

An Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Rockville



2025 ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER

MASTER
PLAN

Adopted on January 27, 2025



City of
Rockville
Get Into It

Dept. of Community Planning & Development Services
www.rockvillemd.gov/CPDS • 240-314-8200

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

City of Rockville Mayor & Council

Monique Ashton, Mayor
Kate Fulton
Barry Jackson
David Myles
Izola Shaw
Marissa Valeri
Adam Van Grack

Former Mayor & Councilmembers

Bridget Donnell Newton
Beryl L. Feinberg
Mark Pierzchala

City of Rockville Planning Commission

Shayan Salahuddin, Chair
Jamie Ivan Espinosa
Eric Fulton
Suzan Pitman
Meng Sun

Former Planning Commissioners

Andrea Nunez
Sam Pearson
John Tyner II

Department of Community Planning & Development Services

Ricky Barker, Director
Jenny Snapp, Deputy Director
Li Alligood*, Megan Flick, Andrew Reitelbach,
John Foreman, Katie Gerbes, Christopher Meyers*,
Manisha Tewari, Jim Wasilak

Department of Housing & Community Development

Ryan Trout, Director
Asmara Habte*, Jane Lyons-Raeder

Department of Public Works

Craig Simoneau, Director
Jim Woods, Deputy Director
Gina Arnett, Bryan Barnett-Woods, Wendy
Blackman, Amanda Campbell, Emad Elshafei, Yaolin
Fennell, Faramarz Mokhtari, John Scabis, Erica
Shingara

Department of Recreation & Parks

Tara Stewart, Director
Chris Henry, Deputy Director
Tim Chestnutt*, Steve Mader, Colleen McQuitty

City Manager's Office

Jeff Mihelich, City Manager
Becca Brown, Hjarmann Cordero*, Cliff Cumber,
Tyree Davis IV*, Lori Russler

City Attorney's Office

Nick Dumais

Rockville Economic Development, Inc.

Cindy Rivarde, Executive Director
Richelle Wilson, Deputy Director

* indicates former employee

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The City of Rockville acknowledges that our diverse and multi-cultural population, that now comprises Rockville, live and work upon the traditional homelands of the Piscataway Peoples. We affirm the need to share truthful and accurate histories of the rightful original inhabitants, present stewards, and future generations. Our city opposes oppression in all its forms and seeks to repair past injustices as we work to advance an equitable future for all. We further acknowledge that the lands that make up Town Center have been significantly changed through federally sanctioned urban renewal policies and programs implemented by the City of Rockville in the 1960s and 1970s. These policies caused displacement of an existing Black American residential and business community and the razing of a majority of the city's original central business district buildings. We commit to educating ourselves about the past and to use such knowledge to formulate and implement improved, realistic community benefits to achieve a more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous future for all Rockville citizens, businesses, and visitors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Vision for Town Center	13
Planning Process	15
Recent History & Prior Planning Efforts	18
Demographics	23
Zoning & Land Use	29
Transportation & Mobility	46
Housing	59
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	65
Historic Preservation	75
Economic Development & Business	79
Sustainability	87
Adequate Public Facilities	94
Implementation	100
Appendices	121

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 *Town Center Master Plan* (the Plan) is an update of a document by the same name from 2001. The Plan builds off of the visions, goals and policies noted in the Planning Area 1 Chapter of the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, recent studies and reports compiled on Town Center and an extensive community outreach effort to create an updated vision for Town Center that meets the needs of Rockville's residents, business community and the market. This Plan is an amendment to the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* and supersedes the recommendations outlined within Planning Area 1 of the original *Rockville 2040* document, as published in August 2021.

To create this Plan, the Department of Community Planning and Development Services conducted an extensive 5-month outreach and engagement process. Through that effort, Rockville staff met with hundreds of stakeholders and conducted nearly 50 meetings to solicit feedback on Town Center's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Upon conclusion of the outreach period, a Community Engagement Report was published, highlighting the feedback received by the community and drawing conclusions based on 10 different engagement methodologies. Major takeaways from the outreach and engagement period were desires to have:

- More density, particularly in the form of housing with acknowledgment of the increasing need for affordable housing.
- More diversity in retail options and fewer retail vacancies. Additionally, there was some interest in forming an entity of some sort to aid and assist Town Center retailers.
- Improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Improved wayfinding throughout Town Center.
- Improved parking garage signage and accessibility.
- Additional parks and green spaces.
- More events in Town Center.

The resounding themes found throughout this document are to create a flexible regulatory environment that allows Town Center to thrive by enabling development and allowing the market to dictate the "highest and best" land uses over the next two decades. Additionally, the Plan prioritizes the development of additional residential housing units, with a particular emphasis on affordable and attainable housing units. The final theme throughout the document is to turn Town Center into a vibrant local and regional destination by creating an environment where people can live, work, and play for years to come.

Executive Summary

The Plan identifies and seeks to accomplish 12 goals across 7 thematic chapters:

Zoning & Land Use

1. Target appropriate areas for higher density residential developments to reach 3,000 new residential units by 2040. Provide a variety of development types to adapt to marketplace demands and to address missing-middle housing.
2. Amend parking requirements to be reflective of a transit-oriented neighborhood and to provide a more seamless, accessible, and user-friendly experience when parking.
3. Create pedestrian-oriented building and site design standards for Town Center.

Transportation & Mobility

4. Make transportation related improvements that enhance safety and user experience for all who drive, bike, walk or roll.
5. Work with WMATA and MCDOT to enhance public transportation systems to increase accessibility, improve ridership, and expand systems.
6. Implement wayfinding signage to provide clear direction and awareness of Town Center and its attractions.
7. Strengthen visual and physical connections between Town Center and adjacent neighborhoods.

Housing

8. Increase the number of affordable homes within Town Center.

Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities

9. Cultivate Town Center to be an exciting, fun, and innovative place where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds want to be.

Historic Preservation

10. Document and retain Town Center's history and capitalize on the historic aspects of Town Center to promote heritage tourism.

Economic Development

11. Establish Town Center as a well-known location brimming with diversity and activity.

Sustainability

12. Encourage sustainable and resilient building practices to prevent, withstand, respond to and recover from climate change impacts.

A series of recommended actions are nestled within each of goal in the Plan, resulting in a total of 63 recommended actions. The Plan concludes with a matrix to assist with implementation of each action and ensure that the community's vision for Town Center comes to life. This Plan was adopted by the Rockville Mayor and Council on January 27, 2025.

