

Introduced 04.07.2025
Public Hearing 04.21.2025
Council Action 05.05.2025
Executive Action 05.06.2025
Effective Date 07.06.2025

County Council of Howard County, Maryland

2025 Legislative Session

Legislative Day No. 5

Bill No. 22-2025

Introduced by: The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Adopting - Howard County Flag

AN ACT adopting a new flag description for Howard County, Maryland; setting out the design of the flag and the colors displayed therein.

Introduced and read first time April 7, 2025. Ordered posted and hearing scheduled.

By order

Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Having been posted and notice of time & place of hearing & title of Bill having been published according to Charter, the Bill was read for a second time at a public hearing on April 21, 2025.

By order

Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

This Bill was read the third time on May 5, 2025 and Passed ☒, Passed with amendments ☐, Failed ☐

By order

Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Sealed with the County Seal and presented to the County Executive for approval this 5 day of May, 2025 at 8⁰⁰ a.m./p.m.

By order

Michelle Harrod
Michelle Harrod, Administrator

Approved/Vetoed by the County Executive May 6, 2025

Calvin Ball
Calvin Ball, County Executive

NOTE: [[text in brackets]] indicates deletions from existing law; TEXT IN SMALL CAPITALS indicates additions to existing law; ~~Strike-out~~ indicates material deleted by amendment; Underlining indicates material added by amendment

1 **Section 1. *Be It Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland, that the Howard
2 *County Code is amended as follows:*

3 *By amending*

4 *Title 22,*

5 *Section 22.100. County Flag.*

6
7 **Title 22. General Provisions.**

8 **Subtitle 1. County Flag and County Seal.**

9
10 **Section 22.100. County Flag**

11 [[The Howard County flag is a red, white, green and gold design which incorporates part of the
12 flag of the State of Maryland. Added to the basic design, on the first quarterly, a sheaf of wheat
13 in gold. In the fourth quarterly, a green outline of the County is set in a triangle of gold. The
14 remaining quarterlies are red. The flag is centered with the same red and white cross
15 incorporated in the flag of the State of Maryland.

16
17 The design is as published in the Central Maryland News of June 6, 1968.]]

18
19 THE HOWARD COUNTY FLAG IS A BLUE, GREEN, WHITE AND GOLDEN YELLOW DESIGN. THE FLAG
20 FEATURES A BLUE BACKGROUND WITH AN ARCHING WHITE LINE THROUGH THE MIDDLE. TOUCHING
21 THE ARCHING WHITE LINE IS A GOLDEN YELLOW CIRCLE POSITIONED TO THE RIGHT OF CENTER AND
22 ABOVE THE MIDDLE OF THE FLAG. BELOW THE ARCHING WHITE LINE IS A FIELD OF GREEN. IN THE
23 BOTTOM QUARTER OF THE FLAG, AND WITHIN THE GREEN FIELD, IS A SEMICIRCLE OF GOLDEN
24 YELLOW AND WHITE ARCHES IN A STRIPED PATTERN WITH THREE GOLDEN YELLOW AND THREE
25 WHITE STRIPES. THE SEMICIRCLE OF GOLDEN YELLOW AND WHITE ARCHES IN A STRIPED PATTERN
26 IS SLIGHTLY OFF-CENTER TO THE RIGHT.

27
28 THE DESIGN IS AS PUBLISHED IN THE BALTIMORE BANNER ARTICLE DATED MARCH 18, 2025.

29
30 **Section 2. *And Be It Further Enacted*** by the County Council of Howard County, Maryland that
31 *this Act shall become effective 61 days after its enactment.*



Howard County

Internal Memorandum

SUBJECT: Council Testimony and Fiscal Impact Statement
Adoption of a new County flag

TO: Brandee Ganz
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Brian Shepter,
Deputy Chief of Staff

DATE: March 24, 2025

Section 909 of the Howard County Charter empowers the Howard County Council to alter the Howard County flag. The adoption of a new Howard County flag ultimately requires the legislative approval of the Howard County Council. This legislation proposes a new flag and is the result of the process undertaken by the 19-member Howard County Flag Commission (the “Commission”). A copy of the Commission’s report is attached. Also attached is the design selected by the County Executive and intended to be adopted by this legislation.

The Commission was established by County Executive Calvin Ball on January 22, 2024, by Executive Order 2024-01. Adopted in 1968, the Howard County Flag is more than 50 years old. The Commission’s charge was to undertake a process that would result in recommendations for an updated and modernized Howard County flag design.

Specifically, the Commission was directed to:

1. Solicit designs from the public through a website portal;
2. Conduct one or more public hearings on the design of a new Howard County Flag;
3. Recommend criteria to be used to evaluate submissions;
4. Based on the recommended criteria, select up to 10 submissions for additional public review;
5. Establish a process by which the public may vote on the submissions selected by the Commission for additional public review in order to narrow the number of submissions to the top five; and
6. Select three of the five publicly-voted submissions to present to the County Executive.

The Commission met 13 times over 13 months and held a public hearing on September 30, 2024. The Commission and County Office of Public Information used press releases, social media, email lists, the Ball Bulletin, flyers and word-of-mouth to advertise the Commission’s processes and to invite public participation.

Participants were allowed to submit up to three designs for consideration by the Commission. The Commission received a total of 209 designs from 102 individuals. The Commission posted its Top 10 preferred designs for public vote. Over a 60-day voting period, the Commission received 1248 unique ballots. The Top Five vote earners were then isolated and the Commission recommended three designs from among the Top Five to the County Executive. The County Executive has selected one design to be submitted to the Council. This legislation proposes to adopt that selected design and include its description in our County Code.

Fiscal Impact

The County has budgeted \$20,000 for replacing the County flag in the budget for FY25. This will include the replacement of flags located in County buildings and at County facilities. It also includes flags used as part of promotional activities.

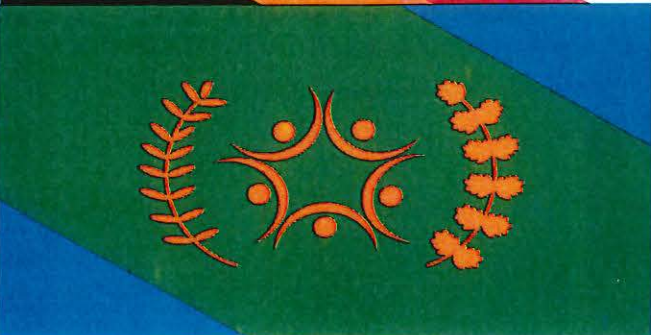
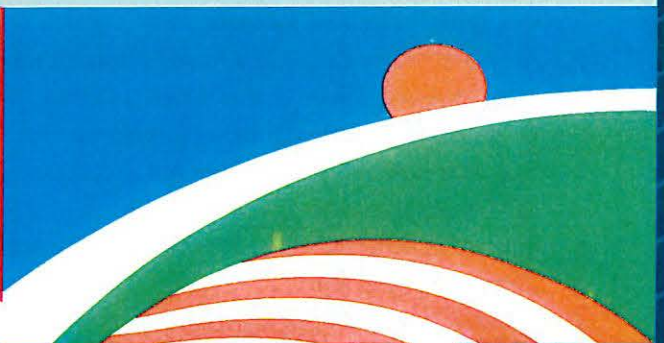
Howard County Flag Design



1913 L.D. 3025



Final Report
Howard County Flag Commission
February 25, 2025



Commission Creation and Charge

The Howard County Flag Commission was established by County Executive Calvin Ball on January 22, 2024, by Executive Order 2024-01.

Adopted in 1968, the Howard County Flag is more than 50 years old. The Commission's charge was to undertake a process that would result in recommendations for an updated and modernized Howard County flag design.

Specifically, the Commission was directed to:

1. Solicit designs from the public through a website portal;
2. Conduct one or more public hearings on the design of a new Howard County Flag;
3. Recommend criteria to be used to evaluate submissions;
4. Based on the recommended criteria, select up to 10 submissions for additional public review;
5. Establish a process by which the public may vote on the submissions selected by the Commission for additional public review in order to narrow the number of submissions to the top five; and
6. Select three of the five publicly-voted submissions to present to the County Executive.

Section 909 of the Howard County Charter empowers the Howard County Council to alter the Howard County flag. Adoption of a new Howard County flag ultimately requires the legislative approval of the Howard County Council.

Commission Members

In accordance with Executive Order 2024-01, the Howard County Flag Commission was comprised of the following voting representatives, including at least one resident from each of the County's councilmanic districts:

1. Four Howard County residents, as recommended by members of the County Council – *Kate Kuc (District 1), Rashida George (District 2), Pearl Atkinson-Stewart (District 3), Chelsea Bork (District 4)*
2. Executive Director of the Howard County Lynching Truth and Reconciliation, inc., or their designee – *Marlena Jareaux*
3. Archivist of the Columbia Association, or their designee – *Erin Berry*
4. Two representatives of the Howard County Historical Society, including the Executive Director, or their designee – *Mark Stout, Ellen Flynn Giles*
5. Representative of the African American Community Roundtable of Howard County – *Dr. Tracey Williams*
6. Executive Director of the Howard County Arts Council, or their designee – *Coleen West, Commission Chair**
7. Representative of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) commission – *Lanlan Xu*
8. Representative of the LGBTQIA+ commission – *Beck Seckler*
9. Representative of La Alianza Latina commission – *Katherine Canales*
10. President & CEO of the Howard County Library System, or their designee – *Carol Murray*

11. President & CEO of the Howard County Chamber of Commerce, or their designee – *Annmarie Bilger*
12. Executive Director of Howard County Tourism Council, Inc., or their designee – *Amanda Hof*
13. President of the Howard County Farm Bureau, or their designee – *Barb Glenn (District 5)*
14. President of Howard Community College, or their designee – *Stephanie Wall*
15. A representative of the faith community, as selected by the County Executive – *Jonathan Alexander*

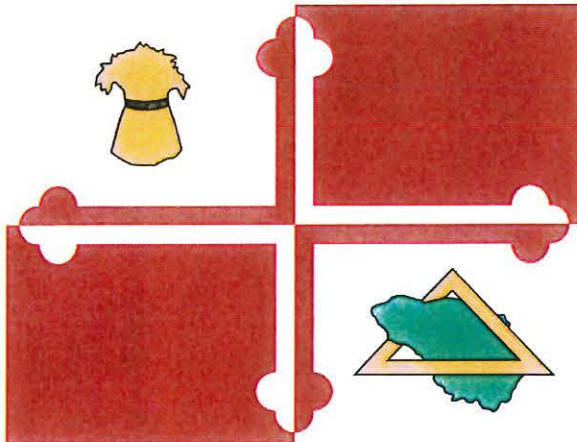
* The Executive Order further names the Executive Director of the Howard County Arts Council as the Chair of the Commission.

Brian Shepter, Deputy Chief of Staff to County Executive Calvin Ball, provided principal staff support to the Commission.

The Commission and its members' tenures expire on June 1, 2025.

Current Howard County Flag

In 1968, Howard County's official flag was chosen from among forty entries in a contest sponsored by The Central Maryland News. This winning entry was submitted by Jean O. Hannon (Mrs. Phillip A.) of Howard County and described as "a red and white design which incorporates part of the Maryland flag." Added to this, on the first quarterly, a sheaf of wheat in gold symbolizes the agricultural heritage of the County (the Ellicott and Carroll families were responsible for the agricultural change from tobacco to wheat which affected the entire county). In the fourth quarterly a green outline of the county is set in a triangle of gold symbolizing the unique position of Howard in the future development of the eastern seaboard.



Judges for the contest included the three County Commissioners, Harry T. Murphy, Alva S. Baker and Charles E. Miller; the two Circuit Court judges, James Macgill and T. Hunt Mayfield; the Superintendent of Schools, John E. Yingling; and the three legislators, Senator James Clark, Del. Hugh Burgess and Del. Edwin Warfield. The flag was presented to the Howard County Commissioners on September 19, 1968 and was raised on the flagpole in front of the Court House by Commissioner Murphy.

Commission Meetings

The Howard County Flag Commission met 13 times in 13 months to invite public input, deliberate, and advance this process. This included a public hearing on flag designs held on September 30, 2024. All meetings were held in hybrid format, both in-person at the George Howard Building, 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043 and virtually via Webex. Meeting materials and process information were primarily shared via the Flag Commission [webpage](#) on the Howard County government [website](#).

Links to agendas and meeting video recordings are provided below.

Commission Meeting #1 - February 6, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)(video)

Commission Meeting #2 - March 5, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)(video)

Commission Meeting #3 - March 19, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)(video)

Commission Meeting #4 - April 16, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #5 - April 30, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #6 - June 25, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #7 - July 31, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #8 - September 16, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #9 - *Public Hearing* - September 30, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #10 - Work Session 1 - October 17, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #11 - Work Session 2 - October 21, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #12 - January 28, 2025

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #13 - February 25, 2025

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Referenced Material and Models

In order to inform its design review, the Commission considered the following sources:

- [North American Vexillological Association](#) (NAVA)
- *"Good" Flag, "Bad" Flag* by Ted Kaye

This guide offers the following five principles for flag design.*

1. Keep It Simple
2. Use Meaningful Symbolism
3. Use 2 or 3 Basic Colors
4. No Lettering or Seals
5. Be Distinctive or Be Related

*Of course there are exceptions to every rule, but depart from these five principles only with caution and purpose.

The Commission Chair reported to the full body in the April 16, 2024, public meeting to have had a meeting with NAVA on April 8, 2024, and that there were free resources they had available to us which included design review, a coaching session, and personnel for the creation of vector files, etc. Upon the request of the full Commission, Mr. Ted Kaye joined the Commission live for the Commission's [April 30, 2024, meeting](#) to answer questions and offer additional guidance regarding the Commission's process.

Among other guidance, Mr. Kaye advised that, to ensure a functional and high-quality flag, the County Executive should enlist a professional flag designer for the final design and select colors from among the standard set of colors manufactured by flag fabric mills.

Additionally, the Commission considered the following recent flag design competitions for models of how to conduct a successful process.

- [Frederick County, Maryland](#)
- [State of Minnesota](#)
- [City of Duluth, Minnesota](#)
- [State of Utah](#)

Design Guidelines and Criteria

In an effort to provide direction to interested individuals, the Commission adopted [flag design guidelines and criteria](#) prior to its design solicitation. These guidelines and criteria established the requirements for the public solicitation and design eligibility review.

The Commission determined that it would accept designs only from individuals that had a connection to Howard County and to conduct the design review process with anonymity as to the designer.

Designs were deemed ineligible if they:

- Were generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Contained religious symbols, depictions of violence, gang, or sexually-related material, nudity, profanity, or political images or themes.
- Were construed as hateful, defamatory or discriminatory.
- Were incomplete or submitted after the deadline.
- Had references to alcohol, drugs, illicit or illegal activities.

Additionally, an evaluation table was adopted to help inform Commissioners' individual review of designs received. The [evaluation table](#) (page 5) incorporates elements from "Good" Flag, "Bad" Flag.

Design Solicitation

The Commission and County Office of Public Information utilized press releases, social media, email lists, *the Ball Bulletin*, flyers and word-of-mouth to advertise the Commission's processes and invite public participation. Examples of promotional materials are attached as Appendix A.

The Commission solicited the public for flag design submissions using a Howard County government-hosted online portal. The portal was open for 90 days from April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024.

Participants in the design process were permitted to submit up to three (3) designs for Commission consideration.

Among other things, the Commission's process required:

- Contact information for the individual who designed the flag (name, address, phone number, email, and age). If designer was under 18 years of age, their parent or legal guardian's contact information was required.
- A written description (250 words or less) explaining the design and color choices in the flag, their enduring appeal, what they symbolize, and how they represent Howard County.
- A brief statement (100 words or less) on Participant's connection (live, work or play) to Howard County.

The Commission received a total of 209 designs from 102 individuals. Each submission was assigned a numerical value to maintain the anonymity of the designer.

Design Eligibility Review

In order to determine the eligibility of the 209 designs received, the Commission decided at its June 17, 2024, meeting to have staff assigned to the Commission review all submissions against the Design Guidelines and Criteria, noting issues that required further deliberation. A subcommittee was formed to review the staff findings and make recommendations to the full Commission.

In an effort to preserve the anonymity of designers, staff removed any information linking a design or submission to an individual prior to review by Commission members. The subcommittee met on July 12 and July 15, 2024, and their report was given to the full Commission in the July 31, 2024, meeting.

The Commission determined submissions to be ineligible for a variety of reasons, including:

- Insufficient "live, work, play" connection to Howard County in narrative provided by the participant;
- Unoriginal art;
- Inadequate design description;
- Duplicate submissions, exceeding three (3) designs per participant;
- Disclosure of participant's name in the design or design description.

Eligibility recommendations from the Subcommittee to the Commission are available [here](#).

Final eligibility determinations of the Commission are available [here](#).

The Commission determined that 184 designs from 89 individuals were eligible to proceed for further consideration.

All eligible designs were made available for public review [here](#). Materials were created to promote the hearing, with requests that Commissioners share them with their networks. Examples of promotional materials are attached as Appendix A.

Public Hearing

A recommended hearing protocols subcommittee was formed, and a virtual meeting of that subcommittee occurred on August 19, 2024. Their recommended public hearing protocols were presented to the full Commission for consideration at its September 16, 2024, virtual meeting. The registration for public testimony went live on the Commission's webpage on September 19, 2024. The Commission hosted a public hearing in the Howard County Council chambers on the eligible flag designs on September 30, 2024 at 6:00pm. Commissioners were strongly encouraged to participate in person. Nine members of the public provided oral testimony on the designs submitted. Their testimony may be viewed [here](#).

