

Amendment 91 to Council Bill No. 28 -2023

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Amendment No. 91

(This Amendment makes the following changes to HoCo by Design Chapter 1:

- Chapter 1:*
- Introduction*
- *Clarifies that the General Plan is the County's growth plan;*
 - *Removes a reference under definition of Predictability to detail and specificity;*
 - *Under An Inflection Point, strikes a reference to Activity Centers;*
 - *Adds notation under Every Voice regarding the number of individuals actively engaged in the plan process;*
 - *Adds women and disabled owners to the list of small business owners to be targeted with outreach efforts; and*
 - *Removes quotes displayed as graphics.)*

1 In the *HoCo By Design* General Plan, attached to this Act as Exhibit A, amend the following
2 pages as indicated in this Amendment:

- 3 • Chapter 1: Introduction: 2, 8, 9, 15, and 16.

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5 Correct all page numbers, numbering, and formatting within this Act to accommodate this
6 amendment.

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INTRODUCTION TO HOCO BY DESIGN

HoCo By Design is a visionary document that guides policy decisions for the next two decades. The General Plan is re-evaluated every ten years and provides general direction for a twenty-year horizon while recognizing that decision-making in the intervening years will be further informed by factors beyond these pages.

HoCo By Design is the [community's County's growth](#) Plan. It reflects a depth and breadth of public engagement that is unprecedented for Howard County. Throughout the planning process, stakeholders and participants collaborate to create a vision for what they consider to be the ideal future for Howard County. Residents describe Howard County as a welcoming place with thriving neighborhoods, innovative and prosperous businesses, and quality recreational, cultural, educational, and housing opportunities. They celebrate the County's high quality of life, abundant natural resources, and self-sustaining economy. HoCo By Design reflects the values of process participants and seeks to preserve and protect the qualities of Howard County that make the community so special while tackling the challenges ahead.

HoCo By Design starts from the baseline of the previous General Plan – PlanHoward 2030 – and aims to define a growth and conservation path to 2040 that is **more equitable, more predictable, more sustainable, and more achievable** for the County and all its residents. While PlanHoward 2030 emphasized three pillars of sustainability, HoCo By Design aspires to improve upon PlanHoward with a four-pronged, aspirational approach toward greater equity, predictability, sustainability, and achievability.

-  **Equity** is about crafting a future ripe with opportunities for ALL people and ALL communities, including access to attainable housing, amenity-rich neighborhoods, high-quality education, and economically-uplifting employment.
-  **Predictability** informs future land use [with greater detail and specificity of future outcomes](#), and guides budget priorities to align decisions for a shared understanding of direction and sequencing.
-  **Sustainability** is about shaping growth and preservation in a manner that protects our valuable natural resources, reduces environmental impacts through vertical and compact development, and responsibly balances and grows our fiscal resources to deliver the government services that enhance our quality of life.
-  **Achievability** aims to provide realistic direction that is grounded in stakeholder input, considers resource limitations, and helps the County measure progress toward attaining the community's vision.

Setting the Stage For the Plan

Each decade brings a unique set of challenges. By early 2020, the County was already grappling with issues presented by the combination of a growing population, dwindling supply of undeveloped land, lack of affordable housing options, and shifting weather patterns associated with climate change. These challenges were then compounded by the unprecedented nature of the global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting upheaval of daily life, locally and globally, that began in mid-March of 2020 and continued to influence behavior over the course of the planning effort.

Since the launch of the planning process in March of 2020, extensive community feedback, data analysis, and best practice research have coalesced to underscore five major issue areas for Howard County's future. These are detailed in the "Planning Themes" chapters, which respectively outline:



Ecological Health – this chapter identifies opportunities to deepen Howard County's commitment to environmental stewardship, create better compatibility between the natural and built environments, and provide needed measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation.



County in Motion – this chapter highlights the need to manage and provide a safe, equitable, and fiscally sustainable transportation system for all users that is responsive to changing local, regional, and national transportation trends.



