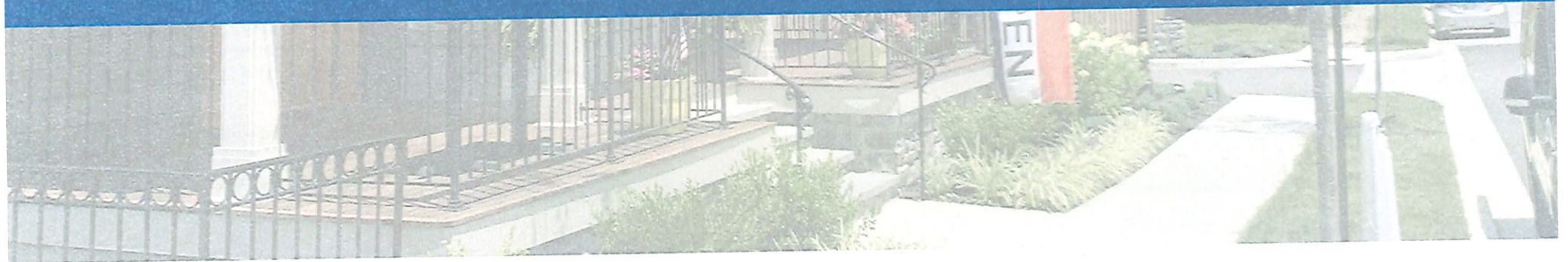




CHAPTER 7

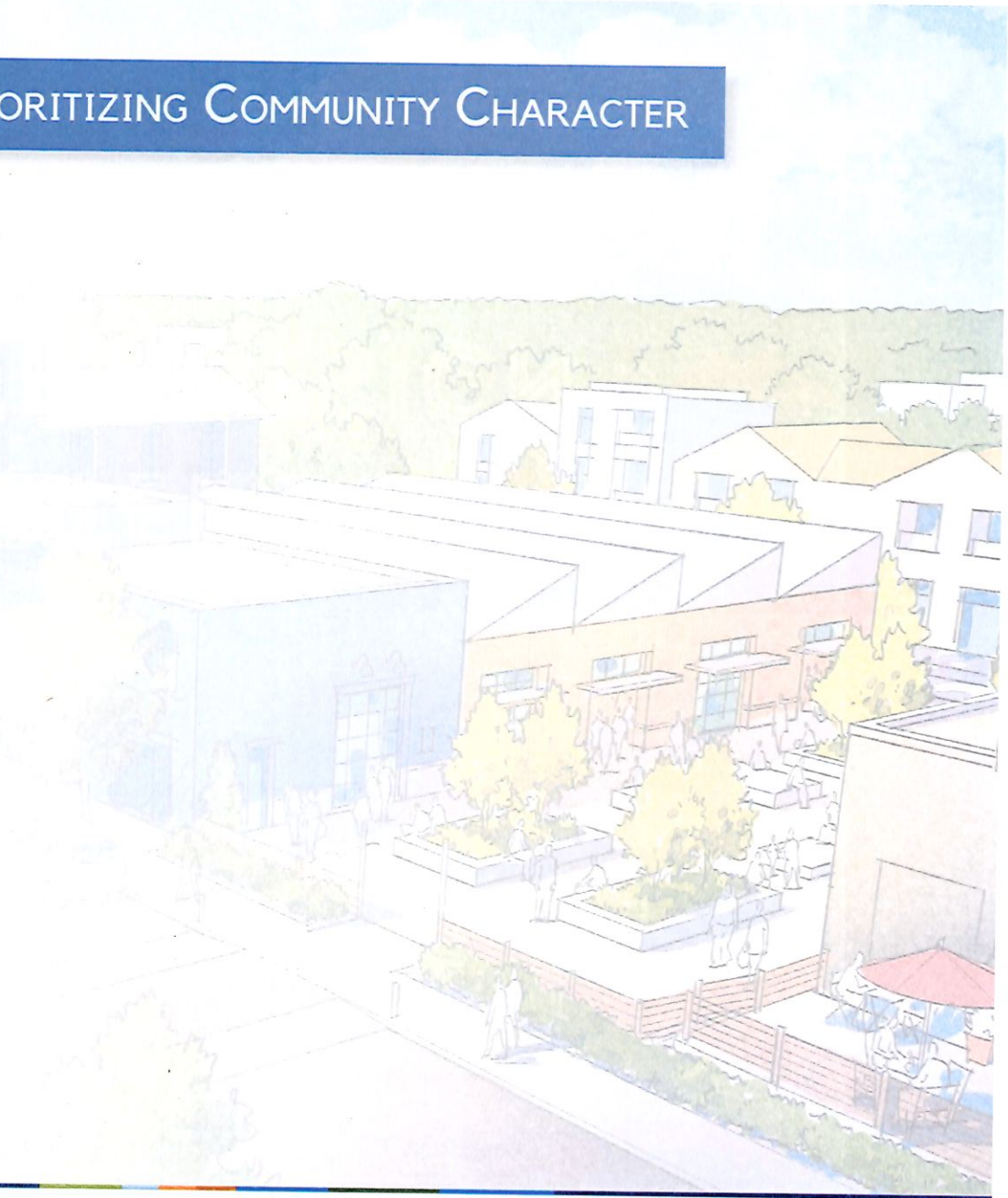
QUALITY BY DESIGN



QUALITY BY DESIGN: RESPECTING AND PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

This chapter celebrates the rich and varied character of Howard County's built and natural environs. It recognizes that the County is comprised of a variety of distinct areas, each with an individual style and feeling, and attempts to reinforce each area's character while providing a shared sense of place overall. In the East, these distinct areas range from the planned community of Columbia—including the recent redevelopment of Downtown Columbia—to historic districts and established suburban neighborhoods. In the West, areas range from farms to large-lot suburban residential areas and rural crossroads. Recommendations aim to preserve and promote character in future and existing developments, and adopt context-sensitive design standards for varying scales of development. Finally, historic resource preservation is emphasized as an important contributor of community character and tradition. As a supplement to the design-related policies in this chapter, Technical Appendix C presents illustrative concepts for three focus areas: New Town Columbia, Gateway, and Rural Crossroads.

Howard County continues to evolve to meet the growth it has experienced. Stakeholders throughout the HoCo By Design planning process expressed a clear desire to establish more robust guidelines to better describe the character of existing communities and serve as a reference for future development. The community defines its character through both the built and natural environs. These existing patterns should inform land use regulation updates, which will implement recommendations in the Plan and emphasize the continuity of existing neighborhoods. These updates will be used to shape infill and redevelopments as they are proposed over the coming decades.



WHAT WE HEARD

Throughout the public engagement and planning process, residents and stakeholders discussed the importance of respecting and prioritizing community character. As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, the County is comprised of many unique communities—which collectively reinforce a shared sense of place and character. Community members value authentic places, and stressed the importance of customizing land use, size, scale, and materials for different areas and lifestyles found throughout the County.

A common concern among HoCo By Design participants was that infill development might be incompatible with established communities. Residents voiced apprehension about new housing and its visual impact on their neighborhood's scale and character. Community members felt that to maintain maximum cohesion in their communities, new homes should compliment existing neighborhood scale, setbacks, and building materials. Some participants expressed desire for new and innovative architecture.

Other voices desired more sustainable development in the County, such as energy efficient buildings designed with integrated renewable energy sources. Participants suggested that more spaces be designed with adjacencies that connect people to nature and each other.

Open space was regarded as a precious feature in the County. Participants often noted that investments in the public realm—streets, parks, plazas, landscapes, etc.—are essential to community character. Comments reflected a concern about over-urbanizing the County and the general loss of natural open space. There was a general acknowledgement that protecting parks and natural areas, along with prioritizing walkable neighborhoods, will contribute to the health and well-being of communities. A few participants also suggested more meadow plantings and larger buffer areas to protect fragile landscapes.


Accordingly, there was general support from the community to construct new buildings upward and not outward to save as much open space as possible in new and existing activity centers. Ground floor or first floor access was important to persons with disabilities, who emphasized accessibility and inter-generational “visitation” for family, friends, and neighbors. Most community members also supported places designed for walkability. They also recognized that, as the County ages, residential building design should support “aging in place” and senior-friendly options. Finally, many noted that preserving historic landscapes is critical to maintaining a sense of place.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Focus Groups Findings

- Appreciation for open space and the proximity of ponds, streams, and parks to residential areas
- Diversity is valued in communities.
- Desire for walkability and closer proximity to stores and amenities
- Need for more diverse shopping and restaurants
- Desire for greater access to a variety of entertainment and cultural events

Equity in Action

The following equity best practices inform several of the implementing actions in this chapter. Each implementing action that directly advances equitable outcomes will be noted with a “” symbol.

- Ensure that new and existing public spaces are inclusive and welcoming.
- Remove barriers to affordable housing in zoning, subdivision, and land development regulations.
- Provide a range of housing types.
- Plan for improved health and safety for all populations and communities.
- Support planning and funding that enhances or expands multi-modal transportation infrastructure that provides access to jobs and amenities.
- 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.

QUALITY BY DESIGN TERMS

Activity Centers: Places where housing and businesses are mixed together, usually in a walkable environment. Activity centers vary in scale and are shown on the draft Future Land Use Map (FLUM).

Greenfield Development: A form of new development occurring in a previously undeveloped area.

Infill Development: A form of new development occurring in an already developed area, such as within a parking lot of an existing commercial or office area, or within an existing neighborhood. Infill development can occur at different scales, such as a larger infill development in a commercial area versus a small-scale infill development of a new home or homes in an existing neighborhood.

Redevelopment: A form of new development that is comparable to infill development in that it occurs in an already developed area, but also involves demolition of existing buildings.

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

Howard County was, for much of its history, considered a rural county. However, as a result of significant growth over the past 60 years, the County has developed a more diverse and mature community character. This community character is shaped by various influences, including Howard County's location between two major metropolitan areas within the Northeast Corridor, its physical geography, and its historical development as a center for rural industry. River valleys define much of the County's borders. This geography informed the physical patterns of both early and present-day industry, transportation networks, and development. Rapid suburbanization beginning in the mid-20th century—with the creation of Columbia and the ongoing preservation of historic districts and structures—has led to the diverse mix of present-day character areas. Countywide policies and evolving planning principles and practices have also shaped the physical development of the County. Agricultural preservation in the West, mixed-use redevelopment in the East, and environmental stewardship throughout has allowed the County to geographically focus growth and better protect the natural and built features that contribute to a positive community character. Policies to balance competing pressures for growth and conservation will be needed as Howard County continues to mature.

Transportation Influences and Development Patterns

Historic development in places like Ellicott City, Elkridge, and Savage formed along the rivers. Historic settlements grew as transportation networks expanded, including the railroad, which followed the Patapsco River valley to accommodate trade to the west and between Baltimore and Washington. Early roadways, such as the National Road (Route 144, a portion of which would eventually become part of Route 40) and Route 1, enhanced these same connections. In rural areas, farm buildings were clustered in the center of fields; housing and commerce developed along the roadways in a linear fashion or near river crossings. Additional highways and the interstate systems (Interstate 95, Interstate 70, and Route 29) were developed to meet the increased demand and reliance on automobiles.

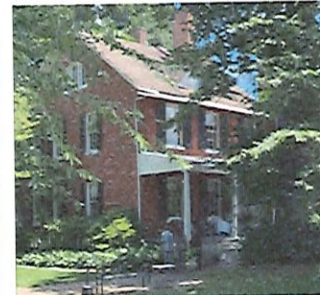
As the population rose, a mix of traditional neighborhood and suburban development street patterns were established, with direct access from major corridors (Interstate 95, Interstate 70 and Route 29). A growing network of pathways, sidewalks, and bicycle routes provided an additional layer to the overall vehicular and pedestrian transportation network.