Written testimony on the 184 eligible designs was also accepted through October 2, 2024. All written testimony received is available [here](#).

Top 10 Designs

Following the public hearing, the Commission met for work sessions on October 17 and October 21, 2024 in order to determine 10 designs that would receive additional public input via an online portal hosted on the Howard County government website that collected design rankings and comments from the public. At the conclusion of the October 17, 2024, session, the Commission had selected 31 designs for further consideration. The purpose of the October 21, 2024, session was to reduce the number of designs to 10. The following 10 designs and accompanying descriptions were approved by vote of the Commission for further public feedback. The designs are presented in order of their design entry number, not by any vote or preference.

Entry 6 – CS0049471C

Description



From my perspective, when Howard County is at its best, it is a place of education, progress, and responsible stewardship of the environment. I constructed this flag to represent our ethos of knowledge and enlightenment while paying homage to our agricultural foundations.

Entry 11 – CS0049468A



The flag adopts an asymmetric minimalist design that separates itself from the rigid lines seen in many flags prior, creating a distinctive modern appearance while still being representative of Howard County's heritage. The fluid curves of the wheat plants are golden yellow, symbolizing enduring agriculture and the richness of life seen in Howard County. The curved wheat plants appeared to be swept by winds, yet enduring much like the county's ideals, and their position mimicked the letters "H" and "C," the initials of Howard County. On closer inspection, the kernels on the wheat heads are not perfectly uniform, symbolizing individuals of all kinds, uniquely different but still collectively united. The deep green represents farmlands and lush greenery, an essential selling point of Howard County, and the navy blue symbolizes the Eastern seaboard, alluding to the county's potential development and the sky, where community members are connected under and noting the many blue-ribbon schools, placing an importance on education in Howard County. The earthy colors highlight the importance of the environment to Howard County's roots, which are ever-present while striving for improvement in generations to come, fostering a sense of connection and unity among the residents.

Entry 25 – CS0049458B



When I think of Howard County, a county my family has lived in for decades, the peaceful green spaces and farmland is the first thing that comes to mind. In this design, I wanted to spotlight this attractive feature of the county. Green, is used, of course, as well as curves to convey the hilly, open pastures and prominent grassy areas.

Separate "green spaces" are depicted to highlight three things that the County is known for and that many residents love about living here: (1) the active farms producing crops (represented by the wheat symbol), (2) the wildlife that is still very present even in well-populated, residential areas (represented by the deer), and (3) the beautiful flora in our wooded

areas and grasslands (represented by the County's official flower, Queen Anne's Lace. (Note: The wheat spike contains 21 kernels as a nod to Howard County being Maryland's 21st county.)

Despite all of the nature around us, we also have to be proud of the growth in the county over the years in relation to urban development. The buildings in front of an expansive, blue sky represent the growing population and modern, booming business areas, like Columbia. A silhouette of the County's official bird, the American Goldfinch, is flying high along the skyline to convey that despite the modernization of the area, humans are still coexisting peacefully with the abundant wildlife.

Entry 71 – CS00493942A



Out of my three submissions, this flag feels like Howard County the most to me.

The arrows symbolize Howard County's progressiveness and how it always strives to move forward in making improvements within its community.

The wheat represents Howard County's agricultural roots, which is also the same symbol in HoCo's government branding.

The green symbolizes Howard County's dedication to preserving their forests and habitats, while the blue represents the Patuxent and Patapsco rivers.

Entry 89 – CS0049366B



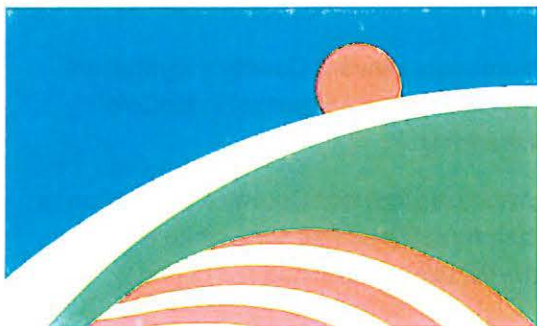
This design shows wheat in green and light blue water on a dark blue background. This design is simple and shows these two symbols which are well associated with Howard County. The wheat represents agriculture and how it has always been a core part of Howard County. The water represents the Patapsco and Patuxent rivers which are important aspects of the county since Howard County lies in the watersheds of these two rivers. This design symbolizes the important features of Howard County which its people connect to and cherish.

Flag Entry 106 - CS0049253A



For this flag design, the forest green background represents the lush green landscape and farmlands of Howard County, while the gold and white of the central logo harkens back to the same colors found in the Maryland flag. The decision to use gold as the primary color within the central logo is to symbolize the affluence and prosperity of Howard County, which continues to be one of the wealthiest and well-educated counties in all of the United States. Within the central logo are two main elements of wheat and lace. The three golden wheat stalks represent the harmony, wisdom and understanding found within the community, while harkening back to the original Howard County Seal (which included a shock of wheat to portray the county's long-standing agricultural heritage). The white circular lace border is a simplified representation of the county's flower, the Queen Anne's Lace, whose flowers bloom and radiate from their center in a lacy pattern.

Flag Entry 115 - CS0049124B



Design 2 reflects the diversity and inclusion of Howard County's natural and human resources – an historically proud and future-oriented central Maryland community. It represents an evolving agricultural past blended with an optimistic cultural, environmental, and economic future which is cosmopolitan, vibrant, and thriving. Unique yet unified.

Three shapes and colors:

The Arch: represents both the historical past of Howard County (Thomas Viaduct) and its dynamic future (the Chrysalis) — a new hub of culture, the arts, education, and commercial enterprise

The Stripes: represent Howard County's historical and contemporary abundance of agricultural and natural resources — farms, fields, fairways

The Circle: represents the boundless energy of the sun empowering a diverse community with a view toward the horizon, a bright and optimistic future

Blue: represents the optimism of endless skies, the hope of a bright future, the abundance of natural and recreational resources — lakes, rivers, waterways

Green: represents the planned preservation and utilization of the natural environment, the continuing investment in a thriving agriculture economy, and the promise of growing a culturally appreciative community — as seen through the iconic Chrysalis — where everyone is welcome

Gold: represents the sun's energy for thriving farms and fields, the optimism of a culturally diverse community – and a primary color from the Maryland flag as a location anchor for Howard County

Flag Entry 123 - CS0049012



My flag is titled: the history and future of our beloved county. The top right is based off of the coat of arms of John Eager Howard, who the county is named after. The stars represent the space missions which have been designed, built, and operated by JHU/APL, the county's largest employer. The three lines in the flag represent significant pieces of Howard County's history and geography. First, the three lines represent the County's major rivers: Patapsco, Deep Run, and Patuxent rivers. They also represent the rich history of railroads in the County. America's first railroad terminal was built in Howard County, the B&O railroad's first tracks connected Baltimore with Ellicott Mills, and the Underground Railroad was particularly active in Howard County. Finally, the lines contained within the flag represent the fact that John Eager Howard was colonel in the Maryland Line regiment, in the Continental Army. George Washington gave Maryland it's (*sic*) nickname (The Old-Line State) after commanding the Maryland Line regiment. Lastly, the colors (also the colors of the Maryland flag) represent: the blood of the soldiers who served in the Maryland Line Regiment (red); golden wheat - the agricultural history of the County, which was one of the first to switch from tobacco to wheat crops (gold/yellow); the hope of peaceful prosperity in the future (white); a remembrance and honoring of those who sought to escape enslavement

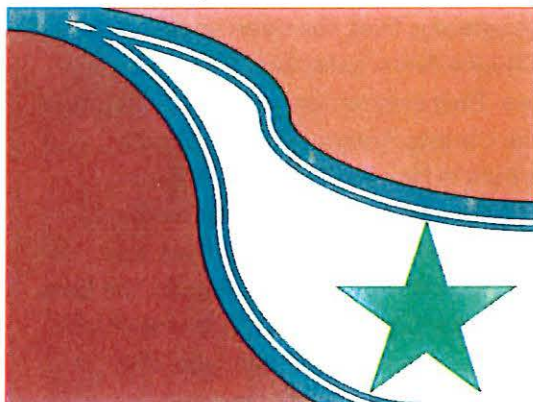
via the underground railroad through Howard County (black).

Flag Entry 173 - CS0045083



The background of the flag is a rich green symbolizing the gently rolling hills covering the majority of the county. The blue in the top right and bottom left corners represents the Patapsco and Patuxent rivers, respectively, which border the county to the northeast and southwest. The graphics in the middle are yellow in color signifying the happiness of the county's residents. On the left is a stalk of wheat representing the county's agricultural origins. On the right is an oak branch representing the county's strength and endurance through periods of change and growth. Between the two are five abstractly-designed individuals holding hands, representing the five county districts that make up our community. The individuals form the shape of a star, symbolizing that it is the members of the community that guide the county's growth and development.

Flag Entry 177 - CS0044977A



Howard County is the geographic center of Maryland. Blue lines represent the rivers that create/define its borders: Patapsco and Patuxent. Option 1 shows the movement of the County's borders. Option 2 straightens the lines for a bolder look.

Yellow represents/matches the the *(sic)* flags of the State of Maryland and City of Baltimore (located to the Northeast); Also a nod to the original use of yellow wheat on the existing flag.

Red matches the current Howard County Flag and represents the flags of the State of Maryland and Washington DC (located to the South), emphasizing Howard County as a regionally important location between Baltimore and DC.

A star symbolizes positivity, happiness, and hope – all things that Howard County represents.

The star has 5 points and is both large and prominent emphasizing strength, growth, its central location (surrounded by 5 counties), position of importance

and a leader within the State; and to act as a regional guide.

The star is green representing Howard County's commitment to preserving nature, and its commitment to health and civility.

This flag design is a symbol that represents the County, showcasing its history, location, energy, vibrancy, and its future.

Public Vote

A draft design of the public poll was circulated to the full Commission, and recommendations for minor improvements were made to County staff which were incorporated into the final poll design. The top 10 designs were posted for public review [here](#). The Commission accepted public votes on the 10 remaining designs via a web-based platform for 60 days from November 13, 2024, to January 12, 2025. Each design was posted with its accompanying design description. The personal narrative of the participant's connection to Howard County was not displayed.

Voters were instructed to rank all ten designs from one (1) to ten (10), with 1 being the best design and 10 being the least desired design. Each voter had to apply only one rank value to each design. All designs had to be ranked in order to submit. And no two designs could share the same ranking. Each individual was instructed to submit only one vote. In total, 1258 votes were received.

Staff reviewed the raw vote data to identify any duplicates. Ten votes were determined to have been cast by the same individual twice. The latter of the individual's two votes was removed from the tally, leaving 1248 total votes received. Comments were also received from the public during the vote period, and they can be found [here](#).

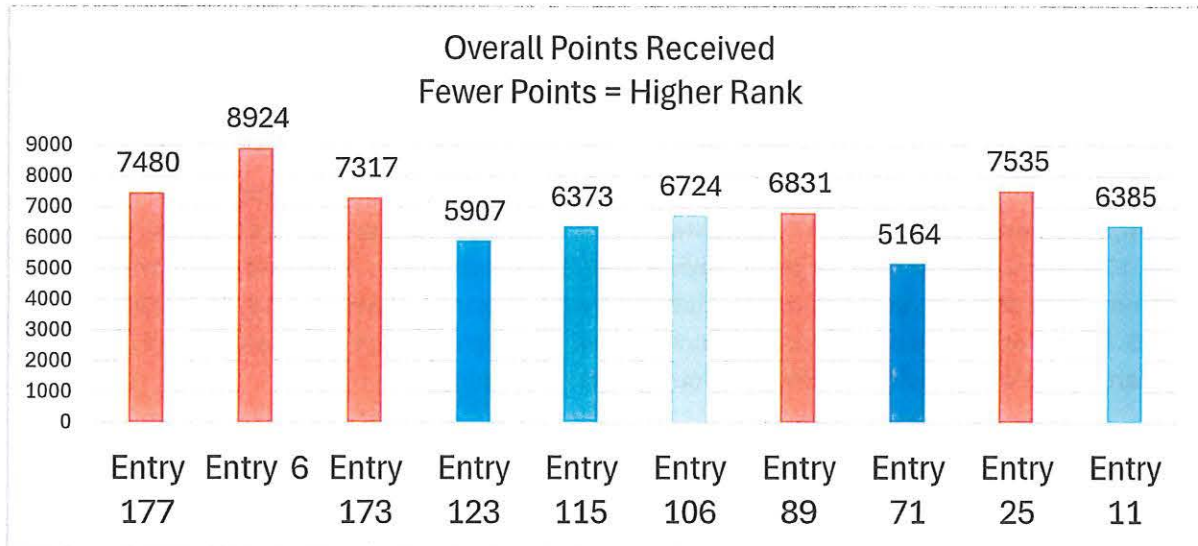
In accordance with the Executive Order, the Commission was required to determine the top five vote earners and from among the top five, recommend three designs to the County Executive.

Staff analyzed the votes received using two methodologies: cumulative point and ranked choice.

