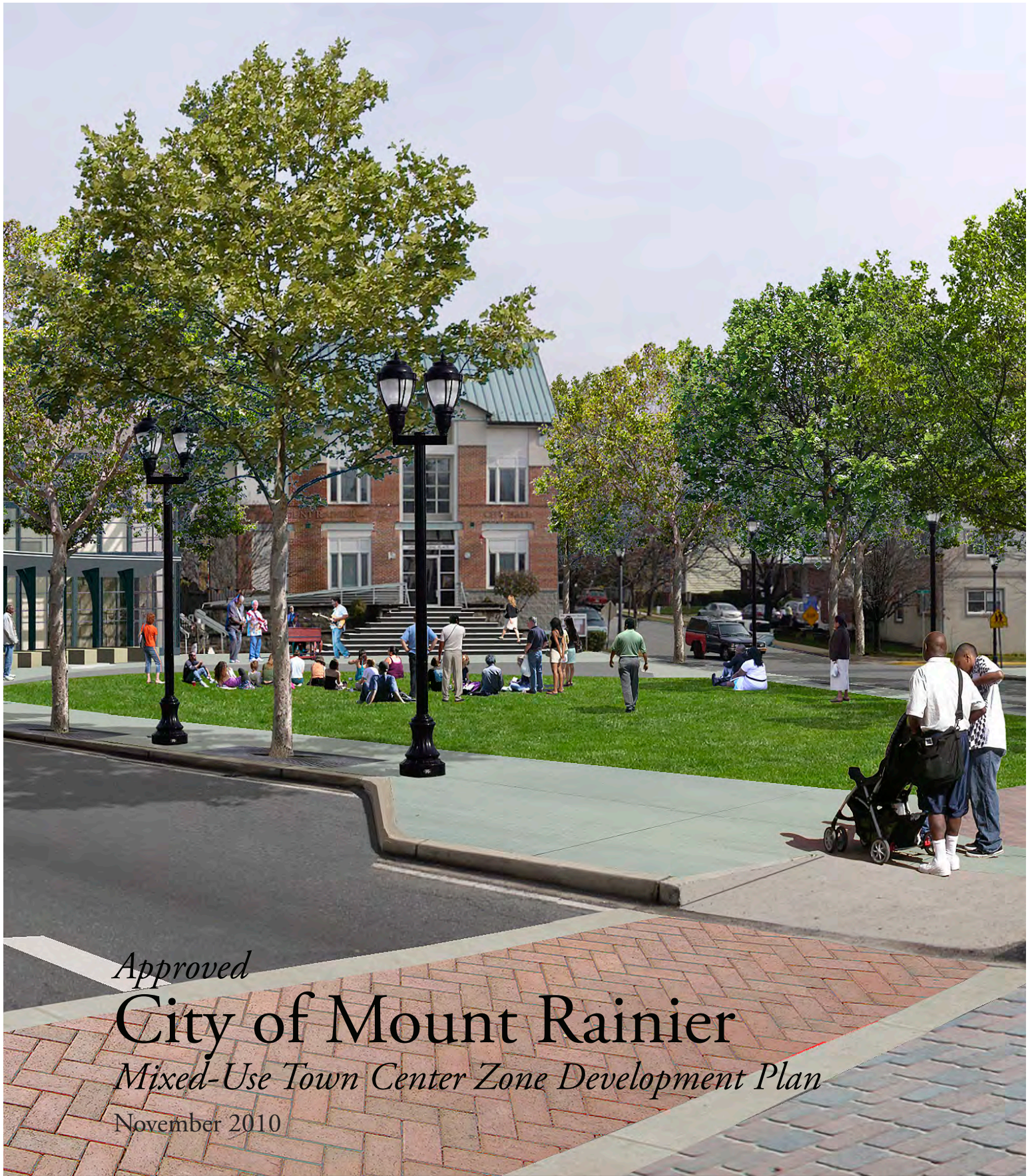
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ABSTRACT: The mixed-use town center (M-U-TC) zone district was created in 1994 to promote reinvestment and development in the county's older, more established mixed-use areas. This document updates the July 1994 *Mount Rainier Town Center Development Plan* and revises the development policies and design standards and guidelines that will support a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant mixed-use town center for the City of Mount Rainier.