Today, suburban cul-de-sac developments dominate the landscape, with some aging automobile-oriented areas experiencing redevelopment. In an evolution of their character, and as available land becomes sparse, some of these traditional auto-focused areas are transforming into mixed-use walkable communities. Most notable is along the Route 1 Corridor where some single-story retail, industrial, and warehouse sites are being redeveloped into predominantly compact residential communities that have space reserved for commercial uses on the lower level of multi-story buildings. Despite varying degrees of successful development, [challenges filling ground floor commercial spaces in multistory buildings and recent changes in the County's Zoning Regulations that reduced requirements for commercial spaces in the Route 1 corridor in certain zoning districts](#), there continues to be community interest in redevelopment along these traditional transportation corridors. These transportation elements (i.e. roads, sidewalks, etc.) and how people use them across the County help to inform the community's character.



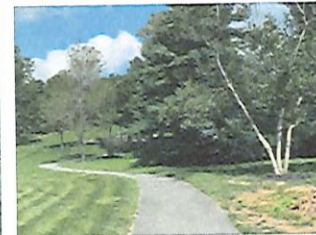
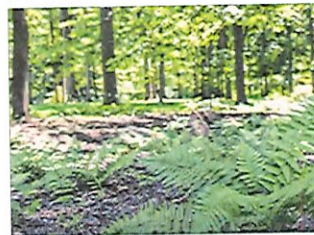
Buildings and Architectural Styles

Building and architectural styles are varied throughout Howard County. However, the predominant style evolved from early American vernacular traditions grounded in Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival forms and styles. Early rural development used simple agrarian forms and styles, while development of the past 50+ years mostly follows styles typically found in suburban areas. Development in the mid-20th century implemented contemporary styles, particularly in the early phases of Columbia. Contemporary architecture is most common in and around Downtown Columbia but most residential development and some commercial development continue to be traditional in style. Building and architectural styles found within a specific area contribute to its overall feeling and sense of place. Future development should begin by identifying current style(s) within a character area for cues on context-sensitive design.



Landscape

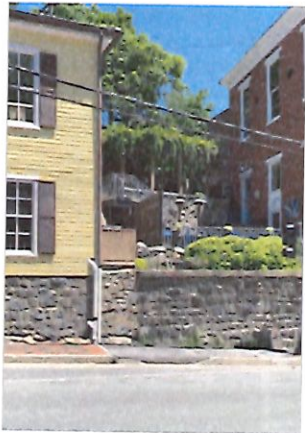
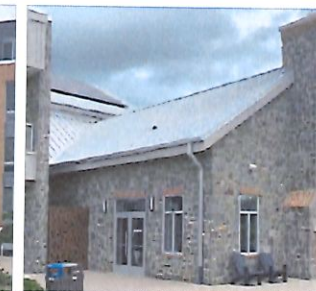
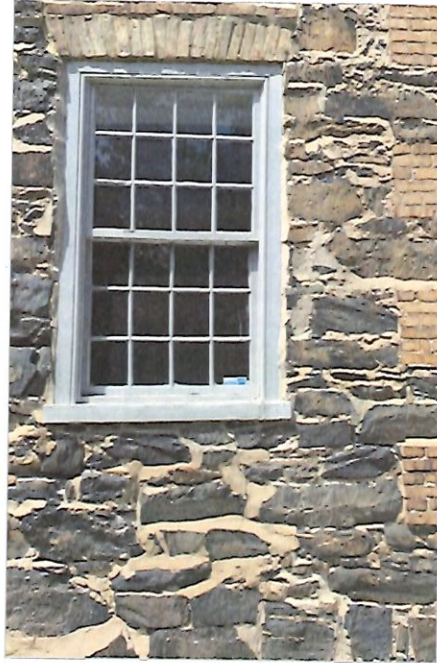
Both the natural and the planned landscapes inform community character. The natural landscape includes the forest stands, wooded river valleys, and associated wetlands and floodplains. The planned landscape includes: tree-lined roadways, walking paths, manicured lawns, plantings, agricultural fields, and berms. Howard County's emphasis on stream valley protection and long history of stringent landscape requirements, both evident throughout the County, have positively impacted its character. Wooded buffers are the predominant image along Interstate 95 and many parts of Route 29 and Interstate 70. The landscapes of Columbia and many other older residential and commercial areas are lush and often mature. Redevelopment along Route 40 and Route 1 follow their respective manual requirements and include street tree and setback plantings where none previously existed. More recent planned landscapes incorporate environmental site design practices for stormwater management as a feature of the landscape rather than a technical afterthought.



Building Materials and Site Elements

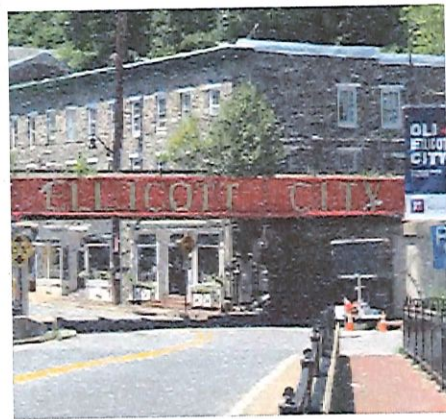
Building materials, site elements, and associated construction quality also inform community character. Historically, buildings and site structures were comprised of locally-available materials, including stone, wood siding, wood fencing, metal, and brick. To a lesser degree, stucco was also used.

These materials (and/or imitations of them) continue to be used today where, over the past several decades, they have been employed in both interpretations of traditional architectural styles and in contemporary applications. In many instances, the materials used in these contemporary applications have not held up well over time, due to poor construction methods and/or use of low-quality synthetic materials. While wood, brick, stone, and metal continue to be used today in rural, single-family, and low-density residential districts; metal, glass, and architectural precast concrete are more frequently used in mixed-use and larger residential projects, particularly in Downtown Columbia and other commercial areas. A combination of these materials is often used within the fenestration of these structures, reducing the visual impact of the overall building mass.



Spatial Definition

Both the natural and built environments define spaces. These spaces have an overall impact on the perceived character within the County. People experience a variety of spatially-defined areas as they travel from one geographic area of the County to another. For example, a winding road in the narrow, wooded Patapsco River valley or Main Street in Ellicott City, with its narrow street dimension and buildings constructed on or near to the property lines, create tight enclosures. Newer streets in Downtown Columbia and compact developments are quite different from the broad highway corridors of Route 40 and Route 1 or the rural residential streets of the West that feature generous building setbacks. Each of these space patterns adds to the defined character of the place and should inform guidelines for future development within the area.



EXISTING CHARACTER IN HOWARD COUNTY

Howard County does not convey a single community character, nor do all geographic areas within the County; its character is rich and varied. Community character is closely tied to design. The craftsmanship, use of available materials, construction methods, historic architecture, and intentional design efforts associated with recent development, all contribute to the overall design of a place. While some property owners and developers are inclined toward high-quality, context-sensitive design, others are not. Additionally, "good" design means different things to different people and regulating design can be a challenging issue.

Buildings

Development patterns have evolved over time as the County's population has risen, first organically and later through planned growth. How buildings and developments relate to the land, surrounding built environment, and streets and civic spaces—and how sites are designed generally—has a greater impact on community character than the use itself.

The varied architecture throughout the County helps to reinforce the character of different places and the time periods during which they evolved. There is not one correct architectural style for Howard County, nor should there be. However, the current architecture found throughout many recent developments within the County is often generic in style and form. It can be similarly found anywhere in the Mid-Atlantic region. In the future, there may be ways to design new construction so that its character is more compatible with the surrounding context.



Open Space

Open space patterns influence community character and offer different benefits. Broad building setbacks, buffers between uses, and large parking lot islands can provide stormwater management and landscaping. These serve an aesthetic function and provide some environmental benefit but offer little social or recreational benefit. Stream valley open space networks located behind buildings offer environmental and recreational benefits but are not very visible and prominent. Community commons and open spaces located along street and building frontages and designed as community focal points provide social and aesthetic benefits as highly visible public spaces. Each of these open space patterns are appropriate for specific applications, and it will take careful consideration to determine the pattern best suited for each situation.

Howard County's geography, natural systems, protected areas, rigorous landscape requirements, and maturing landscape in developed areas have resulted in a community character where the landscape often predominates over the built form. As a result, the landscape becomes the major organizing and structural element in the neighborhood, a circumstance which may neutralize a variety of architectural styles. This emphasis on the landscape can be positive if architecture is not of a character that the community desires. ~~Conversely, too much planting can often obscure and negate superior architecture or important sightlines to major cultural or community-focused spaces.~~

The landscape in developed areas also reflects a shift from an emphasis on the amount of planting, to an emphasis on the use of native and non-invasive plants. These areas have also shifted from solely increasing tree canopy coverage to providing more ecologically-beneficial landscapes in the overall landscape design.



Roadways and Corridors

Transportation networks also contribute to community character, and the existing roadways are a prevalent feature of the County's defined character. From the interstate highways that convey travelers at great speeds, it is easy for people to move effortlessly across landforms and from one place to another. Individual details of the landscape become less important than the networks of forest, farmland, and broad views.

Howard County has created broad landscaped corridors along its major interstates and has begun to transform its secondary routes into more walkable environments. A shift to more walkable corridors—along with increased attention to pedestrian and cyclist connectivity—is supported by the Route 1 Manual, Route 40 Design Manual, and the Complete Streets Policy.

In the western portion of the County, there has been a desire to maintain the agrarian viewsheds from the roadway. Within the East, there is a similar focus on preserving the character of scenic roads (views of forests and stream valleys, and narrow, winding, and/or hilly roads) through recent regulatory changes that strengthen and protect viewsheds. Off the highways and along secondary and local roadways with lower speeds and tighter design, the crossing of a river, changes in landforms, and the details of adjacent buildings and the landscape become more apparent. On bike and on foot, these details are even more pronounced, and the presence of street trees along public and private roads has become an organizing element in the suburban landscape.

CURRENT LAND USE PATTERNS

As more fully described in the Growth & Conservation Framework chapter, Howard County's current land use patterns reflect not only development trends over time but also proactive preservation of open space and farmland. An estimated 39% of land is presently preserved. Another 8% of land is comprised of rights-of-way (ROW). By contrast, 51% of Howard County is considered developed, and just 2% of land remains unpreserved or undeveloped (with no built structures and not committed to a proposed development). Given this breakdown, only 53% of the County's total land area can be developed.

Undeveloped parcels are scattered throughout the County and are generally relatively small—the average size is 5.36 acres, though the largest undeveloped parcel is 67 acres. The wide distribution and relatively small acreage mean there is limited ability to create a critical mass of acreage needed to generate new areas of activity. These properties may contain sensitive environmental resources, such as floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes, that limit their development potential. Individual property owners may choose to build on the developable portions of these properties. It is likely such infill development will serve similar uses as their neighboring properties.

Developed land refers not only to permanent buildings and structures, but also includes surface parking lots that serve adjoining buildings, and sliver lots where size, shape, or access limitations would generally keep them from developing in the future.



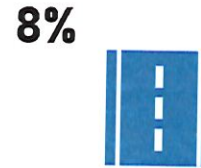
Open Space



Developed Land



Undeveloped Land

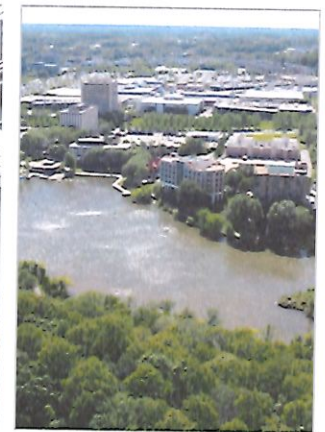


Rights-of-Way

Densities of developed areas vary throughout the County. For instance, in the West, the patchwork of developed land appears widespread. However, this land includes large-lot single-family homes that have relatively small building footprints. Generally, the remaining land is not available for future development, though there are some large parcels that have potential for future preservation or development through subdivision. Conversely, in the East, most developed land is used for residential and commercial purposes, although the homes are more concentrated than those in the West. Some developed land, such as parking lots, may be able to accommodate infill development in future years, but these opportunities remain limited.

The term "rights-of-way" (ROW) refers to land used for roads, rail lines, and major public utility corridors. Given their current use, this land is unlikely to see future development. However, some rail ROW have the potential to be converted to trails as adjacent land uses change.

