



TECHNICAL APPENDIX B

CHARACTER AREAS







Introduction

HoCo By Design uses the term “character areas” to describe unique and discernible areas of the community depicted on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) in the Growth and Conservation Framework chapter. The categories describe important elements that work together to instill a sense of place (or visitor experience) for residents, customers, or employees in the character area. A character-based planning approach prioritizes site design, public realm, building form and massing, and architecture over general land use and density.

Included in this appendix are detailed descriptions of the character areas and their typical street and block patterns, open space and natural resources, lot size and building placement, building types and massing, and transportation considerations. While the densities and building heights described for each character area represent intentions for contiguous properties in an area, there may be individual buildings that are larger or smaller than these ranges for a specific parcel. The County’s Zoning Regulations and Subdivision and Land Development

Regulations will provide more specific rules and standards. These will include provisions for permitted land uses, densities, block sizes, setbacks, parking, and landscaping using HoCo By Design’s general character area guidance and recommendations.

Some character areas share commonalities and have cross-cutting land uses. Environmental and agricultural land preservation easements can be found across multiple character areas to preserve farmland and natural resources throughout the County. Areas under a preservation easement are depicted on the FLUM in the Growth and Conservation Framework chapter of HoCo By Design.

Areas to Preserve	Areas to Strengthen	Areas to Enhance	Areas to Transform
			
SPECIAL USE	SINGLE-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD	INDUSTRIAL	DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA
OPEN SPACE	MULTI-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD	CAMPUS	REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER
RURAL CONSERVATION	MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD	SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL	TRANSIT ACTIVITY CENTER
RURAL LIVING	RURAL CROSSROADS		VILLAGE ACTIVITY CENTER
HISTORIC COMMUNITY	VILLAGE ACTIVITY CENTER		INDUSTRIAL MIXED-USE CENTER
			MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER
			MULTI-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD
			Village Activity Center

CHARACTER AREA: SPECIAL USE

Land reserved for landfills, quarries, or other uses that are unique in the County and often guided by federal or state planning, permitting, and design guidelines, such as the Alpha Ridge Landfill & Recycling Center.

Street and Block Pattern

Street and block patterns are dictated by specific uses on the site.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

These types of uses can disturb existing natural resources, given the need for mass grading and even excavation, but should minimize disturbance of existing floodplains, streams, and wetlands, or provide appropriate mitigation. Preserved tree stands, natural areas, or open space should provide buffer areas between special uses and adjacent uses.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Special uses should include large setbacks and buffer areas, including raised berms or landscape screening, to minimize visibility of equipment or operations from an adjacent street. Building and outdoor operation areas should be placed on the site and set back from property lines to minimize noise, dust, odor, vibration, or other impacts associated with the specific use.

Building Types and Massing

Building types and massing are dictated by specific uses on the site. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Transportation modes and access to the site should be dictated by the specific uses.



CHARACTER AREA: OPEN SPACE

Land dedicated for active or passive open space uses. For example, open space uses can include natural resource protection, parks, greenways, and combinations of trails and pathways.

Street and Block Pattern

Driveways and private roads may provide access to buildings, parking areas, recreational facilities, and public utility sites. Roads, driveways, and parking lots for parks, athletic fields, sports complexes, greenways, or trailheads may be paved or unpaved.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

These areas prioritize preservation of natural resources and access to common open space, including, but not limited to, natural resource and wildlife management areas, parks, recreational trails, and greenways. Development in these areas, where allowed, should minimize disturbance of existing natural resources. Open spaces may be connected to other open spaces, neighborhoods, and/or activity centers through a comprehensive network of trails or greenways.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Parcel sizes vary depending on use, ranging from smaller recreation areas to large parks. Buildings on lots are located based on characteristics unique to each lot: topography, tree stands, and depth or width of the lot. Buildings may be oriented toward roads. Access to buildings is provided via access drives or driveways.



Building Types and Massing

Buildings are generally limited in these areas, with the exception of structures needed to support outdoor recreational facilities, such as bathrooms, visitor centers, concessions, equipment rental, or shelters. Any such buildings should be contextually-appropriate in design.

Transportation Considerations

Where applicable, roads generally reflect the surrounding context and serve primarily automobiles. Bicycles may share the road with automobiles, or bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities may be provided to connect recreation areas through greenways and multi-use trails or paths. Safe pedestrian and bicycle connectivity should be provided between adjacent neighborhoods and recreation destinations. In more rural areas, pedestrian paths or trails may run parallel to a road for only short distances before turning back into more natural areas. Bus transit service may be provided to recreational destinations.



CHARACTER AREA: RURAL CONSERVATION

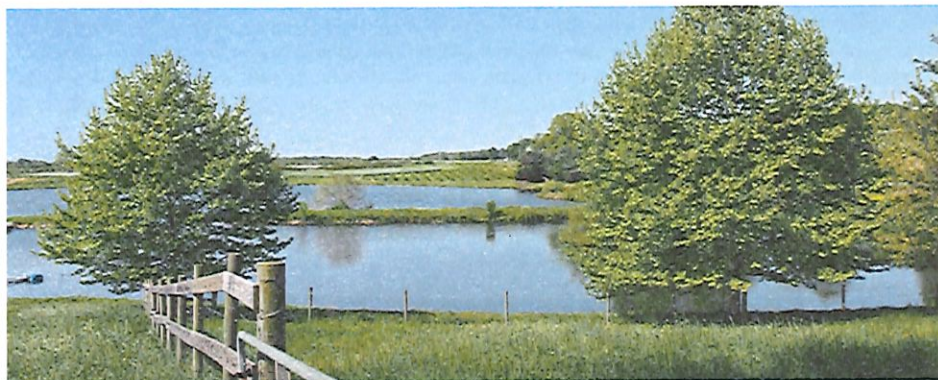
Land corresponding to the County's Rural Conservation (RC) Zoning District, and characterized by large lots and a high degree of separation between buildings. Buildings are generally oriented toward roads and have direct access via private driveways. Homes, farms, and farmettes are scattered throughout the countryside and integrated into the landscape. Large areas are preserved under agricultural or environmental easements. These areas prioritize the preservation of farmland, including, but not limited to, farms, pastures, timber stands, woodlands, and streams. Rural Conservation areas include a higher proportion of agricultural easements than Rural Living areas.

Farmland includes land actively used for commercial agriculture or forestry activities, including cultivated farmland, small-scale farms, timber harvest, horse farms, other livestock, or woodlands. Farms may include a primary residence, additional housing to support agricultural operations, and/or outbuildings associated with activities on the farm. While these areas are primarily an agriculture category, conditional, accessory, or ancillary uses that support the economic viability of the farm may occur on the property. These uses could include but are not limited to agritourism; special event venues; breweries; wineries; distilleries; education centers; or other activities that are directly connected to specific farm activities performed on the property.

In some cases, Rural Conservation areas may offer the opportunity to include detached accessory dwelling units that are located and designed to be compatible with the primary residence on the same lot. Opportunities may also exist in some Rural Conservation areas to support missing middle home choices that are designed and located on a lot in keeping with the rural character of the area. Missing middle homes may vary in building orientation and placement.

Street and Block Pattern

There may be discernable blocks in the area, which are comprised of large residential or agricultural lots. Driveways provide access to buildings.



Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Development should minimize disturbance of existing topography and natural resources. New development must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. The rural nature of development provides opportunities to maximize natural resource protection and to create connections between natural resources both on- and off-site.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lots are generally large, with ample front, rear, and side setbacks providing a high degree of separation between buildings on adjacent lots. Residential buildings are generally oriented toward roads, but other buildings may not be. Direct access is provided via private driveways. The careful placement of buildings and agricultural functions on a lot should help mitigate the impact of such activities on adjacent residential lots.

Building Types and Massing

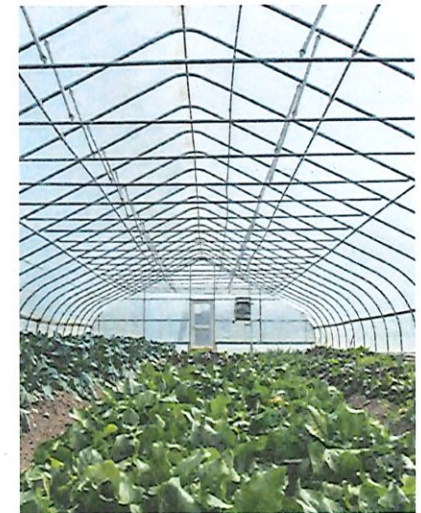
Buildings are primarily single-family dwellings, with opportunities for additional home choices, including missing middle housing types. Residential buildings, regardless of the number of dwelling units, should be designed in keeping with the rural character of the area. Detached accessory dwelling units should be allowed and designed for compatibility with the primary residence on the lot.