This plan was developed by M-NCPPC during an extensive 18-month public participation process that involved the input of many residents and public officials. The plan, which takes into account current market and economic conditions, consists of five sections: the Introduction, which defines the project area and outlines the public participation process; the Existing Conditions Analysis, which includes a historical overview and current economic and marketing considerations; the Plan Vision, which describes the envisioned future for the M-U-TC area; the Design Standards and Guidelines, which promote high-quality urban and architectural design; and the Implementation, which provides information on funding resources to encourage, promote, and facilitate near, medium, and long-term project goals.



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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

www.mncppc.org



Prince George's County Planning Department

14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive

Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is a bicounty agency, created by the General Assembly of Maryland in 1927. The Commission's geographic authority extends to the great majority of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties: the Maryland-Washington Regional District (M-NCPPC planning jurisdiction) comprises 1,001 square miles, while the Metropolitan District (parks) comprises 919 square miles, in the two counties.

The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District.
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system.
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the county government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Department of Planning (M-NCPPC):

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect, and manage the county's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decision-makers, citizens, and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change.

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary 1

Introduction 5

 Plan Purpose 6

 Study Area Description 6

 Public Outreach Process 7

Existing Conditions 11

 Context 12

 Historical Analysis 14

 Property Analysis 15

 Transportation Analysis 16

 Market Analysis 18

 Market Analysis: Existing Land Uses 20

Vision 23

 Plan Principles 24

 Urban Design Plan 25

 Illustrative Plan 26

 District Recommendations 27

 Land Use Recommendations 45

 Historic Preservation/Adaptive Reuse Recommendations 47

 Environmental/Sustainability Recommendations 49

 Transportation Recommendations 50

 Arts and Arts Community Recommendations 53

Design Guidelines 55

 Design Review Process 56

 Plan Vision Overview 62

 Mount Rainier M-U-TC Design Standards and Guidelines . . . 65

 Public Space Standards and Guidelines 66

 Site Design Standards and Guidelines 78

 Architectural Elements Standards and Guidelines 88

Implementation 103

 Implementation 104

 Implementation Area Recommendations and Charts 106

 Implementation Tools and Programs 123

 Specific Property or Building Recommendations 129

Appendices 157

 Gateway Arts District Uses Permitted 158

 The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Preservation
 Restoration, and Rehabilitation 179

 Historic Preservation Definitions 181

 M-U-TC Building and Property Inventory 184

 Acknowledgments Inside back cover

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: An illustrative showing the sub-plan areas	1
FIGURE 2: Implementation map—Civic Core	3
FIGURE 3: Regional context map	12
FIGURE 4: M-U-TC development plan area	13
FIGURE 5: Scale comparison—8th Street SE, Washington, D.C.	13
FIGURE 6: Existing property map	15
FIGURE 7: Bus lines serving the study area	17
FIGURE 8: Primary trade area	18
FIGURE 9: Diagram of the initial districts concept	24
FIGURE 10: The urban design plan	25
FIGURE 11: Illustrative plan for the M-U-TC area	26
FIGURE 12: Recommendations for the three districts	27
FIGURE 13: Existing conditions—34th Street, looking south	29
FIGURE 14: Proposed conditions—34th Street south of Bunker Hill Road, looking south	29
FIGURE 15: Recommendations for Upper 34th Street	32
FIGURE 16: Existing street section: Rhode Island Avenue, west of traffic circle, looking west	34
FIGURE 17: Proposed short-term street section—Rhode Island Avenue, west of traffic circle, looking west	34
FIGURE 18: Proposed mid-term street section—Rhode Island Avenue, west of traffic circle, looking west	35
FIGURE 19: Proposed long-term street section—Rhode Island Avenue, west of traffic circle, looking west	35
FIGURE 20: Schematic site plan	38
FIGURE 21: Building solar study: May 21st	38
FIGURE 22: Recommendations for Rhode Island Avenue	39
FIGURE 23: Recommendations for the Civic Core/City Center	44
FIGURE 24: Primary and secondary retail focus areas	45
FIGURE 25: Protected and unprotected historic properties	47
FIGURE 26: M-U-TC, Mount Rainier, and historic district boundaries	48
FIGURE 27: Location of permeable parking areas and rain gardens/Green Streets prototype	49
FIGURE 28: City of Mount Rainier	62
FIGURE 29: Proposed street section: 34th Street, south of Bunker Hill Road, looking south	66
FIGURE 30: Proposed street plan: 34th Street, south of Bunker Hill Road	66
FIGURE 31: Proposed street section: 34th Street, North of Bunker Hill Road, looking south	67
FIGURE 32: Proposed street section: Rhode Island Avenue, west of the traffic circle, looking west	68
FIGURE 33: Proposed conditions: North side of Rhode Island Avenue, looking west	69
FIGURE 34: Proposed conditions: South side of Rhode Island Avenue, looking west	69
FIGURE 35: Proposed street plan: Rhode Island Avenue, north side	70
FIGURE 36: M-U-TC pedestrian zones and crosswalks	71
FIGURE 37: Potential shared parking locations	73
FIGURE 38: Primary and secondary retail focus areas	78
FIGURE 39: Orientation of new buildings	80
FIGURE 40: Maximum building heights within the M-U-TC boundary area	81
FIGURE 41: Proposed street section at Rhode Island Avenue adjacent to new infill residential, looking west	82
FIGURE 42: Proposed site plan at the Rhode Island Avenue new infill residential site	83
FIGURE 43: Diagram showing fence height	84
FIGURE 44: Proposed outdoor seating in front of buildings with a setback	85
FIGURE 45: Proposed front yard improvements	92
FIGURE 46: Diagram showing awning height dimensions	102