INTRODUCTION



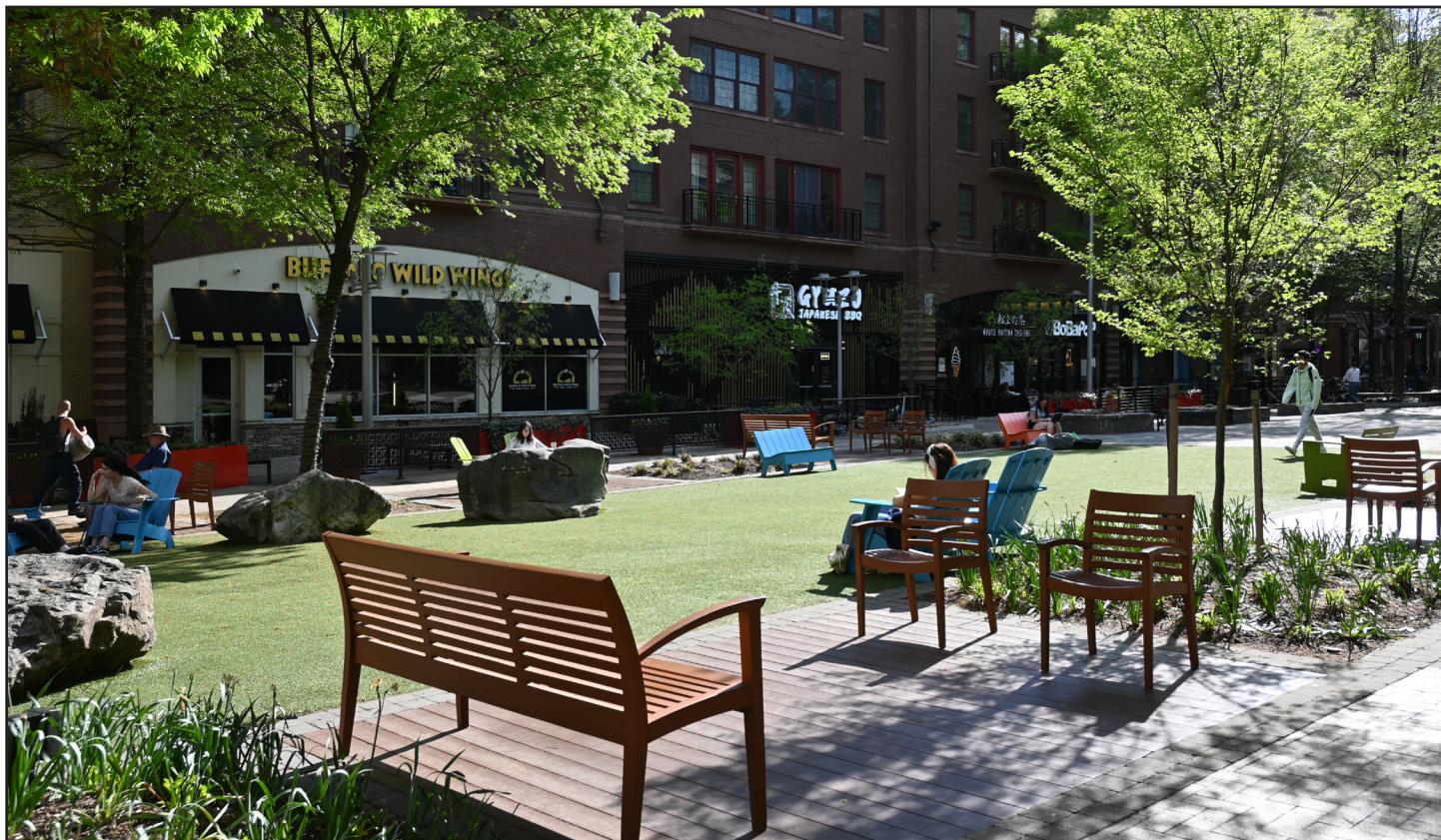
Introduction

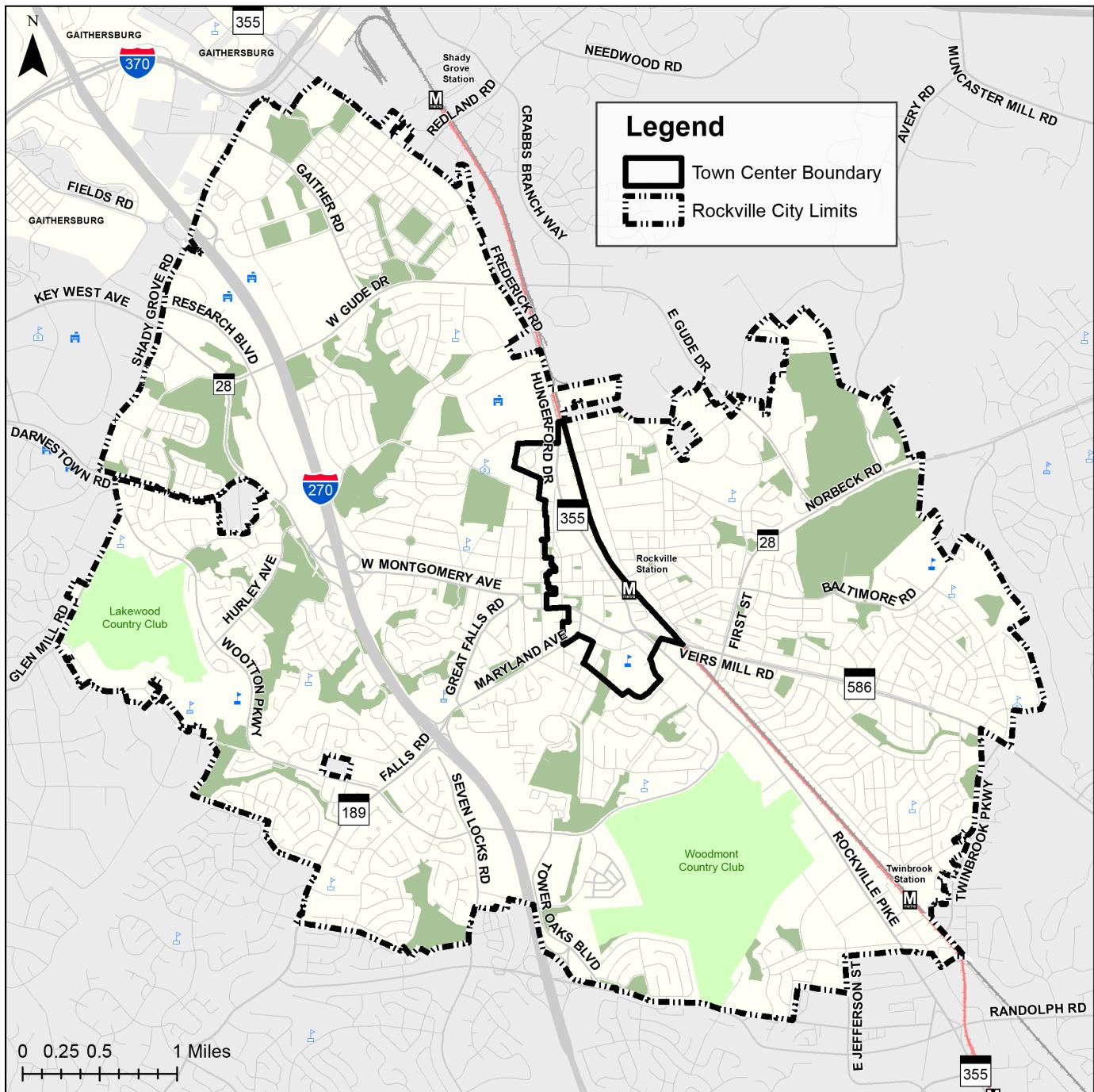
The 2025 *Rockville Town Center Master Plan* (“Plan”) updates the 2001 *Rockville Town Center Master Plan* (“2001 Plan”). The overarching aim of the master plan update is to strengthen Town Center by creating a cohesive vision for the planning area that meets the city’s goals and provides a clear path for implementation.

Rockville Town Center is, in many ways, the heart of Rockville. Located in the geographic center of the city and along major thoroughfares of MD-355 (also known as Rockville Pike and Hungerford Drive) and MD-28 (also known as W. Montgomery Avenue and E. Jefferson Street), Town Center is a hub of commerce, seat of Montgomery County government activity, a meeting point for many of the region’s modes of public transportation, and home to thousands of Rockville residents. For many, Town Center is synonymous with Rockville and is viewed as the city’s “downtown.”

The previous Rockville Town Center Master Plan was adopted by Mayor and Council in October 2001. In the subsequent two decades since the 2001 Plan’s adoption, Town Center has evolved into a mixed-used destination and job center for the city. However, due to increasing regional competition and an ever-changing retail and office market, Town Center faces a number of challenges. Actions laid out in this Plan will help guide and direct Town Center’s success in the coming decades.

Furthermore, since the creation of the 2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan, Rockville has adopted additional citywide goals, policies, and initiatives. These include the adoption of the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, Vision Zero initiatives to end traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030, goals to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, housing production goals to develop more than 8,000 new residential units in Rockville by 2040, and to further racial equity and social justice. This update brings the Town Center Master Plan into alignment with these important goals.



Map 1: Town Center Relative to City

TOWN CENTER PLANNING AREA GEOGRAPHY

The *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* (“Comprehensive Plan”) divides the City of Rockville into 17 distinct geographic planning areas. The Town Center planning area is known as Planning Area 1. The Comprehensive Plan shifted the boundaries of Planning Area 1 slightly from the boundaries identified in the 2001 Plan. The *2025 Rockville Town Center Master Plan* is utilizing the boundaries set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and described below.

Planning Area 1 is bounded by Richard Montgomery High School to the south; by the Metro/CSX tracks to the east; falls just shy of Mannakee Street and Montgomery College to the north; and loosely follows N/S. Washington Street to the west. The Rockville Metro station is located within the Town Center boundary, as is the entirety of the Town Square development and many Montgomery County government offices, in addition to Rockville City Hall and the Rockville Police Department. Planning Area 1 totals 0.4 square miles in size.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

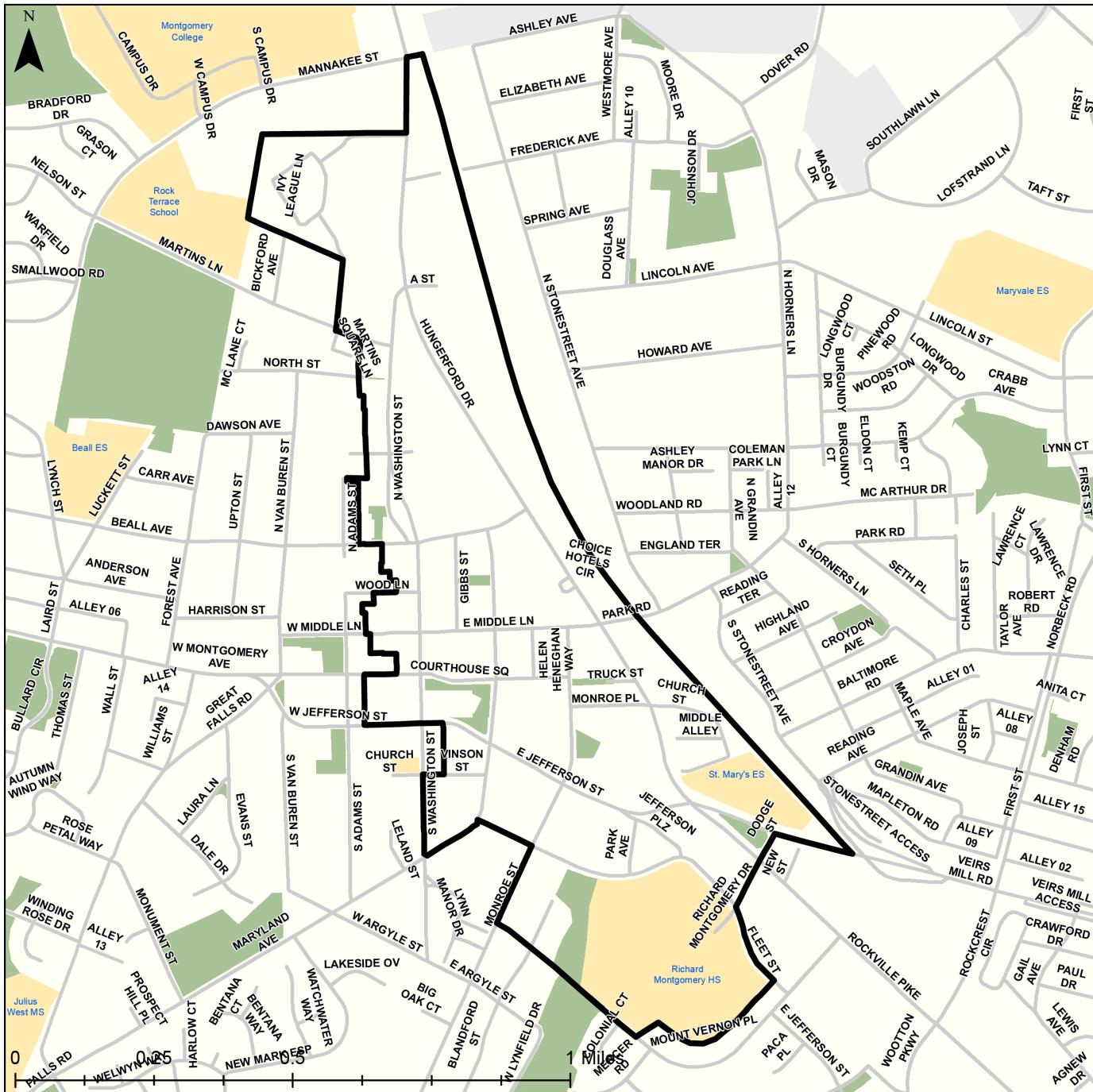
This document is organized into topic-based chapters. Most chapters begin with an introduction orienting the reader to that topic’s existing conditions within Town Center. Following that, there are goals, policies, and actions related to that topic.