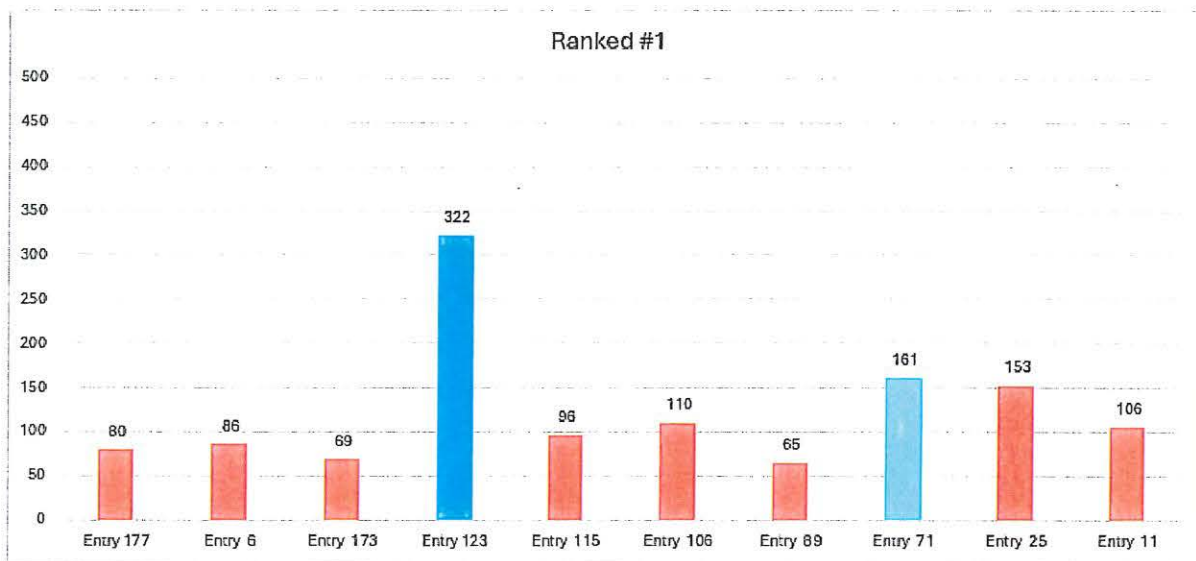
Cumulative Point Methodology

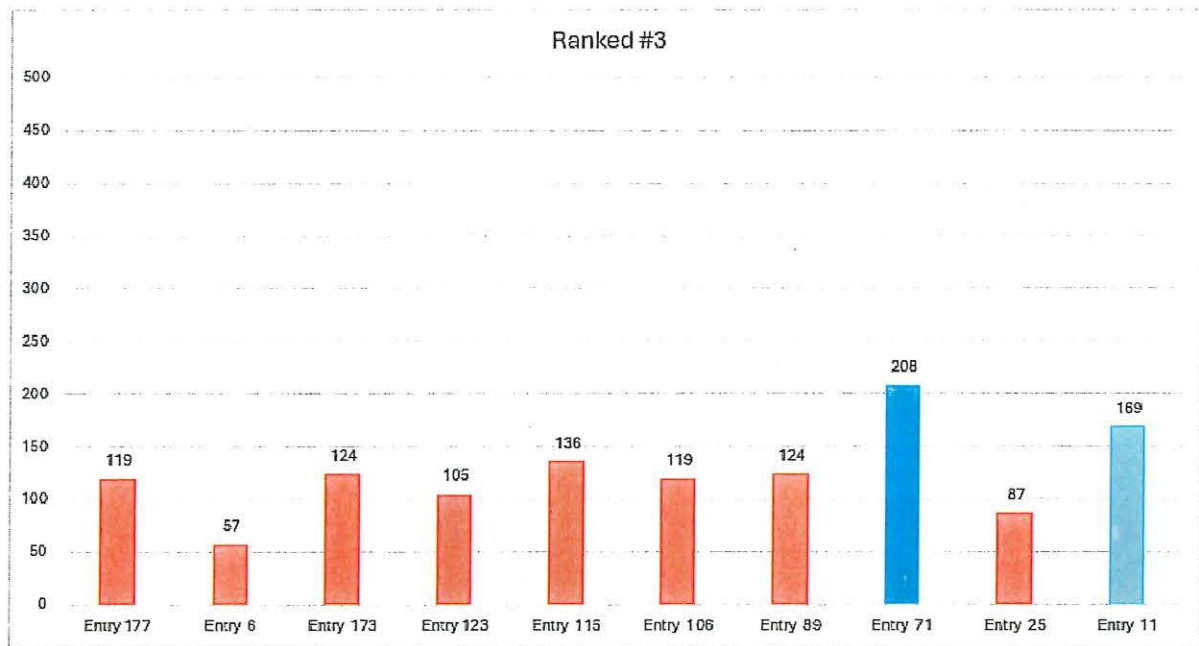
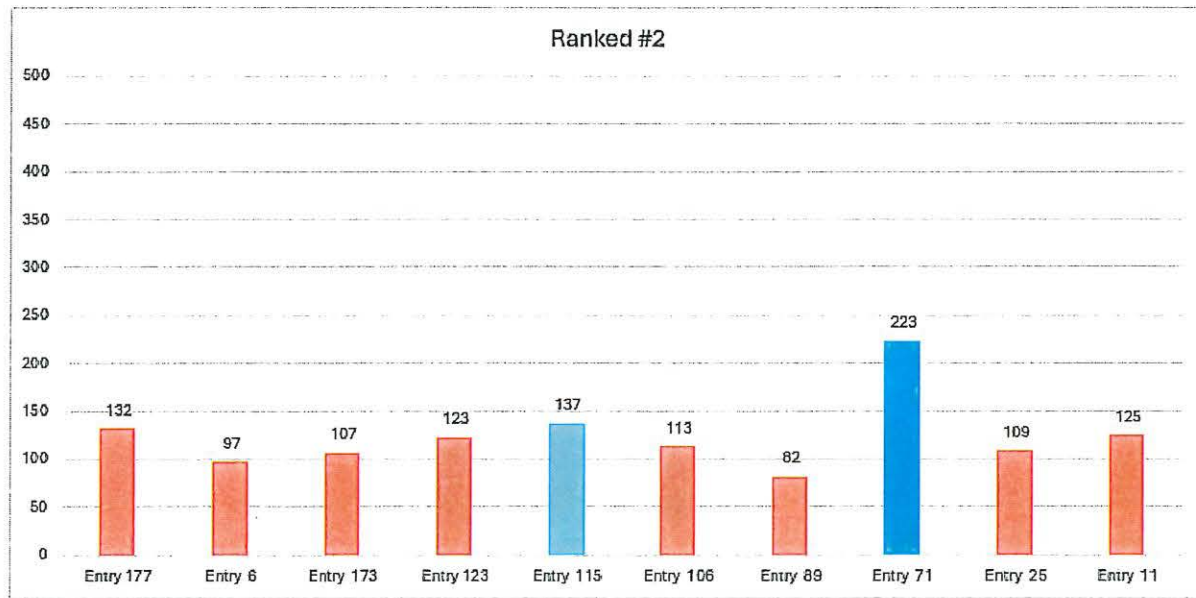
In the cumulative point analysis, each design's rank value, as assigned by all voters, was simply totaled. The lowest scoring design represented the highest total rank. The highest cumulative point value represented the lowest overall rank.

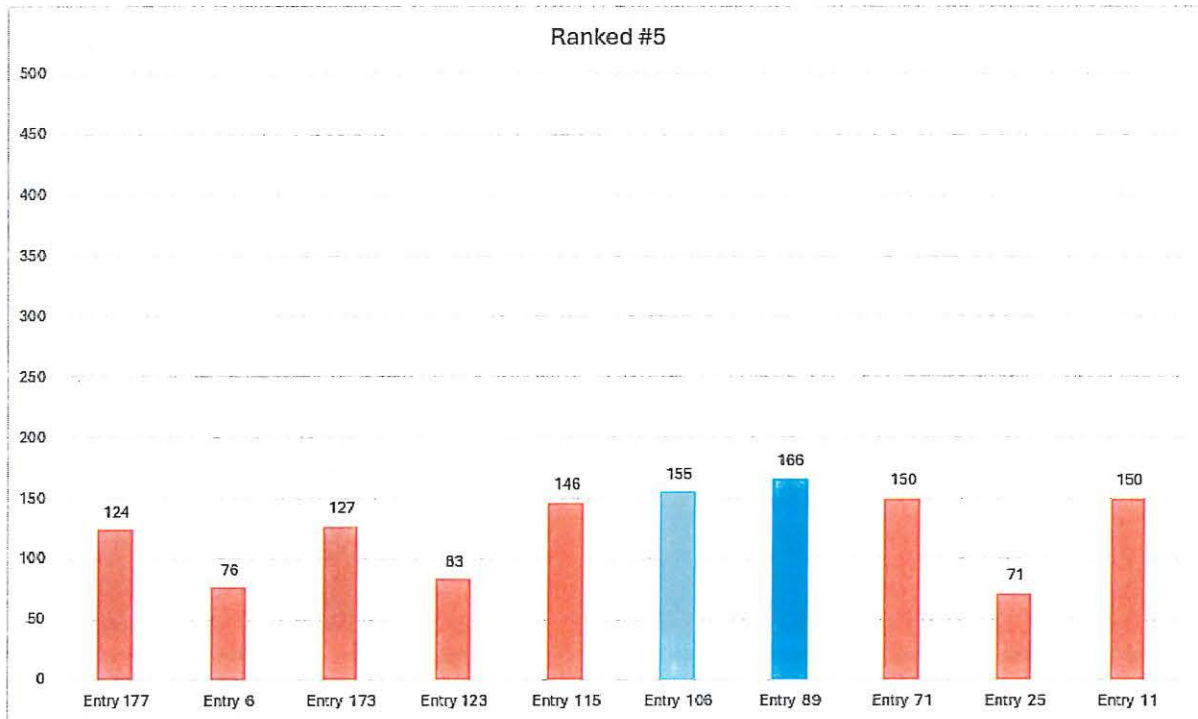
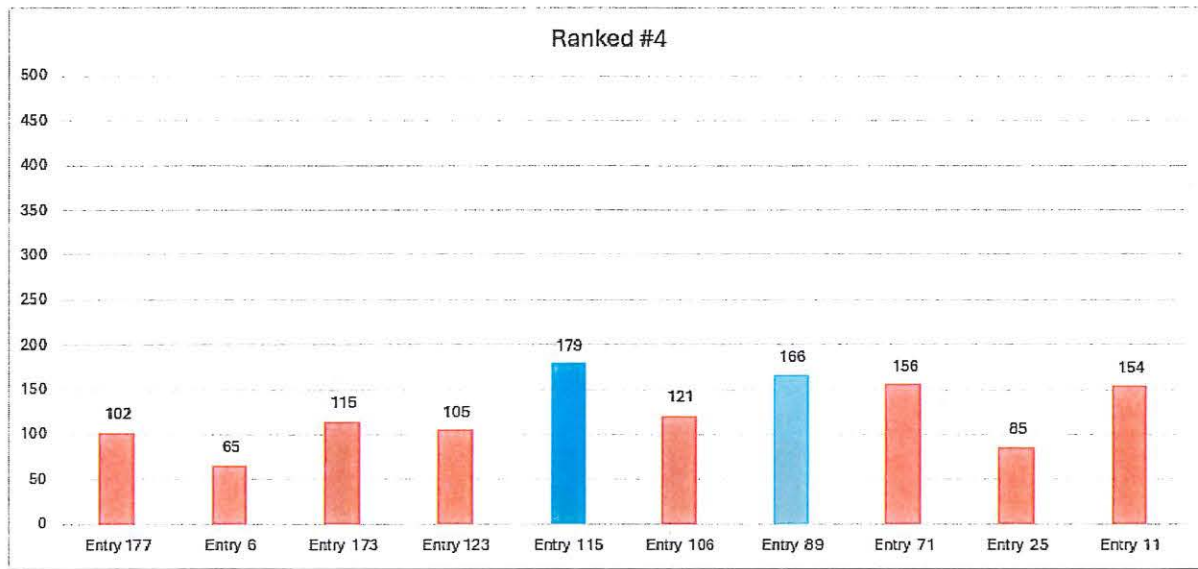
Under the Cumulative Point Methodology, the ten designs ranked as follows:



With this methodology, the public's rankings of their #1 through #5 designs were presented graphically by staff to the full Commission as follows:



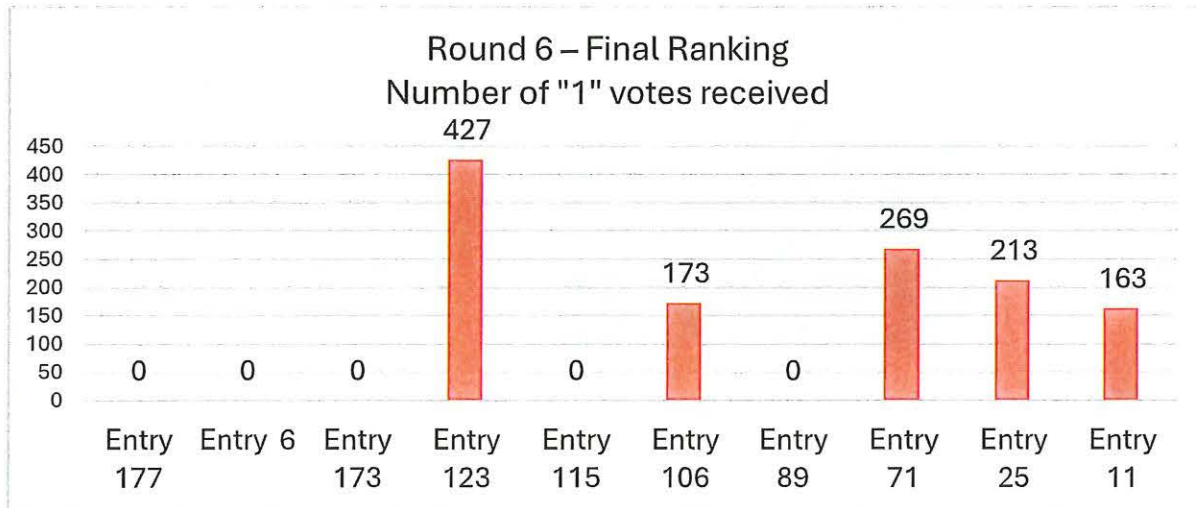




Ranked Choice Methodology

The ranked choice voting methodology is more complex. This method sought to represent the most preferred designs across all votes received by tabulating all “1” (top) rankings for each design and eliminating the design that received the lowest number of “1” ratings. For each design that is eliminated, that voter’s preference is redistributed in that their next highest ranked design, which became a “1” rating. This exercise was repeated through six total rounds until only 5 designs (the Commission’s target) remained. The results were manually calculated by staff and verified using ChatGPT.

Under the Ranked Choice Methodology, the public's top five designs were as follows:



Among the five designs that were eliminated using the ranked choice voting process, their ranking was:

6. Entry 115-eliminated in Round Five
7. Entry 6- eliminated in Round Four
8. Entry 177- eliminated in Round Three
9. Entry 173- eliminated in Round Two
10. Entry 89- eliminated in Round One

The Commission deliberated over the merits of the two methodologies in its January 28, 2025, meeting and ultimately voted to accept the Cumulative Point Methodology as its basis for determining the Top 5 vote earners.

Top 5 Vote Earners

Utilizing the Cumulative Point Methodology, the Top 5 vote earners were as follows, shown from highest rank to lowest:

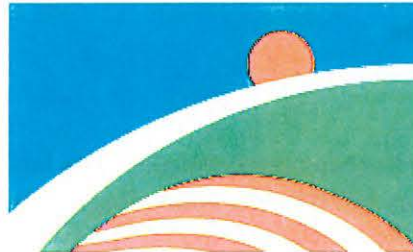
1. Flag 71



2. Flag 123



3. Flag 115



4. Flag 11



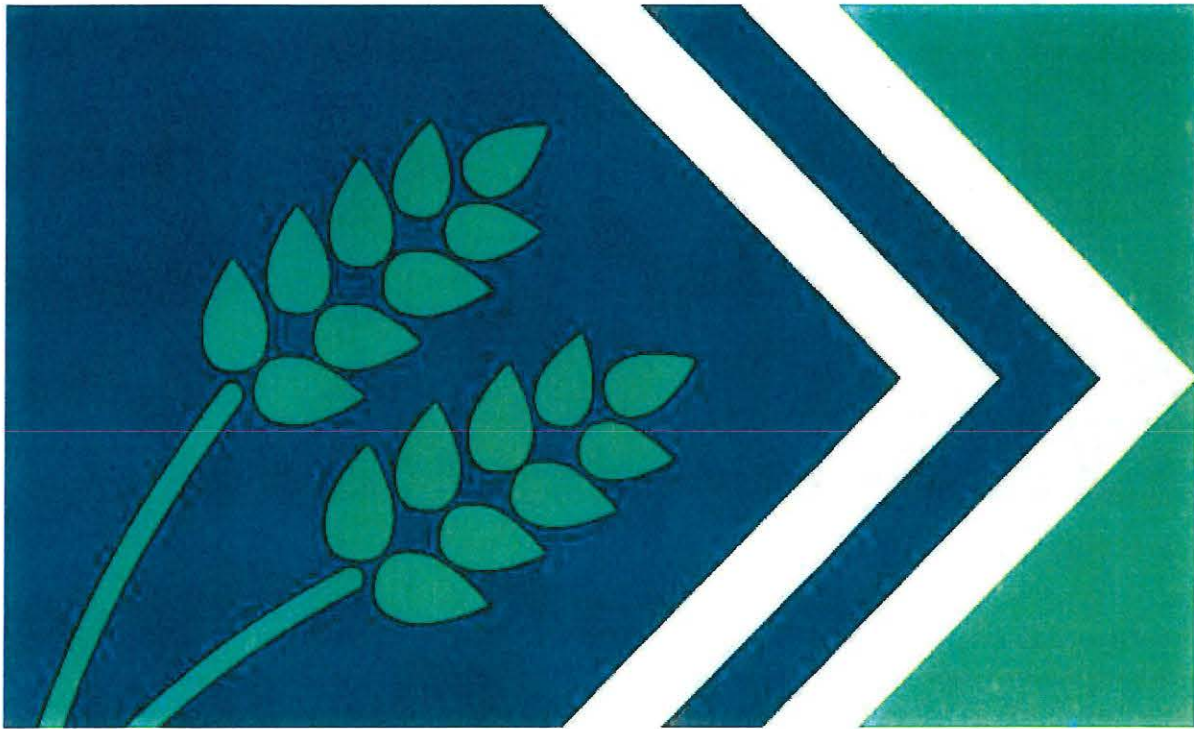
5. Flag 106



Final Recommendations – 3 Designs

In accordance with the Executive Order, the Commission discussed the Top 5 vote earners and the majority voted to recommend the top 3 public vote earners as calculated using the cumulative methodology to the County Executive for consideration as the next Howard County Flag. Those three designs and the designers' descriptions are:

Entry 71 – CS00493942A



Designer's Description:

Out of my three submissions, this flag feels like Howard County the most to me.

The arrows symbolize Howard County's progressiveness and how it always strives to move forward in making improvements within its community.

The wheat represents Howard County's agricultural roots, which is also the same symbol in HoCo's government branding.

The green symbolizes Howard County's dedication to preserving their forests and habitats, while the blue represents the Patuxent and Patapsco rivers.

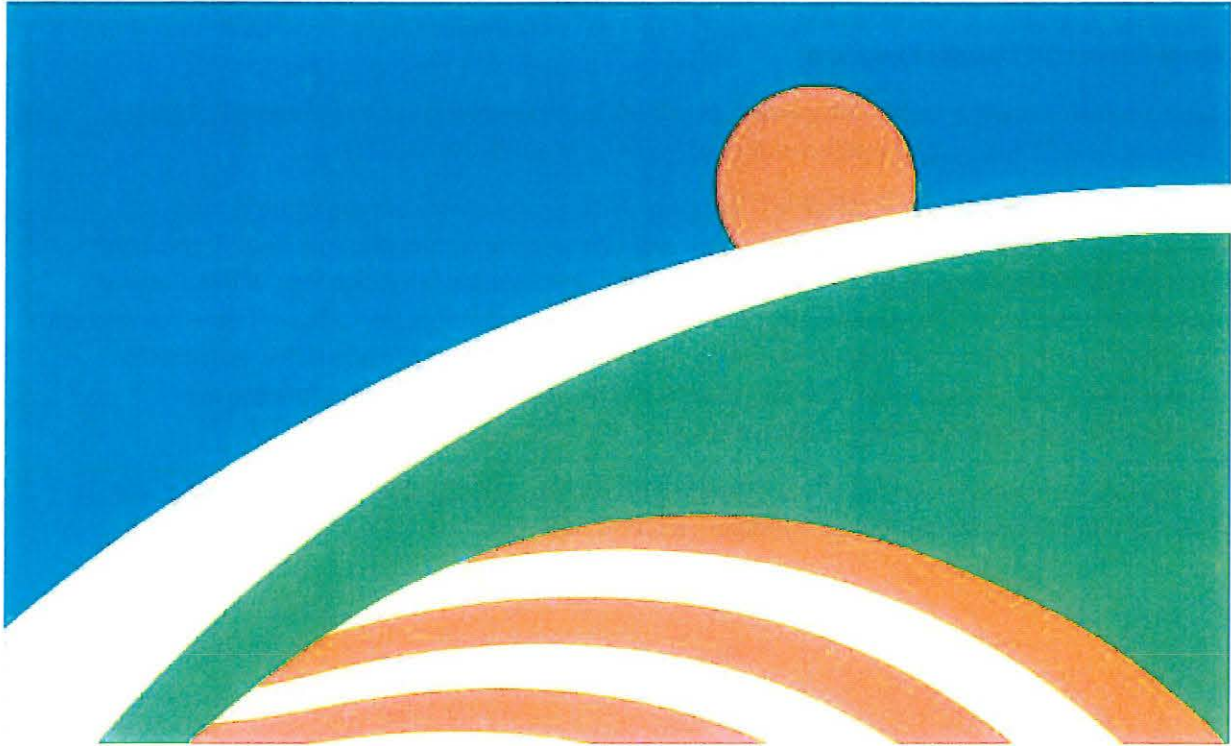
Flag Entry 123 - CS0049012



Designer's Description:

My flag is titled: the history and future of our beloved county. The top right is based off of the coat of arms of John Eager Howard, who the county is named after. The stars represent the space missions which have been designed, built, and operated by JHU/APL, the county's largest employer. The three lines in the flag represent significant pieces of Howard County's history and geography. First, the three lines represent the County's major rivers: Patapsco, Deep Run, and Patuxent rivers. They also represent the rich history of railroads in the County. America's first railroad terminal was built in Howard County, the B&O railroad's first tracks connected Baltimore with Ellicott Mills, and the Underground Railroad was particularly active in Howard County. Finally, the lines contained within the flag represent the fact that John Eager Howard was colonel in the Maryland Line regiment, in the Continental Army. George Washington gave Maryland it's (*sic*) nickname (The Old-Line State) after commanding the Maryland Line regiment. Lastly, the colors (also the colors of the Maryland flag) represent: the blood of the soldiers who served in the Maryland Line Regiment (red); golden wheat - the agricultural history of the County, which was one of the first to switch from tobacco to wheat crops (gold/yellow); the hope of peaceful prosperity in the future (white); a remembrance and honoring of those who sought to escape enslavement via the underground railroad through Howard County (black).