With Howard County's land largely developed or preserved, the ability to grow in new areas is limited. Furthermore, connecting new areas in the West to the County's existing transportation network would be difficult. It would likely be challenging to design efficient new roadways given the patchwork of preservation easements and lack of developable land. Thus, transportation infrastructure investment is likely to occur along existing road and rail corridors.



new toWn Columbia

New Town Columbia stands out as a carefully planned community initiated by a single developer with a vision to be carried out over time. In 1967, Columbia's founder, James Rouse, set out to design and build a city. A conscious, planned approach, this novel endeavor resulted in one of the most talked about New Towns of mid-20th century America, an inspiration for planned communities across the country. Rouse envisioned the planned community of Columbia as a socially responsible, environmentally friendly, and financially successful place in which people of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds could grow as individuals, neighbors, and citizens. Today, Columbia is a thriving unincorporated city with over 100,000 residents living in ten villages, each containing multiple neighborhoods. His strategic vision for what was to be a new kind of community that he applied to the development of New Town Columbia included the following objectives:

1. Provide a real, comprehensive, balanced city.
2. Respect the land and allow the land to impose itself as a discipline on the form of the community.
3. Provide the best possible environment for the growth of people.
4. Realize a profit.

Columbia includes ten villages, each containing multiple neighborhood clusters organized around a village center. The ten villages are organized around Town Center, which includes Downtown Columbia. As "Respect for the Land" was one of the four formative goals for Columbia, clustered development patterns and the curvilinear road network are informed by the open space system, which is defined by the natural drainage patterns. The open spaces and roads, therefore, serve a dual role in both connecting and separating the distinct components of Columbia. Because it follows natural drainage patterns, much of the open space network has historically been located behind structures.

Most of Columbia's village centers are inward-oriented and located on neighborhood-serving roads. ~~However, River Hill, Harper's Choice, and Hickory Ridge Village Center is Centers are located on a busy roadway roadways and follows follow more conventional suburban retail development patterns.~~ As Town Center and the village centers mature and, in some cases, redevelop, development patterns are following more recent trends that increase the visibility of retail uses and emphasize walkability. Other distinct characteristics of Columbia include the emphasis on landscape; the incorporation of lakes in Town Center and several villages, and the retention of historic features, such as former manor homes, barns, and hedgerows. Despite having an extensive pathway and sidewalk network, Columbia is generally auto-oriented. It is trending, however, toward redevelopment and has begun to incorporate infrastructure improvements that enhance bicycle accommodations and walkability.

DoWntoWn columbia

In 2010, Howard County adopted the Downtown Columbia Plan following five years of debate, discussion, and dialogue with a wide array of stakeholders. The plan's goal is to revitalize downtown, creating a diverse, mixed-use, physically distinctive, and human-scaled place with a rich variety of housing choices, business opportunities, and recreational, civic, cultural, and educational amenities. The plan's implementation is well underway, with many investments completed or in process to realize this vision.

major pRovisions of neW toWn zoning

In 2014, Columbia Association's planning staff (the late Jane Dembner) prepared a New Town Zoning Briefing Paper for the Columbia Association Board of Directors. This briefing paper noted that New Town zoning regulations were adopted in 1965 and remained relatively unchanged until 2009 and 2010, when changes were made to address village center redevelopment and Downtown Columbia revitalization. The briefing paper listed the following as major provisions of New Town zoning regulations:

- **District size:** a New Town zoning district must contain at least 2,500 contiguous acres. (Columbia is the County's only New Town district and comprises 14,272 acres.)
- **Flexibility in land use:** New Town permits all uses allowed in other county zoning districts except heavy manufacturing and mobile homes.
- **Open space preservation:** New Town zoning requires that 36 percent of the lands zoned New Town be for open space uses. This requirement, combined with the design of Columbia, has resulted in a distinctive tight weave of Columbia's open space areas, residential neighborhoods, and clustered housing sites. Columbia's open space is a defining and distinguishing feature of Columbia.
- **Overall housing density:** Overall density (gross density) may not exceed 2.5 dwelling units per acre of New Town zoned land. The maximum number of dwellings permitted by the Downtown Columbia redevelopment process is in addition to this density limit.
- **Mixed-use requirements:** New Town requires a mix of various land uses, with minimum and maximum percentages and allows flexibility in the geographic placement of those uses.

The General Plan does not propose to change these provisions. Any changes to New Town zoning would be considered through a public process to update the Zoning Regulations. New Town embodies much of HoCo By Design's intended goals: walkability, diverse housing options, and equitable access to open space. Continuity of neighborhoods is critical to the feel and success of New Town.

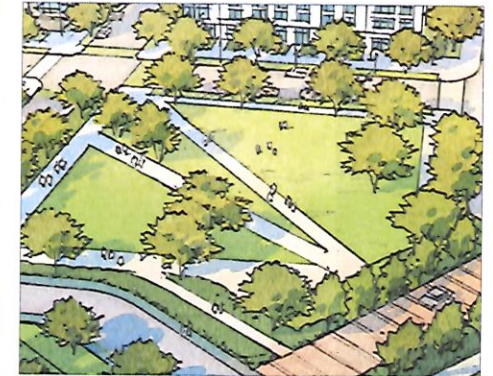
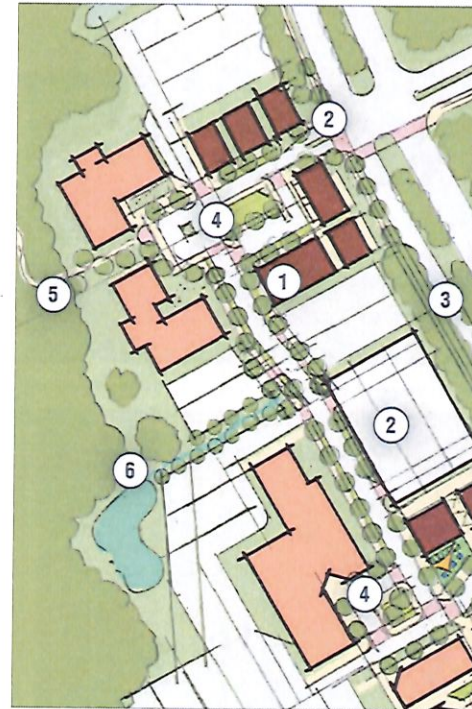
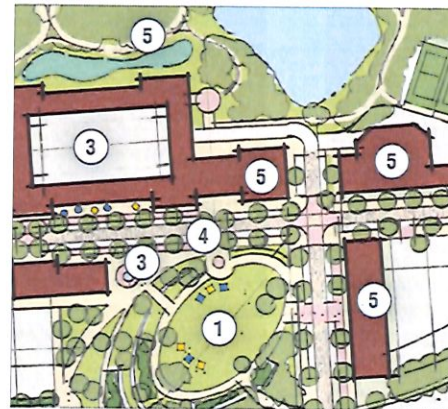
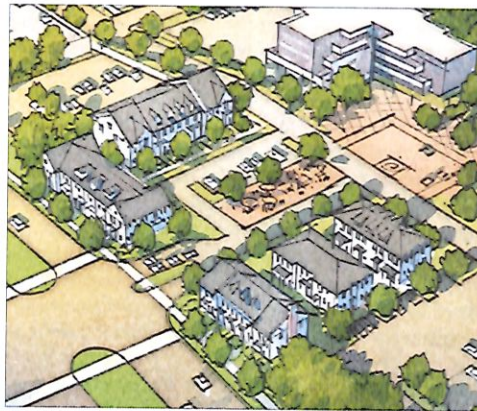


NEW TOWN COLUMBIA DESIGN SESSIONS

Recognizing the special nature of Columbia, the HoCo By Design project team hosted discussions about general design principles in Columbia over the course of three different events. In May 2021, the team hosted two virtual meetings to discuss general design principles and how they contribute to Columbia's overall community character and sense of place. Through interactive polling, meeting attendees helped identify and prioritize aspects of community character to preserve, enhance, transform, or strengthen. At an in-person open house in July 2021, residents had a chance to view concepts that emerged from feedback at the May meetings and speak directly with the design team.



These concepts applied to village centers, commercial corridors, and employment centers. Following the in-person open house, the public was invited to share feedback on the illustrated concepts through a survey. In September 2021, the HoCo By Design team hosted a Draft Plan Workshop Series. As part of this series, the team presented more detailed drawings that highlighted the application of specific design concepts in Columbia. A selection of these drawings is provided below. The full set of drawings are included in HoCo By Design's Technical Appendix C: Focus Areas.



PReseRving ChaRacteR in futuRe Development

Development standards can and should encourage high-quality future development. These standards should clearly articulate the community's desired vision for an area targeted for development or redevelopment to help the County obtain the type and quality of development it seeks. New developments, redevelopments, and infill developments should use best practice placemaking and urban design principles to achieve high-quality built environments, preserve and incorporate natural features, and establish transitions between the built and natural realms. Key design elements could include the use of building articulation, building placement and site planning principles, building design transitions across landscapes, landscape design, plantings, stormwater management, and open spaces.

The County's existing ordinances regulate a largely-suburban built environment but could be enhanced to further protect the built and natural character of the County and to promote more walkable, high-quality development, where appropriate. The County's Zoning Regulations, Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, and design manuals will need to be reviewed and rewritten to support the vision and policies presented in the General Plan—especially provisions related to context-sensitive new construction in existing neighborhoods, and walkable, mixed-use development in new activity centers.

Conventional zoning ~~may still be~~ is still may still be appropriate for existing single-family residential neighborhoods and strip commercial centers. However, the adoption of an ordinance or guiding document that incorporates more character-based (or form-based) elements will assist in achieving high-quality development that is in keeping with the character of Howard County and the desires of the community.

In contrast with conventional zoning that emphasizes separating uses, a character-based (or form-based) code uses character, or the look and feel of a place, as the primary organizing principle for new development. Hybrid codes may also combine conventional zoning with character-based elements.

According to the Development Regulations Assessment, there could be opportunities to revise the historic district zones in the County. Currently, the Zoning Regulations describe the requirements and restrictions applicable to historic districts instead of generally addressing the allowable land uses or development standards. Frequently, in zoning regulations, historic districts are identified with an overlay zone or as a character-based district that more clearly defines the boundaries and helps demonstrate how historic preservation regulations interact with underlying zoning and subdivision regulations. Overlay zones with a clearly defined base zoning district can help provide predictability of permitted uses within a historic district, encourage development patterns that are consistent with the historic character, and create opportunities to establish future districts that may benefit from such designation criteria.



ChaRacter-based Elements

Character-based code elements emphasize context of development and may apply to a designated area or more generally within the overall land use regulations and zoning codes. They could be used to regulate a number of factors, including building height and placement, parking locations, street frontage, sidewalks, plantings areas, drainage, density, and the street itself. This information is conveyed with specific instructions and often includes easy-to-understand diagrams or other graphic illustrations.

While character-based concepts can be applied anywhere, they are most successful in: areas that have a mix of uses, historic communities, and Rural Crossroad areas. A character-based approach to land use regulation in Howard County may yield more walkable, compact, and diverse, mixed-use environments.

Character-based code elements are used to achieve the following:

1. Create neighborhoods where development is appropriately scaled to surrounding land uses and the public realm.
2. Encourage active transportation (e.g. walking, biking, etc.).
3. Foster social cohesion.



The New Town Zoning District represents more than 14,000 acres and 28,000 parcels in Columbia. The New Town District is comprised of 268 approved Final Development Plans (FDPs) and a regulatory structure that results in challenges for FDP amendments and is difficult to administer. Over time, ownership has changed and development has advanced making it challenging to reconcile the district's original goals and organizational structure. In 2018, Howard County completed a Development Regulations Assessment and Annotated Outline for its Zoning Ordinance. It recommended, in part, significant changes to the New Town Zoning District. Zoning experts cite vague, poorly defined language in some cases and much too detailed language in others as significant challenges to administering New Town zoning. They also claim that the absence of flexibility in New Town zoning and requirements for multiple rounds of approvals will put Columbia at a disadvantage when competing for desired future investment.