- **Goals** are overarching targets that the city seeks to achieve.
- **Policies** are more specific in the direction that the city should go to achieve the goal, but do not outline exactly what steps need to be taken.
- **Actions** are the discrete steps the city will take to enact the associated policy and achieve the overarching goal.

At the conclusion of this Plan, there is an implementation matrix that will be used by city staff to implement each of the 63 recommendations outlined within the Plan.



Map 2: Town Center Planning Area Boundary



ALIGNMENT WITH MARYLAND PLANNING VISIONS

The Maryland Land Use Article, Section 1-201, requires Maryland jurisdictions with planning and zoning authority to implement the state's 12 planning visions through a comprehensive plan and its amendments. As an amendment to the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, this Plan is also subject to implementing the state's visions. This Plan addresses each of these planning visions. Table 1 indicates where each of these visions can be found within this Plan.

Table 1: Maryland Planning Visions

Maryland Planning Vision	Chapter Addressed
Quality of Life and Sustainability	Sustainability
Public Participation	Planning Process
Growth Areas	Zoning & Land Use
Community Design	Zoning & Land Use
Infrastructure	Zoning & Land Use, Adequate Public Facilities
Transportation	Transportation
Housing	Housing
Economic Development	Economic Development
Environmental Protection	Sustainability
Resource Conservation	Sustainability
Stewardship	Sustainability
Implementation Approaches	Implementation

ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING STANDARDS & REQUIREMENTS

This Plan makes many recommendations for changes to the built environment. That said, this Plan does not supersede any existing Federal requirements such as the Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design or the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. Additionally, this Plan does not supersede existing state or local laws, ordinances, or standards, such as building codes, zoning ordinances, etc. This Plan is a policy document, and unless otherwise stated, existing standards and regulations will apply.

Certain elements of the Rockville Zoning Ordinance are proposed to be revised within this Plan. At the time of development review, any new project will be required to follow whatever the Zoning Ordinance at that time calls for, which may be before or after any changes recommended in this Plan are implemented.

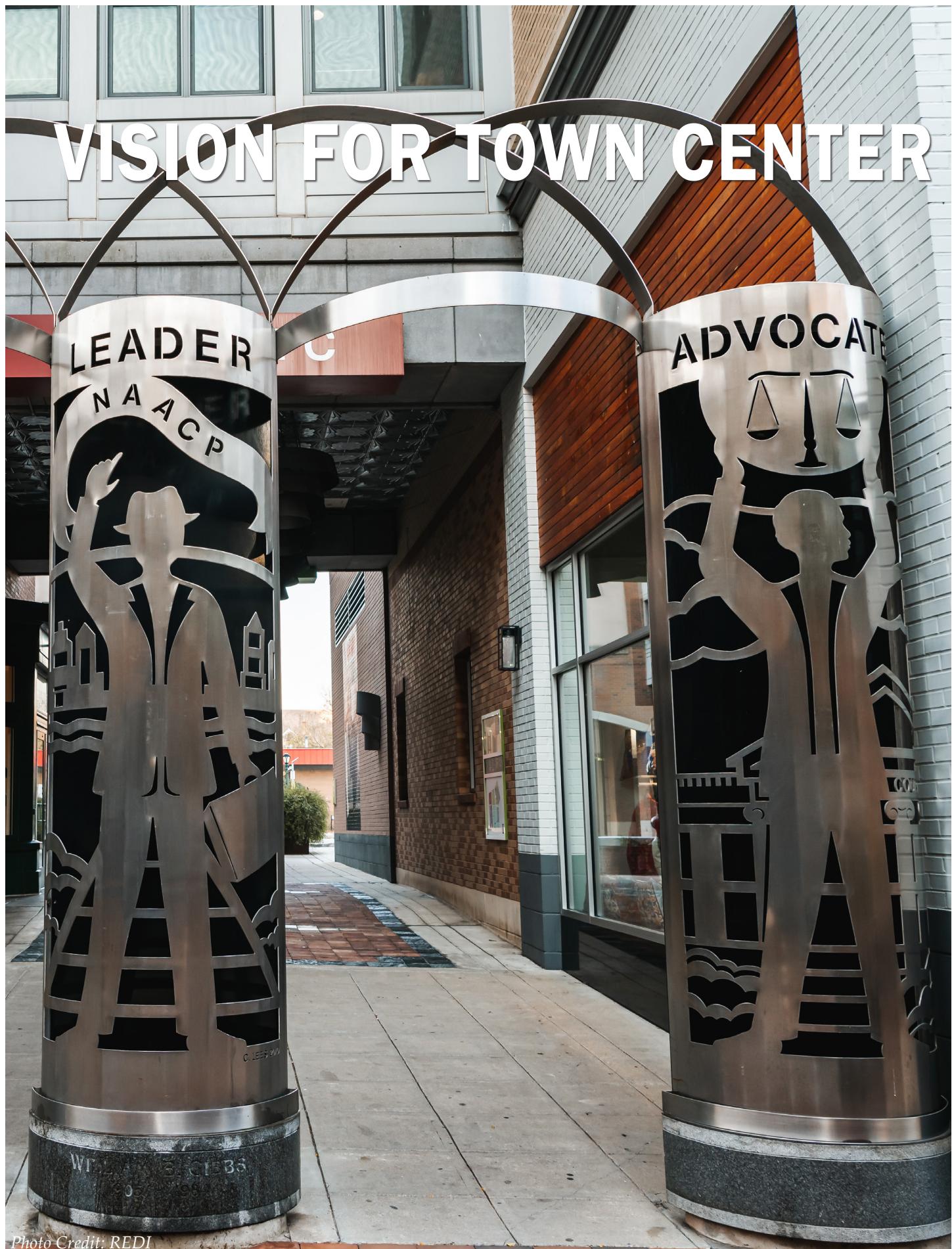


Photo Credit: REDI

VISION FOR TOWN CENTER

Rockville Town Center will continue to grow as a vibrant, multicultural, diverse, and inclusive community that celebrates a high quality of life and sense of place. A neighborhood at its core, Town Center will be a hub within the region for sustainable, walkable, transit-oriented living.

To achieve this vision, the Town Center Master Plan will create a flexible regulatory environment, encourage the development of additional housing units, and promote higher density development, all of which will strengthen the local economy and bring this vision to life.



PLANNING PROCESS



PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Mayor and Council endorsed nine objectives to guide the planning process and recommendations within the Plan. These objectives are similar to, though not exact replicas of, the objectives set forth for the 2001 Plan. The nine objectives guiding this Plan update are:

1. Provide an environment conducive to and supportive of living, working, and entertainment.
2. Accommodate a variety of densities, scales, uses, and typologies of development that are sensitive to an urban neighborhood environment and flexible to the marketplace.
3. Enhance links to public and active transportation options and parking, which improve their visibility and accessibility.
4. Provide improved connections from neighborhoods to Town Center.
5. Minimize the divisive impact of Rockville Pike and the Metro/CSX rail lines.
6. Make Town Center a unique, high-amenity destination for local and regional customers.
7. Utilize urban design to establish zoning and density requirements that will assist in defining, placemaking, and activating the public realm of Rockville Town Center.
8. Provide an environment that is safe and appealing for pedestrians and bicyclists.
9. Establish Town Center as a welcoming and affordable place for people of all incomes and backgrounds to live.

PLAN OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

This Plan is the result of an intensive outreach and engagement process that incorporated feedback from residents, visitors, employees, business and property owners, nonprofit leaders, city staff, and other stakeholders. Extensive efforts were made at every stage of the planning process to maximize public knowledge about and participation in the development of the Plan. Project preparation featured a deep dive into the existing conditions of the planning area, the creation of a project charter that was approved by the Mayor and Council, and the establishment of an internal working group of city staff representing different departments and perspectives.

Community engagement kicked off with four listening sessions in April 2023. The following five-month outreach and engagement period included online feedback tools (a survey, reaction map, and idea board), city staff tabling community events, a series of focus group style roundtables, leaving doorhangers on residences in Town Center, visiting retail businesses, meeting with City of Rockville boards and commissions, and hosting stakeholder interviews. In total, city staff estimate that nearly 1,000 people provided input in the planning process in one form or another.

Despite receiving feedback through several different mechanisms, many of the same themes and commentary emerged throughout the entire outreach and engagement phase of the project. Comments primarily focused on a desire for more retail and restaurants, better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, more housing and overall density, and more events in Town Square. The full results of the community engagement process and further methodology can be found in the Community Engagement Report, Appendix A. The release of the Community Engagement Report was accompanied by two public meetings and a comment period in October 2023.

The first draft of the Plan was released to the public in April 2024. Following a series of public meetings outlining the Plan's recommendations, the draft Plan was first brought to the Planning Commission on June 26, 2024. The Planning Commission reviewed and discussed the Plan at five different meetings between June – September before ultimately approving the Plan on September 25, 2024. The Plan was introduced to the Mayor and Council through a public hearing hosted on October 28, 2024. The Mayor and Council continued discussion and provided direction to staff on the Plan at five different meetings between October 2024 – January 2025; a second public hearing was held on December 9 and work sessions were held on December 9, December 16, and January 6. At a meeting on January 13, 2025, the Mayor and Council requested a one-time, 60-day extension to continue review of the Plan, pursuant to Section 3-101 of the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. The Mayor and Council continued to accept public testimony on the Plan up until it was adopted. Ultimately, the Mayor and Council passed an ordinance to adopt the Plan on January 27, 2025.