Flag Entry 115 - CS0049124B



Designer's Description:

This design [edited] reflects the diversity and inclusion of Howard County's natural and human resources – an historically proud and future-oriented central Maryland community. It represents an evolving agricultural past blended with an optimistic cultural, environmental, and economic future which is cosmopolitan, vibrant, and thriving. Unique yet unified.

Three shapes and colors:

The Arch: represents both the historical past of Howard County (Thomas Viaduct) and its dynamic future (the Chrysalis) — a new hub of culture, the arts, education, and commercial enterprise

The Stripes: represent Howard County's historical and contemporary abundance of agricultural and natural resources — farms, fields, fairways

The Circle: represents the boundless energy of the sun empowering a diverse community with a view toward the horizon, a bright and optimistic future

Blue: represents the optimism of endless skies, the hope of a bright future, the abundance of natural and recreational resources — lakes, rivers, waterways

Green: represents the planned preservation and utilization of the natural environment, the continuing investment in a thriving agriculture economy, and the promise of growing a culturally appreciative community — as seen through the iconic Chrysalis — where everyone is welcome

Gold: represents the sun's energy for thriving farms and fields, the optimism of a culturally diverse community – and a primary color from the Maryland flag as a location anchor for Howard County

Final Report for County Executive

The Executive Order required submission of a final Commission report by February 7, 2025, however, the Commission required additional time to prepare the final report.

A draft final report was created by the Commission Chair and staff, and distributed to the full Commission. It was also posted to the Commission's website for the public's view. Instructions were provided for Commissioners to individually provide specific language they wanted to see included or removed. They were instructed to share their comments and edits in track changes with the Chair and staff no later than Wednesday, February 19, 2025, to provide sufficient time to incorporate all Commissioners' thoughts for final consideration and recirculated to the Commission prior to their final public meeting.

During the final public meeting of the Commission on February 25, 2025, the draft report was reviewed and this final report was approved, as modified.

APPENDIX A:

Examples of Promotional Materials

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!



We invite submissions of original art that reflects Howard County's values and inspires future generations.

Submit your design(s) via our online portal until June 30th, 2024. Limit 3 designs per person.



Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – English

हॉवर्ड काउंटी अपने ध्वज कोफरि से सुसज्जति कर रही है!



आपसे अनुरोध है कि अपनी मौलिक कलाकृतियाँ हमें प्रेषित कीजिए। हम ऐसी प्रस्तुतियाँ आमंत्रित करते हैं जो हॉवर्ड काउंटी के मूल्यों को प्रतिबिंबित करते हुए भावी पीढ़ियों को प्रेरित करती हैं।

30 जून, 2024 तक अपनी मौलिक प्रवर्षटियाँ हमारे ऑनलाइन पोर्टल के माध्यम से भेजने का कष्ट करें। प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के लिए 3 प्रवर्षटियाँ भेजने की सीमा सुनिश्चित की है।



कोई आयु सीमा बंधन नहीं

कृपया रचना (डिजाइन) प्रवर्षटियों के दिशानर्दिश, शर्तें देखें और अधिक जानें।

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Hindi

하워드 카운티가 깃발을 다시 디자인 하는 중입니다.



하워드 카운티의 가치를 반영하고 미래 세대를 위로
할수있는 오리지널 디자인을 받고 있습니다.

2024년 6월 30일까지 우리 온라인 포털로 디자인
보내주세요! 사람당 최대 3개까지 가능합니다.



모든 나이가 참여 가능합니다.

참여를 하실 분들에게서는 규칙을 읽고 따라주세요.

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

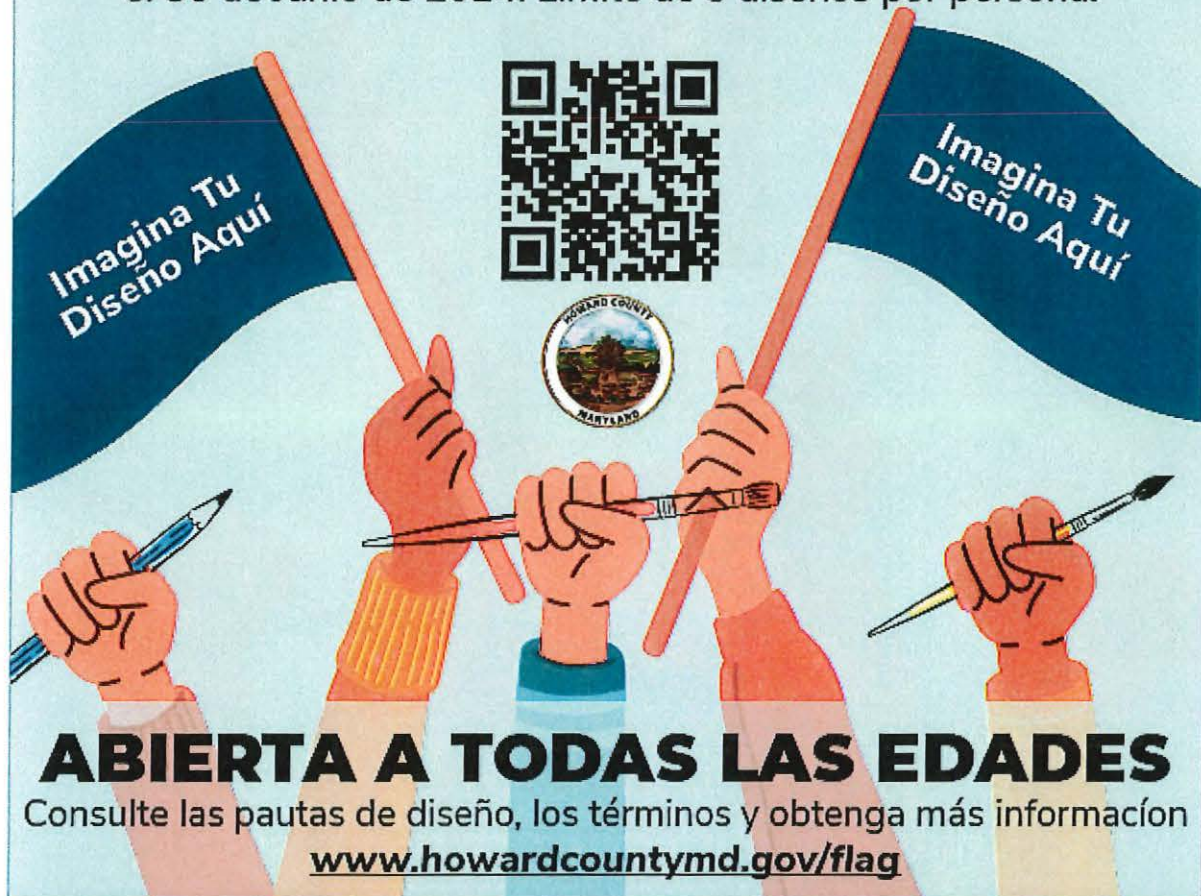
Design solicitation flyer – Korean

EL CONDADO DE HOWARD ESTÁ REDISEÑANDO SU BANDERA!



Invitamos a enviar obras de arte originales que reflejen los valores del Condado De Howard e inspiren a las generaciones futuras.

Envíe su(s) diseño(s) a través de nuestro portal en línea hasta el 30 de Junio de 2024. Límite de 3 diseños por persona.



ABIERTA A TODAS LAS EDADES

Consulte las pautas de diseño, los términos y obtenga más información

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

¿Preguntas? Envíe un correo electrónico a flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Spanish

哈維郡正在重新设计自己的旗帜！



我们邀请大家提交原创设计作品，来展现哈維郡 的价值并激励未来的一代。

请在我们的网站上提交您的设计，截止日期为2024年6月30日。每人最多提交3个设计作品。



欢迎所有年龄层朋友的参与。

请查看设计指南、条款，了解更多信息。

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Chinese (Simplified)

霍華德郡正在重新設計自己的旗幟！



我們邀請大家提交原創設計作品，來展現霍華德郡的價值並激勵未來的一代。

請在我們的網站上提交您的設計，截止日期為2024年6月30日。每人最多提交3個設計作品。



歡迎所有年齡層朋友的參與。

請查看設計指南、條款，了解更多資訊。

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Chinese (Traditional)



Web version of design solicitation flyer

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!



We invite submissions of original art that reflects Howard County's values and inspires future generations.

Submit your design(s) via our online portal until June 30th, 2024. Limit 3 designs per person.



Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Web version of design solicitation flyer



**DESIGN
SUBMISSIONS
ARE LIVE!**

200+
designs received from
100 individuals

View the eligible
design options here
<https://tinyurl.com/subs-live>

For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

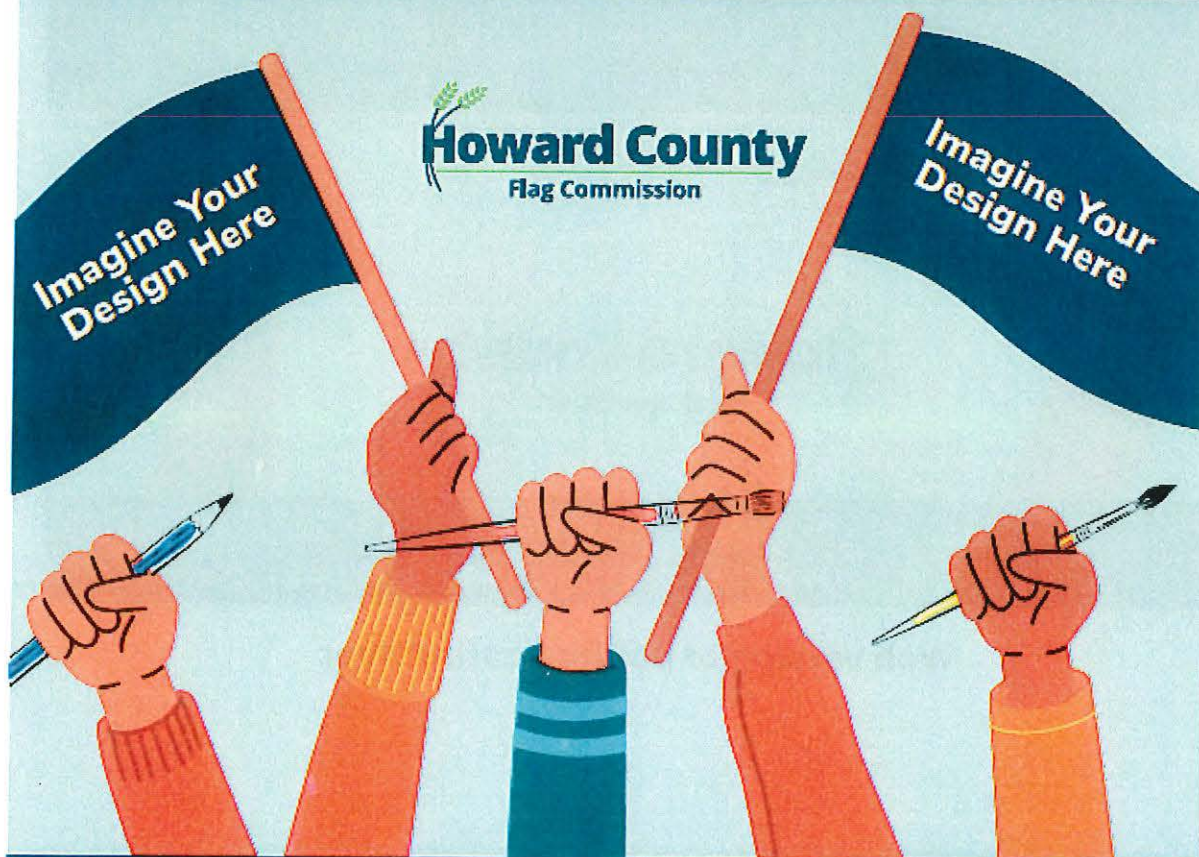
The background of the graphic features two hands holding pencils, with faint text 'Imagine Your Design Here' repeated twice.

Web version announcing design submissions received

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!

PUBLIC HEARING September 30 – 6PM

Share your thoughts on the flag designs received
@ George Howard Building – 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City



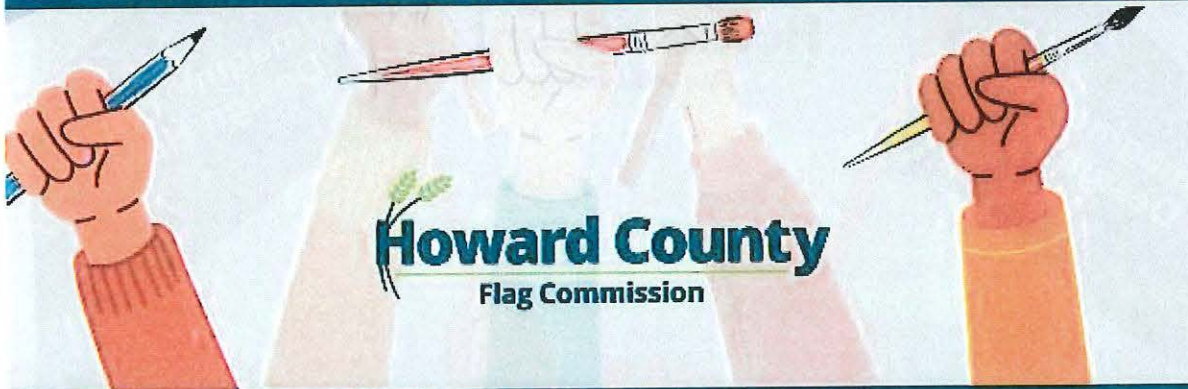
For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

Public hearing flyer

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!

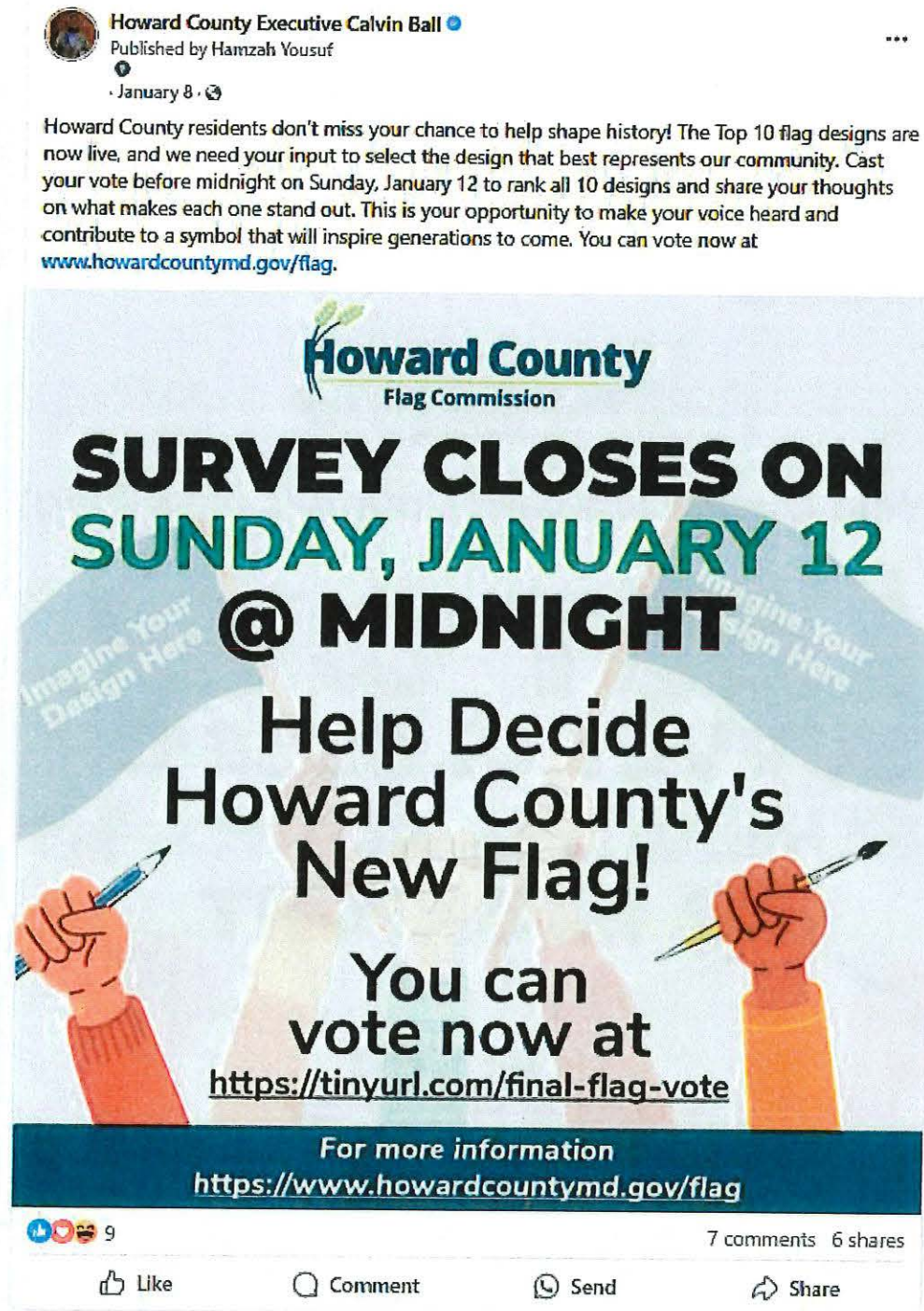
PUBLIC HEARING
September 30 – 6PM

Share your thoughts on the flag designs received
@ George Howard Building – 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City



For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

Web version of public hearing flyer



Facebook post promoting public voting on flag designs




Howard County Executive Calvin Ball

Published by Hamzah Yousuf

January 10

Voting closes this Sunday, January 12, at midnight. Don't miss your chance to be part of the process! The Howard County Flag Commission has narrowed 184 submissions down to the Top 10, and your input is needed to help select a design that embodies the spirit of our community. Rank all 10 designs and share your feedback on what elements resonate most with you. It's rare that community members get to contribute to a decision like this one. Together, we're creating a symbol tha... See more



Help Decide Howard County's New Flag!