Civic buildings, such as schools or churches, may be developed in some Rural Conservation areas to adequately support community needs. Residential buildings should be one to two stories and may be as tall as three stories under some special circumstances or in specific areas.

On farmland, buildings may include additional housing or lodging to support agricultural operation or agritourism; agricultural buildings for the storage of livestock, grain or produce, food and beverage production, or equipment and supplies; and buildings to support other uses like special event venues or education centers. Building size and massing varies depending on building use. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Roads generally reflect the rural nature of the area and serve primarily automobiles, including vehicles and equipment associated with farm uses. Bicycles share the road with automobiles. Pedestrian facilities are limited to side paths or trails that may run parallel to a road for only short distances before turning back into more natural areas. Trails may also support equestrian activities. Transit service is generally not provided in these areas.



CHARACTER AREA: RURAL LIVING

Land corresponding to the County's Rural Residential (RR) Zoning District and characterized by large lots and a high degree of separation between buildings. Homes, farms, and farmettes are scattered throughout the countryside and integrated into the landscape. Some areas are preserved under agricultural or environmental easements. These areas are largely committed to low-density residential development but also prioritize the preservation of farmland.

Farmland includes land actively used for commercial agriculture or forestry activities, including cultivated land, small-scale farms, timber harvest, horse farms, other livestock, or woodlands. Farms may include a primary residence, additional housing to support agricultural operations, and/or outbuildings associated with activities on the farm. While these areas are primarily an agriculture category, conditional, accessory, or ancillary uses that support the economic viability of the farm may occur on the property. These uses could include but are not limited to agritourism; special event venues; breweries; wineries; distilleries; education centers; or other activities that are directly connected to specific farm activities performed on the property.

In some cases, Rural Living areas may offer the opportunity to include detached accessory dwelling units that are located and designed to be compatible with the primary residence on the same lot. Opportunities may also exist in some Rural Living areas to support missing middle home choices that are designed and located on a lot in keeping with the rural character of the area. Missing middle homes may vary in building orientation and placement.

Street and Block Pattern

There may be discernable blocks in the area, which are comprised of large residential or agricultural lots. Driveways provide access to buildings.



Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Development should minimize disturbance of existing topography and natural resources. New development must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. The rural nature of development provides opportunities to maximize natural resource protection and to create connections between natural resources both on- and off-site.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lots are generally larger than those within the Planned Service Area, or are clustered surrounding open space, with ample front, rear, and side setbacks providing a high degree of separation between buildings on adjacent lots. Residential buildings are generally oriented toward roads, but other buildings may not be. Direct access is provided via private driveways. The careful placement of buildings and agricultural functions on a lot should help mitigate the impact of such activities on adjacent residential lots.

Building Types and Massing

Buildings are primarily single-family dwellings, with opportunities for additional home choices like duplexes, triplexes, or quadplexes. Residential buildings, regardless of the number of dwelling units, should be designed to look like existing single-family detached homes in the Rural West. Detached accessory dwelling units should be allowed and should be designed to be compatible with the primary residence on the lot. Civic buildings, such as schools or churches, may be developed in some Rural Living areas to adequately support community needs. Residential buildings should be one to two stories and may be as tall as three stories under some special circumstances or in specific areas.

On farmland, buildings may include additional housing or lodging to support agricultural operation or agritourism; agricultural buildings for the storage of livestock, grain or produce, food and beverage production, or equipment and supplies; and buildings to support other uses like special event venues or education centers. Building size and massing varies depending on building use. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Roads generally reflect the rural nature of the area and serve primarily automobiles, including vehicles and equipment associated with farm uses. Bicycles share the road with automobiles. Pedestrian facilities are limited to side paths or trails that may run parallel to a road for only short distances before turning back into more natural areas. Trails may also support equestrian activities. Transit service is generally not provided in these areas.



HISTORIC COMMUNITIES

Historic Communities include the Ellicott City Local and National Register Historic District, the Lawyers Hill Local and National Register Historic District, the Savage Mill National Register Historic District, and the historic Elkridge Survey Districts.

Each of these designated Historic Communities has a different character based on its original founding, historical growth, and site constraints, and may include several different land uses within the Historic Community. The character of Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill are both best described in their respective design guidelines, which should be consulted. The Savage Mill Historic District is also described in detail in the National Register nomination. The four survey districts in Elkridge are best described in the respective Inventory forms for HO-784, HO-377, HO-514 and HO-803.



Ellicott City, Elkridge, and Savage may serve local economic, entertainment, and community activities for nearby residents. The core area of Ellicott City is found along Main Street, between Ellicott Mills Drive and the Patapsco River. Ellicott City supports a compact development pattern in the core, with vernacular architecture, plazas, and public spaces that promote social interaction and celebrate the local community. In Ellicott City's commercial areas, buildings may include retail, office, restaurant, or other entertainment uses, with apartments or nonresidential uses above storefronts. Parking is satisfied by using on-street parking or shared parking lots.

In Savage, the main commercial node of the town resides in the historic mill building, which contains ground surface parking lots near the building. The Little Patuxent River is located to the south of the mill, and the town developed in a grid pattern north of the mill, with brick duplex worker housing. In residential areas, some buildings that appear or were constructed as single-family houses, or even a general store, are now divided into apartments. There are some single-family bungalow style cottage buildings as well. The area is walkable, with sidewalk-lined streets.

The Lawyers Hill Historic District is a residential neighborhood with a shared community hall. The homes tend to be located on larger lots with large tree canopies and narrow streets that are prevalent throughout the historic community.

Elkridge contains four survey districts listed on the Historic Sites Inventory. The districts are in close proximity to each other, with overlapping boundaries. The districts are primarily residential, although the Main Street district (HO-377) contains some commercial uses as well. The Elkridge Landing (HO-784), Main Street (HO-377) and Furnace Avenue (HO-514) districts are located within the core of historic Elkridge, while the Old Washington Road district (HO-803) is located to the south and has grown as a suburb outside of town. Generally, each area is characterized by homes located close to the street, with a sidewalk making it a walkable community. Along Old Washington Road some homes may sit farther from the street and have larger lots.



Preserving the character of existing historic structures and environmental settings should be prioritized in these areas. To protect the areas' historic character, new construction can be designed to be differentiated from the old while still compatible with historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing. New or improved parks, plazas, streets, or other public spaces are important elements that unify the community and its character.

Street and Block Pattern

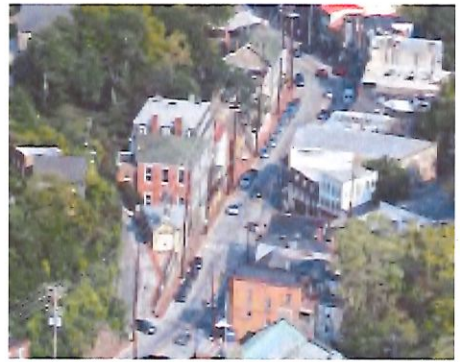
These areas vary from each community. Some, such as Savage and Elkridge, may be characterized by compact development patterns of small blocks with a regular street grid. Some areas may have a more irregular development pattern due to natural constraints, such as the Ellicott City Historic District, where the placement of homes is a careful response to the topography. Parking may be located on-street or in surface parking lots. Preservation of existing streetscapes and block patterns is important, and any new or infill development should be context-sensitive and compatible with existing development patterns, setbacks, scale, height, bulk, proportion, and massing.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Historic Communities vary in the degree to which their natural resources were preserved in their original construction. Future development should protect existing natural features, such as tree stands and rock outcroppings, and must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands. There may be opportunities to create new or improved public spaces in existing Historic Communities, which can help link these areas to surrounding neighborhoods. In a larger historic community, open space features may include squares, plazas, and formal greens.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot sizes vary depending on the community, but they are generally small to medium in the core of the community. Larger residential lots are common in Lawyers Hill and in parts of Ellicott City. Front and side yard setbacks are variable, based on the community, but tend to be consistent within that area. Any new or infill development



should be compatible in lot size and building placement, with setbacks similar to that of adjacent development. New or infill development should also be compatible in scale, massing, bulk, proportion, and height of existing historic structures. Front-facing garages should be avoided, but where desired in new development they should be detached and setback from the facade of the principal dwelling. In areas such as Ellicott City or Lawyers Hill, they should be consistent with the Guideline recommendations.