PLAN ASSESSMENT THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS

The entirety of this Plan has been written through a lens of equity. Principles of equity must be incorporated into everyday actions and policies of the City of Rockville and cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Equity doesn't assume that all people are the same, rather it acknowledges and accepts that each individual faces different physical, intellectual, socioeconomic, or other challenges, and that a community should be accommodating and inclusive of people from a vast array of backgrounds. In some cases, that means providing additional resources to certain members of the community. In other cases, that means providing alternatives rather than assuming a "one size fits all" approach to any given problem.

Equity is especially relevant and important in urban planning, as master plans like this one govern how the built environment is shaped for decades to come. Historically the planning profession has endorsed policies that are directly in conflict with equity, such as redlining practices that were commonplace beginning in the 1930s. These government sanctioned programs prohibited people of color, most notably Black Americans, from being able to obtain mortgages in certain areas. As a result, people of color could only get funding for homes in areas that were downtrodden, environmentally sensitive, industrial in nature, or far from the activities of daily life. More recently, the federal government sponsored urban renewal programs that leveled entire neighborhoods. Most often, immigrant or minority neighborhoods were labeled as "blighted" and roads, new homes, and shopping centers were built in their place. In the late 1960s, most of what we know now as Town Center was razed, displacing the vibrant Black community known as "The Lane" and creating a central business district instead.

This Plan does not have a specific equity chapter, as actions that work to further equity are intertwined throughout the document. For example, the housing chapter talks about the need to increase affordable housing in Town Center. These recommendations are inextricably linked to equity, as increasing the diversity and price point of housing enables a broader community of people to reside in Town Center and have access to the area's amenities. Similarly, the transportation chapter contains several recommendations to grow infrastructure for non-automotive transportation. Ensuring the community has access to free and low-cost transportation options, regardless of an individual's income or ability, helps to make Town Center more equitable. The Department of Community Planning and Development Services, and the City of Rockville as a whole, are dedicated to enhancing principles of equity, diversity, and social justice in all we do, and this Plan is no exception.



RECENT HISTORY & PRIOR PLANNING EFFORTS

URBAN RENEWAL: 1950s - 1960s

In the early 20th century, the area which now makes up Town Center was comprised of a commercial center and Black American residential neighborhood. Following World War II, as a result of societal changes such as suburbanization and the increased reliance on automobiles, businesses began moving out of the downtown to nearby suburban-style shopping centers. In 1959 the Mayor and Council launched a massive downtown revitalization effort to address the vacancies in Town Center.

Shortly thereafter, Rockville became the first city in Maryland to enter into a federal government-funded urban renewal program. In 1961, the Mid-City Urban Renewal Project was launched to develop a plan to eliminate perceived "blight" by improving circulation of traffic, establishing a new retail center, and creating a new and modern identity for the city. The project area involved the 46-acre portion of the central business district core and was envisioned to create a multi-use center comprised of government offices, shopping, housing, and entertainment.

In 1966, a unified urban renewal concept for the project area was presented, made up of detailed schematic plans, public works projects, and design objectives. The firm responsible for creating the concept developed design and aesthetic objectives that, in their assessment, created "a vital civic core and one that provided answers to formless sprawl that characterized large areas of the region." The concept proposed separating pedestrian and automobile movement within the Town Center, whereby pedestrians could walk along open or covered paths, greenways, and shopping arcades and automobiles would be able to reach convenient parking through a system of external service streets and lower-level parking.

By 1968, efforts to transform the downtown were underway. Over 90% of the downtown's buildings were demolished, existing business and residential populations, largely Black American, were displaced, and local roadways eliminated or reconfigured¹.

THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER: 1970s - 1990s

In 1973, the city developed a supplemental promotional plan, "Rockville Town Center," to further establish Rockville as a desirable regional city near Washington, D.C. The Town Center concept proposed three phases of development for the area:

- **Phase I** - A 320,000-square-foot enclosed shopping mall (Rockville Mall) situated on top of a 1,560-space parking garage.
- **Phase II** - Two major office complexes with retail space, a motel with a restaurant and convention facilities, and a senior housing development.
- **Phase III** - A second anchor department store within the Rockville Mall, Montgomery County Courthouse facility, County Administrative Office Building, and Metro transit station.

All three phases would be connected through the construction of a series of parks, plazas, and walkways that would integrate the Town Center into a cohesive and concentrated center.

In the decades to follow, Rockville Mall struggled with vacancies and never met its original projections. In the early 1980s, \$50 million was invested to redevelop the mall and adjacent area as Rockville Metro Center, which consisted of a theater complex, billiards parlor, and restaurants, as well as a pedestrian

Recent History and Prior Planning Efforts

bridge to access the Rockville Metro Station. In 1995, a major portion of the mall was demolished, with many citing that the barren mall was inhibiting downtown redevelopment.

In 1997, a citywide community visioning process called “Imagine Rockville” launched to help shape Rockville for the next ten years and beyond. This grassroots process was focused heavily on Town Center and created three new phases for the future of Town Center:

- **Phase I** (two months to three years) - Plan for a future library, develop open spaces, establish a downtown promotion association, and develop an integrated retail plan.
- **Phase II** (four to six years) - Open the library, set up a permanent visitor’s center, have thriving shops and restaurants, and open a science and technology center.
- **Phase III** (seven years plus) - Expand the Town Center further to the north, continue to bring in retail and shops, and open a cultural center or museum.

This vision served as the impetus to refocus efforts on redeveloping and reformatting the Town Center and ultimately the development of an area master plan, which became the 2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan.

2001 ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN

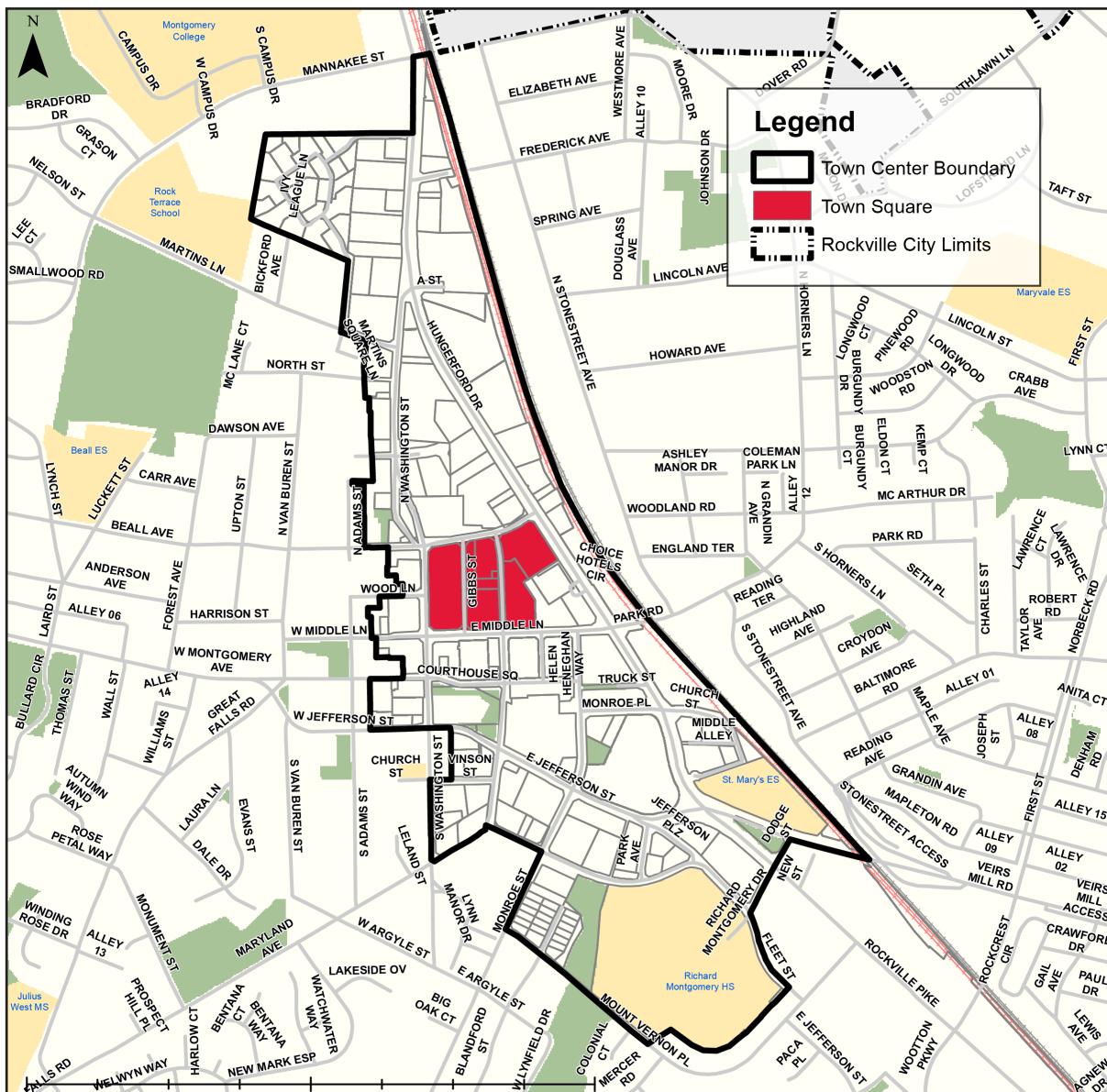
Stemming from the phasing plan developed during the Imagine Rockville exercise, the 2001 *Rockville Town Center Master Plan* established a desired framework and guiding principles for future development to create the mixed-use theme anticipated in the area. The guiding principles for future development in the 2001 Plan include:

- Organize development extending from the Metro station westward along E. Montgomery Avenue and the northward extension of Maryland Avenue to N. Washington Street.
- Establish N. Washington Street as a pedestrian and vehicular corridor to serve as a transitional area between flanking western neighborhoods and the Town Center.
- Provide connectivity between Maryland Avenue and other traffic corridors such as MD-355 and N. Washington Street in a way that does not compromise pedestrian character.
- Promote redevelopment at and surrounding the Rockville Metro Station.
- Connect Town Center to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Forge partnerships between property owners, businesses, citizens, civic associations, governmental entities, and other groups to implement the goals and objectives set forth within the plan.