LAST CALL
SURVEY CLOSSES ON
SUNDAY, JANUARY 12
@ MIDNIGHT

You can
vote now at
<https://tinyurl.com/final-flag-vote>

For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

14

6 comments 9 shares

Like

Comment

Send

Share

Facebook post promoting public voting on flag designs



Final Report
Howard County Flag Commission
February 25, 2025



Commission Creation and Charge

The Howard County Flag Commission was established by County Executive Calvin Ball on January 22, 2024, by Executive Order 2024-01.

Adopted in 1968, the Howard County Flag is more than 50 years old. The Commission's charge was to undertake a process that would result in recommendations for an updated and modernized Howard County flag design.

Specifically, the Commission was directed to:

1. Solicit designs from the public through a website portal;
2. Conduct one or more public hearings on the design of a new Howard County Flag;
3. Recommend criteria to be used to evaluate submissions;
4. Based on the recommended criteria, select up to 10 submissions for additional public review;
5. Establish a process by which the public may vote on the submissions selected by the Commission for additional public review in order to narrow the number of submissions to the top five; and
6. Select three of the five publicly-voted submissions to present to the County Executive.

Section 909 of the Howard County Charter empowers the Howard County Council to alter the Howard County flag. Adoption of a new Howard County flag ultimately requires the legislative approval of the Howard County Council.

Commission Members

In accordance with Executive Order 2024-01, the Howard County Flag Commission was comprised of the following voting representatives, including at least one resident from each of the County's councilmanic districts:

1. Four Howard County residents, as recommended by members of the County Council – *Kate Kuc (District 1), Rashida George (District 2), Pearl Atkinson-Stewart (District 3), Chelsea Bork (District 4)*
2. Executive Director of the Howard County Lynching Truth and Reconciliation, inc., or their designee – *Marlena Jareaux*
3. Archivist of the Columbia Association, or their designee – *Erin Berry*
4. Two representatives of the Howard County Historical Society, including the Executive Director, or their designee – *Mark Stout, Ellen Flynn Giles*
5. Representative of the African American Community Roundtable of Howard County – *Dr. Tracey Williams*
6. Executive Director of the Howard County Arts Council, or their designee – *Coleen West, Commission Chair**
7. Representative of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) commission – *Lanlan Xu*
8. Representative of the LGBTQIA+ commission – *Beck Seckler*
9. Representative of La Alianza Latina commission – *Katherine Canales*
10. President & CEO of the Howard County Library System, or their designee – *Carol Murray*

11. President & CEO of the Howard County Chamber of Commerce, or their designee – *Annmarie Bilger*
12. Executive Director of Howard County Tourism Council, Inc., or their designee – *Amanda Hof*
13. President of the Howard County Farm Bureau, or their designee – *Barb Glenn (District 5)*
14. President of Howard Community College, or their designee – *Stephanie Wall*
15. A representative of the faith community, as selected by the County Executive – *Jonathan Alexander*

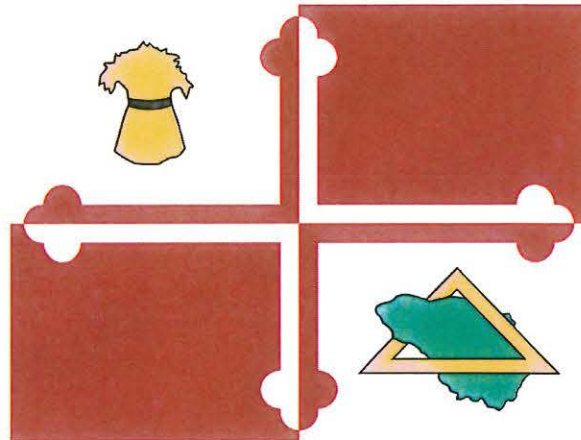
* The Executive Order further names the Executive Director of the Howard County Arts Council as the Chair of the Commission.

Brian Shepter, Deputy Chief of Staff to County Executive Calvin Ball, provided principal staff support to the Commission.

The Commission and its members' tenures expire on June 1, 2025.

Current Howard County Flag

In 1968, Howard County's official flag was chosen from among forty entries in a contest sponsored by The Central Maryland News. This winning entry was submitted by Jean O. Hannon (Mrs. Phillip A.) of Howard County and described as "a red and white design which incorporates part of the Maryland flag." Added to this, on the first quarterly, a sheaf of wheat in gold symbolizes the agricultural heritage of the County (the Ellicott and Carroll families were responsible for the agricultural change from tobacco to wheat which affected the entire county). In the fourth quarterly a green outline of the county is set in a triangle of gold symbolizing the unique position of Howard in the future development of the eastern seaboard.



Judges for the contest included the three County Commissioners, Harry T. Murphy, Alva S. Baker and Charles E. Miller; the two Circuit Court judges, James Macgill and T. Hunt Mayfield; the Superintendent of Schools, John E. Yingling; and the three legislators, Senator James Clark, Del. Hugh Burgess and Del. Edwin Warfield. The flag was presented to the Howard County Commissioners on September 19, 1968 and was raised on the flagpole in front of the Court House by Commissioner Murphy.

Commission Meetings

The Howard County Flag Commission met 13 times in 13 months to invite public input, deliberate, and advance this process. This included a public hearing on flag designs held on September 30, 2024. All meetings were held in hybrid format, both in-person at the George Howard Building, 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043 and virtually via Webex. Meeting materials and process information were primarily shared via the Flag Commission [webpage](#) on the Howard County government [website](#).

Links to agendas and meeting video recordings are provided below.

Commission Meeting #1 - February 6, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)(video)

Commission Meeting #2 - March 5, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)(video)

Commission Meeting #3 - March 19, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#)(video)

Commission Meeting #4 - April 16, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #5 - April 30, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #6 - June 25, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #7 - July 31, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #8 - September 16, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #9 - *Public Hearing* - September 30, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #10 - Work Session 1 - October 17, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #11 - Work Session 2 - October 21, 2024

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #12 - January 28, 2025

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Commission Meeting #13 - February 25, 2025

- [Agenda](#)
- [Minutes](#) (video)

Referenced Material and Models

In order to inform its design review, the Commission considered the following sources:

- [North American Vexillological Association](#) (NAVA)
- ["Good" Flag. "Bad" Flag](#) by Ted Kaye

This guide offers the following five principles for flag design.*

1. Keep It Simple
2. Use Meaningful Symbolism
3. Use 2 or 3 Basic Colors
4. No Lettering or Seals
5. Be Distinctive or Be Related

*Of course there are exceptions to every rule, but depart from these five principles only with caution and purpose.

The Commission Chair reported to the full body in the April 16, 2024, public meeting to have had a meeting with NAVA on April 8, 2024, and that there were free resources they had available to us which included design review, a coaching session, and personnel for the creation of vector files, etc. Upon the request of the full Commission, Mr. Ted Kaye joined the Commission live for the Commission's [April 30, 2024, meeting](#) to answer questions and offer additional guidance regarding the Commission's process.

Among other guidance, Mr. Kaye advised that, to ensure a functional and high-quality flag, the County Executive should enlist a professional flag designer for the final design and select colors from among the standard set of colors manufactured by flag fabric mills.

Additionally, the Commission considered the following recent flag design competitions for models of how to conduct a successful process.

- [Frederick County, Maryland](#)
- [State of Minnesota](#)
- [City of Duluth, Minnesota](#)
- [State of Utah](#)

Design Guidelines and Criteria

In an effort to provide direction to interested individuals, the Commission adopted [flag design guidelines and criteria](#) prior to its design solicitation. These guidelines and criteria established the requirements for the public solicitation and design eligibility review.

The Commission determined that it would accept designs only from individuals that had a connection to Howard County and to conduct the design review process with anonymity as to the designer.

Designs were deemed ineligible if they:

- Were generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Contained religious symbols, depictions of violence, gang, or sexually-related material, nudity, profanity, or political images or themes.
- Were construed as hateful, defamatory or discriminatory.
- Were incomplete or submitted after the deadline.
- Had references to alcohol, drugs, illicit or illegal activities.

Additionally, an evaluation table was adopted to help inform Commissioners' individual review of designs received. The [evaluation table](#) (page 5) incorporates elements from "Good" Flag, "Bad" Flag.

Design Solicitation

The Commission and County Office of Public Information utilized press releases, social media, email lists, *the Ball Bulletin*, flyers and word-of-mouth to advertise the Commission's processes and invite public participation. Examples of promotional materials are attached as Appendix A.

The Commission solicited the public for flag design submissions using a Howard County government-hosted online portal. The portal was open for 90 days from April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024.

Participants in the design process were permitted to submit up to three (3) designs for Commission consideration.

Among other things, the Commission's process required:

- Contact information for the individual who designed the flag (name, address, phone number, email, and age). If designer was under 18 years of age, their parent or legal guardian's contact information was required.
- A written description (250 words or less) explaining the design and color choices in the flag, their enduring appeal, what they symbolize, and how they represent Howard County.
- A brief statement (100 words or less) on Participant's connection (live, work or play) to Howard County.

The Commission received a total of 209 designs from 102 individuals. Each submission was assigned a numerical value to maintain the anonymity of the designer.

Design Eligibility Review

In order to determine the eligibility of the 209 designs received, the Commission decided at its June 17, 2024, meeting to have staff assigned to the Commission review all submissions against the Design Guidelines and Criteria, noting issues that required further deliberation. A subcommittee was formed to review the staff findings and make recommendations to the full Commission.

In an effort to preserve the anonymity of designers, staff removed any information linking a design or submission to an individual prior to review by Commission members. The subcommittee met on July 12 and July 15, 2024, and their report was given to the full Commission in the July 31, 2024, meeting.

The Commission determined submissions to be ineligible for a variety of reasons, including:

- Insufficient "live, work, play" connection to Howard County in narrative provided by the participant;
- Unoriginal art;
- Inadequate design description;
- Duplicate submissions, exceeding three (3) designs per participant;
- Disclosure of participant's name in the design or design description.

Eligibility recommendations from the Subcommittee to the Commission are available [here](#).

Final eligibility determinations of the Commission are available [here](#).

The Commission determined that 184 designs from 89 individuals were eligible to proceed for further consideration.

All eligible designs were made available for public review [here](#). Materials were created to promote the hearing, with requests that Commissioners share them with their networks. Examples of promotional materials are attached as Appendix A.

Public Hearing

A recommended hearing protocols subcommittee was formed, and a virtual meeting of that subcommittee occurred on August 19, 2024. Their recommended public hearing protocols were presented to the full Commission for consideration at its September 16, 2024, virtual meeting. The registration for public testimony went live on the Commission's webpage on September 19, 2024. The Commission hosted a public hearing in the Howard County Council chambers on the eligible flag designs on September 30, 2024 at 6:00pm. Commissioners were strongly encouraged to participate in person. Nine members of the public provided oral testimony on the designs submitted. Their testimony may be viewed [here](#).

Written testimony on the 184 eligible designs was also accepted through October 2, 2024. All written testimony received is available [here](#).

Top 10 Designs

Following the public hearing, the Commission met for work sessions on October 17 and October 21, 2024 in order to determine 10 designs that would receive additional public input via an online portal hosted on the Howard County government website that collected design rankings and comments from the public. At the conclusion of the October 17, 2024, session, the Commission had selected 31 designs for further consideration. The purpose of the October 21, 2024, session was to reduce the number of designs to 10. The following 10 designs and accompanying descriptions were approved by vote of the Commission for further public feedback. The designs are presented in order of their design entry number, not by any vote or preference.

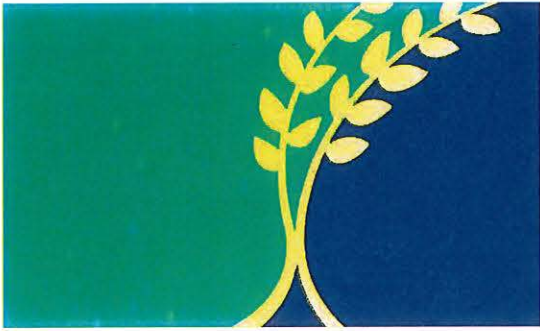
Entry 6 – CS0049471C

Description



From my perspective, when Howard County is at its best, it is a place of education, progress, and responsible stewardship of the environment. I constructed this flag to represent our ethos of knowledge and enlightenment while paying homage to our agricultural foundations.

Entry 11 – CS0049468A



The flag adopts an asymmetric minimalist design that separates itself from the rigid lines seen in many flags prior, creating a distinctive modern appearance while still being representative of Howard County's heritage. The fluid curves of the wheat plants are golden yellow, symbolizing enduring agriculture and the richness of life seen in Howard County. The curved wheat plants appeared to be swept by winds, yet enduring much like the county's ideals, and their position mimicked the letters "H" and "C," the initials of Howard County. On closer inspection, the kernels on the wheat heads are not perfectly uniform, symbolizing individuals of all kinds, uniquely different but still collectively united. The deep green represents farmlands and lush greenery, an essential selling point of Howard County, and the navy blue symbolizes the Eastern seaboard, alluding to the county's potential development and the sky, where community members are connected under and noting the many blue-ribbon schools, placing an importance on education in Howard County. The earthy colors highlight the importance of the environment to Howard County's roots, which are ever-present while striving for improvement in generations to come, fostering a sense of connection and unity among the residents.

Entry 25 – CS0049458B



When I think of Howard County, a county my family has lived in for decades, the peaceful green spaces and farmland is the first thing that comes to mind. In this design, I wanted to spotlight this attractive feature of the county. Green, is used, of course, as well as curves to convey the hilly, open pastures and prominent grassy areas.

Separate "green spaces" are depicted to highlight three things that the County is known for and that many residents love about living here: (1) the active farms producing crops (represented by the wheat symbol), (2) the wildlife that is still very present even in well-populated, residential areas (represented by the deer), and (3) the beautiful flora in our wooded

areas and grasslands (represented by the County's official flower, Queen Anne's Lace. (Note: The wheat spike contains 21 kernels as a nod to Howard County being Maryland's 21st county.)

Despite all of the nature around us, we also have to be proud of the growth in the county over the years in relation to urban development. The buildings in front of an expansive, blue sky represent the growing population and modern, booming business areas, like Columbia. A silhouette of the County's official bird, the American Goldfinch, is flying high along the skyline to convey that despite the modernization of the area, humans are still coexisting peacefully with the abundant wildlife.

Entry 71 – CS00493942A



Out of my three submissions, this flag feels like Howard County the most to me.

The arrows symbolize Howard County's progressiveness and how it always strives to move forward in making improvements within its community.

The wheat represents Howard County's agricultural roots, which is also the same symbol in HoCo's government branding.

The green symbolizes Howard County's dedication to preserving their forests and habitats, while the blue represents the Patuxent and Patapsco rivers.

Entry 89 – CS0049366B



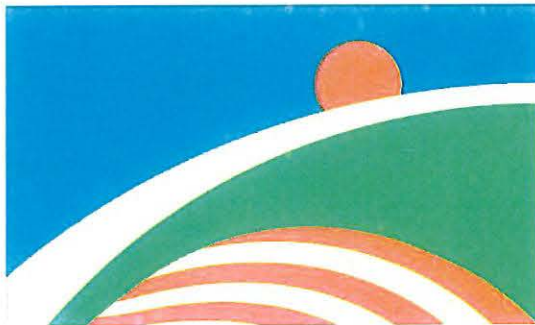
This design shows wheat in green and light blue water on a dark blue background. This design is simple and shows these two symbols which are well associated with Howard County. The wheat represents agriculture and how it has always been a core part of Howard County. The water represents the Patapsco and Patuxent rivers which are important aspects of the county since Howard County lies in the watersheds of these two rivers. This design symbolizes the important features of Howard County which its people connect to and cherish.