Executive Summary

Introduction

The City of Mount Rainier Mixed-Use Town Center (M-U-TC) Zone Development Plan updates the previously approved 1994 *Mount Rainier Town Center Development Plan*. The new plan takes into account current economic/market conditions. Its revised development policies and design standards will guide future development within the plan area and ensure a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant mixed-use town center.

The project area encompasses the buildings along the Rhode Island Avenue corridor east of the District of Columbia line at Eastern Avenue to just beyond the traffic circle at 34th Street. It also extends from the building frontages along 34th Street just north of Bunker Hill Road to about an eighth of a block south of Rhode Island Avenue.

Several hundred residents and stakeholders within a half-mile radius of the study area participated in the development plan update through more than 12 public meetings, hands-on work sessions, and stakeholder group meetings held between September 2009 and March 2010.

Existing Conditions Analysis

As a part of the development plan update, a detailed analysis was made of existing conditions in Mount Rainier. This analysis included research and documentation of the following:

- The physical/geographic description of the M-U-TC boundary
- Historic background and development patterns
- Transportation systems
- Market analysis
- Demographics
 - Existing land uses
 - Market demands and development
 - Opportunities

Plan Vision

The plan vision incorporates urban design and illustrative plans, which provide a framework and visualization of the planned town center, as well as recommendations for the three sub-plan areas:

- Upper 34th Street
- Rhode Island Avenue
- Civic Core/City Center



FIGURE 1: An illustrative showing the sub-plan areas.

Design Standards and Guidelines

The purpose of the design standards and guidelines is to promote high-quality urban and architectural design within the context of the M-U-TC Zone development plan area and to encourage a cohesive and attractive environment consistent with the plan vision and economic revitalization.

The design standards and guidelines define a design review process that ensures predictability for development or redevelopment from concept, through review, to approval and implementation.

First, the design standards and guidelines are based on an understanding of the Mount Rainier Historic District and an overview of its defining characteristics.

The plan area's three districts are described in detail:

- Upper 34th Street: “Main Street” pedestrian scaled one- to three-story retail.
- Rhode Island Avenue: “Boulevard” three- to five-story larger scale, retail/residential mix.
- Civic Core/City Center: “Civic Center” three- to four-story larger scale, civic/residential mix.

Next, the design standards and guidelines provide graphics and details for the public realm, site design, and architectural elements. Examples of these graphics and details include street sections at 34th Street and Rhode Island Avenue, pedestrian crosswalks, sidewalks, street lighting, building height, setbacks, massing, walls, fences and screening, façades and fenestration, storefronts, material, color, porches and front yards, additions, subtractions, and signage.

Specific recommendations are provided for key buildings within the plan area.