Building Types and Massing

Buildings may be horizontally or vertically mixed-use, including civic, retail, office, restaurant, entertainment, and residential uses. Condominiums, apartments, or other nonresidential uses may be located above storefronts. There may be opportunities in areas adjacent to the Historic Communities to introduce additional housing types, including missing middle home choices. Detached accessory dwelling units should be allowed where space allows but should not be subdivided from the principal dwelling on the lot. Buildings may be two to three stories in height. The scale, height, bulk massing, proportion, and design of new buildings should be sensitive to and compatible with existing historic character and context. Historic character and architecture should be preserved by prioritizing the adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings and the contextually-appropriate design of new buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Streets in Historic Communities vary based upon the specific community. Some are pedestrian-friendly, with narrower travel lane and road widths, sidewalks, and a mature tree canopy. Others, like those found in Lawyers Hill, are winding and narrow, in-keeping with a forested summer retreat outside the neighboring urban areas. Since streets, curbs, and gutters in Historic Districts are often themselves a major contributing factor to the historic character, they should be preserved. There may be some opportunities for contextually-appropriate improvements or retrofits consistent with the Howard County Complete Streets Policy. New streets should be similar in design to existing historic streets. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.

CHARACTER AREA: SINGLE-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD

Land generally formed as subdivisions that currently includes a limited number of home choices (usually single-family detached or single-family attached homes). For existing Single-Family Neighborhoods, buildings are oriented to the interior of the site and typically buffered from surrounding development by transitional uses, topography, or vegetative buffers. Blocks vary greatly in size in the same neighborhood, and the road network often includes a large number of unconnected streets, usually ending in cul-de-sacs.

In select instances, there may be opportunities in existing Single-Family Neighborhoods to introduce more housing units—including missing middle housing types. However, preserving the character of existing homes and communities should be prioritized in these areas. New housing units should be compatible and integrate with surrounding neighborhoods by aligning with their site orientation, bulk, massing, and proportion.

Larger new Single-Family Neighborhoods are encouraged to provide different home types on different lot sizes that vary enough to provide a range of home choices in the same neighborhood. Some new Single-Family Neighborhoods may mix home types, lot sizes, or home sizes on the same block and provide accessory dwelling units. Principal dwellings should be oriented toward streets with rear yards larger than front yards. Small blocks and a grid street network support a well-connected, cohesive community in new Single-Family Neighborhoods.

New neighborhoods should include a comprehensive and connected network of open space throughout the site to accommodate small parks, multiple gathering spaces, and community gardens. Internal streets and open space in new Single-Family Neighborhoods should connect to existing or future neighborhoods nearby.



Street and Block Pattern

New neighborhoods are encouraged to create networks of walkable streets with connections to adjacent residential and nonresidential development (stub outs are provided if adjacent land is vacant). While small blocks and grid networks are encouraged over traditional cul-de-sac development patterns, street patterns should be responsive to varying densities and types of subdivisions. Informal, on-street parking (unmarked) may be provided in the neighborhood.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

New neighborhoods should minimize disturbance of existing topography and natural resources. New development must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. The open space protecting these resources should be incorporated into site planning to create connections between natural resources both on- and off-site. Open space elements in a new neighborhood may also include small parks, multiple gathering spaces, and community gardens, along with trails or greenways that connect them.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot width and depth in a new neighborhood is variable and contextually appropriate with surrounding areas, which creates a mix of home types and densities throughout the development. Front and side yard setbacks are also variable, based on lot size.

Building Types and Massing

Residential building types could offer several home choices in the same neighborhood, including single-family detached, duplex, triplex, quadplex, or townhome in different sizes and formats. Detached accessory dwelling units should be permitted where space allows. Building types may be mixed within blocks or organized with more dense buildings near the center of the community and less dense types near the edges. Civic buildings, such as schools or churches, may be appropriate in some neighborhoods. Buildings may be up to four stories in height. Front-facing garages should not be dominant over the front façade of the home. Small infill projects will not always deliver a mix of building types in the same development but should provide new housing types that complement adjacent existing buildings. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Streets in new neighborhoods are built as “complete streets,” which provide infrastructure for walking, biking, transit, and driving in the same corridor. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged. In existing neighborhoods, there may be opportunities for contextually-appropriate improvements or retrofits consistent with the Howard County Complete Streets Policy.



CHARACTER AREA: MULTI-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD

Land generally formed as complexes or communities with a relatively uniform housing type and density throughout. They support residential development at varying densities in the suburban landscape and may contain one or more of the following housing types: apartments, townhomes, stacked townhomes, duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, or cottage dwellings.

For older Multi-Family Neighborhoods in the County, buildings are oriented to the interior of the site and may be focused on a central gathering place like a community pool or clubhouse. The areas are buffered from surrounding development by transitional uses or landscaped areas. Large surface parking lots, entrance gates, and limited street connectivity are also common in older Multi-Family Neighborhoods.

Opportunities for new Multi-Family Neighborhoods exist throughout the County. Some may be realized through redevelopment of existing, aging multi-family properties, and others may be realized through strategic infill development. New Multi-Family Neighborhoods are encouraged to use a new set of design principles. An interconnected network of streets, bicycle facilities, and walkways—with one or more streets oriented to surrounding development—provides convenient, equitable, and safe access for all users to nearby destinations.

Roads near the edge of a development should connect to streets on adjacent properties. On-street parking throughout the community reduces the size and location of required surface parking lots. Buildings are oriented toward the street and hide parking lots or provide for structured parking. A comprehensive and connected network of open space throughout the site accommodates new parks, gathering spaces, and community amenities—such as community gardens—as well as environmental site design features to accommodate stormwater runoff.





Street and Block Pattern

Existing development is uniform in type and density, with limited street connectivity in insular development complexes, some of which may be gated. Large surface parking lots surround buildings, with landscape buffers between multi-family development and adjacent residential areas and neighborhoods.

New Multi-Family Neighborhoods are encouraged to incorporate a grid network of walkable streets with small blocks and connections to adjacent residential and nonresidential development (stub outs are provided if adjacent land is vacant). On-street parking should be provided throughout new Multi-Family Neighborhoods to reduce the need for surface parking lots. Off-street parking should be accommodated at the side or rear of the lot to minimize the presence of parked automobiles on driveways along residential streets (with parking access to lots from rear alleys to the maximum extent possible).

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

In existing Multi-Family Neighborhoods, open spaces are mostly private, for residents only. New development should consider providing public open space for the use of the entire community. This open space should become part of a comprehensive and connected network of open space, when adjacent to existing trails, pathways, and greenways; public open spaces or parks; and recreational facilities.

New neighborhoods should minimize disturbance of existing topography and natural resources. New development must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. The open space protecting these resources should be incorporated into site planning to provide connections between natural resources both on- and off-site. Open space elements in a new neighborhood may also include small parks, multiple gathering spaces, and community gardens, along with trails or greenways that connect them.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot sizes are typically more uniform in existing Multi-Family Neighborhoods, which often have several of the same building type repeated and are surrounded by surface parking.

Lot width and depth in a new neighborhood is variable and contextually appropriate with surrounding areas, which creates a mix of home types and densities throughout the development. Front and side yard setbacks also vary based on lot size. Buildings should be oriented toward the street, with surface or structured parking concealed behind them.

Building Types and Massing

Existing Multi-Family Neighborhoods may have the same multi-unit building types, including condominiums, age-restricted housing, and/or apartments. There are few choices when it comes to housing type, size, and form.

To create mixed-income communities, new Multi-Family Neighborhoods should include several home choices affordable to residents at different income levels. Building types may be mixed within blocks or organized with more dense buildings near the center of the community and less dense types near the edges. Buildings may be up to five stories in height. Small infill projects will not always deliver a mix of building types in the same development but should provide new housing types that complement adjacent existing buildings. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

In existing Multi-Family Neighborhoods, auto-oriented streets are often private and internal to the site or development. Generally, they offer limited connectivity to adjacent residential areas and neighborhoods.