The plan utilized design guidelines, zoning, urban design, and land use principles to realize the vision outlined in the document. These guidelines and principles were largely oriented around the desire to develop Town Center to be a vibrant, mixed-use community that allows flexibility but also holds development to a high standard. Design guidelines included bringing buildings up to the street edge to reinforce a sense of urban enclosure, encouraging high-quality materials and design, incorporating open space into projects, creating streetscapes and public spaces that feel comfortable for pedestrians, and maximizing street activity.

After the 2001 Plan was approved in October 2001, city staff worked with county, state, and federal agencies to obtain financial commitments for the Town Center's first phase: Rockville Town Square. Rockville Town Square is a 12.5-acre, 1.8 million square foot mixed-use community developed by Federal Realty Investment Trust. The Town Square development is bounded by Beall Avenue, N. Washington Street, E. Middle Lane and Hungerford Drive. In total, \$352 million was spent on the development of Rockville Town Square over the life of the project: \$264 million in private funding and \$88 million in public funding. Montgomery County funded the Rockville Memorial Library, at \$26.3 million, and contributed \$12 million over six years towards project infrastructure costs. Project development began in 2004 and the grand opening was held in 2007, when the redevelopment project was praised by Maryland's Governor as "a way to revive the aging suburb."

Map 3: Rockville Town Square



ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER: STRENGTHENING ITS VITALITY (2019)

In 2019, the city and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments hosted a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) by the Urban Land Institute focused on Town Center. TAPs bring industry experts from throughout the region to communities and host an intensive, multiple-day charette, ultimately producing a report that outlines recommended changes to achieve the goals stated by the host community. The report focused on actions that could improve Town Center's urban environment, ways to attract and retain new uses, determine how Town Center could be differentiated from its competition, identify policy obstacles to the city's goals, and provide guidance on a land use mix that serves the goals of the community.

Upon the conclusion of their visit, TAP panelists identified seven "actionable items" that should be addressed as the Town Center matures:

- Retain significant employers.
- Build density in the Town Center without compromising character.
- Strengthen relationships with Montgomery College and the County Board of Education.
- Hire a parking consultant to create and manage potential changes to the fee structure in the Town Center.
- Engage a branding, marketing, and wayfinding consultant.
- Redesign E. Middle Lane and N. Washington Street to make connections easier.
- Implement a downtown shuttle and extend the route to Montgomery College.

Beyond these "actionable items," the report also recommended that the city improves wayfinding; forms a formal organization (like a business improvement district or urban partnership); continues to build and foster relationships; conducts a pilot program for parking; and improves communications, marketing, and an identity for Town Center.

ROCKVILLE 2040: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE CITY OF ROCKVILLE (2021)

Municipalities in Maryland are required to adopt a comprehensive plan, which acts as a community's guide to growth, development, and quality of life over an extended period of time. The City of Rockville is currently operating under the *Rockville 2040: Comprehensive Plan* of the City of Rockville, Maryland ("Comprehensive Plan"). This plan was adopted by the Mayor and Council in 2021 after extensive community outreach and engagement. Planning Area 1 within the Comprehensive Plan is Town Center. The Comprehensive Plan identifies 10 key issues within Town Center and addresses those concerns through recommendations on four specific focus areas, nine city projects, and 34 other policy recommendations.

Recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan for Town Center supersede the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan states that Project 1 within the Planning Area 1 chapter is to "conduct a planning effort leading to the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan amendment to Planning Area 1 that updates and replaces the 2001 Town Center Master Plan." This Plan is an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and supersedes its recommendations for Planning Area 1.

DEMOGRAPHICS

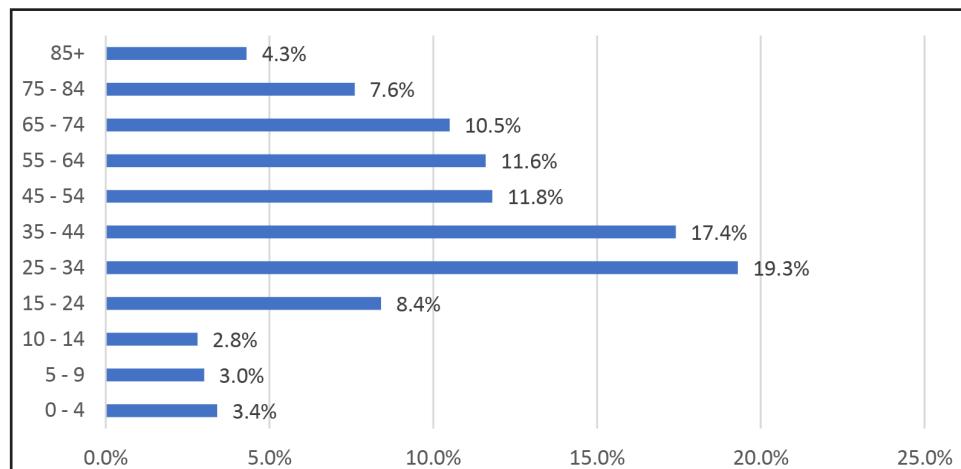


Demographics

Understanding the demographics of Town Center is key to understanding its needs and the actions recommended within this Plan.

The Town Center Planning Area is 0.4 square miles in area. As of the 2020 Census², the planning area had a population of 4,020 people. The average household size is 1.75 people per household. The median age in the planning area is 42.2, and the largest segment of Town Center's population falls between 25 - 34 years of age.

Figure 1: Town Center Age Distribution



Racially and culturally, Town Center is incredibly diverse. According to the 2020 Census, the majority of Town Center residents are non-white. 47.1% of Town Center residents identify as white, 25% identify as Asian, 13.3% identify as Black, 9.5% identify as two or more races, 4.8% identify as some other race and 0.2% identify as American Indian². Thirteen percent of the planning area identifies as being of Hispanic origin. These numbers on race are consistent with citywide demographics on race. Both in Town Center and the city as a whole, data shows a steady increase in the Asian, Hispanic, and Black American populations, with the largest growth being within the Asian community between 1980 and 2020³.

Figure 2: Town Center Population by Race

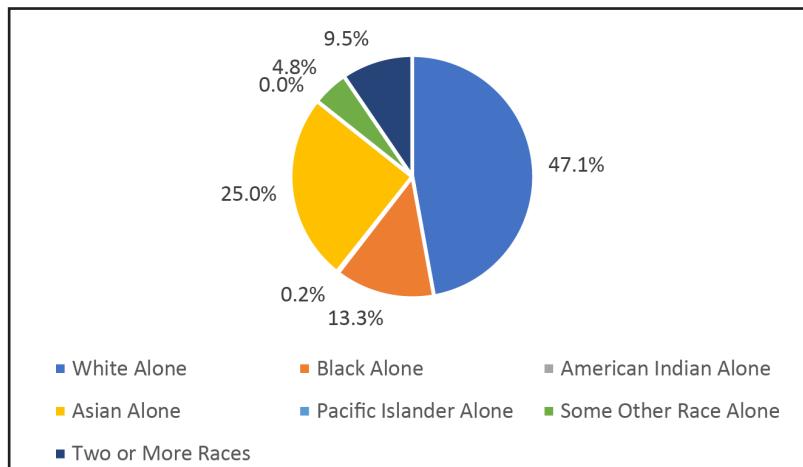
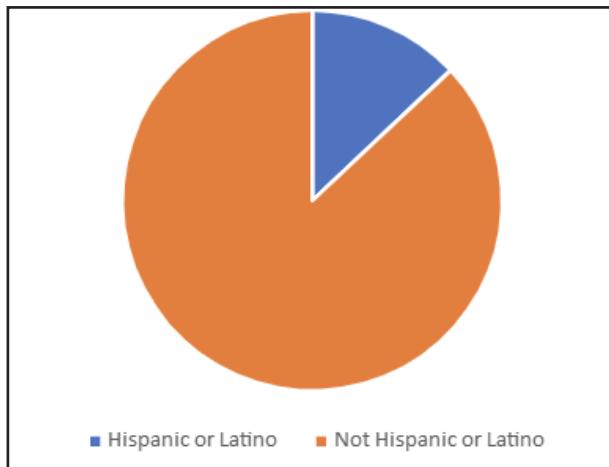


Figure 3: Town Center Population by Ethnicity

Generally speaking, Town Center is a wealthy and highly educated area. The median household income is \$96,773 and the average household income is \$127,869². This is just lower than the City of Rockville as a whole, which has a median income of \$111,797³. Town Center is also highly educated, with 69% of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher.

Table 2: Educational Attainment in Town Center

Education Level	Percentage of Population
Less than 9th Grade	3.3%
9th - 12th grade, No Diploma	2.4%
High School Graduate	8.2%
GED / Alternative Credential	0.5%
Some College, No Degree	9.2%
Associate Degree	7.1%
Bachelor Degree	26.9%
Graduate / Professional Degree	42.4%