Economic Prosperity – this chapter highlights values, policies, and initiatives that continue strengthening Howard County's position as a self-sustaining, diverse employment center for the region.



Dynamic Neighborhoods – this chapter provides guidance on maintaining and supporting vibrant living that meets the needs of current and future residents with a focus on diversifying housing options, increasing housing affordability, creating amenity-rich neighborhoods, improving infrastructure in existing and new neighborhoods, and encouraging a balanced approach to residential development for all income levels and age ranges.



Quality By Design – this chapter aims to preserve character in future developments and adopt design standards that are context sensitive for different areas and development opportunities. Historic resource preservation is emphasized as an important contributor to community character and tradition.

an inflection Point

The County's ability to address challenges is shaped, in part, by available land to accommodate new uses and associated buildings and spaces. Howard County has reached an inflection point, where limited land supply prompts new patterns of land development and natural resource conservation.

Historically a desirable location for households and employers, the County has continued to grow and is projected to witness strong demand for new spaces through 2040. Along with this growth comes the need for supporting infrastructure, such as schools, parks, and transportation investments. Meanwhile, approximately 98% of the County's land supply is already developed, committed for development, or preserved via open space, agricultural, or other type of easement—leaving just 2% of land "undeveloped."

Given the diminishing land supply, HoCo By Design explores redevelopment as a transformative opportunity for the future. Redevelopment can involve the demolition of existing buildings to make way for new, the addition of new buildings on lots that already have structures, or the re-use of a site (like a parking lot). HoCo By Design also embraces mixing uses, where places to live are located with places to work, shop, and dine. These types of mixed-use, walkable redevelopments are called "activity centers" in this Plan and are limited in number and location. While prior General Plans began the process of identifying certain areas for growth and revitalization, these areas were expansive in geography, which resulted in unpredictable growth patterns. ~~HoCo By Design activity centers hone these geographic areas more specifically, furthering more predicable growth patterns over the planning horizon.~~

HoCo By Design outlines these redevelopment locations on its Future Land Use Map (FLUM), which categorizes the County into eighteen different "Character Areas." This palette speaks to the wide variety of places in Howard County, from its rural crossroads to its historic communities and suburban retail, office, and residential neighborhoods. This Plan offers guidance for design as well as use in these Character Areas and organizes them under a framework of anticipated change—from "preserve," to "strengthen," to "enhance," and finally, to "transform" ("P-S-E-T"). The FLUM, the Character Areas, and the "P-S-E-T" framework are more fully described in the Growth and Conservation Framework chapter.

An appendix on Focus Areas turns the spotlight to New Town Columbia, Gateway, and Rural Crossroads. Additionally, a plan for Route 1 accompanies the General Plan. Design considerations are provided with illustrative concepts and recommendations offered that are unique to each of these areas.

Planning with a redevelopment mindset requires cautious consideration of infrastructure needs, described in the Supporting Infrastructure and Managing Growth chapters. The Plan concludes with an Implementation chapter that includes a matrix of plan policies.

Every Voice

The name, HoCo By Design, was derived with the following in mind:

- “HoCo” is a colloquialism used by those with ties to Howard County. It makes the “new” General Plan feel familiar and underscores the importance of thinking locally and from within the community about the best path forward.
- “By Design” was included in the name as it succinctly demonstrates that the Plan is crafted and shaped with great intentionality, and its development and implementation will require just as much art as it does science to protect and promote the character of Howard County.

The project’s slogan, “Every Voice, One Vision” set the tone for the planning process.

- County officials wanted to hear from every voice in Howard County to forge a collective vision for the future of the community.
- To maximize participation in the planning process, the HoCo By Design project team took a comprehensive approach to engagement and used various mediums—advisory groups, focus groups, public meetings, and online surveys—to reach numerous community organizations, interest groups, government boards and commissions, and the general public.
- Throughout the HoCo By Design planning process the community was asked about what was most important to them. Engagement initiatives were customized for both populations traditionally engaged in planning processes, and for people and organizations historically under-represented in planning.