Streets in new neighborhoods are built as "complete streets," which provide infrastructure for walking, biking, transit, and driving in the same corridor. Improved connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and nearby destinations can help reduce auto dependence. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.



CHARACTER AREA: MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD

Land offering the opportunity to live, work, shop, and play in a master-planned community. Mixed Use Neighborhoods emphasize a mix of uses, a neighborhood activity center, and one or more neighborhoods connected to the activity center by a network of pathways or walkable streets, such as Maple Lawn and Turf Valley.

An activity center within the Mixed-Use Neighborhood provides goods and services to surrounding neighborhoods. The center's proximity to neighborhoods requires that operations be at a scale and design compatible with nearby residential development. The design of mixed-use neighborhoods transitions effectively between residential and nonresidential uses, and includes safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access for nearby residents. Sites effectively minimize the impact of cut-through traffic on nearby neighborhood streets by orienting vehicle access and circulation away from neighborhoods.

Residential neighborhoods within and adjacent to the activity center are encouraged to offer different home types on varied lot sizes with a range of home choices. Some neighborhoods may mix home types, lot sizes, or home sizes on the same block or offer accessory dwelling units. Homes should be oriented toward streets, and when possible, provide for larger rear yards than front yards. New neighborhoods should include a comprehensive and connected network of open space throughout the site to accommodate small parks, multiple gathering spaces, and community gardens, as well as environmental site design features to help manage stormwater runoff. Internal streets and open space throughout new Mixed-Use Neighborhoods should connect to existing or future neighborhoods nearby.



Street and Block Pattern

Mixed-Use Neighborhoods are encouraged to incorporate a grid network of walkable streets with small to medium blocks organized around a small commercial core and connections to adjacent residential and nonresidential development—with stub outs provided if adjacent land is vacant. Off-street parking should be accommodated at the side or rear of the lot to minimize the presence of parked automobiles on driveways along residential streets—with parking access to lots from rear alleys to the maximum extent possible. Shared parking facilities should be considered to promote right-sized parking requirements. Formal on-street parking may be provided in the center, with informal on-street parking in residential areas.



Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Mixed-Use Neighborhoods should minimize disturbance of existing topography and natural resources. New development must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. The open space protecting these resources should be incorporated into site planning to create connections between natural resources both on- and off-site. Site design should incorporate environmentally friendly features through measures such as replacing lawns with native landscaping to increase tree canopy and create pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. Formal and informal open spaces may also include greens, squares, plazas, pocket parks, and community gardens, along with trails or greenways that connect them and provide connections to adjacent neighborhoods.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot width and depth is variable, with larger lots near the edges of the neighborhood and small lots near the commercial core, which creates a mix of home types and densities throughout the development. Some neighborhoods may mix varying lot sizes and home types within the same block, or along a street, with higher-density housing closer to the edges. Homes should be oriented toward the street or, in limited cases, a public open space. Front and side yard setbacks are also variable based on lot size but should be generally consistent along block faces to provide streetscape continuity. Rear yards should be larger than front yards. Front-facing garages should be avoided, but where unavoidable, they should be set back from the facade of the building to emphasize the living quarters of the home over the garage.

Building Types and Massing

Buildings in the commercial core of a Mixed-Use Neighborhood should be relatively small in scale and intensity, and designed for compatibility with residential development in the neighborhoods. Residential building types within each neighborhood should include single-family detached, duplex, triplex, quadplex, and/or townhome in different sizes and formats. Attached and detached accessory dwelling units should also be allowed. Building types may be mixed within blocks or organized with more dense buildings near the center of the community and less dense types near the edges. Civic buildings, such as schools or churches, may be appropriate in some neighborhoods. Buildings are two to four stories in height. Small infill projects will not always deliver a mix of building types in the same development but should provide new housing types that complement adjacent existing buildings. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Streets in new neighborhoods are built as “complete streets,” which provide infrastructure for walking, biking, transit and driving in the same corridor. To ensure multi-modal success, the locations of these communities should be on or close to existing/programmed transit services. Improved connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and nearby destinations can help reduce auto dependence. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.



CHARACTER AREA: RURAL CROSSROADS

Small nodes of mixed-use areas focusing on commercial activity along rural highways at important intersections in older farming communities in the Rural West. Small-scale, compact businesses are oriented toward a main street, intersection, parking area, or green space, and serve as gathering places for the community or as nearby destinations to meet some of the daily needs of the surrounding rural population. The compact, walkable design of a Rural Crossroads encourages walking between buildings. Industrial or manufacturing uses are not allowed in these areas.

In some cases, Rural Crossroads may offer the opportunity to include a limited number of residential units or offices above storefronts that provide choices for residents to live near and experience these destinations—including, but not limited to, missing middle home choices. Residential uses in a Rural Crossroads are secondary to commercial uses in terms of the size, scale, footprint, or intensity of development. Residential and nonresidential buildings in a Rural Crossroads area are connected using a comprehensive network of walkable streets.



Street and Block Pattern

Rural Crossroads may not have a discernable block structure, as they are usually small activity nodes located at important rural intersections or along a rural main street. These compact areas include small-scale commercial buildings and/or common gathering spaces. Parking is often located between the street and the building but may also be in the rear. Informal on-street parking may also be allowed.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Due to their small scale and location, Rural Crossroads are often developed in a manner that does not allow significant protection of topography or natural landscape features. New development must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands and meet forest conservation requirements; and should incorporate environmentally sensitive design features. Open space elements in a Rural Crossroads may include parks, pocket parks, civic plazas, or squares.

Lot Size and Building Placement

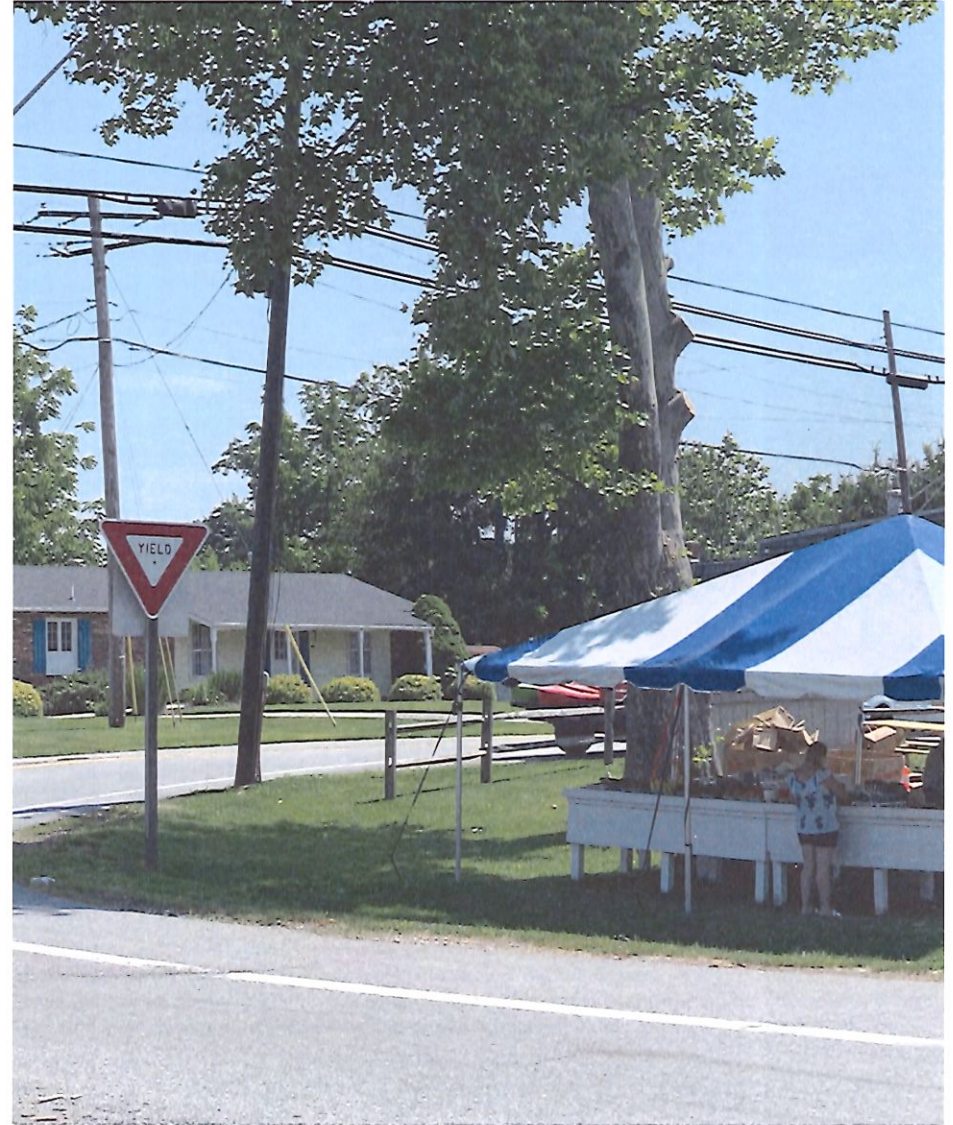
Front setbacks may be large if parking is provided between the building and the street. Redevelopment and new development should be in more compact lot and building patterns, with parking relocated to the rear of buildings that are oriented to the street. Front setbacks are variable and should be smaller in the core and larger in areas adjacent to existing rural development, which may have very large setbacks. Side and rear setbacks are variable.