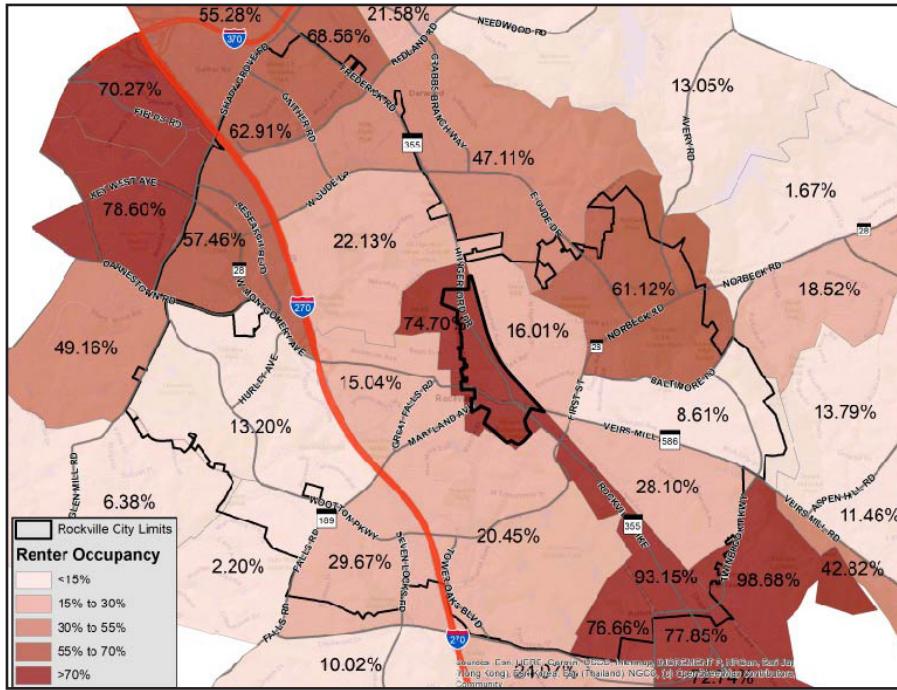
The population of Town Center swells during the daytime hours due to the prevalence of government offices and the state and county courts located in the area, as well as the ancillary businesses that support said government operations. The daytime population of Town Center is an estimated 11,442, largely thanks to the 1,172 businesses located within the planning area⁴. It should be noted that this number is driven from a demographic analysis and does not take into consideration operational shifts in the workplace stemming from the coronavirus pandemic. According to a survey of business owners in Town Center, there is a large range of working conditions (hybrid, fully remote, etc.) being practiced within Town Center. About half of the government related businesses who participated in the survey⁵ indicated that on any given day, 25-49% of their employees are physically in the office, whereas most private sector businesses indicate 75-100% of their employees are in the office on any given day. These numbers are constantly shifting and evolving as policies and expectations around in-person work continue to change as surges of the coronavirus ebb and flow.

TOWN CENTER IN COMPARISON: THROUGH AN EQUITY LENS

Certain aspects of Town Center's demographics stand out when compared with the rest of the city. Understanding where gaps exist helps to identify marginalized populations and where the city should focus efforts to advance its justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion goals.

Town Center has an especially high percentage of renters (75% of all housing), primarily due to its amount of multifamily housing stock and the rest of the city's relatively low multifamily housing stock. Renters are at higher risk of housing instability than homeowners due to increasing rents and have less control over the standards of their living conditions, instead appealing to landlords for improvements to health, safety, and sustainability. Historically, renters are also more difficult to engage in public processes due to a confluence of factors related to transience, income, languages spoken, and more.

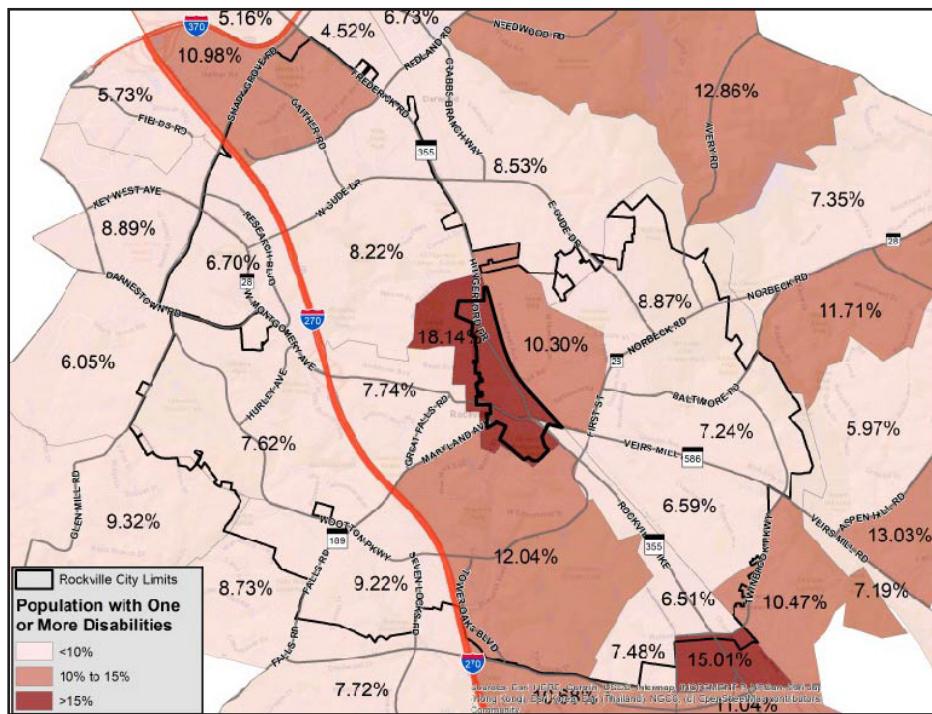
Map 4: Percentage of Housing Occupied by Renters



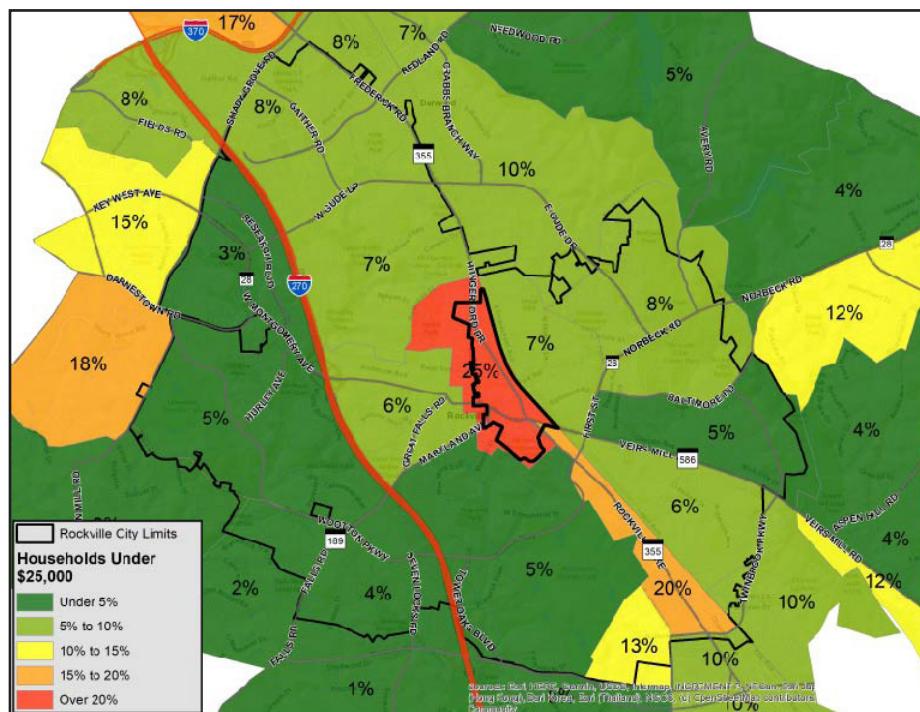
Within the city, Town Center has the highest percentage of residents with one or more disability at 18%. Town Center is a countywide hub for individuals with mental and physical disabilities because of the services offered, walkability and accessibility via mobility devices, abundance of public transportation, and comparatively lower cost housing options. Over the next 20 years, Town Center can strive to serve this population even better.

While a large portion of Town Center residents are highly educated and wealthy, there are also folks in Town Center living on the other end of the spectrum. When looking at census tracts throughout Rockville, Town Center has the highest percentage (25%) of households living under the federal poverty line of \$25,000 for a family of three. Households facing poverty typically have challenges in regard to acquiring housing, food, medical care, and transportation, which government programs may be able to assist with. Town Center residents may benefit from targeted job training and financial empowerment programs.

Map 5: Percentage of Residents with One or More Disability



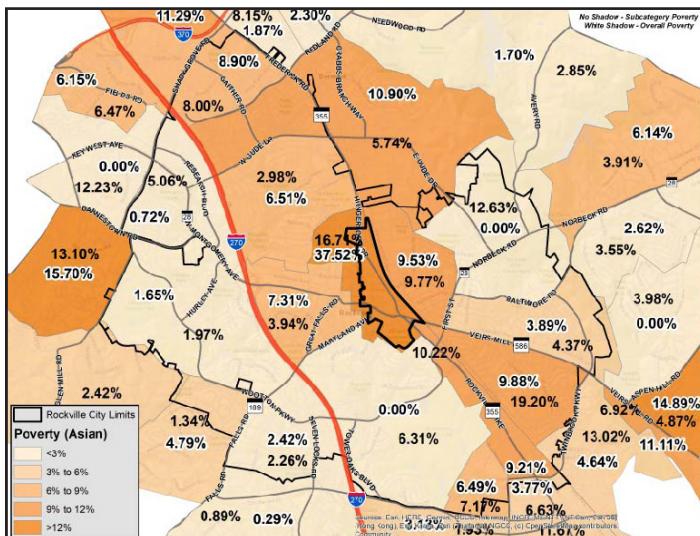
Map 6: Households with Income Under Federal Poverty Line



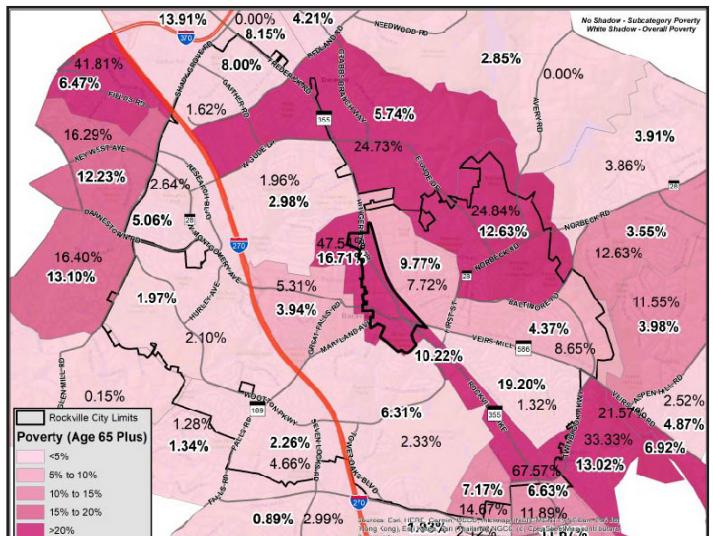
Demographics

The degree of poverty seen in residents above the age of 65 (47.5%) and Asian households (37.5 %) within Town Center are especially notable when compared with the rest of the city. Not only should poverty alleviation programs target the Town Center area, but they should also take care to align program outreach and accessibility with the needs of Asian and senior populations.