Flag Entry 106 - CS0049253A



For this flag design, the forest green background represents the lush green landscape and farmlands of Howard County, while the gold and white of the central logo harkens back to the same colors found in the Maryland flag. The decision to use gold as the primary color within the central logo is to symbolize the affluence and prosperity of Howard County, which continues to be one of the wealthiest and well-educated counties in all of the United States. Within the central logo are two main elements of wheat and lace. The three golden wheat stalks represent the harmony, wisdom and understanding found within the community, while harkening back to the original Howard County Seal (which included a shock of wheat to portray the county's long-standing agricultural heritage). The white circular lace border is a simplified representation of the county's flower, the Queen Anne's Lace, whose flowers bloom and radiate from their center in a lacy pattern.

Flag Entry 115 - CS0049124B



Design 2 reflects the diversity and inclusion of Howard County's natural and human resources – an historically proud and future-oriented central Maryland community. It represents an evolving agricultural past blended with an optimistic cultural, environmental, and economic future which is cosmopolitan, vibrant, and thriving. Unique yet unified.

Three shapes and colors:

The Arch: represents both the historical past of Howard County (Thomas Viaduct) and its dynamic future (the Chrysalis) — a new hub of culture, the arts, education, and commercial enterprise

The Stripes: represent Howard County's historical and contemporary abundance of agricultural and natural resources — farms, fields, fairways

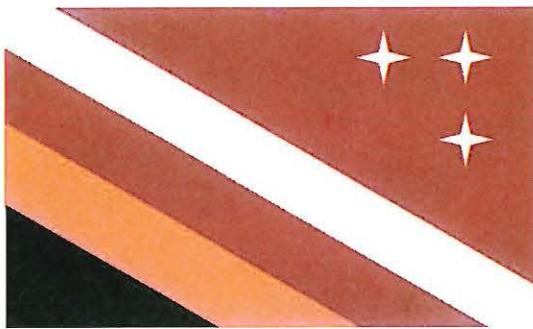
The Circle: represents the boundless energy of the sun empowering a diverse community with a view toward the horizon, a bright and optimistic future

Blue: represents the optimism of endless skies, the hope of a bright future, the abundance of natural and recreational resources — lakes, rivers, waterways

Green: represents the planned preservation and utilization of the natural environment, the continuing investment in a thriving agriculture economy, and the promise of growing a culturally appreciative community — as seen through the iconic Chrysalis — where everyone is welcome

Gold: represents the sun's energy for thriving farms and fields, the optimism of a culturally diverse community – and a primary color from the Maryland flag as a location anchor for Howard County

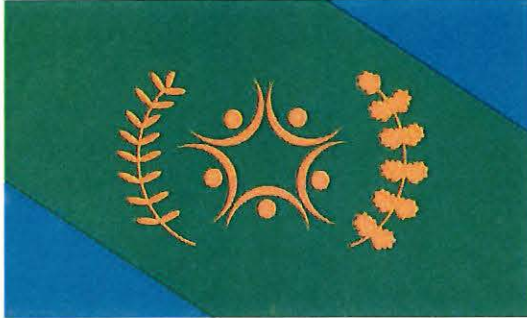
Flag Entry 123 - CS0049012



My flag is titled: the history and future of our beloved county. The top right is based off of the coat of arms of John Eager Howard, who the county is named after. The stars represent the space missions which have been designed, built, and operated by JHU/APL, the county's largest employer. The three lines in the flag represent significant pieces of Howard County's history and geography. First, the three lines represent the County's major rivers: Patapsco, Deep Run, and Patuxent rivers. They also represent the rich history of railroads in the County. America's first railroad terminal was built in Howard County, the B&O railroad's first tracks connected Baltimore with Ellicott Mills, and the Underground Railroad was particularly active in Howard County. Finally, the lines contained within the flag represent the fact that John Eager Howard was colonel in the Maryland Line regiment, in the Continental Army. George Washington gave Maryland it's (*sic*) nickname (The Old-Line State) after commanding the Maryland Line regiment. Lastly, the colors (also the colors of the Maryland flag) represent: the blood of the soldiers who served in the Maryland Line Regiment (red); golden wheat - the agricultural history of the County, which was one of the first to switch from tobacco to wheat crops (gold/yellow); the hope of peaceful prosperity in the future (white); a remembrance and honoring of those who sought to escape enslavement

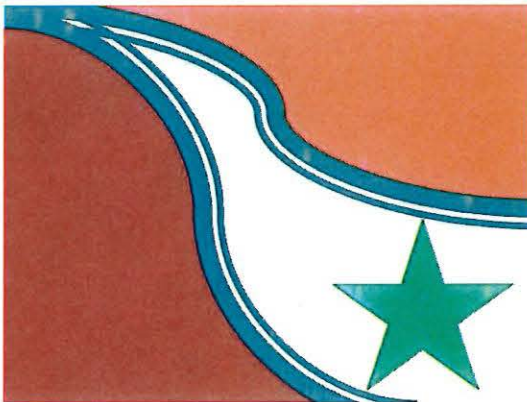
via the underground railroad through Howard County (black).

Flag Entry 173 - CS0045083



The background of the flag is a rich green symbolizing the gently rolling hills covering the majority of the county. The blue in the top right and bottom left corners represents the Patapsco and Patuxent rivers, respectively, which border the county to the northeast and southwest. The graphics in the middle are yellow in color signifying the happiness of the county's residents. On the left is a stalk of wheat representing the county's agricultural origins. On the right is an oak branch representing the county's strength and endurance through periods of change and growth. Between the two are five abstractly-designed individuals holding hands, representing the five county districts that make up our community. The individuals form the shape of a star, symbolizing that it is the members of the community that guide the county's growth and development.

Flag Entry 177 - CS0044977A



Howard County is the geographic center of Maryland. Blue lines represent the rivers that create/define its borders: Patapsco and Patuxent. Option 1 shows the movement of the County's borders. Option 2 straightens the lines for a bolder look.

Yellow represents/matches the the (*sic*) flags of the State of Maryland and City of Baltimore (located to the Northeast); Also a nod to the original use of yellow wheat on the existing flag.

Red matches the current Howard County Flag and represents the flags of the State of Maryland and Washington DC (located to the South), emphasizing Howard County as a regionally important location between Baltimore and DC.

A star symbolizes positivity, happiness, and hope – all things that Howard County represents.

The star has 5 points and is both large and prominent emphasizing strength, growth, its central location (surrounded by 5 counties), position of importance

and a leader within the State; and to act as a regional guide.

The star is green representing Howard County's commitment to preserving nature, and its commitment to health and civility.

This flag design is a symbol that represents the County, showcasing its history, location, energy, vibrancy, and its future.

Public Vote

A draft design of the public poll was circulated to the full Commission, and recommendations for minor improvements were made to County staff which were incorporated into the final poll design. The top 10 designs were posted for public review [here](#). The Commission accepted public votes on the 10 remaining designs via a web-based platform for 60 days from November 13, 2024, to January 12, 2025. Each design was posted with its accompanying design description. The personal narrative of the participant's connection to Howard County was not displayed.

Voters were instructed to rank all ten designs from one (1) to ten (10), with 1 being the best design and 10 being the least desired design. Each voter had to apply only one rank value to each design. All designs had to be ranked in order to submit. And no two designs could share the same ranking. Each individual was instructed to submit only one vote. In total, 1258 votes were received.

Staff reviewed the raw vote data to identify any duplicates. Ten votes were determined to have been cast by the same individual twice. The latter of the individual's two votes was removed from the tally, leaving 1248 total votes received. Comments were also received from the public during the vote period, and they can be found [here](#).

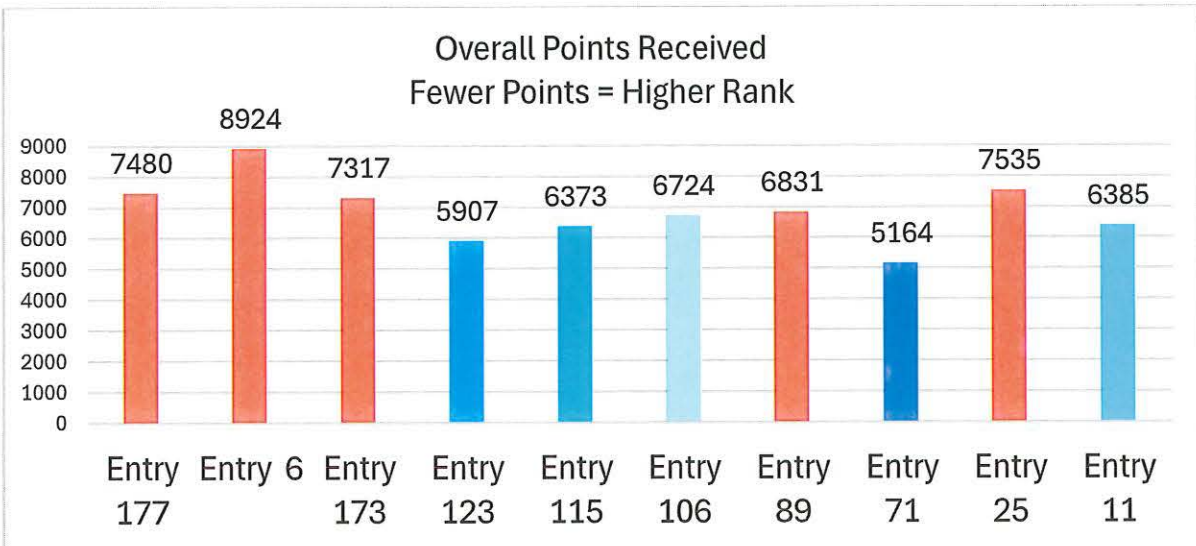
In accordance with the Executive Order, the Commission was required to determine the top five vote earners and from among the top five, recommend three designs to the County Executive.

Staff analyzed the votes received using two methodologies: cumulative point and ranked choice.

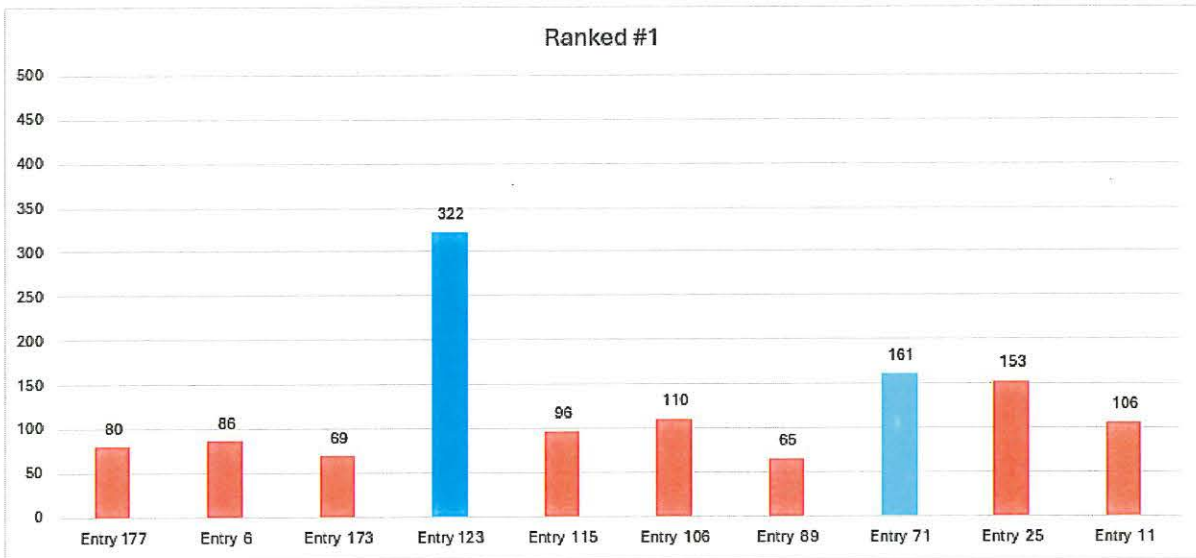
Cumulative Point Methodology

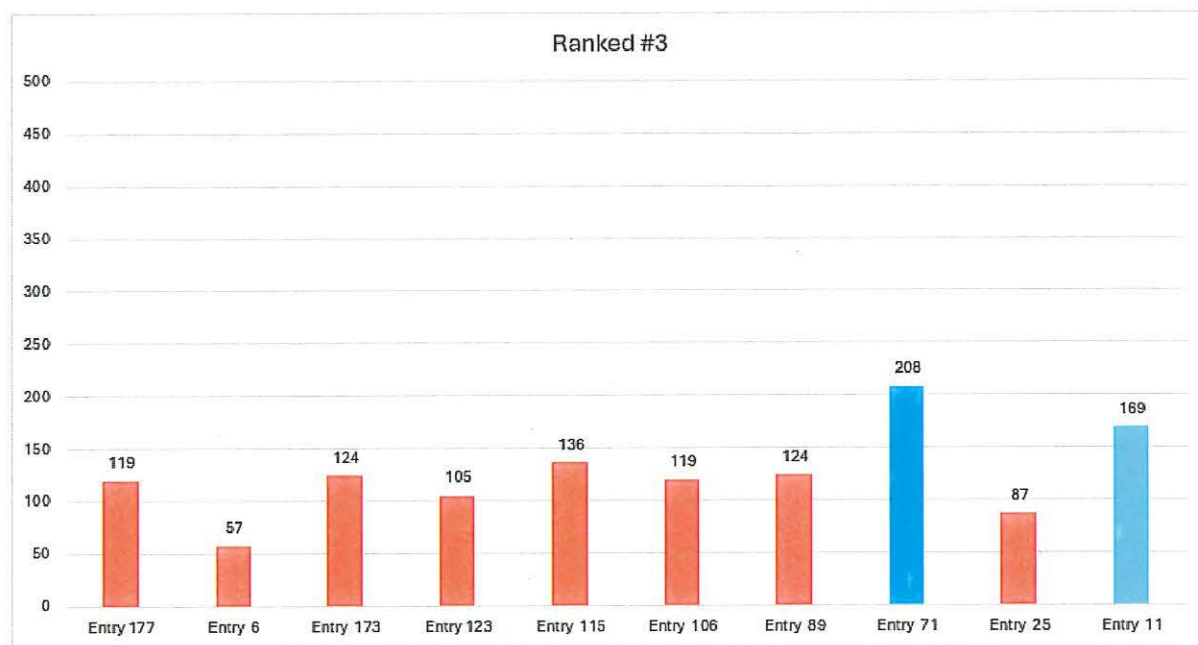
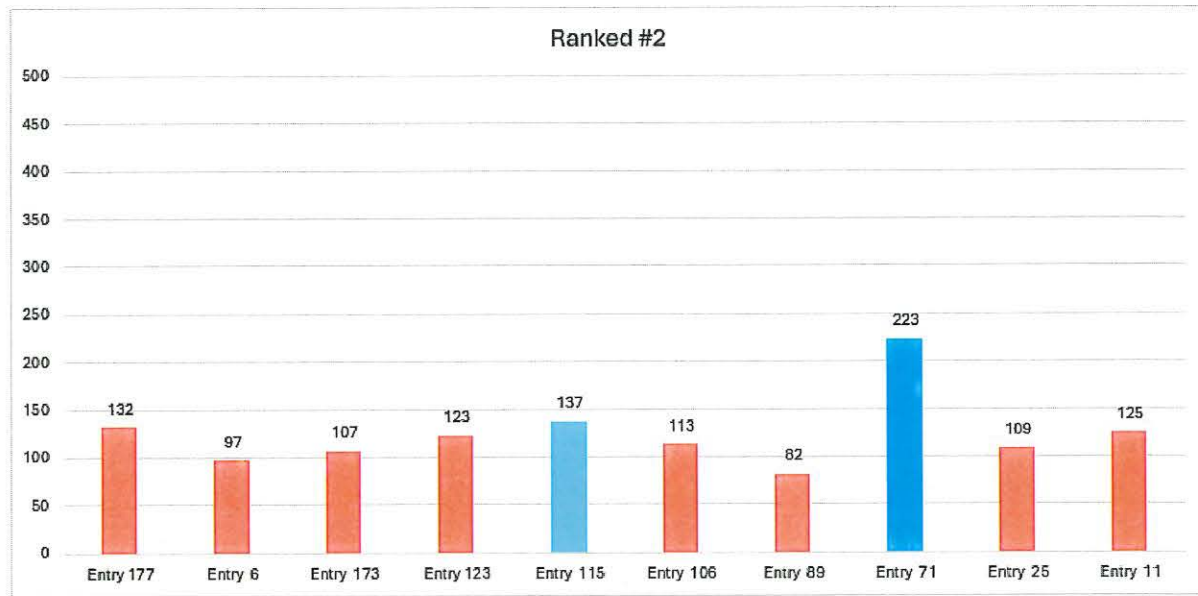
In the cumulative point analysis, each design's rank value, as assigned by all voters, was simply totaled. The lowest scoring design represented the highest total rank. The highest cumulative point value represented the lowest overall rank.