Building Types and Massing

Buildings are mostly one to two stories, with three stories allowed only under special circumstances or in specific areas. Commercial buildings are small-scale and local-serving. Buildings nearest to existing residential neighborhoods should be of a scale and design compatible with nearby development. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts. Rural Crossroads may provide a variety of housing choices, including missing middle housing types. Residential buildings should be secondary to commercial in terms of scale, footprint, and intensity. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

A network of walkable streets should provide safe and efficient movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. There may be some opportunities for contextually-appropriate improvements or retrofits consistent with the Howard County Complete Streets Policy.



CHARACTER AREA: INDUSTRIAL

Land providing opportunities to concentrate employment clusters in the County. They support large-scale, single-tenant industrial, warehouse, and flex space buildings, as well as smaller, multi-tenant industrial buildings that are clustered and may support and serve one another.

Street and Block Pattern

Blocks are large and may not have a discernible block structure because of the development scale or access requirements for specific buildings. Lots may be front- or rear-loaded based on the vehicles served (especially trucks) or loading needs. Parking is provided in surface parking lots surrounding the building.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

To achieve the desired mix of uses and scale for the area, grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary. However, redevelopment and new development must protect floodplains, streams, wetlands, and steep slopes, and meet forest conservation requirements. Redevelopment also offers an opportunity to improve stormwater management. Industrial areas should be buffered from surrounding development by tree preservation or landscaped areas, with the type and size of the buffer a function of the activities being performed on the site.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot size and building placement vary depending on development scale and land uses served. Most buildings are located behind large surface parking lots or loading areas. Buildings are encouraged to face the street when possible.

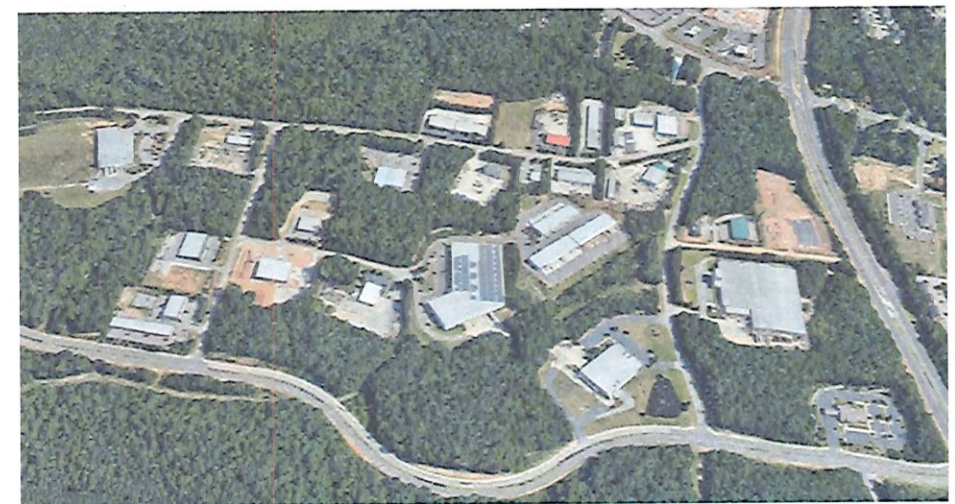
Building Types and Massing

Buildings are generally one to two stories tall, with small- to large-building footprints. Exceptions may be allowed for special manufacturing land uses. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Streets in existing areas are generally auto- or truck-oriented without dedicated infrastructure for pedestrians or bicycles internal to the site.

New and redeveloped Industrial area streets should provide for safe multi-modal access that incorporates opportunities for contextually-appropriate improvements or retrofits consistent with the Howard County Complete Streets Policy.



CHARACTER AREA: CAMPUS

Land to support academic, medical, or office buildings; athletic facilities; event spaces; equipment; or other ancillary uses needed to support an educational, medical, or other large institution. Visual qualities of the buildings and their surrounding grounds often make campus facilities landmarks in the County.

Buildings are oriented to support several modes of transportation for reaching the Campus, such as walking, bicycle, transit, or automobile. Structured parking or large surface lots, dedicated areas for public gathering, and distinctive architecture also represent typical Campus development. Building uses and intensities on a Campus vary widely based on the institution's mission, available space, and site topography. Complementary uses near a Campus may include student housing, residential neighborhoods, downtowns, medical offices, or private research and development buildings.

Street and Block Pattern

In existing Campus developments, particularly Howard County General Hospital, blocks are hard to discern because surface parking lots are located between the street and existing buildings, and there is generally a lack of driveway connections to adjacent properties. Most existing Campus development functions as one super block, or a limited number of very large blocks, defined by widely spaced driveways, drive aisles in parking lots, or private access roads serving only the Campus development.

New or redeveloped Campuses should provide cross-access between destinations via internal roads, with provisions for mobility access between buildings that support a park-once or transit-once mentality. In new and infill Campus development, street and block patterns can vary, with a tighter grid in the center of the campus and a somewhat looser grid along the edges where there may be student housing or residential neighborhoods. Blocks should be relatively small and walkable. Large blocks should provide cross-block pedestrian passages or walkways to maximize multi-modal connectivity. Parking is provided in on-street facilities and surface parking lots, which should be located behind buildings where possible.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

To achieve the desired mix of uses and scale for the Campus, grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary. However, redevelopment and new development must protect floodplains, streams, wetlands, and steep slopes, and meet forest conservation requirements. The open space protecting these resources should be incorporated into site planning to provide connections between natural resources both on- and off-site. Sustainable development techniques should be incorporated into landscape and stormwater management features, such as replacing lawns with native landscaping to increase tree canopy and create pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. New or redeveloped campuses should also include a common green and a series of connected public open spaces, including plazas, pocket parks, and community gardens.



Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot size and building placement vary depending on development scale and land uses served. Redevelopment and new development should be in more compact lot and building patterns, with parking strategically located to encourage walking in and around Campus. Lots should not be so large that they compromise walkability. Parking should be located behind buildings in surface lots or parking structures.

Building Types and Massing

The scale and massing of buildings varies widely depending on use. Most buildings should be three to four stories, though slightly taller buildings may be appropriate in the Campus core, with shorter buildings along the edges to transition to less intense uses. Building types also vary depending on the type of institution and may include academic buildings; dormitories; athletic facilities; hospitals and other medical facilities; office space; dining facilities; and/or civic buildings or event spaces. Buildings should incorporate innovative design techniques and materials, and campus buildings should exhibit high-quality design. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

New and redeveloped Campus streets should have a relatively urban character with a high level of connectivity and a grid street pattern, which may vary depending on the circulation needs of the institution. Future development should support all modes of transportation, with less emphasis on the automobile. Campuses should accommodate safe and efficient pedestrian or bicycle movements throughout the site for those who arrive via transit or automobile, and should create additional connections to regional transit and trail networks to support car alternatives. Streets should have seating areas, bike racks, and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.

CHARACTER AREA: SUBURBAN COMMERCIAL

Land contributing to the County's office employment base and serving the daily retail needs of office users and surrounding residential neighborhoods. They typically locate near high volume roads and key intersections and are designed to be accessible primarily by automobile. Buildings are set back from the road behind large surface parking lots, with little or no connectivity between adjacent businesses. Common types of suburban commercial centers in Howard County include multi-tenant strip centers, large-scale isolated office buildings with numerous employees, big box stores, large shopping malls, and areas with multiple businesses that support and serve one another. Commercial buildings may also be located on freestanding commercial parcels (sometimes referred to as outparcels or pad sites) near big box stores or large shopping malls.