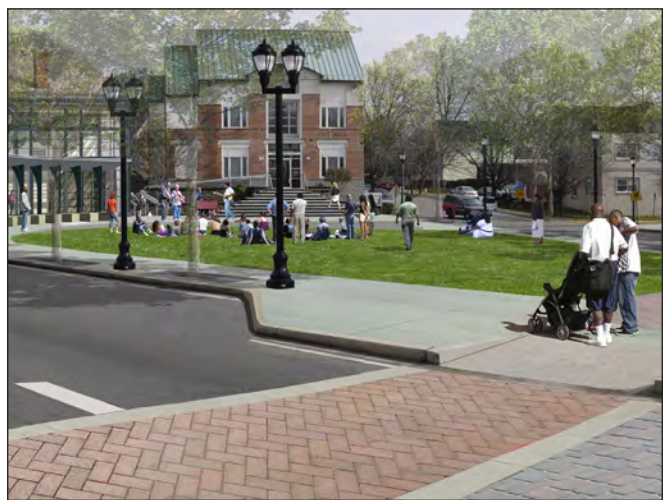
Finally, the design standards and guidelines also address public art, sustainability, parking, and the treatment of historic buildings within the Mount Rainier M-U-TC Zone development plan area.



Plan vision: 34th Street, looking south.



Plan vision: Rhode Island Avenue, looking west.



Plan vision: civic core/city center, looking east.

Implementation

For the effective implementation of the plan vision, it is suggested that a number of key stakeholders form new working relationships and coordinate initiatives. The M-U-TC Zone development plan provides a framework for implementation, paying special attention to priorities, timing, and possible funding strategies. The key elements to the implementation philosophy are:

- A comprehensive framework
- Building on existing resources
- Priority and focus
- Quality over quantity
- Incremental change

The key implementation priorities are:

- To reinforce the role of the M-U-TC Zone development plan as the critical planning tool.
- Creation of a “downtown” action plan to concentrate public investment and energy on key plan areas: Upper 34th Street, Rhode Island Avenue, and the Civic Core/City Center.
- Creation of a “Main Street” program.

The M-U-TC Zone development plan provides implementation charts and action timelines for each of the key plan areas.

Implementation precedents such as Barracks Row in Washington, D.C., and Takoma Park Main Street in Maryland provide specific examples of how the recommended strategies worked in other communities.

The section on implementation tools and programs itemizes current successful economic development programs and transportation implementation tools. Economic revitalization programs are outlined at the Prince George’s County, State of Maryland, and federal levels.

Profiles of property/building clusters provide details on existing conditions and development potential for major development or redevelopment opportunity sites highlighted in the plan vision. Information is included on lot area, land use, building details, historic integrity, and ownership. Details are also provided on implementation factors such as costs, benefits, and phasing.

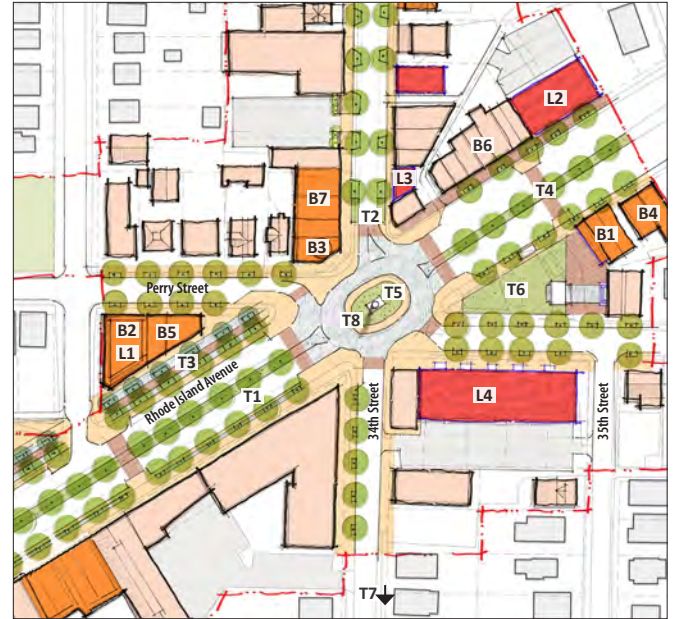


FIGURE 2: Implementation map—Civic Core.

T—Transportation recommendations

L—Land use recommendations

B—Building recommendations