Map 7: Poverty by Race - Asian



Map 8: Poverty by Age - 65+



Percentages without a shadow indicate poverty for the subcategory. Percentages with a white shadow indicate overall poverty for the Census tract.

ZONING & LAND USE

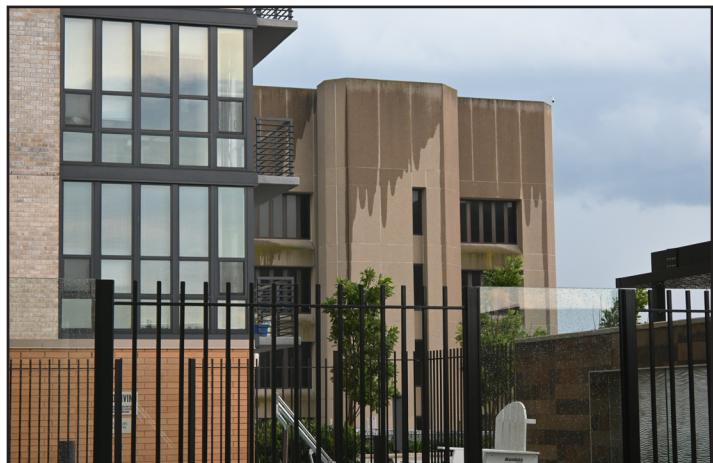


Town Center is the premier option for a compact, walkable, urban environment within Rockville. Residents, business owners, and employees highly value Town Center's access to Metro and the convenience of clustered goods and services. This type of built environment is possible due to the current mix of land uses and zoning categories, the majority of which encourage a mixed-use development pattern of medium and high densities. Present land uses range from high-rise office and residential buildings to government buildings and courthouses, mixed-use retail, townhomes, and low-rise shopping centers.

According to feedback from the community, when many people think of Town Center, they primarily think of Town Square. In fact, a common comment during the outreach and engagement process was that many people weren't aware there was more to Town Center than the Town Square development. Due in part to its urban form and large public square that serves as a gathering space for the community, Town Square is currently the primary hub of activity in Town Center. The assumption that Town Square is the entirety of Town Center speaks to the lack of cohesion between Town Square and other areas within Town Center, especially the more suburban shopping mall form of many commercial buildings north of Town Square and along the east side of MD-355. Development and redevelopment present opportunities to bring walkable destinations in an urban form throughout the rest of Town Center so that the area will be more notable as a regional destination and activity hub. In the future, ideally the community will think of Town Square as a central feature of and gathering place within Town Center, but not as its exclusive identity.

Town Center is expected to continue to be an employment center for businesses as well as offices of government agencies given Rockville's designation as the county seat. However, the rise of teleworking nationally has led to a weaker office market and a rising interest in adapting office buildings to residential uses where feasible. Generally, there is a desire for both the flexibility to adapt to

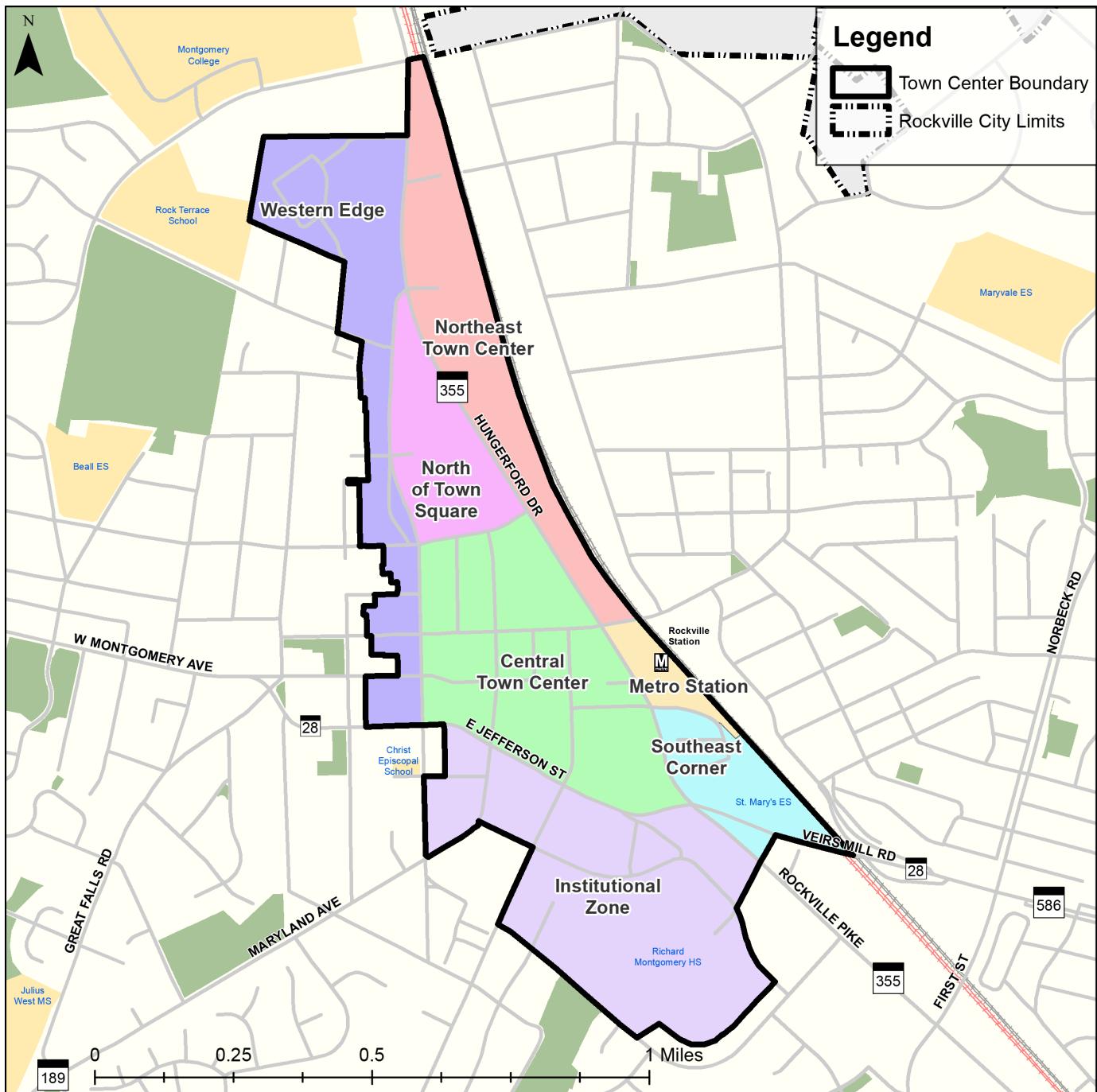
changing market conditions and predictability in the development process so that projects may move forward quickly to implement the Plan's vision.



AREA VISIONS

The Plan divides Town Center into seven different subareas. Each of these subareas have slightly different identities and development potential. Below is the general vision this Plan puts forward for each of the subareas of Town Center.

Map 9: Area Visions



Southeast Corner

This area consists of St. Mary's Catholic Church and School, Sunrise of Rockville, the historic Rockville Railroad Station, and two office buildings facing Rockville Station. More activation is desired in this area due to its proximity and walkability to Metro. Given the high levels of vacancy seen in the office buildings at 1 Church Street and 21 Church Street, the city recommends the conversion of these buildings from office to residential use. If the property owners are not interested in repositioning the buildings, the city should work with partner agencies such as Rockville Economic Development Inc. or Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation to find office users for the site.

Metro Station

The Rockville Metro Station is core to Town Center's desirability for residents, visitors, and businesses. The station itself needs to be updated, as envisioned in the 2022 Rockville Metro Station Study, and better connected across MD-355 to central Town Center. There is a need for better signage, sense of arrival, pedestrian safety, public art, and other features that will contribute to placemaking. Due to low utilization and the city's desire for transit-oriented development, this Plan reimagines the surface parking lots as high-density mixed-use development.

The city worked with WMATA and their hired consultant to develop a design concept for redevelopment of the station that is flexible to refinement based on market conditions. The Rockville Mayor and Council endorsed a design concept on May 6, 2024 that envisions the Rockville Metro Station as an iconic gateway and multi-modal hub that connects the greater area, enhances the experience of downtown Rockville as a destination, and maximizes safety for commuters and residents. On December 16, 2024, the Mayor and Council approved resolution 19-24, which further reiterated the elected body's desire to see development at the Rockville Metro Station.