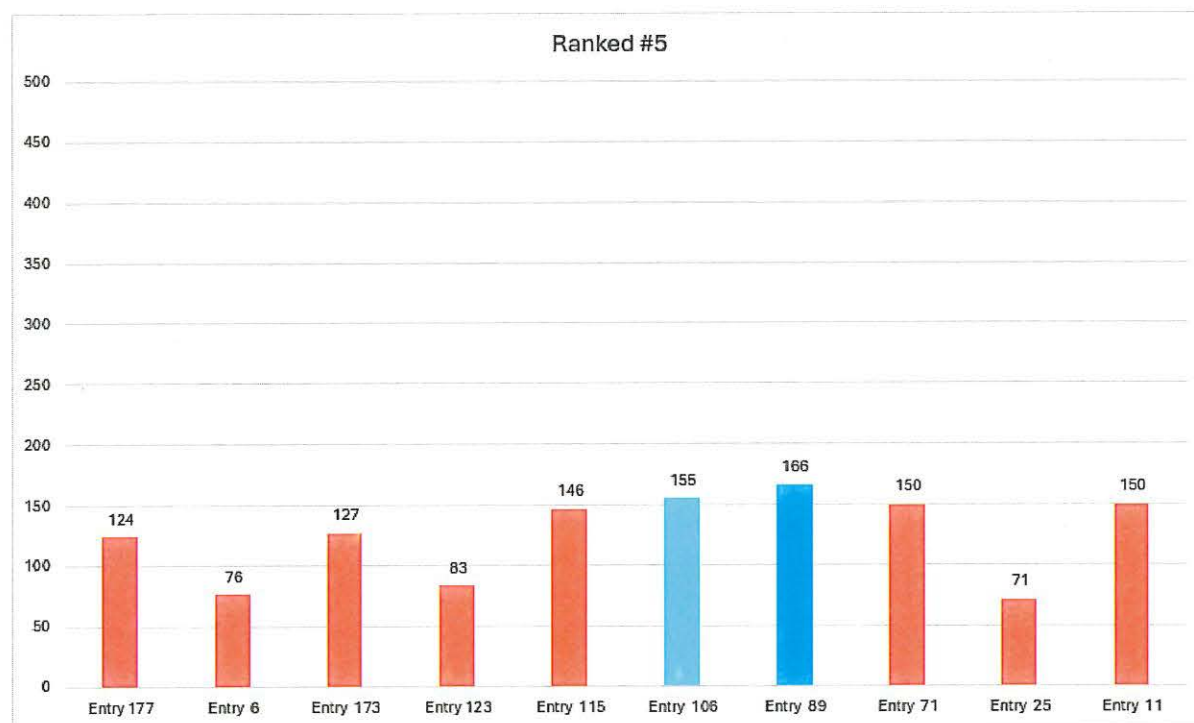
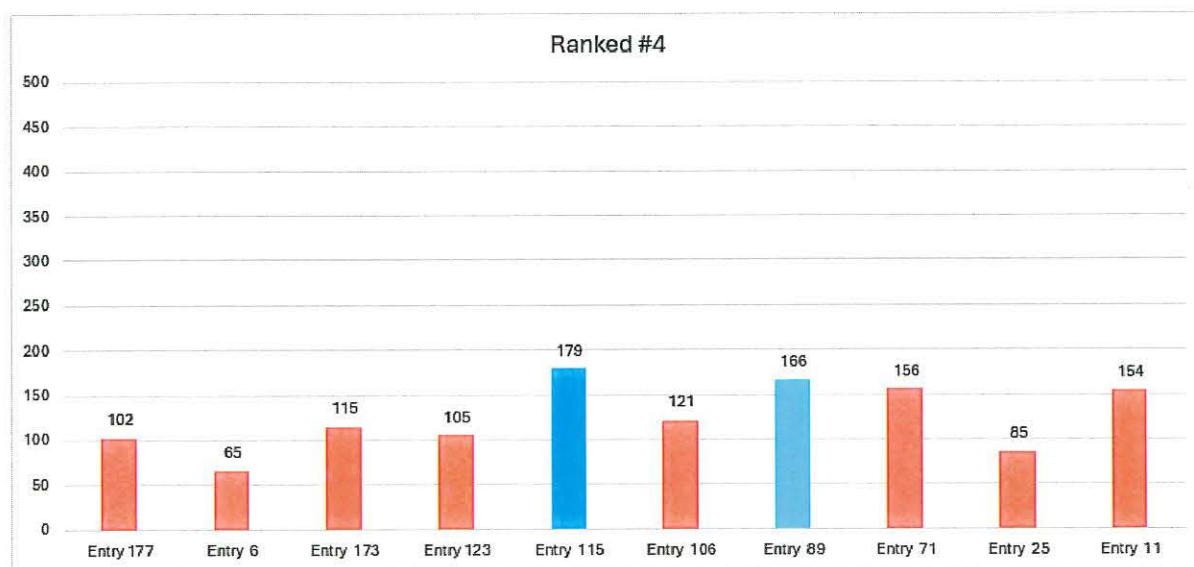
Under the Cumulative Point Methodology, the ten designs ranked as follows:



With this methodology, the public's rankings of their #1 through #5 designs were presented graphically by staff to the full Commission as follows:



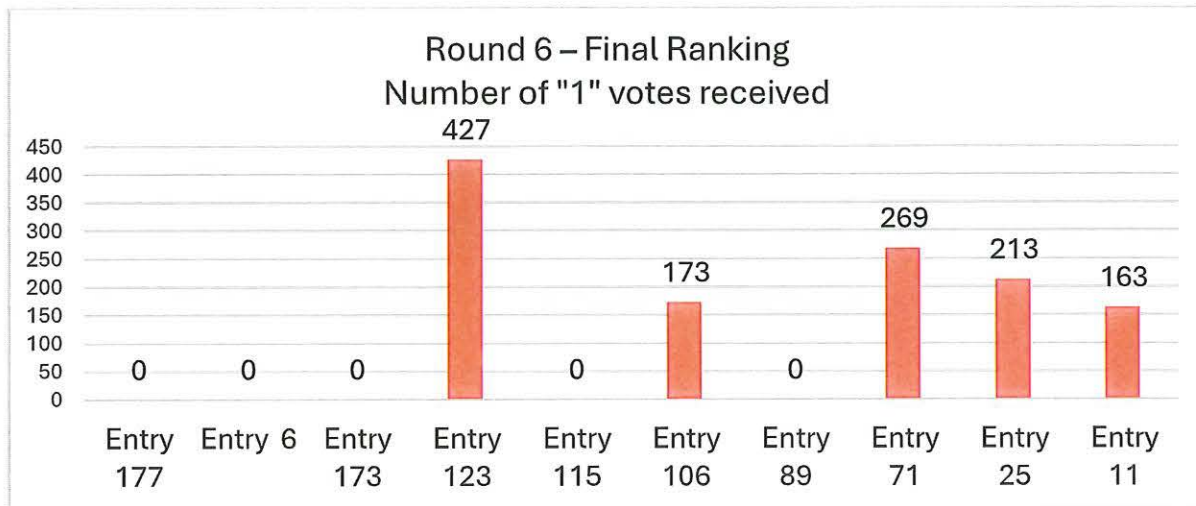




Ranked Choice Methodology

The ranked choice voting methodology is more complex. This method sought to represent the most preferred designs across all votes received by tabulating all “1” (top) rankings for each design and eliminating the design that received the lowest number of “1” ratings. For each design that is eliminated, that voter’s preference is redistributed in that their next highest ranked design, which became a “1” rating. This exercise was repeated through six total rounds until only 5 designs (the Commission’s target) remained. The results were manually calculated by staff and verified using ChatGPT.

Under the Ranked Choice Methodology, the public's top five designs were as follows:



Among the five designs that were eliminated using the ranked choice voting process, their ranking was:

6. Entry 115-eliminated in Round Five
7. Entry 6- eliminated in Round Four
8. Entry 177- eliminated in Round Three
9. Entry 173- eliminated in Round Two
10. Entry 89- eliminated in Round One

The Commission deliberated over the merits of the two methodologies in its January 28, 2025, meeting and ultimately voted to accept the Cumulative Point Methodology as its basis for determining the Top 5 vote earners.

Top 5 Vote Earners

Utilizing the Cumulative Point Methodology, the Top 5 vote earners were as follows, shown from highest rank to lowest:

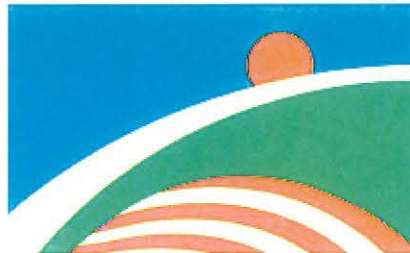
1. Flag 71



2. Flag 123



3. Flag 115



4. Flag 11



5. Flag 106



Final Recommendations – 3 Designs

In accordance with the Executive Order, the Commission discussed the Top 5 vote earners and the majority voted to recommend the top 3 public vote earners as calculated using the cumulative methodology to the County Executive for consideration as the next Howard County Flag. Those three designs and the designers' descriptions are:

Entry 71 – CS00493942A



Designer's Description:

Out of my three submissions, this flag feels like Howard County the most to me.

The arrows symbolize Howard County's progressiveness and how it always strives to move forward in making improvements within its community.

The wheat represents Howard County's agricultural roots, which is also the same symbol in HoCo's government branding.

The green symbolizes Howard County's dedication to preserving their forests and habitats, while the blue represents the Patuxent and Patapsco rivers.

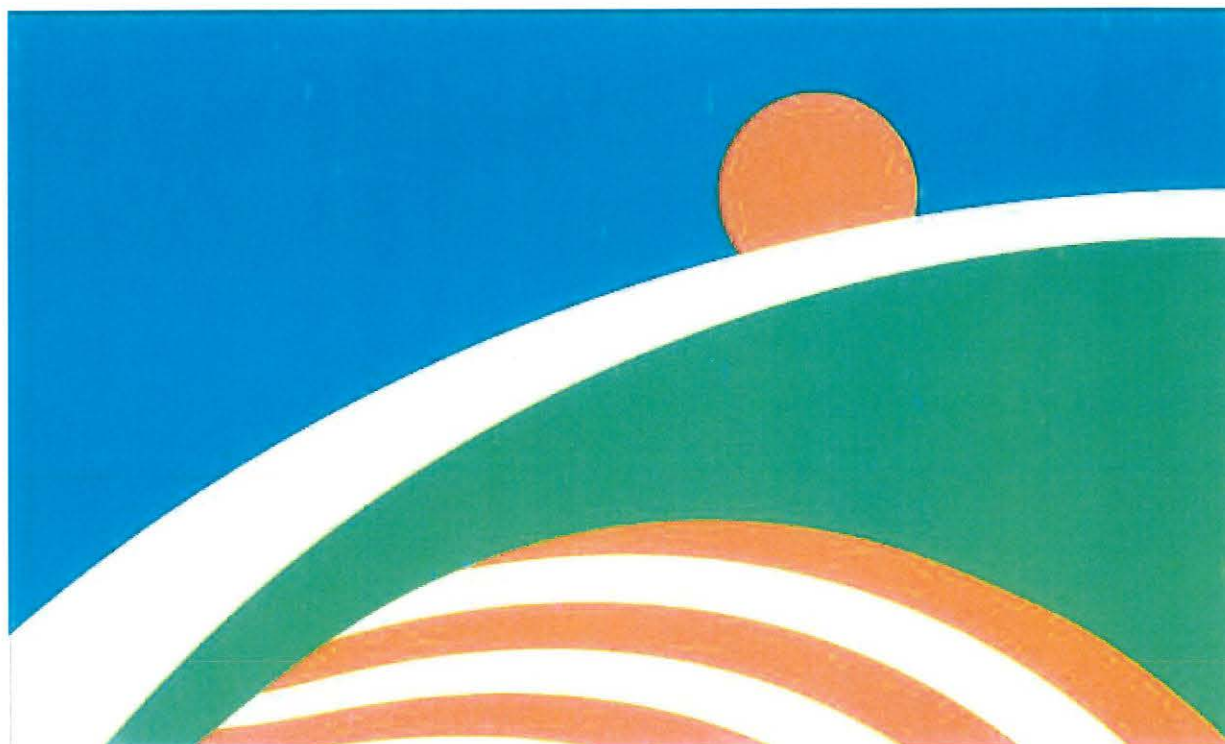
Flag Entry 123 - CS0049012



Designer's Description:

My flag is titled: the history and future of our beloved county. The top right is based off of the coat of arms of John Eager Howard, who the county is named after. The stars represent the space missions which have been designed, built, and operated by JHU/APL, the county's largest employer. The three lines in the flag represent significant pieces of Howard County's history and geography. First, the three lines represent the County's major rivers: Patapsco, Deep Run, and Patuxent rivers. They also represent the rich history of railroads in the County. America's first railroad terminal was built in Howard County, the B&O railroad's first tracks connected Baltimore with Ellicott Mills, and the Underground Railroad was particularly active in Howard County. Finally, the lines contained within the flag represent the fact that John Eager Howard was colonel in the Maryland Line regiment, in the Continental Army. George Washington gave Maryland it's (*sic*) nickname (The Old-Line State) after commanding the Maryland Line regiment. Lastly, the colors (also the colors of the Maryland flag) represent: the blood of the soldiers who served in the Maryland Line Regiment (red); golden wheat - the agricultural history of the County, which was one of the first to switch from tobacco to wheat crops (gold/yellow); the hope of peaceful prosperity in the future (white); a remembrance and honoring of those who sought to escape enslavement via the underground railroad through Howard County (black).

Flag Entry 115 - CS0049124B



Designer's Description:

This design [edited] reflects the diversity and inclusion of Howard County's natural and human resources – an historically proud and future-oriented central Maryland community. It represents an evolving agricultural past blended with an optimistic cultural, environmental, and economic future which is cosmopolitan, vibrant, and thriving. Unique yet unified.

Three shapes and colors:

The Arch: represents both the historical past of Howard County (Thomas Viaduct) and its dynamic future (the Chrysalis) — a new hub of culture, the arts, education, and commercial enterprise

The Stripes: represent Howard County's historical and contemporary abundance of agricultural and natural resources — farms, fields, fairways

The Circle: represents the boundless energy of the sun empowering a diverse community with a view toward the horizon, a bright and optimistic future

Blue: represents the optimism of endless skies, the hope of a bright future, the abundance of natural and recreational resources — lakes, rivers, waterways

Green: represents the planned preservation and utilization of the natural environment, the continuing investment in a thriving agriculture economy, and the promise of growing a culturally appreciative community — as seen through the iconic Chrysalis — where everyone is welcome

Gold: represents the sun's energy for thriving farms and fields, the optimism of a culturally diverse community – and a primary color from the Maryland flag as a location anchor for Howard County

Final Report for County Executive

The Executive Order required submission of a final Commission report by February 7, 2025, however, the Commission required additional time to prepare the final report.

A draft final report was created by the Commission Chair and staff, and distributed to the full Commission. It was also posted to the Commission's website for the public's view. Instructions were provided for Commissioners to individually provide specific language they wanted to see included or removed. They were instructed to share their comments and edits in track changes with the Chair and staff no later than Wednesday, February 19, 2025, to provide sufficient time to incorporate all Commissioners' thoughts for final consideration and recirculated to the Commission prior to their final public meeting.

During the final public meeting of the Commission on February 25, 2025, the draft report was reviewed and this final report was approved, as modified.

APPENDIX A:
Examples of Promotional Materials

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!



We invite submissions of original art that reflects Howard County's values and inspires future generations.

Submit your design(s) via our online portal until June 30th, 2024. Limit 3 designs per person.



OPEN TO ALL AGES

Please see design guidelines, terms, and learn more

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – English

हॉवर्ड काउंटी अपने ध्वज कोफरि से सुसज्जति कर रेही है!



आपसे अनुरोध है कि अपनी मौलिक कलाकृतियाँ हमें प्रेषित कीजिए। हम ऐसी प्रस्तुतियाँ आमंत्रित करते हैं जो हॉवर्ड काउंटी के मूल्यों को प्रतिबिंबित करते हुए भावी पीढ़ियों को प्रेरित करती हैं।

30 जून, 2024 तक अपनी मौलिक प्रवर्षितियाँ हमारे ऑनलाइन पोर्टल के माध्यम से भेजने का कष्ट करें। प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के लिए 3 प्रवर्षितियाँ भेजने की सीमा सुनिश्चित की है।



कोई आयु सीमा बंधन नहीं

कृपया रचना (डिजाइन) प्रवर्षितियों के दिशानर्देश, शर्तें देखें और अधिक जानें।

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Hindi

하워드 카운티가 깃발을 다시 디자인 하는 중입니다.



하워드 카운티의 가치를 반영하고 미래 세대를 위로
할수있는 오리지널 디자인을 받고 있습니다.

2024년 6월 30일까지 우리 온라인 포털로 디자인
보내주세요! 사람당 최대 3개까지 가능합니다.



귀하의 디자인
작업

귀하의 디자인
작업



모든 나이가 참여 가능합니다.

참여를 하실 분들께서는 규칙을 읽고 따라주세요.