The New Town Zoning District represents more than 14,000 acres and 28,000 parcels in Columbia. Created as a planned community by a visionary developer over 50 years ago, it is today frequently cited as one of the best places to live in the Country. Columbia has a unique sense of place, much like an historic district, that its residents want to preserve and enhance, as reported by the Columbia Association's testimony to the County Council on June 28, 2023. Columbia's original master plan contained a focus on open space in proportion to other land uses housing units that has been preserved over the decades and results in a wooded suburban community. The architectural character, although representing an earlier era, is also part of the community's signature feel. One of Columbia's founding principles was to provide a full-spectrum of housing that still exists today and provides the majority of affordable housing options in the County. Older parts of Columbia have some of the County's highest proportion of multi-family units and more affordable older single-family homes and townhouses. This relationship should be acknowledged and considered when determining locations for new affordable housing.

The New Town Zoning District represents more than 14,000 acres and 28,000 parcels in Columbia. Created as a planned community by a visionary developer over 50 years ago, it is today frequently cited as one of the best places to live in the Country. Columbia has a unique sense of place that its residents want to preserve, enhance, and strengthen. As a complement to character-based or hybrid zoning, pattern books or design guidelines and manuals can serve as a framework for preferred architectural patterns, styles, and details in the community. They can provide guidelines and standards for building types, building composition and massing, building materials, roof types and details, windows, doors, porches, and other architectural elements. They can also include standards for landscaping, lighting, fences, walls, signage, and other outdoor elements. The scope is typically limited to specific districts, neighborhoods, or activity centers in the community. While pure form-based codes can be challenging to develop, form-based elements can be used to support more traditional zoning regulations using hybrid approaches to further achieve desired character outcomes. The HoCo By Design Character Areas technical appendix provides additional design-related guidance for future code updates.

The regulatory framework of New Town zoning establishes minimum and maximum proportions of open space, residential, commercial, industrial and other land uses in addition to an overall density cap. Past General Plans evaluated and recommended updates to this framework resulting in the 2009 Village Center Revitalization zoning process update and the 2010 Downtown Columbia Master Plan which added residential units above this cap and established different land use percentages for Downtown. The New Town District is comprised of 268 approved Final Development Plans (FDPs) that enumerate parcel-specific regulations and cross-reference use and bulk provisions of non-New Town zoning districts. The FDP structure was designed to provide significant flexibility to the master developer and majority land owner of this planned community as it was developing. This regulatory structure and associated processes could be evaluated to ensure more efficient administration of the New Town Zone.

A review of the New Town zoning district and its character-defining elements by a task force would provide an opportunity to ensure that the regulatory structure is calibrated to successfully carry forward New Town zoning.

HoWARD County's Design aDvisoRy panel

The Design Advisory Panel (DAP) is a seven-member panel of professionals, including architects, landscape architects, planners, urban designers, and civil engineers, who provide recommendations regarding proposed plans for development or redevelopment that are subject to DAP review.

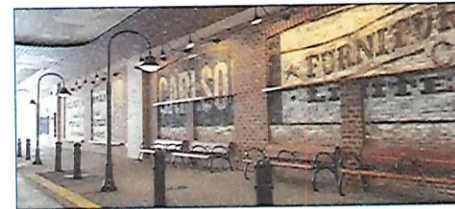
Created by the Howard County Council in 2009, the purpose of the DAP is to encourage excellence in site design and architecture, promote design compatibility with surrounding development, promote revitalization, and enhance property values.

The DAP provides design advice on proposed subdivisions and site development plans when they are subject to the Route 1 Manual, Route 40 Design Manual, New Town Village Center Design Guidelines, Downtown-wide Design Guidelines or Downtown Neighborhood Design Guidelines, Clarksville Pike Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines, compatibility criteria for conditional use applications, or design guidelines consistent with the requirements of the County's adopted Zoning Regulations.

The DAP also provides guidance regarding the following:

1. The design for buildings, vehicular circulation and access, pedestrian access and linkages, parking, loading, dumpsters, external mechanical units, existing trees, landscaping, hardscape, conceptual designs for graphic elements, and walls and fences.
2. Building scale and massing in relation to and compatible with the surrounding area and with significant and contextual adjacencies, and appropriate responses to existing site conditions, grading, and stormwater management.
3. Building architectural style, materials, entrances, windows, roof design, and colors.
4. Open space on the site including pathways, public spaces, street furniture, amenity areas, and similar features.
5. The design of exterior lighting devices and potential disturbances to the public and adjacent properties.
6. Principles of sustainability and green design.

4. Create a taskforce that is appointed by the County Council and the County Executive to determine evaluate and make recommendations on how to preserve carry forward New Town's planned community framework, fixed densities, and existing character as defined through the while considering future redevelopment.



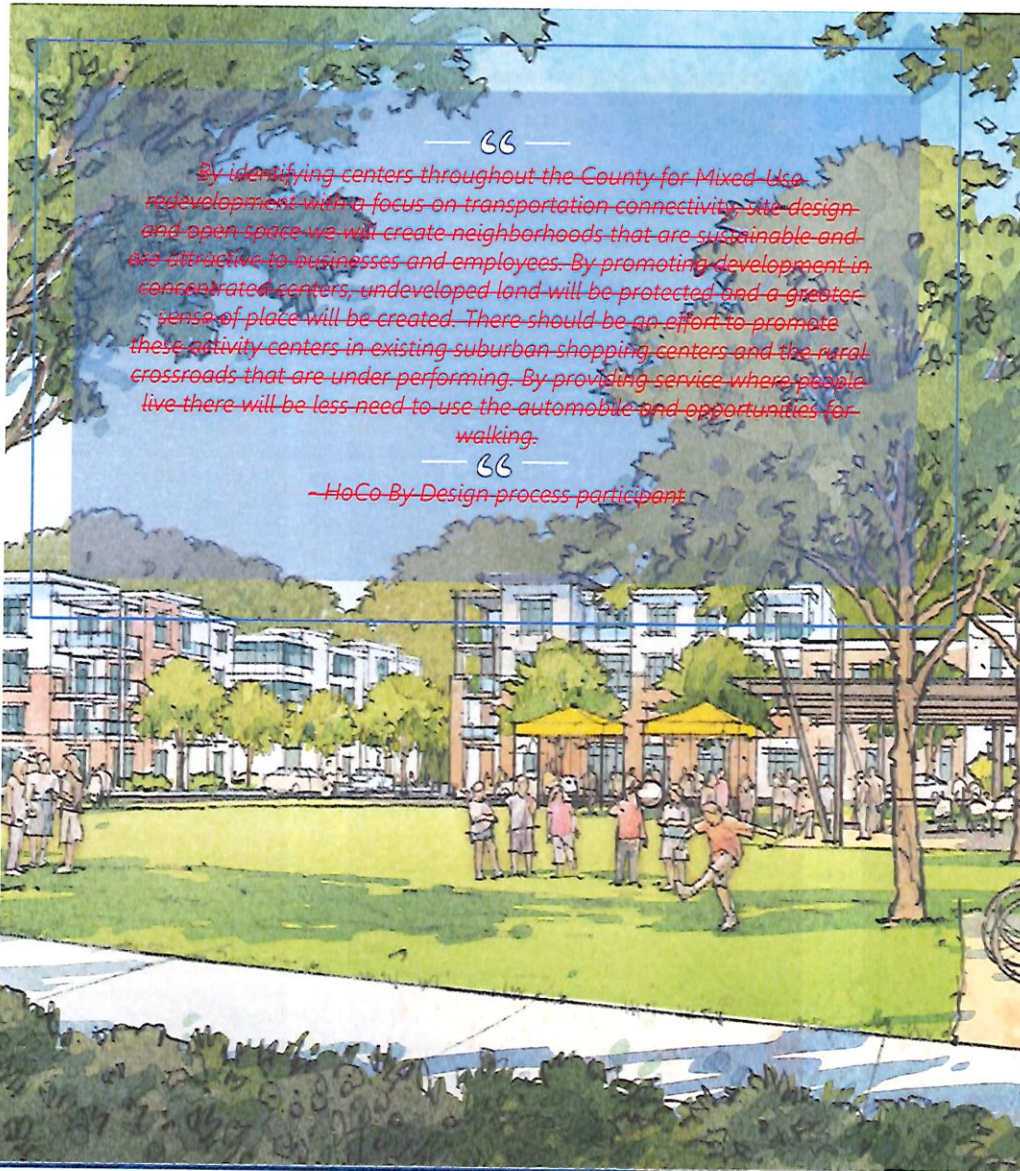
Regional examples of how character and design can be prioritized in new development.

QBD-1 Policy Statement

Prioritize character and design in future development, recognizing variations in Howard County's unique areas.

Implementing Actions

1. Identify areas to investigate character-based zoning concepts and consider the use of pattern books, design guidelines and manuals, or a hybrid approach to establish an intended character and design elements for different character areas in Howard County.
2. ~~Build on the 2018 Development Regulations Assessment to update the County's Zoning Regulations and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and policies. Incorporate opportunities to codify current practices and create regulations and design standards for new developments, infill developments, and redevelopments.~~
3. ~~2.~~ Evaluate the existing historic district zones and consider replacing them with new historic zoning district overlays or form-based districts.
4. ~~3.~~ Review the current Design Advisory Panel (DAP) review areas and approved guidelines for updates. Consider whether the role of the DAP should be expanded to other areas within Howard County.
4. ~~Create a taskforce to determine how to preserve New Town's planned community framework, fixed densities, and existing character as defined through the master development plan while considering future redevelopment~~
5. ~~Revise the New Town Zoning District and investigate the use of enhanced design guidelines and character-based or form-based codes in Columbia:~~
 - a. ~~Build upon the preferred development types, patterns, intensities, and design elements described in HoCo By-Design's Character Areas technical appendix.~~
 - b. ~~Take into consideration the design and planning principles illustrated in HoCo By-Design's Focus Areas technical appendix.~~
 - c. ~~Explore rules and requirements for design review by the Design Advisory Panel, or a combination of staff and the DAP.~~
 - d. ~~Identify the appropriate purpose and timing of design review within the development review process.~~



Identifying and Transforming Activity Centers Throughout the County

Traditional suburban communities are changing. As land available for greenfield development runs out, communities, stakeholders, and County government will have to adjust to meet the social, economic, infrastructure, character, and environmental needs of the future. Positioning mature suburban communities for new opportunities requires considering market demands, demographics, regional forces, infrastructure capacity, community actions and reactions, physical planning, and phasing redevelopment in specific areas with fractured land ownership, as well as government rules and policies.

To accommodate growth and continue to provide a high level of service and infrastructure, the County will need to embrace redevelopment opportunities. Several decades of conventional suburban development, combined with land preservation efforts, have resulted in a community with very little developable land remaining, a wide spectrum of character typologies, and a population increasingly reliant on automobiles.

HoCo By Design seeks to identify activity centers that promote mixed-use, walkable development areas throughout the community as areas for transformation. These activity centers are depicted in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) presented in the Growth & Conservation Framework Chapter. Character areas that provide opportunities for the County to grow and innovate with future activity centers include Downtown Columbia, Regional Activity Center (Gateway), Transit Activity Center, Industrial Mixed-Use Center, Village Activity Center, and Mixed-Use Activity Center. The FLUM and character areas aim to create more predictability around what type of development will occur in these targeted areas. These activity centers provide opportunities to reimagine Howard County's future and introduce new mixed-use employment centers, regional shopping centers, entertainment areas, and upper-story or adjacent residential units in appropriate locations.

The overall goal is to allow and promote compact mixed-use development patterns in county activity centers that create places where people live, work, shop, and play as a cohesive community—furthering the economic vitality and sustainability of the area. Mixed-use development also increases the efficiency of the utilities and transportation serving the area and enhances the sense of community experienced by residents, business owners, and visitors.

These new activity centers in the County will evolve over time in terms of land use mix, density and intensity, home choices, and transportation options. Each activity center's design will be unique, resulting in a variety of mixed-use places. These are the areas where the County should emphasize public and private investment—increasing allowable densities and intensities, adding infrastructure capacity (such as public schools, fire stations, and other public facilities), improving access from nearby neighborhoods, investing in streetscape improvements, and encouraging affordable housing.