In some cases, Suburban Commercial areas may offer the opportunity to include a limited number of residential units above storefronts, in addition to other housing types. Residential uses are secondary to commercial uses in terms of the size, scale, footprint, or intensity of development in Suburban Commercial areas.

New or redeveloped Suburban Commercial areas should include a common green and other public spaces throughout the development to encourage community gathering, outdoor dining, and people-watching. Cross-access between Suburban Commercial destinations should also be provided via internal roads with provisions for mobility access between buildings that support a park-once mentality (or walk-to, bike-to environment from surrounding residential neighborhoods).



Street and Block Pattern

Surface parking lots are located behind or on the side or between the street and existing buildings. Most development functions as one super block, or a limited number of very large blocks, defined by widely-spaced driveways, drive aisles in parking lots, or private access roads serving only the development.

New or redeveloped Suburban Commercial areas should provide cross-access between destinations via internal roads with provisions for mobility access between buildings that support a park-once mentality (or walk-to, bike-to environment from surrounding residential neighborhoods).

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

To achieve the desired mix of uses and scale for the area, grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary. However, redevelopment and new development must protect floodplains, streams, wetlands, and steep slopes, and meet forest conservation requirements. Redevelopment also offers an opportunity to improve stormwater management. Site design should incorporate environmentally friendly features through measures such as replacing lawns with native landscaping to increase tree canopy and create pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. These areas should also include a common green and other public open spaces throughout the development to encourage community gathering, outdoor seating and dining, and people-watching.

Lot Size and Building Placement

Lot size and building placement vary depending on development scale and land uses served. Most buildings are located behind large surface parking lots. Some larger developments may include smaller buildings on outparcels, which may be platted as separate lots. New buildings are encouraged to face the street when possible.



Building Types and Massing

Buildings are generally one to five stories tall. Building footprints will vary from small to large depending on the use. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Streets in existing Suburban Commercial areas are generally auto-oriented without dedicated infrastructure for pedestrians or bicycles internal to the site. New or redeveloped areas must accommodate safe and efficient pedestrian or bicycle movements into and within the site using a "park-once" design concept for surface parking lots. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.



CHARACTER AREA: DOWNTOWN COLUMBIA

Land comprising Downtown Columbia. The Downtown Columbia Plan, adopted in 2010, creates a 30-year master plan for the revitalization and redevelopment of Downtown Columbia. The Downtown Columbia Plan states "Downtown Columbia will be a diverse, mixed-use, livable, physically distinctive and human-scaled place with a range of housing choices and recreational, civic, cultural and educational amenities." As part of the Downtown Columbia Plan, Neighborhood Design Guidelines ensure a consistent and high level of design standard for Downtown Columbia. For more information on the character of Downtown Columbia, refer to the Downtown Columbia Plan.¹



¹ A copy of the Downtown Columbia Plan is available from the Department of Planning and Zoning.

Character Area: Regional Activity Center

Comprised of Columbia Gateway business park, the Regional Activity Center is an existing employment center that should redevelop as a large regional growth center in the future (along with Downtown Columbia). The center currently contains large isolated buildings set back from the road and surface parking lots. The area should be reimagined as a major hub for entertainment, employment, and innovation in the County with access from one or more major transportation corridors. As a magnet to surrounding cities and neighborhoods, the Regional Activity Center becomes an iconic model for sustainable and innovative development and infrastructure projects, making it an exciting new focal point for the Baltimore-Washington region. Currently, Gateway is an underutilized asset that presents tremendous potential for transformation.

In the Regional Activity Center, residential units or office spaces may be found above storefronts. The public spaces between buildings should be designed for walkability, community gathering, and interesting street life. Specific building heights will be determined through the master planning process. Homes in and surrounding the center of development may reflect a variety of housing types—including, but not limited to, missing middle home choices. Industrial, warehouse, and flex space buildings should be considered for specific areas.

A gridded network of walkable streets should connect destinations within the Regional Activity Center and surrounding neighborhoods. Parking should be satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies. A comprehensive and connected network of open space throughout the Regional Activity Center accommodates recreation facilities, small parks, greenways, or gathering places; preserves natural resources; and helps manage stormwater runoff.

Infrastructure needed to support future development, including new schools, fire stations, parks, or recreation facilities, should be accommodated within the Regional Activity Center to the maximum extent possible. Impacts to infrastructure outside the Regional Activity Center should be minimized using innovative land use and site design elements within the center. These could include mobility options that reduce the number of vehicle trips entering or exiting the site, low-flow technologies that reduce sewer demands, or native landscaping and vegetation that reduce water demands. Future plans for the Regional Activity Center should consider airplane operations from nearby Baltimore/Washington Thurgood Marshall International Airport and design provisions for noise mitigation including, but not limited to, noise reduction design elements.

The design, scale, character, and intensity of development in the Regional Activity Center should be compatible with, and transition to, adjacent land uses; and the character of existing adjacent neighborhoods should be preserved. Redevelopment of properties in the Regional Activity Center should adhere to a master plan established through a public process, and the plan should establish measurable commercial, housing, school capacity, and transportation goals. The master plan should specify the uses, urban form, densities or intensities, building scale, building heights and types, and design features or controls intended for the area. New development should feel complimentary to existing neighborhoods.





Street and Block Pattern

The existing Gateway employment center has a conventional suburban pattern of streets and blocks, with surface parking lots between the streets and buildings. Blocks are indiscernible in many areas due to limited street connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods.

Redevelopment and new development should create a more interconnected network of small blocks. Larger blocks should provide cross-block pedestrian passages or walkways to maximize connectivity. Off-street parking includes shared parking structures and surface lots in the interior of blocks and behind buildings. Off-street parking between the street and the building should be limited, and formal on-street parking should be provided throughout.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

To achieve the desired mix of uses and scale for the center, grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary. However, redevelopment and new development must protect floodplains, streams, wetlands, and steep slopes, and meet forest conservation requirements. The open space protecting these resources should be incorporated into site planning to create connections between natural resources both on- and off-site. New development and redevelopment should promote opportunities to increase native tree canopy and replace lawns with native landscaping, including pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. Redevelopment also provides an opportunity to improve stormwater management.

As the Regional Activity Center redevelops, emphasis should be placed on incorporating the natural environment into a wide variety of public open spaces to provide gathering and recreational opportunities. Open spaces may include parks, plazas, squares, greens, and activated alleys and streetscapes, all of which should be linked through a network of safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Public gathering spaces should include fun, entertaining features like public art, sculpture, interactive streetscape elements, fountains and seating areas. Excess surface parking lots and other impervious surfaces are encouraged to be redeveloped as open space to the maximum extent possible.

Lot Size and Building Placement

In existing development, lot sizes may be variable and irregular, with large office buildings on large parcels surrounded by surface parking.

Redevelopment should be guided by a Gateway Master Plan that establishes development character and metrics with the intention of creating a high-density, walkable environment. Redevelopment and new development should be in more compact lot and building patterns, with parking relocated to the rear of buildings that are oriented to the street. There are typically no front setbacks, and minimal side and rear setbacks. Density bonuses and reduced parking requirements could incentivize developers to create more affordable housing units than required, especially units for persons with disabilities.

Building Types and Massing

Building types should mix uses horizontally and vertically, and should include civic, retail, office, restaurant, entertainment, and residential uses. Apartments or condominiums should be stacked over ground floor commercial. Housing in and around the Regional Activity Center may include missing middle types. Buildings may stand two to ten+ stories tall, with larger buildings located in the center of development, and shorter buildings at the edges to transition smoothly from adjacent smaller-scale development. The Regional Activity Center provides an opportunity for innovation in architecture and design with a particular focus on sustainable design practices, widescale energy efficiencies, and provision of green technologies. In addition to existing large-format buildings, small-scale retail and office space should be incorporated into new development to enable small businesses and start-ups to share facilities and amenities with more established enterprises. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Existing streets are generally auto-oriented without dedicated infrastructure for pedestrians or bicycles internal to the site. Future development should support all modes of transportation, with less emphasis on the automobile. Access is provided to several major transportation corridors. The Regional Activity Center should accommodate safe and efficient pedestrian or bicycle movements within and through the site for those who arrive via transit or automobile. Development should also reduce automobile trips by providing additional connections to regional transit and trail networks to support car alternatives, including connected and autonomous transit solutions where applicable. Streets should have seating areas, bike racks, and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.