Throughout the process, materials documenting the engagement efforts and feedback were posted on the project website, including: an Engagement Summary encompassing the variety of public involvement activities; a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Focus Groups Summary showcasing this central effort to ensure the Plan reflected a cross-section of voices from the community; and a Comment Log listing the many thousands of thoughts received through the process. [While the Department of Planning and Zoning made many efforts to engage the community, only 3,000 individuals \(1% of the County’s population\) actively engaged in the process.](#)



Advisory Groups

Planning Advisory Committee

To initiate the planning process, a 33-member Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) was appointed by the County Executive and Council, which represented community leaders, service providers, industry groups, and the general public. They served as a sounding board to the project team about the community’s needs and desires in the development of the General Plan. PAC members assisted in developing and identifying planning themes, reviewing data and recommendations, and serving as ambassadors for the process.

The PAC also assisted in developing the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and contributing to recommendations in this General Plan. Specific topics to which members contributed include: the Preserve-Strengthen-Enhance-Transform (P-S-E-T) framework, character area typologies, transportation and water-sewer infrastructure, a growth allocation framework, and growth management strategies.

Technical Advisory Group

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) consisted of Howard County department staff and partner organizations who are considered subject matter and institutional experts. The HoCo By Design project team consulted with TAG members regularly to verify and validate key findings, ideas, data, and reports.

Strategic Advisory Groups

During the Spring of 2021, three Strategic Advisory Groups (SAGs) were formed to delve into specific opportunities and challenges identified through the planning process. Each SAG comprised a multi-disciplinary group of experts that acted as advisors to the project team, similar to policy think tanks. The SAGs addressed the three different topic areas listed below.



Schools: Planning for School Capacity and Growth



Environment: Examining Climate Change and Natural Resources



Housing: Diversifying Housing Stock and Creating Opportunities for “Missing Middle Housing”

What Are Best Practices for Equity in Planning?

Traditionally, comprehensive plans have focused broadly on elements such as transportation and housing, but many contemporary General Plans have explicitly started to address equity considerations within those and other elements.

With increasing national and local attention on deeply rooted inequities in communities, plans can play a role in creating more equitable outcomes through all aspects of the built environment. The project team used guidance from local and national leaders in the community planning field, including the American Planning Association, to identify best practices in equity planning and incorporate them into HoCo By Design. Because General Plan updates occur at most every ten years, it is a crucial opportunity to confront disparities and create actionable approaches that will help level the playing field.

Equity In Action

The best practices listed below were used to help to identify which HoCo By Design polices and actions would contribute to a more equitable future, as it relates to land use, growth, and development.

- Reduce household energy costs with climate mitigation measures.
- Protect populations in vulnerable areas from natural hazards.
- Promote environmental justice.
- Plan for a jobs/housing balance.
- Plan for workforce diversity and development.
- Promote inclusive activation and programming of public spaces for a multicultural population.
- Address the needs of small, minority, disabled, and women owned businesses.
- Plan for access to healthy, locally grown foods for all neighborhoods.
- Support frequent, dependable transit options with emphasis on the needs of carless riders.
- Increase connected multi-modal infrastructure that provides access to jobs and amenities.
- Plan for physical activity and healthy lifestyles.
- Remove barriers to affordable housing in zoning and subdivision regulations.
- Provide a range of housing types.
- Ensure authentic spaces connected to community that facilitate cross-cultural interactions.
- Plan for improved health and safety for historically marginalized populations.
- Encourage documentation and preservation of historic resources connected to the history of people of color, women, immigrants, and other traditionally underrecognized members of the community.
- Take a comprehensive approach to mitigating the impacts of gentrification.



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“Planning for equity is intended to challenge those planning practices that result in policies, programs, and regulations that disproportionately impact and stymie the progress of certain segments of the population more than others. Done with intention, equity is a thread that is woven through the fabric of all plans, regulations, developments, and policy options.”

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—APA Planning for Equity Policy Guide