When developing activity centers, integrating transportation design principles creates cohesive, fluid, and engaging experiences for cyclists and pedestrians. Many suburban rights-of-way (ROW) were designed for high-speed, auto-only travel. By narrowing travel lanes and adding on-street parking, sidewalks, and planting strips, streets can be made safer and more walkable, creating a more user-friendly, aesthetically-pleasing public realm. Redevelopment can also address barriers to non-motorized connectivity in places like aging shopping centers by enhancing pedestrian connections and creating internal drives with infill buildings fronting onto them. Rather than having large surface parking lots between the building and the street, this redevelopment approach relocates parking to the rear of buildings, thereby achieving better land use transition patterns.

Many of the activity centers identified in the FLUM are existing suburban shopping centers and office parks that contain large swaths of impermeable areas and often reflect outdated automobile-centric site designs. Retrofitting aging building sites allows developers to take advantage of existing infrastructure and services. Such redevelopment further helps to mitigate the effects of sprawl by providing better connections to transit and mobility corridors.

Green Redevelopment

Redevelopment of existing shopping centers provides significant environmental benefits by introducing open space, community gathering areas, and stormwater management where none currently exist. Examples of open space elements that can be added in redeveloped centers include small parks, squares, plazas, and community gardens. New or improved stormwater management, which incorporates environmental site design practices, reduces impervious area and adverse impacts to sensitive watersheds. The County currently reviews energy and water efficiency requirements in its Building Code every three years and during the Building Code update process. The County should continue to review these requirements to ensure they reflect the most recent best practices. To further these green initiatives, the County should explore integrating additional environmentally sustainable design standards in future updates for the Zoning Regulations, site design requirements, and environmental programs.

In 2020, Howard County added bird-friendly design standards to its pre-existing Green Building requirements (which apply to new public buildings of 10,000 square feet or larger and new private buildings of 50,000 square feet or larger). The purpose of bird-friendly design is to reduce the likelihood that birds will collide with buildings. Design techniques include use of façade materials that are more visible to birds and reduction of excessive artificial lights that can disorient migrating birds.



QBD-2 Policy Statement

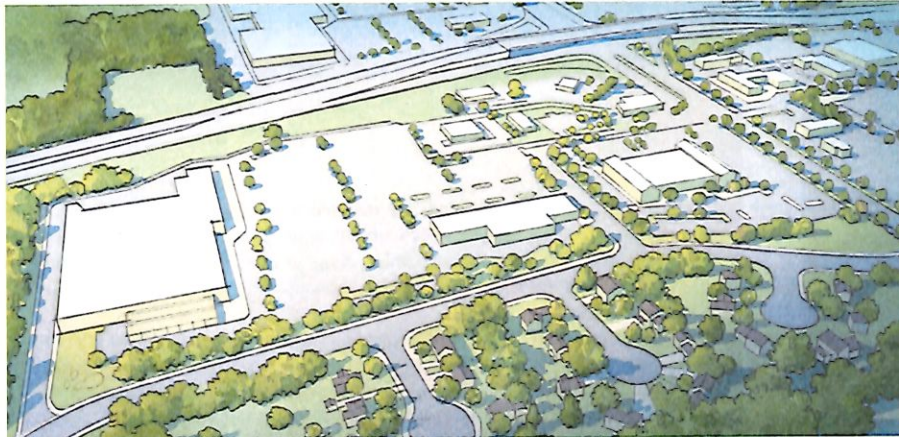
Use the The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) may be used to guide redevelopment in identified activity centers, which present opportunities for mixed-use development, mixed-income housing, small parks or community gathering spaces, increased stormwater management, and multi-modal transportation options.

Implementing Actions

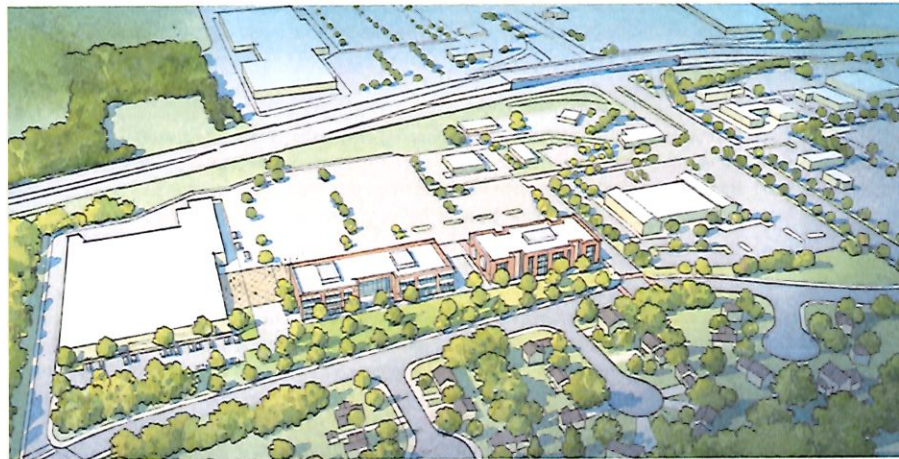
1. Use Consider using the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) during the rezoning process to create activity centers consistent with the character area descriptions.
2. Assess existing Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, Zoning Regulations, and Design Advisory Panel design review policies for opportunities to create or strengthen regulations and design standards for activity center development/redevelopment. Evaluate potential standards for frontage design, main entrance location, and parking calculations. Incorporate accessibility by including standards and guidance to ensure there is direct access to the building from the street.
3. Review the Zoning Regulations and design manuals to identify ways to mitigate the impacts of auto-oriented uses and minimize negative impacts, including odor, noise, light, air pollution, and diesel emissions.
4. Ensure redevelopment of suburban shopping centers and office parks reduces impervious surface, increases and sets percentages for open space, and provides adequate stormwater management, where none or little existed before.
5. Explore integrating additional environmentally sustainable design standards in future updates to the Zoning Regulations, site design requirements, and environmental programs to further green initiatives.
6. When retrofitting shopping centers and business parks, investigate opportunities to create mixed-income housing for all residents. Incentivize affordable housing that can be purchased by low and moderate income buyers.
7. Develop criteria for zoning changes for suburban commercial character areas adjacent to redeveloping activity centers.
8. Identify potential opportunities to realize Ensure better retail success in the Village Centers by partnering to initiate a new market study to update the 2014 study that will clearly identify supportable retail types and quantities at each center. Non-retail uses, including civic and cultural, should be included. This becomes a roadmap regarding support for and input into county and developer proposals.

PHASED REDEVELOPMENT OF A SUBURBAN SHOPPING CENTER

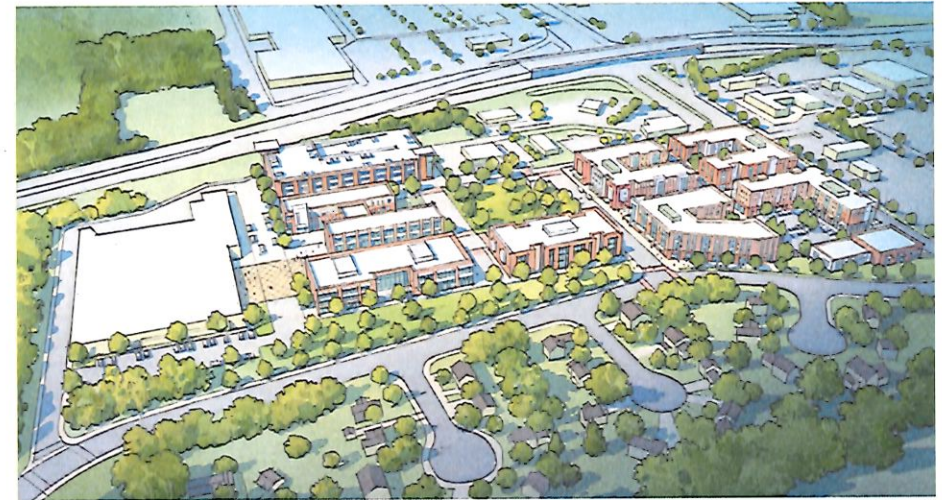
Redevelopment of existing suburban commercial centers can occur through incremental, phased changes. In the top left image below is a typical layout for a conventional big box retail store located several hundred feet back from the street with a large surface parking lot. The following drawings illustrate how a hypothetical phased redevelopment of this suburban shopping center could occur.



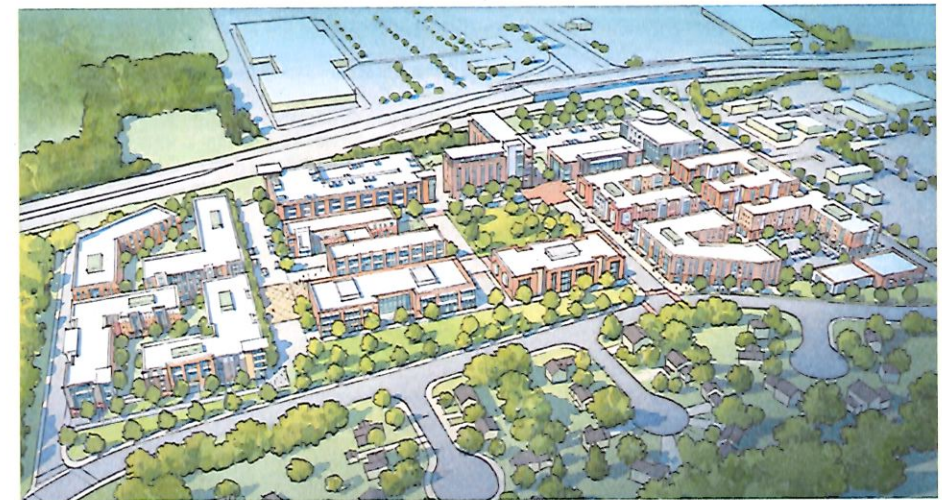
Phase 1: Portions of the shopping center parking lot begin to develop with new retail buildings, sidewalks, and green space.



Phase 2: Parking lot conversion continues. New buildings on previous surface parking lots support a mix of uses: multi-family residential, office, retail, and entertainment.



Phase 3: Big box store is demolished and replaced with additional mixed-use blocks, walkable streets, and central plazas. Full redevelopment potential is realized.



Enhancing the public Realm and Walkability

The public realm is comprised of the spaces between the buildings, including the streets, sidewalks, parks, and other public spaces. Plans for these spaces ensure that community character remains at the forefront as development, redevelopment, and infill occurs.

The concept of accessibility and walkability is a thread that is woven throughout this document in character area descriptions, redevelopment recommendations, and policy statements. A walkable community achieves a balance between multiple modes of transportation and ensures equitable accessibility for persons of all ages and abilities. A walkable place reduces reliance on automobiles and not only encourages walking and biking, but also makes it safe and appealing to pedestrians and cyclists. In Howard County, sprawling development patterns and a disconnected network of pedestrian facilities can make it difficult to travel by foot in some areas, especially for those who may use mobility devices. Many of the existing commercial and suburban retail developments in Howard County remain automobile focused.