CHARACTER AREA: TRANSIT ACTIVITY CENTER

Land creating opportunities for compact, mixed-use development that maximizes residential, commercial, and open spaces within walking distance of premium public transit. Buildings will be tallest near the transit station, and the public spaces between buildings should be designed for walkability, community gathering, and interesting street life. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts. Homes in and surrounding the center of development may offer a variety of housing types—including, but not limited to, missing middle home choices. The design, scale, character, and intensity of development further away from the transit station should be compatible with, and transition to, adjacent land uses.

A grid network of walkable streets connects destinations within the Transit Activity Center and surrounding neighborhoods or recreation areas. Parking should be satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies. Provisions for pedestrian access between buildings should support a park-once, bus-once, or train-once mentality to access the site, and emphasize walking or biking between internal destinations.

The mix of land uses and development densities throughout a Transit Activity Center should maximize transit ridership.

Street and Block Pattern

New or improved Transit Activity Centers should incorporate a grid network of walkable streets and compact mixed-use development organized around public transit stations. More intense development should occur at the center, closest to the transit station, with development at the edges providing a transition to adjacent land uses. Parking should be satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies located toward the interior of blocks. Formal and informal on-street parking should be provided throughout the Transit Activity Center.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

The compact mixed-use development pattern of a Transit Activity Center places less emphasis on preserving the natural landscape, and more on providing a variety of formal public spaces for community gathering. Grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary to achieve the compact development desired. However, new and redeveloped centers must protect steep slopes, floodplains, wetlands, and streams, and meet forest conservation requirements. New and improved centers should promote opportunities to increase native tree canopy and replace lawns with native landscaping, including pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. Redevelopment also provides an opportunity to improve stormwater management.

Open space elements in new and improved Transit Activity Centers may include parks, plazas, squares, and community gardens, along with greenways or activated streets that connect them. Excess surface parking lots and other impervious surfaces are encouraged to be redeveloped as open space to the maximum extent possible.



Lot Size and Building Placement

Redevelopment and new development should be in compact lot and building patterns, with parking relocated to the rear of buildings that are oriented to the street. Front setbacks are variable, with smaller (or no) setbacks in the core. Side and rear setbacks are minimal.

Building Types and Massing

Building types should mix uses horizontally or vertically, and should include both residential, office, and commercial uses to support the needs of those who live and work in the Transit Activity Center. Apartments or condominiums should be stacked over ground floor commercial. Housing in and around the Transit Activity Center may include missing middle housing types. Buildings may be 10 to 20 stories tall, with larger buildings located closest to the transit station and smaller, single-family homes further from the station and closer to adjacent, less intense development. Small-scale retail and office space should be incorporated into new development to enable small

businesses and start-ups to share facilities and amenities with more established businesses. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Transit Activity Centers are designed to promote automobile alternatives, including transit, walking, and bicycling. All streets should be multi-modal in design, allowing safe and efficient pedestrian or bicycle movements throughout the center using a park-once, bus-once, or train-once approach. Key destinations should be directly linked to the Transit Activity Center via easily navigated pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Streets should have seating areas, bike racks, and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.



CHARACTER AREA: VILLAGE ACTIVITY CENTER

As defined in Howard County's code, Village Centers are mixed-use developments designed to be community focal points and gathering places for their surrounding village neighborhoods, land in Columbia that provides goods and services to surrounding neighborhoods. Enhanced or redeveloped Redeveloped Village Activity Centers offer the opportunity to serve broader economic, civic, community, entertainment, and housing needs in the community and to reposition themselves in response to changing market conditions and consumer trends. The competitive position and conditions specific to each village center will be considered when determining whether they are prime for redevelopment or could be enhanced with programming or other amenities that serve their surrounding communities.

The design of Village Activity Centers should transition transitions effectively between residential and nonresidential uses. Active public spaces should be included are encouraged between buildings. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts. Homes in and surrounding the center of development may offer several choices to live and experience the Village Activity Center. including, but not limited to, missing middle home choices These housing types should include, but are not limited to, missing middle homes. Parking is could be satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies. Sites should effectively minimize the impact of cut-through traffic on nearby neighborhood streets by orienting vehicle access and circulation away from adjacent neighborhoods.

Village Activity Centers should maximize their connections to the Columbia open space network, including safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to the centers from nearby neighborhoods.

Transformation of these areas to support mixed-use development will require deliberate planning and phasing to keep the areas viable during their period of change. Redevelopment of Village Activity Centers should instill the principles from the original vision for Columbia, and the focus on Village Activity Centers to serve the needs of residents within, and surrounding, the centers.

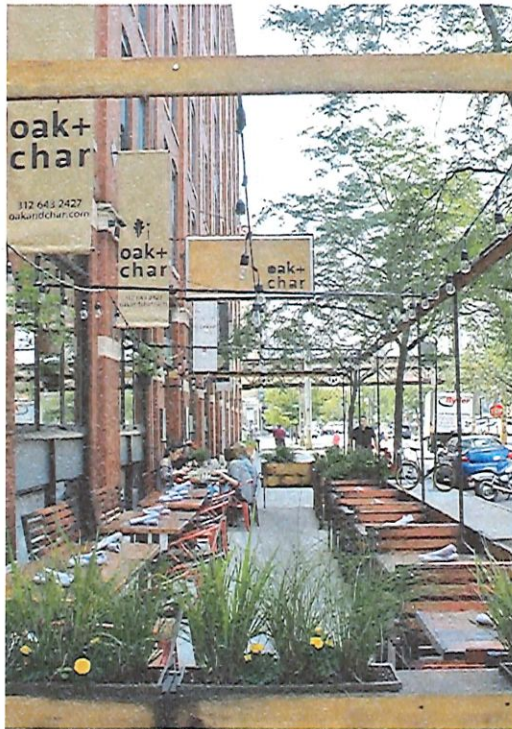


Street and Block Pattern

Redeveloped Village Activity Centers should incorporate a pattern of small blocks and a hierarchy of walkable streets. Vehicle access and circulation should be oriented away from adjacent neighborhoods. Parking should be satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies located toward the interior of blocks. Formal and informal on-street parking should be provided throughout the activity center.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary to achieve the mix of uses desired. However, redeveloped Village Activity Centers must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. Redeveloped centers should promote opportunities to increase native tree canopy and replace lawns with native landscaping, including pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. Redevelopment also provides an opportunity to improve stormwater management.



Open space elements in a redeveloped Village Activity Center may include small parks, multiple gathering spaces, and community gardens, along with trails or greenways that connect them. Large, mature trees should be preserved to reinforce the overall vision and character of Columbia. Excess surface parking lots and other impervious surfaces are encouraged to be redeveloped as open space to the maximum extent possible.

Lot-Size and Building Placement

Redevelopment should be in more compact lot and building patterns, with parking relocated to the rear of buildings that are oriented to the street. Front setbacks are variable, with smaller setbacks in the core and larger ones at the edges. Side and rear setbacks are variable. Setbacks may be exaggerated to preserve large, mature tree stands next to the public right-of-way.

Building Types and Massing

Building types should mix uses horizontally and vertically, and should include residential, office, and commercial uses to support the needs of those who live and work in and around the Village Activity Center. Buildings ~~may stand up to five stories tall, but those nearest to existing residential neighborhoods~~ should be of a scale and design compatible with nearby development. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts in the core of the development. Apartments or condominiums should be stacked over ground floor commercial. Village Activity Centers should provide a wide variety of housing choices including missing middle housing types. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Development should support all modes of transportation. The Village Activity Center should accommodate safe and efficient pedestrian or bicycle movements internally and connect to adjacent neighborhoods. Streets should have seating areas, bike racks, and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.