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

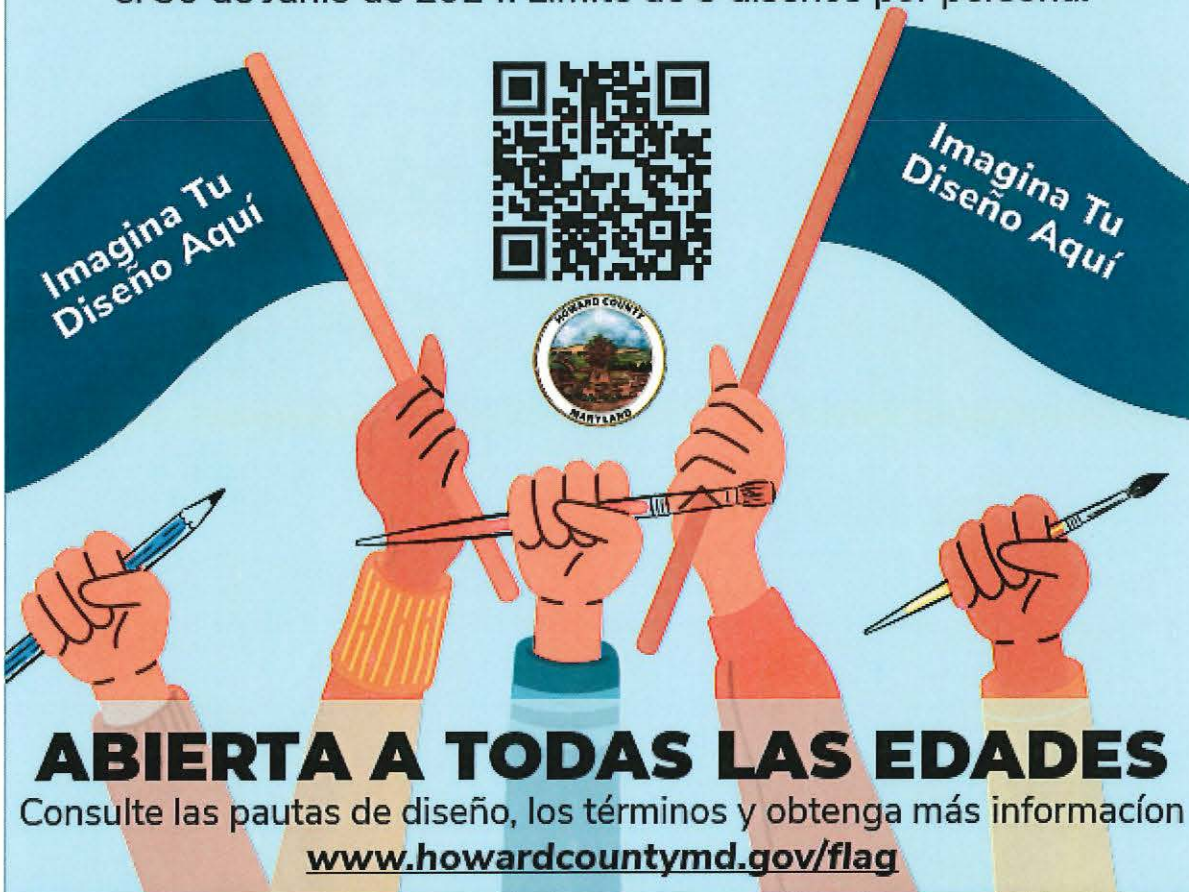
Design solicitation flyer – Korean

EL CONDADO DE HOWARD ESTÁ REDISEÑANDO SU BANDERA!



Invitamos a enviar obras de arte originales que reflejen los valores del Condado De Howard e inspiren a las generaciones futuras.

Envíe su(s) diseño(s) a través de nuestro portal en línea hasta el 30 de Junio de 2024. Límite de 3 diseños por persona.



ABIERTA A TODAS LAS EDADES

Consulte las pautas de diseño, los términos y obtenga más información

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

¿Preguntas? Envíe un correo electrónico a flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Spanish

哈維郡正在重新设计自己的旗帜！



我们邀请大家提交原创设计作品，来展现哈維郡 的价值并激励未来的一代。

请在我们的网站上提交您的设计，截止日期为2024年6月30日。每人最多提交3个设计作品。



欢迎所有年龄层朋友的参与。

请查看设计指南、条款，了解更多信息。

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Chinese (Simplified)

霍華德郡正在重新設計自己的旗幟！



我們邀請大家提交原創設計作品，來展現霍華德郡的價值並激勵未來的一代。

請在我們的網站上提交您的設計，截止日期為2024年6月30日。每人最多提交3個設計作品。



歡迎所有年齡層朋友的參與。

請查看設計指南、條款，了解更多資訊。

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Design solicitation flyer – Chinese (Traditional)



Web version of design solicitation flyer

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!



We invite submissions of original art that reflects Howard County's values and inspires future generations.

Submit your design(s) via our online portal until June 30th, 2024. Limit 3 designs per person.



OPEN TO ALL AGES

Please see design guidelines, terms, and learn more

www.howardcountymd.gov/flag

Questions? Email flag@howardcountymd.gov

Web version of design solicitation flyer



**DESIGN
SUBMISSIONS
ARE LIVE!**

200+
designs received from
100 individuals

View the eligible
design options here
<https://tinyurl.com/subs-live>

For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

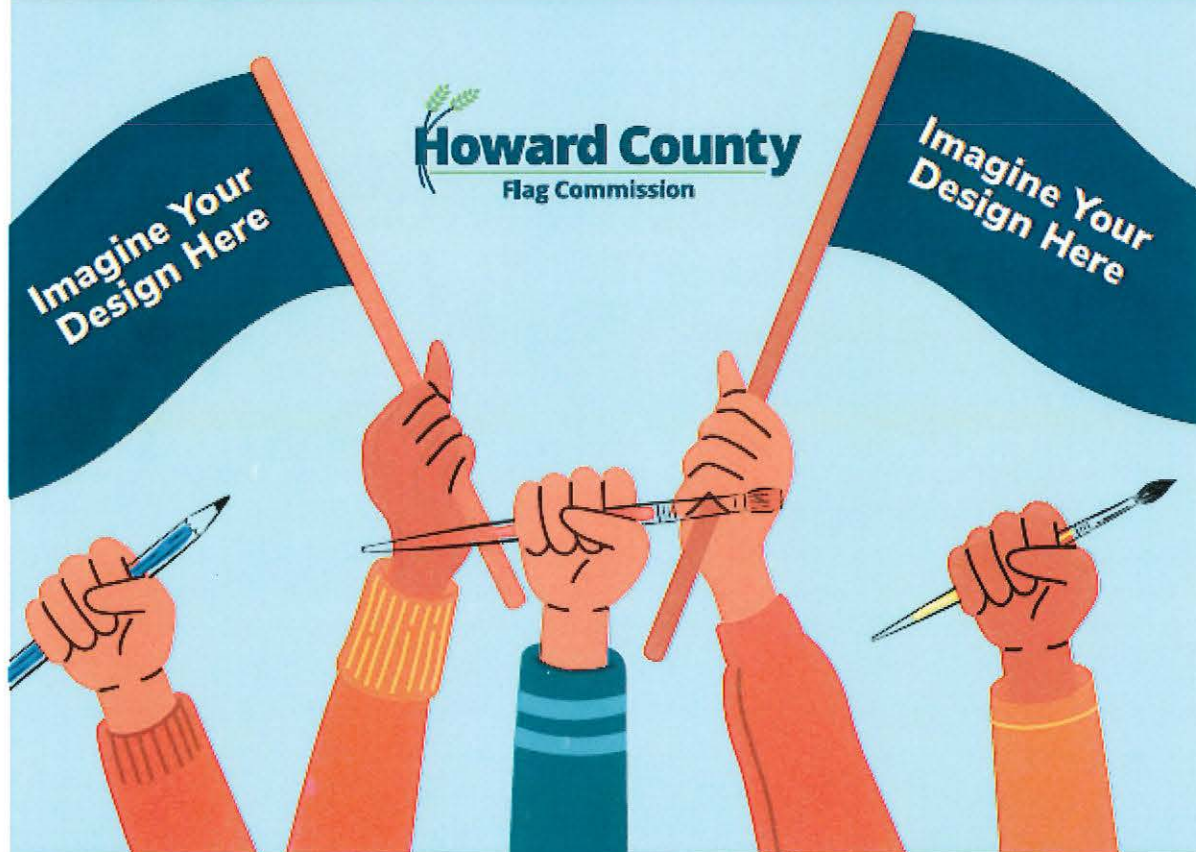
The graphic features a light blue background with two wavy blue banners that say "Imagine Your Design Here". In the center, several hands of different colors (orange, yellow, pink) are raised, holding pens and pencils. The text is overlaid on this background.

Web version announcing design submissions received

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!

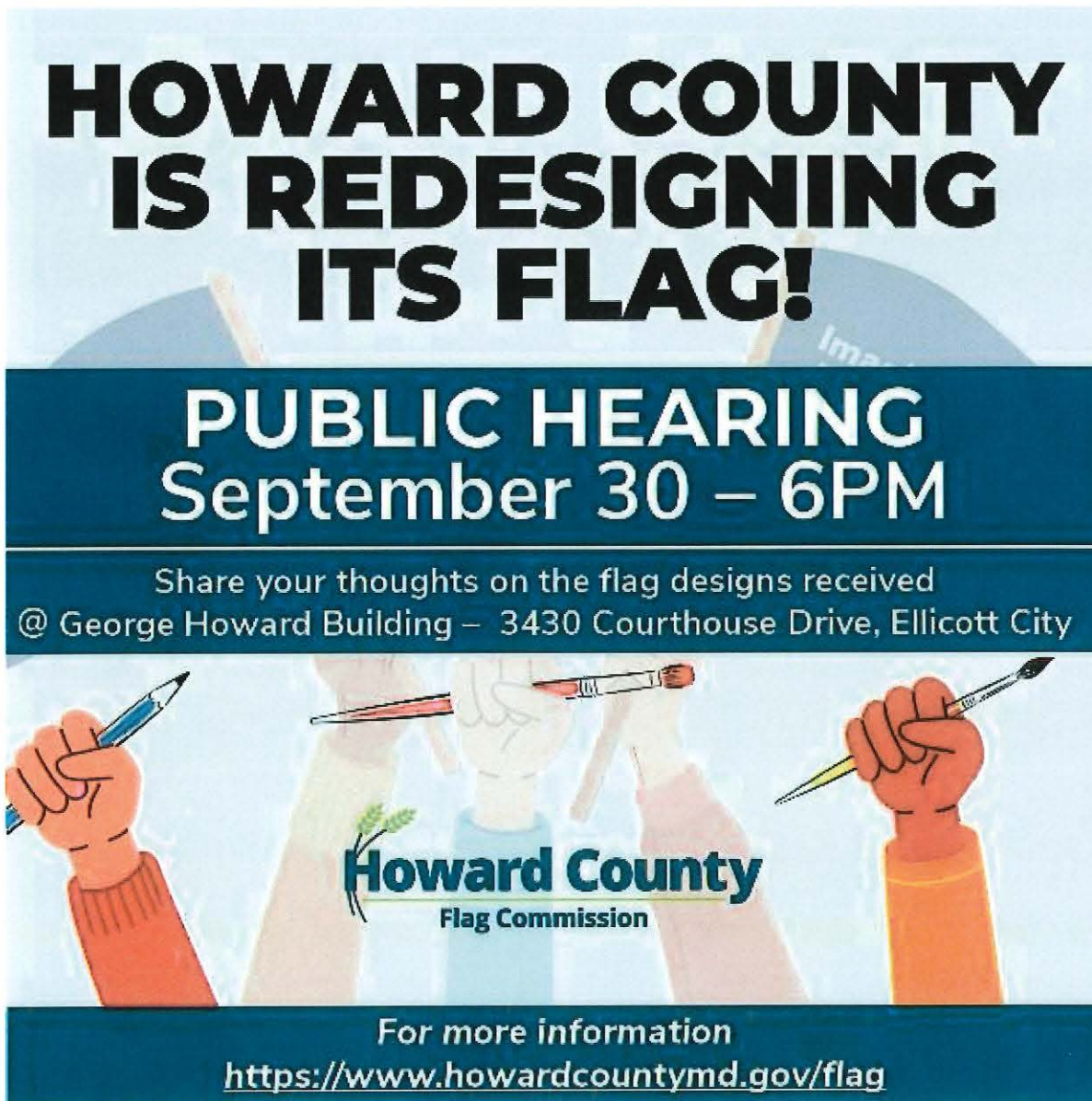
PUBLIC HEARING September 30 – 6PM

Share your thoughts on the flag designs received
@ George Howard Building – 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City



For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

Public hearing flyer



The flyer features a light blue background with a faint illustration of a flag design. At the top, the text "HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!" is written in large, bold, black capital letters. Below this, a dark blue horizontal band contains the text "PUBLIC HEARING September 30 – 6PM" in white. Underneath the band, a light blue section contains the text "Share your thoughts on the flag designs received @ George Howard Building – 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City" in a smaller, dark blue font. The bottom section of the flyer features an illustration of four hands holding various drawing tools (pencil, marker, pen, and paintbrush) around the "Howard County Flag Commission" logo, which includes a small green leaf icon. At the very bottom, a dark blue band contains the text "For more information" and the URL "https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag" in white.

HOWARD COUNTY IS REDESIGNING ITS FLAG!

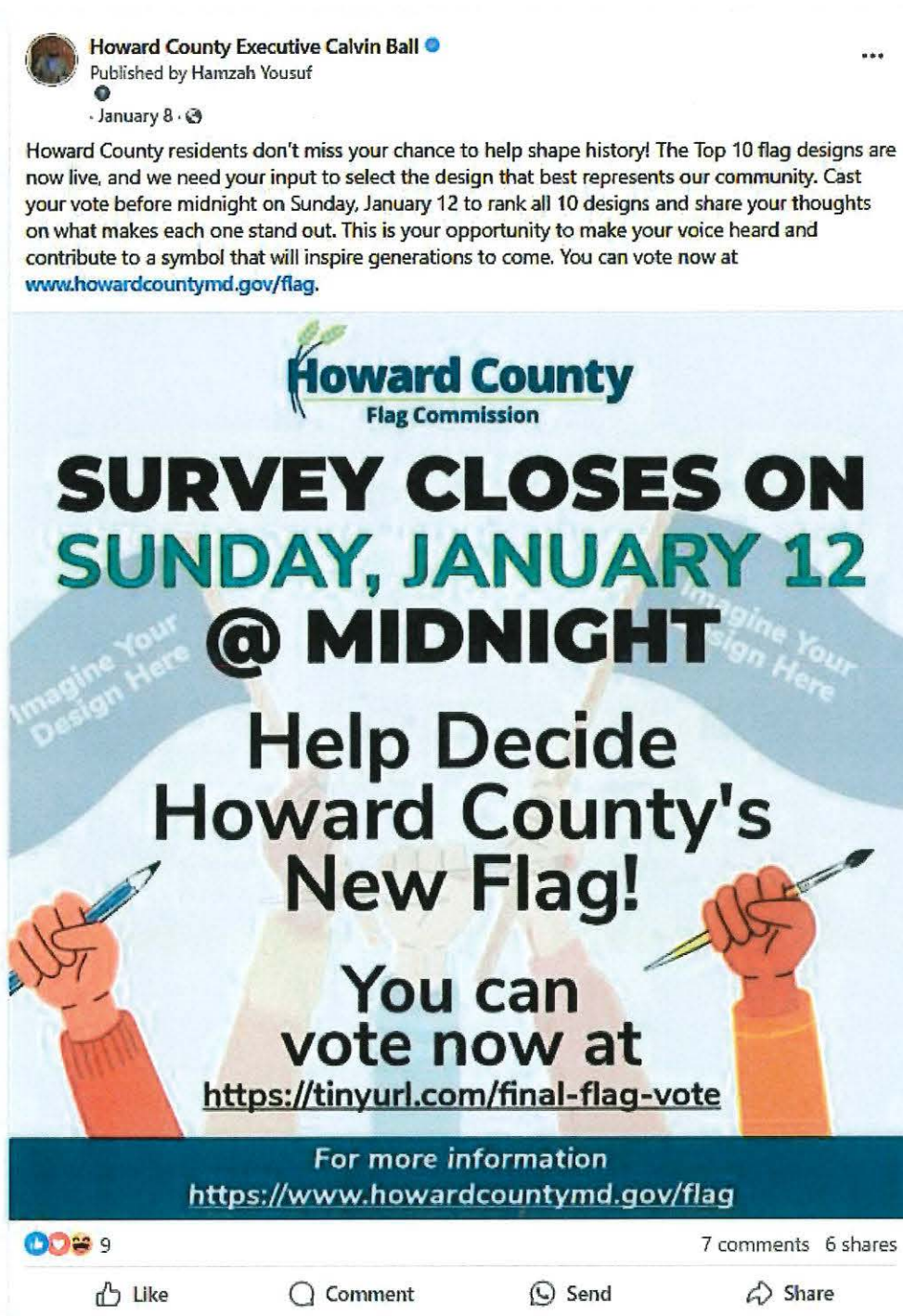
PUBLIC HEARING September 30 – 6PM

Share your thoughts on the flag designs received
@ George Howard Building – 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City

Howard County
Flag Commission

For more information
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>

Web version of public hearing flyer



Facebook post promoting public voting on flag designs



Howard County Executive Calvin Ball

Published by Hamzah Yousuf

January 10

Voting closes this Sunday, January 12, at midnight. Don't miss your chance to be part of the process! The Howard County Flag Commission has narrowed 184 submissions down to the Top 10, and your input is needed to help select a design that embodies the spirit of our community. Rank all 10 designs and share your feedback on what elements resonate most with you. It's rare that community members get to contribute to a decision like this one. Together, we're creating a symbol tha... See more



Help Decide Howard County's New Flag!

LAST CALL
SURVEY CLOSING ON
SUNDAY, JANUARY 12
@ MIDNIGHT



You can
vote now at

<https://tinyurl.com/final-flag-vote>

For more information

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/flag>



14

6 comments 9 shares



Like



Comment



Send



Share

Facebook post promoting public voting on flag designs