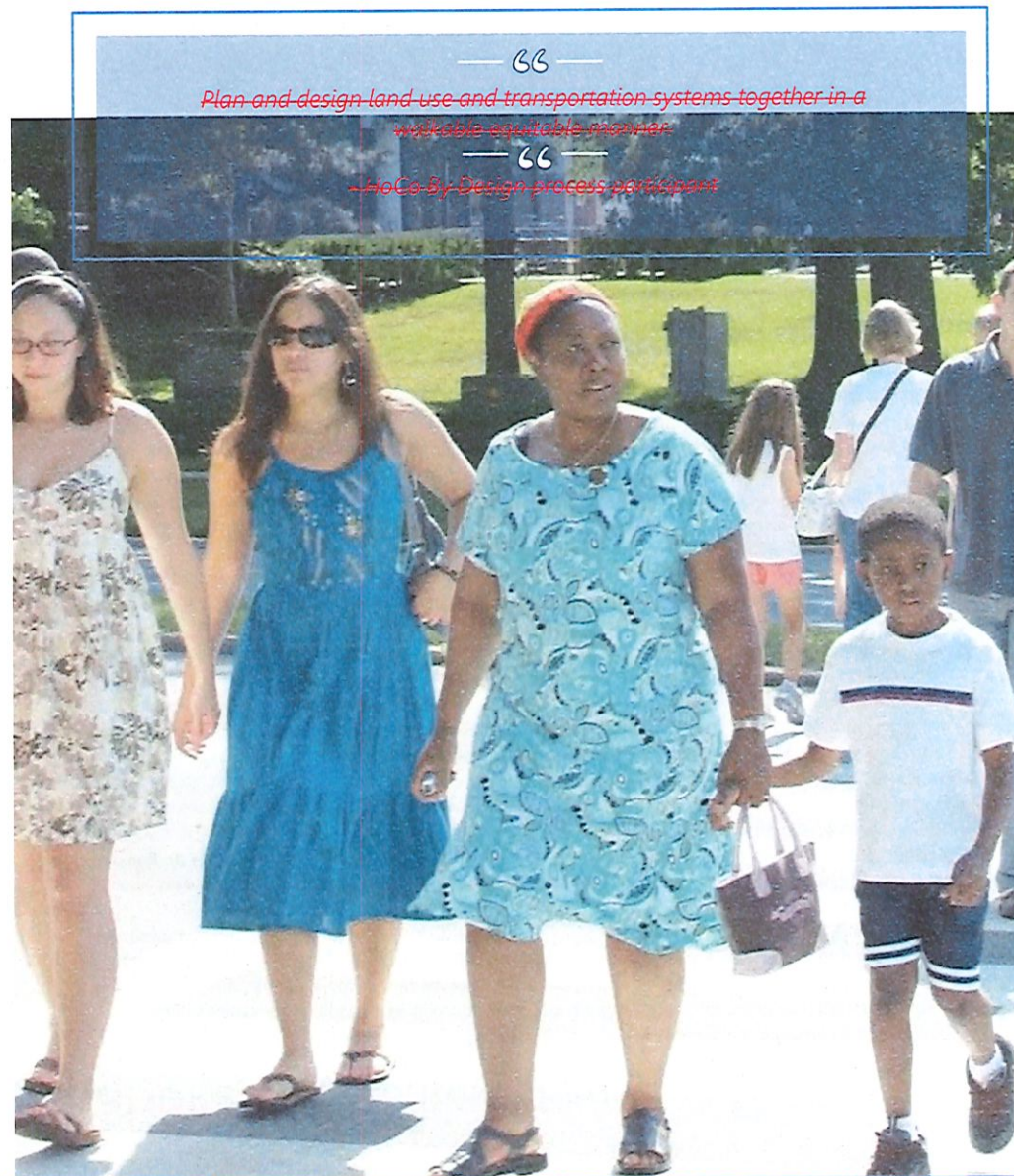
A comprehensive approach to design and investment in public spaces and transportation corridors creates opportunities to coordinate projects that reinforce a common community vision. The ability to create walkable environments through investments in the public realm can also influence travel behavior and nearby land uses and development densities.

In conventional development, commercial uses like gas stations, drive-through restaurants, and banks often place the building at the back of the lot and the vehicular circulation in the front. Flipping the two helps activate the

Benefits of a Walkable Community

- A walkable location with a mix of uses generates more foot traffic, which encourages retail sales.
- Mixed-use environments are generally more economically-resilient and able to evolve with changing demographics.
- The ability to walk and ride transit reduces the need for and costs of car ownership¹.
- Providing walkability throughout Howard County would be a benefit to lower-income families, who may be more reliant on walking.
- A walkable environment can help people incorporate exercise into their daily lives at no cost.
- Communities designed to be walkable have the potential to improve air quality by reducing short car trips.
- Walkable neighborhoods generally have lower rates of traffic fatalities—for both pedestrians and motorists.
- Seniors who choose to give up driving may be able to remain independent longer if they are able to walk to services.

¹The average cost of owning and operating a car in 2019 (per AAA) was more than \$9,000 per year.



Public Art and Planning

According to the American Planning Association, Planning Advisory Service report entitled Public Art and Planning, "Public art can be an engaging tool for creating a sense of place that reflects the character, history, and values of a community. Communities can use public art to further economic growth and sustainability, cultural identity, social cohesion, and public health. There are numerous ways to incorporate art into the built environment and everyday planning processes in a way that engages diverse stakeholders."

street and create a more pedestrian-friendly streetscape. Scale, shade, comfort, and commercial uses activating the street become as important as the infrastructure itself.

Redevelopment in Columbia's downtown and village centers, as well as recent planned mixed-use developments, emphasize design for pedestrians and bicyclists. The County already has some tools in place with the Route 1 Manual, Route 40 Design Manual, and the Clarksville Pike Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines, which guide design of the public realm. HoCo By Design's County in Motion chapter also provides policies and recommendations related to walkability and bikeability.

Finally, the location of recreational open space in new developments and redevelopments impacts its usability. The County's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations should be updated to ensure the creation of usable and accessible community open space.

QBD-3 Policy Statement

Focus on creating active, walkable, and universally accessible public realms in all new development and redevelopment and include a broad range of community spaces, as appropriate to each character area.

Implementing Actions

1. Prioritize the orientation of **commercial** buildings toward the street in all new development and redevelopment to create more walkable places.
2. Work with stakeholders and community members to incorporate policies for diverse and inclusive public art and cultural expression throughout the County. Identify potential partnerships for strengthening public art programs and art education opportunities.
3. Continue to work with stakeholders of all ages and abilities to identify strategies for universal access to employment centers, stores, parks, and recreation and community amenities.
4. Establish goals and guidelines for providing community open spaces and park spaces to create more equitable access across different neighborhoods in Howard County. Ideally, residents should have a variety of open space choices within walking or biking distance of their home.
5. Evaluate the goals described in the Route 1 Manual, Route 40 Design Manual, Clarksville Pike Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines, and Complete Streets Policy for updates and determine if there are items in these manuals that could be adapted more broadly within the County.
6. Use a holistic approach to incorporating transportation infrastructure into the public realm that focuses on connections and universal user experience.

Addressing Context-Sensitive Design

Future development in the County will be guided by character areas applied to the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). Transformative redevelopment in activity centers will become the primary means of change across different areas and places in the County. However, in some cases, neighborhoods may present opportunities for small-scale, context-sensitive infill development and redevelopment that complements the character and uses of surrounding homes and neighborhoods.

In conventional suburban patterns where different uses are separated, clear boundaries and buffers are established to mitigate the impacts of adjacent incompatible uses. A shift to redevelopment presents an opportunity to reimagine site design for both residential and nonresidential buildings. Redevelopment can incorporate best practice design principles that create complete streets, provide for high-quality architecture, construct meaningful open spaces, and maintain the character of existing neighborhoods. Incorporating smaller-scale housing and commercial and office activity centers in areas adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods creates both a challenge and an opportunity. By focusing on transitions in form and massing, the County can begin to infill around its single-use residential areas with contextually-appropriate mixed-use development.

Community character is shaped in large part by the way developments respond to the land, interface with other uses, relate to streets and civic spaces, and reinforce connections. These factors often have a greater impact on character than the use of the buildings themselves. Well-coordinated site and structure design provide an overarching context for a place that transcends its use.

There are many early subdivision neighborhoods in Howard County that may not be officially designated as historic but are older neighborhoods consisting of housing types that are no longer commonly built. Many such neighborhoods are characterized by large lots and mature trees. These neighborhoods have experienced more recent infill development with new houses placed behind existing homes, often accessed off pipestem driveways. In these situations, the new construction tends to follow market trends and is often not compatible with the existing neighborhood in site orientation, bulk, massing, and proportion. These developments can slowly change the character of the neighborhoods.

— CC —
The form (design/massing/site placement) of new housing types is more important than the type of housing. Architecture and site planning do more to shape how housing forms feel in a neighborhood and disparate forms create anxiety and opposition.

— CC —
—HoCo By Design process participant

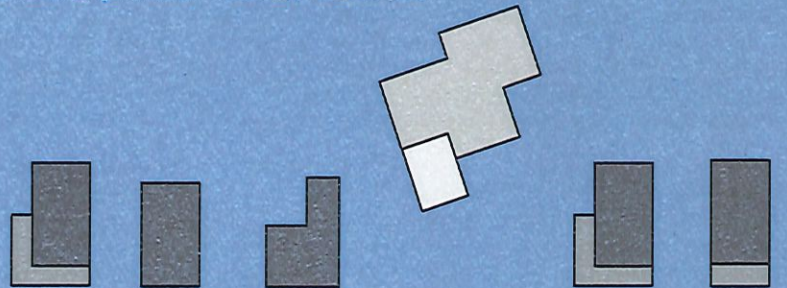
Context-Sensitive Design in Established Neighborhoods

New homes can blend into established neighborhoods through compatible site orientation, bulk, massing, and proportion.

In the following diagram, the new home in the center (shown in light gray) is oriented to the street, just like the existing homes (shown in dark gray). The new home follows the same setback from the street as the existing homes. While not identical to each home on the street, the new home's proportions (depth and width) are comparable to other existing homes. The porch on the new home spans the width of the home, like others on the street, and features similar proportions to existing porches.



Compared to the example above, the new home in the diagram below (shown in light gray) is less compatible with existing homes. The new home is oriented at an angle (rather than towards the street) and is set further back from the existing homes. The new home's proportions also differ from all the existing homes on the street, as does its porch.



Infill Development

It is important that future infill in mature existing communities respects the character of both the built and natural environments. New development should consider existing adjacent development early in the application and conceptual design process. It should be compatible with the scale, bulk, massing, and proportion of the surrounding community. Architectural features may also reflect existing character and can help new development assimilate with nearby buildings through similarly sized and patterned architectural features, such as windows, doors, awnings, arcades, cornices, facade materials, roof types, and other details.

Small infill sites where existing development patterns are established and expected to remain can use building form and placement to avoid incompatible adjacencies. For example, a quadplex with four units can be designed to look nearly the same as a single-family home, allowing it to fit seamlessly into the neighborhood. Allocating parking to the rear of the lot, ~~accessed from an alley or a front-loaded driveway~~, allows the occupancy of the building to appear comparable to adjacent houses. This infill approach provides an opportunity to include a variety of housing types and price points to address housing needs in Howard County.

On larger infill sites, new development across the street from existing development should be complementary in lot size and building massing and placement. New lots and buildings that differ significantly in massing and scale should be located towards the center of the development, with lots and building sizes gradually transitioning to the scale of existing surrounding development. Where these transitions are not possible due to existing neighborhood patterns, infill buildings should still maintain a consistent structure setback and provide a new massing and architecture that correlate to the adjacent building heights and architectural rhythms.

Similar treatments should be considered for small commercial or office buildings near existing neighborhoods. Commercial and industrial development near neighborhoods should be limited to operations that are low-intensity, unobtrusive, and at a scale and design compatible with nearby residential development. The design of these centers should transition effectively between residential and nonresidential uses, and include safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access for nearby residents. New development should focus density and intensity around major intersections and provide appropriate transitions to less intense edges of the neighborhood. Similarly, massing should consider the edge transitions as well. New, taller, more dense buildings may occur at one end of the new development block, with medium, less dense buildings mid-block, and smaller, low-density buildings meeting the scale of the existing neighborhood. Transitions may also take place over rear lot lines, where one side of an existing block may have a different character than the opposite side of the new development block. Illustrative approaches to infill development in different settings are described in Technical Appendix C: Focus Areas.

Context-sensitive infill may be further achieved through design guidelines that are specific to surrounding areas. Buildings and architecture in Howard County are highly varied and reflect several architectural styles, including Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival styles and forms. Mid-century architecture was introduced with the development of Columbia, and new contemporary architecture is also prevalent throughout the County. These variations in architectural styles reinforce the character of different places, but often buildings and developments outside of historic areas, districts, and rural areas do not align with the character of the surrounding areas. Architectural compatibility can be achieved through design guidelines or pattern books to maintain the look and feel of mature neighborhoods; however, regulating architectural style would be challenging given the variety of styles present in the County.