CHARACTER AREA: INDUSTRIAL MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER

Land contributing to the County's economic viability by providing places where people live, work, create, build, store, and distribute goods and services throughout the County and region. Land uses within Industrial Mixed-Use Activity Centers may include office, research and laboratory, residential, neighborhood-serving retail, hotel, light manufacturing, wholesaling, processing, storage, e-commerce fulfillment operations, warehousing and logistics, and distribution. Some light industrial uses, like small commercial kitchens, bakeries, breweries, fitness and indoor sports facilities, and art studios, may be appropriate in contexts that allow them to integrate into a nearby neighborhood or activity center.

This character area recognizes the critical role of the "maker" economy and the importance of urban design in fostering vibrant centers of mixed-use activity. Typical commercial and industrial buildings are low-rise and may feature retail storefronts with attractive facades, awnings, and porches, and outdoor seating. Buildings in this area may be vertically integrated (multiple uses on different floors of a single building), however many are low-scale single use buildings. These areas are envisioned as active live-work centers where placemaking investments, restaurants, cafés, small-scale manufacturing, and commercial uses are supported.

Street and Block Pattern

Industrial Mixed-Use Activity Centers are typically located along collector and arterial roads. Primary buildings should orient to streets and be set back far enough to ensure pedestrians are well-separated on sidewalks from truck and automobile traffic. Buildings should provide direct pedestrian access from the street onto the site and to principal buildings.

Shorter building lengths are encouraged to provide a more interesting and comfortable pedestrian environment and allow for better, more integrated block structure.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary to achieve the mixed-use development desired. However, new and redeveloped activity centers must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. New and improved centers should promote opportunities to increase native tree canopy and replace lawns with native landscaping, including pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. Redevelopment also provides an opportunity to improve stormwater management. Improved open space of various types should be incorporated into Industrial Mixed-Use Activity Centers. Common open spaces such as courtyards or passive landscaped areas, as well as parks and greenways, should be incorporated throughout the center. Buildings that front on open space should orient to common open spaces and include accessible building entrances from the space.



Lot Size and Building Placement

Sites should be designed to provide local street connections and a safe, comfortable public realm from nearby neighborhoods and transit stops, thereby supporting walking, cycling, and transit use.

Building Types and Massing

The height of buildings depends upon the context in which they are located, however most buildings will be five stories or less. Buildings may be taller in the development core and step lower in height in areas where the center transitions to residential uses. Residential units or office space may be found above commercial or flex spaces. Housing in and around Industrial Mixed-Use Centers may include live-work units, or other missing middle housing types. Small-scale retail, office, and light industrial space should be incorporated into new development to enable small businesses and start-ups to share facilities and amenities with more established businesses. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

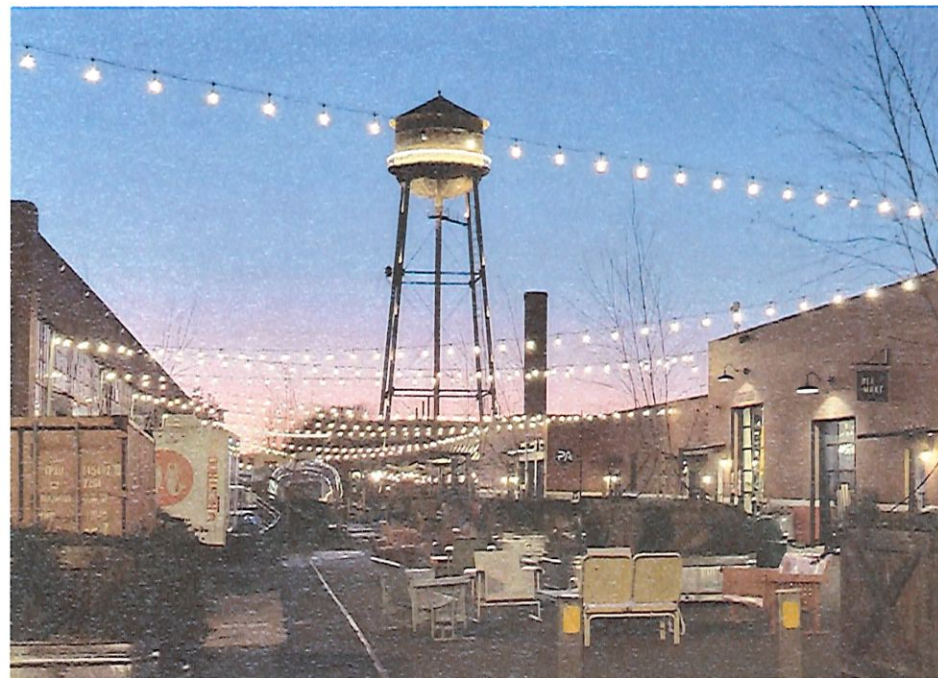
Transportation Considerations

The local street network provides a high-quality walking environment by being both well-connected and designed to accommodate pedestrians. Higher classification roads also support walkability by providing a high-quality public realm, bicycle facilities, and frequent crossing opportunities.

Parking (other than on-street parking) is preferably located to the rear or side of buildings. Parking lots should be designed and located to provide vehicular cross-access between streets.

Higher classification roads traversing Industrial Mixed-Use Centers should be designed to allow convenient crossings and a public realm that supports pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access. Local streets are typically wider to support maneuverability of larger trucks.

Semi-truck traffic should move goods and services on routes that minimize impacts on adjacent neighborhoods and centers.



CHARACTER AREA: MIXED-USE ACTIVITY CENTER

Land offering the opportunity to serve broader economic, entertainment, and housing needs in the community. Land uses should encourage active public spaces between buildings. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts. Homes in and surrounding the center of development may offer several choices to live and experience the Mixed-Use Activity Center—including, but not limited to, missing middle home choices. Mixed-Use Activity Centers may also include flex uses to respond to future market demands. Parking is satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies. The compact, walkable environment and mix of residential and nonresidential uses in the center supports multiple modes of transportation.

A large-scale, Mixed-Use Activity Center may be surrounded by one or more residential neighborhoods that provide additional nearby home choices. Walkability is encouraged with a comprehensive and interconnected network of walkable streets.

Some areas designated as Mixed-Use Activity Center are currently suburban retail or suburban office centers. Transformation of these areas to support mixed-use development will require deliberate planning and phasing to keep the areas viable during their period of change.



Street and Block Pattern

New or improved Mixed-Use Activity Centers should incorporate a pattern of small blocks and a hierarchy of walkable streets. Parking should be satisfied using on-street parking, structured parking, and shared rear-lot parking strategies located toward the interior of blocks. Formal and informal on-street parking should be provided throughout the activity center.

Open Spaces and Natural Resources

Grading of topography and clearing of vegetation may be necessary to achieve the desired compact development. However, new and improved Mixed-Use Activity Centers must protect steep slopes, floodplains, streams, and wetlands, and meet forest conservation requirements. New and improved centers should promote opportunities to increase native tree canopy and replace lawns with native landscaping, including pollinator gardens and other wildlife habitats. Redevelopment also provides an opportunity to improve stormwater management. Open space elements in new and improved Mixed-Use Activity Centers may include small parks, squares, plazas, and community gardens, along with trails, greenways, or activated streets that connect them. Excess surface parking lots and other impervious surfaces are encouraged to be redeveloped as open space to the maximum extent possible.

Lot Size and Building Placement

In existing developments, lot sizes may be variable and irregular, with large retail and/or office buildings on large parcels surrounded by surface parking. Redevelopment and new development should be in more compact patterns, with parking relocated to the rear of buildings that are oriented to the street. Front setbacks are variable, but in new development, especially closest to the center, should be as small as possible. Side and rear setbacks are variable.



Building Types and Massing

Buildings may stand upwards of five stories tall in the development core and two to three stories in areas where the center transitions to residential uses. However, building heights should be determined by market demand and a master planning process. Residential units or office space may be found above storefronts in the core of the development. Housing types in and around the Mixed-Use Activity Center may include apartments stacked over commercial uses, as well as missing middle housing types. Small-scale retail and office space should be incorporated into new development to enable small businesses and start-ups to share facilities and amenities with more established businesses. Energy efficient technologies, such as solar panels or green roofs, are encouraged on new or improved buildings.

Transportation Considerations

Development should support all modes of transportation. The Mixed-Use Activity Center should accommodate safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle movements internally and connect to adjacent neighborhoods. Mixed-Use Activity Centers should be located along corridors served by transit (or with the potential to be), with transit connections to other activity centers. Streets should have seating areas, bike racks, and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Landscaped sidewalks with protective curbs and dedicated pathways with seating are encouraged.

