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Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2011

Chevy Chase Land Company unveils vision for Chevy Chase Lake

More than 100 attend first sector plan community meeting

by Sarah Gantz | Staff Writer

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The Chevy Chase Land Company unveiled Monday a vision for a town center, with neighborhood retail, restaurants and a street grid design, as a potential redevelopment along Connecticut Avenue.

More than 100 people crowded into the Montgomery County Planning Department's Silver Spring headquarters to hear a presentation by Chevy Chase Land Company and other landowners at the first public hearing for the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan. The

Tin Nguyen/The Gazette

More than 100 people attended a presentation by Chevy Chase Land Company and other landholders at the first public hearing for the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan on Monday. The sector plan could rezone an area of residential and commercial property to expand development options.



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"We picture this as a little community — where you can literally ride your bike or walk to anything you need," said David M. Smith, the company's president.

The sector plan covers an area bordered by Jones Bridge Road, East West Highway, Rock Creek Park and the Columbia Country Club and encompasses residential property, commercial property along Connecticut Avenue, North Chevy Chase Elementary School and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

The land company's plan would create narrow roads in the portion of the Chevy Chase Lake property closest to Connecticut Avenue, to improve bus access to the proposed Purple Line station within the sector plan's boundaries and to create a grid that could easily be developed into what the company described as a Main Street, with a mix of restaurants, grocers, florists and other community-use retailers.

Smith said the company aims to emphasize bike and pedestrian access to new development and the Purple Line station, which is not designed to include commuter parking. The company's design includes paths through grassy areas, to make the station more accessible.

"I was amazed at the creativity and the sense of mission the developers have shown in valuing walkability as a community asset," said Richard Hoye, who lives near the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda.

Hoye said public transit and his bicycle are his primary modes of transportation — he does not own a vehicle.

Others are less optimistic that the land company will be successful in reducing traffic simply by not providing parking.

"The American people love their automobiles — they don't love their bikes or their feet," said Bob Colton of Chevy Chase.

Even in its earliest stages, the land company's ideas have been met with contention from some Chevy Chase residents who fear new development will exacerbate traffic problems and create a high-density shopping center that is incompatible with the surrounding area.

At Monday's meeting, some residents became angry and demanded a response when the company's representatives said they were too early in the planning process to answer some questions — such as the height of new buildings or a timeframe for construction.

The Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, which owns a row of homes in the sector plan's area, and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute also gave presentations Monday.

Maryann Dillon, director of real estate development for the Housing Opportunities Commission, said the commission does not have any immediate plans for expansion within the sector plan, but would be open to the possibility. The commission provides affordable housing for families with low and moderate income levels.

Monday's presentation was the first of two community meetings intended to help planning board staff form a recommendation to bring to the board.

Staff could have a draft sector plan completed as early as this spring, said Elza Hisel-McCoy, the project manager for the sector plan.

Any plan staff recommends must come before the public and receive approval from the planning board, county executive and county council.

NEXT MEETING

What: Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan community meeting

When: 7 to 9 p.m. Feb. 2

Where: Montgomery County Planning Department headquarters, 8787 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring

Details: Call Elza Hisel-McCoy at 301-495-2115 or elza.hisel-mccoy@montgomeryplanning.org

The meeting will be aired live on the Montgomery County Planning Department's website.

-Read more about the sector plan: www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/chevychaselake

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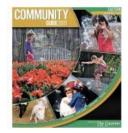
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