Updates to development and redevelopment regulations can incorporate architectural and site design principles that better reflect unique areas, address pedestrian and transit-friendly opportunities in larger developments, and result in meaningful open spaces. Updates to the County Zoning Regulations should address infill development options in residential districts, which includes standards to ensure that new development is appropriate to the site and its surroundings. Architectural elements can also serve as important transitional features for new development. Where a clearly established building character is expected to remain, infill development should blend with nearby buildings by using similarly sized and patterned architectural features.

hoWARD County lanDscape Manual

The Howard County Landscape Manual, which establishes standards of performance for preparing landscape plans, was last amended in 1998 (though a policy memorandum was added in 2010 to update recommended street tree and plant lists). As noted in the 2018 Development Regulations Assessment, there is a need to update the manual to better address issues related to quantities, species, spacing, and survival of plantings, as well as integration with solar technology. Updates could reconsider landscape standards for places in the County that are planned for a more walkable, mixed-use environment, such as planting calculations, screening requirements, placement design, and species mixes. The assessment also cited the need to review and strengthen landscape buffers along residential/commercial and residential/agricultural edges.



NatuRe and Context-Sensitive Design

As previously noted in this chapter, the natural landscape often serves as a unifying element in neighborhoods. Infill development and redevelopment can be designed to both respect natural features and accentuate them. For example, mature trees can be retained and new trees planted to enhance the existing landscape. Building setbacks (such as the space between buildings and the street) can be repeated in new development so existing patterns of green spaces (such as front yards) are maintained. Finally, the approach to design can emphasize adapting a building to a site (rather than adapting a site to a building), thereby reducing disturbance to natural features.

QBD-4 Policy Statement

Develop context-sensitive design standards appropriate for various scales of infill development to effectively transition between larger developments and established uses, and to encourage compatibility of small-scale infill within established neighborhoods.

Implementing Actions

1. Explore the implementation of form-based or character-based districts and neighborhood compatibility standards that emphasize massing and form over use type.
2. Investigate programs to preserve the community character of older neighborhoods that are not currently designated as historic or do not yet meet criteria to be designated as such.
3. ~~Encourage infill housing typologies that create smaller more affordable units, if they blend in with surrounding homes through context-sensitive design.~~
4. ~~3.~~ Review existing design manuals for updates to address contextual architecture design.
5. ~~4.~~ Assess existing land use and zoning policies for opportunities to incorporate best practice placemaking and urban design principles that create transitions between land uses and between the built and natural environments.
6. ~~5.~~ Update the Landscape Manual to reflect current best practices, and to provide clear direction on buffers that address the scale and mass of new development abutting existing development.
7. ~~6.~~ Ensure that adequate parking exists for all infill developments.

ENCOURAGING & STRENGTHENING HISTORIC PRESERVATION

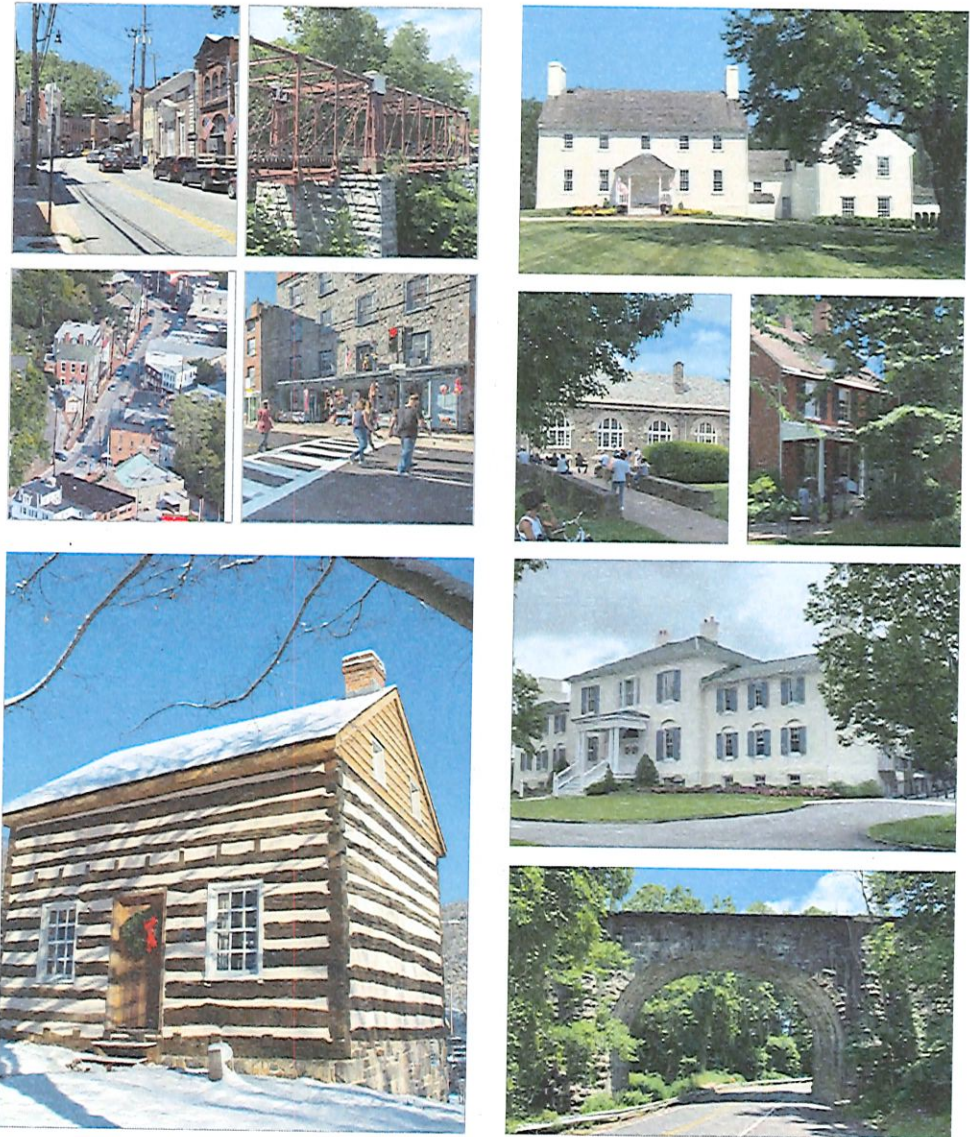
Historic Resources

Historic resources in Howard County are important contributors to character. Howard County is home to many different types of historic properties, cemeteries, and structures. There are over 1,000 historic properties listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties for Howard County and 206 cemeteries listed on the County's cemetery inventory. Of the 1,000 historic properties, approximately 956 are locally adopted onto the Howard County Historic Sites Inventory. Owners of properties listed on the Howard County Historic Sites Inventory can apply for the County's historic tax credit programs for certain repairs to historic buildings, historic landscape features, and historic cemeteries. Howard County contains two local historic districts that are regulated by the County's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC): Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill. These districts are also National Register Districts and contain structures that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks Program, such as the Baltimore and Ohio Ellicott City Railroad Station in Ellicott City.

In addition, Howard County contains two other National Register districts that are not local historic districts: Savage Mill and Daniels Mill. Daniels Mill was listed in 1973, but the mill town was significantly destroyed by flood from Hurricane Agnes in 1972 and then fire in 1978. Only two buildings/ruins remain today, as well as industrial uses. Aside from Howard County's National Register Districts, there are 39 properties individually listed on the National Register, some of which qualify under the National Historic Landmark Program, such as the Bollman Suspension Truss Bridge in Savage. National Register listing does not provide protection from adverse changes, and these sites would need to be locally designated to protect them from adverse alterations or demolition.

Howard County contains several other historic areas that are not listed on the National Register or designated as local historic districts. Historic areas include, but are not limited to, historic Elkrigde (which consists of the Elkrigde Landing Survey District, HO-784; the Main Street Survey District, HO-377; the Railroad Avenue Survey District, HO-514; the Levering Avenue Survey District, HO-785; and the Old Washington Road Survey District, HO-803), the Frederick Road Survey District, the north Rogers Avenue area in Ellicott City, Harwood Park, Frederick Road in Lisbon, and rural places such as Highland and Daisy.

Local design guidelines are an important tool for preserving community character and tradition in historic districts. Both the Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill Historic Districts have design guidelines that are based on the Standards for Review established in Title 16, Subtitle 6 of the County Code. They provide recommendations for the treatment of historic properties and other properties located in a historic district. The Ellicott City Historic District Design Guidelines were adopted in 1998 and are in the process of being updated. The purpose of the update is to create a more user-friendly document that better addresses new technologies, the threat of flooding, and floodproofing methods. However, the Guidelines must maintain the intent of preserving the character of Ellicott City and its historical buildings, building materials, and streetscapes. Ellicott City is the County's most active district, but the Lawyers Hill Historic District Design Guidelines, adopted in 1995, will need to be updated next.



Additionally, Howard County has several policy documents and guidelines that seek to preserve, protect, and maintain historic resources. In 2014, the Howard County Council passed a resolution to adopt the Historic Preservation Plan in CR27-2014. The purpose of the plan was to provide guidance and direction for the current and future preservation of Howard County's non-renewable historic and cultural resources, as well as to ensure the County's future plans for growth would protect historic resources. The plan established a series of goals and objectives, such as strengthening existing laws; evaluating historic, cultural, and archeological resources; identifying and promoting use of financial resources; expanding public education and outreach; enhancing protection of cemeteries; supporting revitalization of historic neighborhoods and commercial areas; and promoting heritage tourism. While the plan does not address when it should be updated, the County should review the plan and determine if an update is needed.



HOWARD COUNTY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is a seven-member commission made up of county residents that have special knowledge and training in fields such as historic preservation, architecture, history, urban design, or related disciplines, and have demonstrated an interest in the preservation of historic and architectural areas of the County. The Commission includes at least one property owner or resident from each multiple site historic district in the County.

Established by the County Council in 1973, the purpose of the Commission is to regulate construction, alteration, reconstruction, moving, and demolition of structures of historic, architectural, and archeological value, together with their appurtenances and environmental settings, within respective specified limits. The regulations the Commission follows are designed to safeguard the heritage of the County by preserving districts that reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political, or architectural history; to stabilize and improve the property values in such districts in the County; to foster civic beauty; to strengthen the local economy; and to promote the use and preservation of such historic districts in the County for the education, welfare, and pleasure of the residents of the County.

The Commission is responsible for reviewing and approving all work that could impact the natural or built environments within a locally designated historic district. Work could include the following:

1. Construction, relocation, demolition, repair, or alteration of any structure in any manner affecting the exterior appearance of the structure.
2. Construction or alteration of parking areas.
3. Installation or alteration of exterior signs.

The Commission primarily uses adopted design guidelines for the Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill Historic Districts and the Standards of Review established in Section 16.607 of the County Code to determine if work is appropriate and should therefore be permitted.

The Commission also reviews applications for alterations to historic structures outside the historic districts and makes other determinations when required by the County Code and Zoning Regulations, assists with identifying historic resources on sites, provides advice regarding the design of development for historic properties undergoing subdivision or site development plan review, and provides advice to Howard County agencies, boards, commissions, and property owners regarding historic sites and historic districts. The Commission is also the steward of the County's Historic Preservation Plan.

Potential New Districts – Multiple or Single Site

Beyond the Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill Historic Districts, the County contains other historic communities, identified on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), that could also be eligible for a historic district designation. However, property owners may be reluctant to form a historic district if it means restrictions will be applied to their property. As an alternative to a traditional district, a conservation district program, sometimes referred to as “historic district-lite,” can also provide protection, preserve community character, and maintain sense of place. Such programs could provide a means to further protect historic structures across the County and could be explored for historic communities identified on the FLUM, such as historic Elkridge and the Savage Mill Historic National Register District. The Frederick Road Survey District, north Rogers Avenue area in Ellicott City, Harwood Park, and rural places, such as Lisbon, Highland, and Daisy, are also noted as other historic areas in the County. However, additional research, exploration, and community engagement would need to be completed prior to considering them for a conservation district program or as a historic community on the FLUM.

Single site districts serve as another preservation tool. Established in Howard County in 2014, with updates in 2018, single site districts are designated historic districts consisting of only one property. These districts could be used to protect historic resources that are susceptible to demolition through the subdivision and land development process, as well as for any historic structure whose owners want to protect the building from alterations that could impact the historic integrity of the building and site. A priority focus for single site district designation could be structures on the Historic Sites Inventory. Design standards could also be created to encourage any possible new construction on these sites to be more compatible with existing historic properties in terms of scale, bulk, massing, proportion, and orientation.



CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

A conservation district is a flexible tool that can be used in a variety of settings and for a variety of reasons, including as an alternative to a local historic district when the community does not want the stricter preservation controls associated with a local district. Conservation districts may include reviews of new construction and additions that typically emphasize compatibility (size, placement of buildings, etc.) rather than architectural features.

According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, “conservation districts are areas... with a distinct physical character. Although these [areas] tend not to merit designation as a historic district, they warrant special land use attention due to their distinctive character and importance as viable, contributing areas to the community at large...New construction projects, including additions, are frequently evaluated under standards that emphasize compatible development in terms of size or massing rather than specific architectural features.”

Threats to Historic Resources

Neglected properties (whether inside or outside of a historic district) negatively impact the community’s aesthetic experience. Demolition by neglect occurs when a property owner allows a historic building to severely deteriorate—beyond the point of repair—which then results in the building’s demolition. In response to increasing incidences of demolition by neglect, in April 2022, the County enacted Council Bill 88, which prohibited property owners from willful failure to maintain and repair certain historic structures in locally designated historic districts. The aim was to prevent these structures from potential demolition by neglect. Council Bill 88 also authorized the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to review and advise on alleged demolition by neglect violation cases.

The HPC provides advisory comments on historic properties undergoing subdivision or site development plan review. However, aside from the 2022 demolition by neglect legislation, the County does not have any other protections to prevent historic structures outside the local historic districts from being demolished through redevelopment activities or from being adversely altered. It is important to retain historically valuable resources, which tell the story of all of Howard County’s community members. The County should explore incentives that would allow for more of these invaluable structures to be retained and rehabilitated, not only during the development process, but also after construction is complete. Transfer of development rights (TDR) programs can be an incentive for property owners to preserve historic sites that would otherwise be developed or to decrease the density of a site being developed. TDR programs allow the property owner to sell their rights to develop to another owner, therefore transferring the development to another site.

QBD-5 Policy Statement

Pursue new historic designations to protect and preserve historic communities and sites through the creation of new single site historic districts, new multiple site historic districts, conservation districts, or other types of designations for historic communities.

Implementing Actions

1. Research the various types of historic designations, beyond those currently used by Howard County.
2. Provide outreach to the various communities to gauge their level of interest in historic designation options.

QBD-6 Policy Statement

Strengthen existing historic preservation programs and initiatives in Howard County.

Implementing Actions

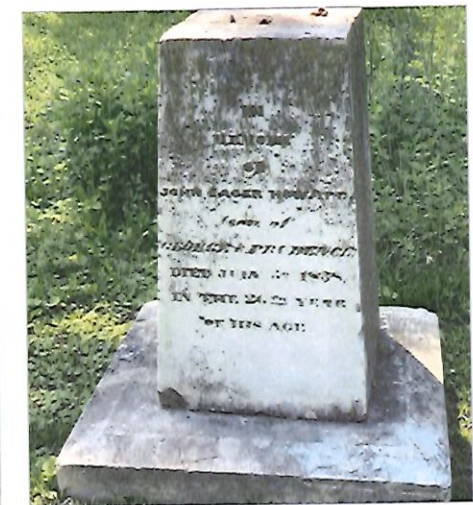
1. Complete the update of the Ellicott City Historic District Design Guidelines to create a user-friendly document that responds to changing technologies while maintaining the character of the District.
2. Update the Lawyers Hill Historic District Design Guidelines.
3. Evaluate ways to strengthen preservation and maintenance of historic properties outside of historic districts.
4. Strengthen historic preservation programs both to prevent demolition and demolition by neglect, and to better incentivize restoration and adaptive reuse.
5. Continue to implement the 2014 Preservation Plan and update it as needed.
6. Encourage the design of new construction that is compatible with historic structures so that neighborhoods maintain a better sense of place and retain historic integrity.
7. Explore the use of transfer of development rights programs, easements programs, or other development incentives to preserve historic sites and their environmental settings.

Historic Tax Credit Programs and Other Incentives

While there are limited protections for historic structures outside of locally designated historic districts, the County offers two historic tax credit programs (20.112 and 20.113 of the County Code) that incentivize restoration and maintenance of both historic structures and cemetery sites. In 2013 and 2016, the County enhanced the 20.112 tax credit to add allowable expenses, increase the credit, and provide more flexible terms, which resulted in a stronger program that is more accessible and beneficial to property owners.

After the 2016 Ellicott City flood, Howard County strengthened the 20.113 Historic Property Assessment tax credit. This resulted in a more usable credit that facilitates restoration of flood damaged buildings in Ellicott City after the 2016 and 2018 floods, and can assist restoration of other historic structures throughout the County that are in need of substantial renovation to be habitable.

Not all historic properties can use existing tax credits; for example, historic churches and other tax-exempt properties that do not pay property taxes cannot benefit from this incentive. Additionally, while cemeteries are an eligible property type for the credit, maintenance of these sites is typically performed and paid for by those who are given permission to access the site, not the property owner. While tax credits have been successful ensuring properties maintain their historic nature and character defining elements over time, they have not been as effective addressing the maintenance and restoration needs of historic cemeteries. A grant program would be more beneficial than a property tax credit, as only the owner of a property can receive a tax credit and it is often difficult to track down ownership of these historic cemeteries. To preserve these resources that reflect the County's diverse heritage and historic architecture, other funding opportunities and partnerships should be explored.



CEMETERY PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD & HISTORIC CEMETERY RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM

Howard County has a Cemetery Preservation Advisory Board (CPAB), whose purpose is to foster the preservation of cemeteries and burial grounds in the County. The CPAB was created to protect old cemeteries and burial grounds from development pressures and advise on the design of any development that may impact a documented historic cemetery. In recent years, the CPAB, in conjunction with the Howard County Genealogical Society, has completed ground field work to further document and confirm the location of most of the listed cemeteries in the County.

The county Historic Cemetery Restoration Grant Program provides financial assistance to cemetery owners and managers for the repair and preservation of local historic cemeteries. The program was created in 2017 in response to a countywide survey of more than 100 historic cemeteries that showed a great need for their repair and maintenance. The program has raised awareness of cemetery preservation, beautified cemetery sites, and revealed information about the County's history and heritage. The program is administered through a successful and mostly voluntarily partnership that includes the Cemetery Preservation Advisory Board, the Department of Planning and Zoning, and the Howard County Genealogical Society.

Howard County and the CPAB strive to not only locate and protect cemeteries, but to also provide support and outreach for the long-term preservation and care of these invaluable historic resources. These resources help tell the story of the County's history and heritage by revealing information about historic events, religions, lifestyles, and genealogy.

QBD-7 Policy Statement

Continue to provide incentives for the restoration and preservation of historic resources.

Implementing Actions

1. Continue to promote use of county historic tax credits for properties located in local historic districts or listed on the Historic Sites Inventory.
2. Continue to pursue and promote funding opportunities for historic property restoration and preservation.
3. Support a grant program for the general upkeep and maintenance of historic cemeteries and tax-exempt properties.
4. Continue partnerships supporting cemetery preservation that can provide funding, advocacy, and education.

Historic Inventories, Documentation, and Education

Howard County has adopted historic inventories for local historic sites, as well as cemeteries and burial grounds. The local Historic Sites Inventory is based on the properties listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, managed by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT). According to MHT's website, "the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) is a repository of information on districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of known or potential value to the prehistory and history of the State of Maryland." The MIHP was created shortly after the Maryland Historical Trust was founded in 1961, and now includes data on more than 13,000 archaeological sites and 43,000 historic and architectural resources. The MIHP includes information about both standing structures and archaeological resources. Inventoried properties contribute information to the understanding of Maryland's architecture, engineering, archaeology, and culture. Howard County has used the local Historic Sites Inventory to allow historic property tax credits to be used for the restoration of historic properties and to make buildings on the Inventory eligible for certain conditional uses within the Zoning Regulations.

In recent years, the County's Historic Sites Inventory has been used in local legislative efforts to impose restrictions on these properties. However, this list was not created as a mechanism to regulate resources; rather, it was created as an eligibility list for tax credit purposes and conditional uses. Property owners opted to be included on this list to be eligible for historic tax credits, but were not informed that inclusion on this list would result in restrictions on use or repair of their property. Some neighboring jurisdictions use a historic landmarks program, a list of properties of significant value, separate from their historic sites inventory. The latter is a planning tool for research and documentation, while the former establishes protections. The County should explore creating a similar mechanism.

The Howard County Historic Sites Inventory and the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties are updated regularly with new photographic information, floor plans, and historic/architectural information. However, as new properties are added to the MIHP, they are not automatically included on the Howard County Historic Sites Inventory. Failure to include these sites on the County's Historic Sites Inventory makes them ineligible for County property tax credits or other opportunities associated with the Inventory.

Further, buildings within Columbia have not previously been documented on the County's Historic Sites Inventory, as documentation efforts tend to focus on older buildings and neighborhoods. The County should consider documenting certain buildings now exceeding 50 years in age, such as those designed by Frank Gehry or other exceptional examples of mid-century modern or contemporary architecture. The National Park Service has published guidance on documenting these "recent past" buildings or structures that have achieved significance in the past 50 years. If the County creates a separate inventory, such as a historic landmarks program, certain structures in Columbia should be considered for inclusion.

As noted previously, there are currently 206 historic cemeteries listed in the cemetery inventory, which represent all facets of the County's diverse history. Largely indicative of the County's rich agrarian past, many cemeteries can be found on land that once was a family farm; however, cemeteries are also associated with other historical aspects. The oldest cemeteries in the County date back to the late 1700s, with some being more than 250

years old. The County has also documented more than two dozen historic African American burial grounds. To ensure that the County's diverse history continues to be represented, protected, and considered as sites are developed, it is important that historic resources continue to be thoroughly investigated and documented.

Current documentation efforts are focused on historic sites—including cemeteries and burial grounds—and buildings. Documentation efforts could be broadened to explore and celebrate the County's diverse heritage through research of archaeological resources, museum collections, and oral histories. Such exploration could investigate broad topics in the County's history with an eye toward including all stories, beginning with indigenous life in pre-colonial times, to plantations and the lives of the enslaved, to early industry and agriculture, and concluding with the more recent past, including New Town Columbia and the County's increasing diversity. In addition to documentation, opportunities to educate the community should be explored through partnerships with local organizations involved in heritage interpretation, documentation, and education. Historic inventories need to be continually updated to reflect changes in local conditions, including new developments, roadways, addresses, property owners, and technologies that assist with documentation.



QBD-8 Policy Statement

Expand documentation, protection, and education regarding the County's diverse historic resources.

Implementing Actions

1. Research and create a mechanism similar to a historic landmarks program that can be used as a tool for identifying valuable historic resources and efforts to protect them.
2. Expand documentation efforts to include "recent past" buildings, such as those of significance in Columbia and other maturing areas.
3. Continue to update the County's Historic Sites Inventory through updated inventory forms for properties added in the 1970s-1990s and for new sites.
4. Create more thorough inventories of the County's historic resources and expand documentation of ethnicity, cultural context, and historic relevance to the County's history.
5. Work with nonprofit organizations to create opportunities for the Howard County community to learn about its historic sites, including telling all stories in the County.
6. Explore grants for documentation of archeological resources, museum collections, and oral histories, and partner on this initiative with local preservation nonprofit organizations.
7. Participate in a statewide effort to create one master state map of all known cemeteries.