The concept is based on the following design principles:

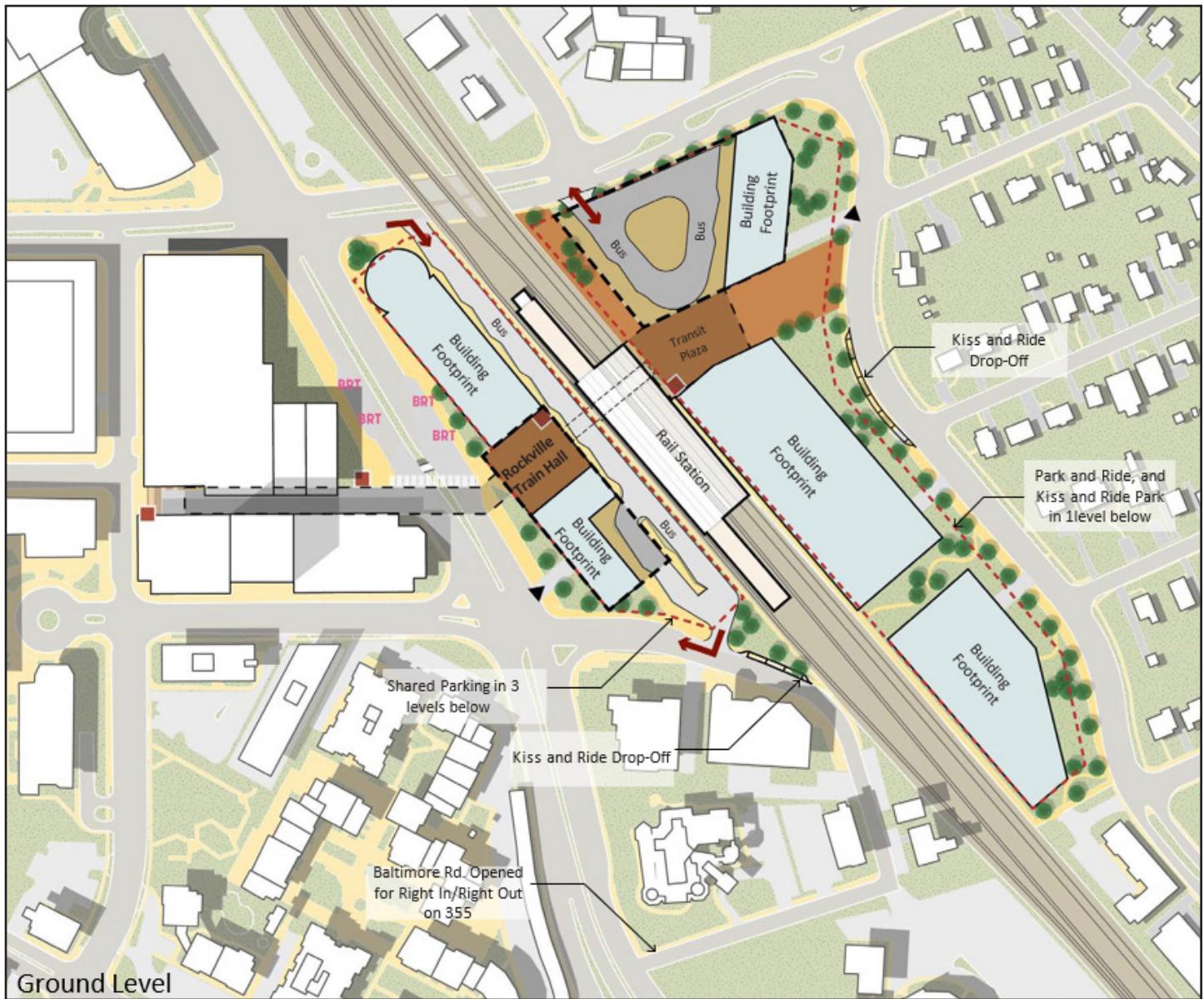
- Provide convenient connections to transit and safe access for pedestrian and bicycle users.
- Create an attractive station environment that encourages transit ridership.
- Improve wayfinding and integration of the site with surrounding areas.
- Accommodate a mix of uses and amenities
- Support economic development.

The concept was designed to adapt to market conditions and has the potential to provide up to 1,850 feet of activated retail frontage, 1,200 residential units, and 10,000 square feet of open space. The concept also proposes an iconic train hall that would serve as a gateway on the west side of the Metrorail station and provide a central point between various transit services available on site.

The train hall would consist of a two-story enclosed space with retail and other amenities within the building. An additional transit plaza is proposed on the east side to generate placemaking opportunities and to enhance the pedestrian experience. The concept also provides an opportunity to expand bus capacity by proposing additional bus bays and improve traffic circulation by providing additional Park & Ride and Kiss & Ride facilities. In addition to transit facilities, the concept improves pedestrian access and circulation to and throughout the station.

The Metro Station design concept developed with WMATA and endorsed by the Rockville Mayor and Council involves development on both sides of the Metro tracks; however, only the western parcels are within Town Center. Therefore, this Plan only references development on the western parcels.

Figure 4: Metro Station Design Concept



Northeast Town Center

This area is primarily characterized by productive yet low density shopping centers that are designed primarily for auto access. In the future, redevelopment here can contribute to the city's housing supply goals while continuing to provide diverse retail and dining options to residents. A focus on pedestrian safety and comfort in the design of new buildings can help make this area feel less separated from the rest of the Town Center and provide safer crossings across MD-355.

Western Edge

This area has many redevelopment opportunities that should be encouraged to activate the N. Washington Street corridor, meet the city's housing supply goals, and potentially provide different retail options within the existing inventory of commercial spaces. Residential uses are particularly desired for this area. Buildings should front N./S. Washington Street and the ground floor designed to facilitate interaction with pedestrians, though ground floor retail is not required.

North of Town Square

To maximize flexibility, the land use policy for the entirety of this subarea is OCRM (office commercial residential mix). Development in this area should contribute to the realization of the Town Center downtown L-shaped "spine" and by designing Maryland Avenue as a continuous commercial corridor between E. Montgomery Avenue and Dawson Avenue. The extension of Maryland Avenue between Beall Avenue and Dawson Avenue should include streetscape amenities, such as wide sidewalks, significant landscaped areas, street trees, decorative lighting, wayfinding and landmark elements, outdoor seating, on-street parking and bike facilities. Redevelopment of this area should contribute towards a pedestrian-oriented, urban-scaled streetscape. New developments should orient primary building facades towards a street or public open space to foster activated areas. The potential redevelopment of 414-416 Hungerford anticipates ~300 residential units and the extension of Maryland

Avenue, which will provide an opportunity to build off the attractive urban form of Town Square and better connect or "open up" Town Square to the rest of Town Center, while also providing amenities such as green space.

Central Town Center

This area includes Town Square, the Regal movie theater building, Courthouse Square Park, and several high-rise multifamily properties that make up the core of the Town Center, given their proximity to Metro. There are major opportunities to work with property owners to determine the future of buildings located at 255 Rockville Pike and 51 Monroe Street, and further activate this area by improving the city-owned Promenade Park. Preliminary discussions with ownership of 255 Rockville Pike have contemplated up to 550 residential units that could be built on site over a phased development plan. The design of this area should take into consideration a sense of arrival and draw the visitor further in. Town Square is likely to continue as the "heart" of Town Center in many ways. As such, maintenance and upkeep, event programming in the square, and filling vacant storefronts should all be major priorities of the city, in partnership with the private owners.

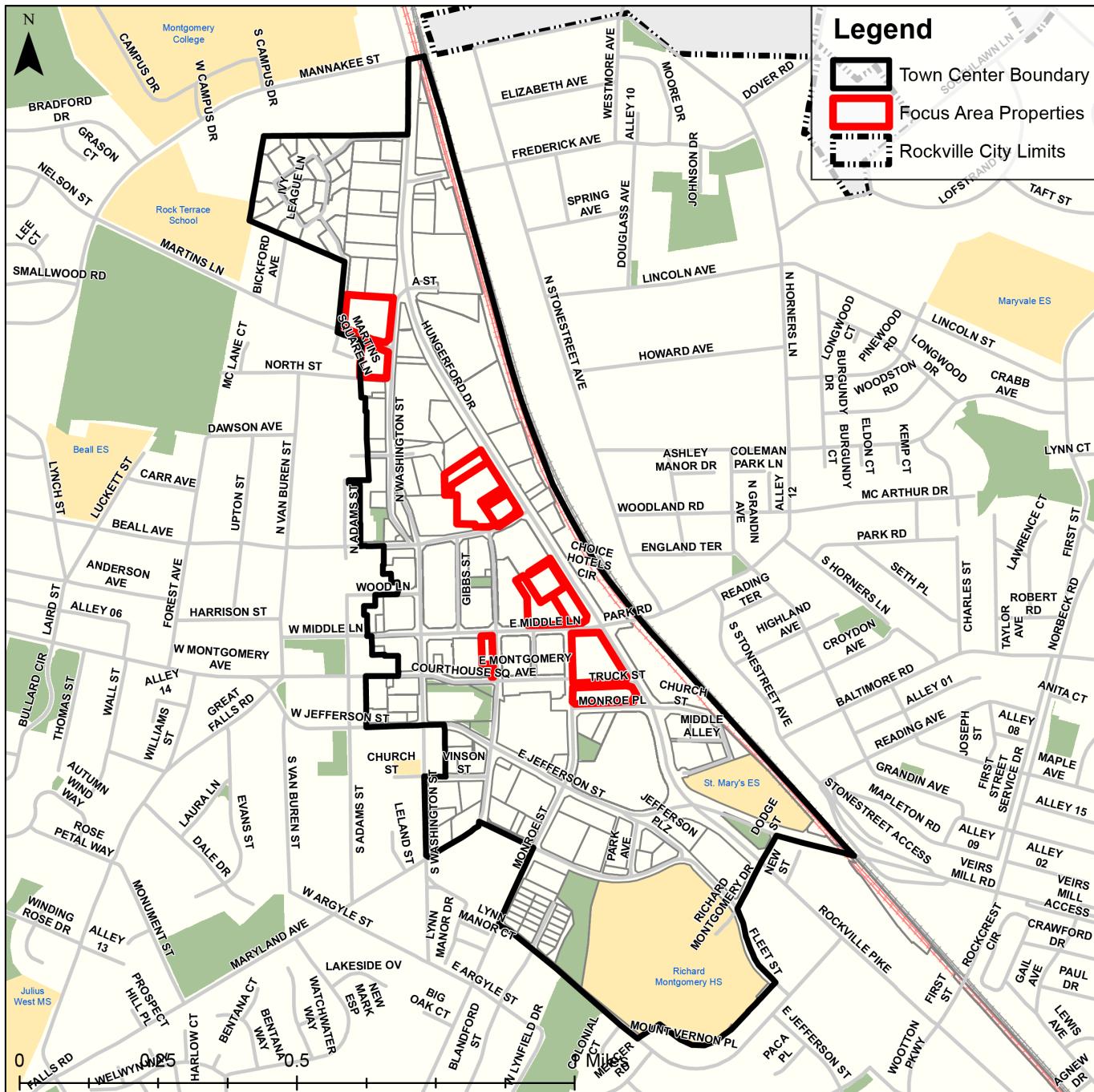
Institutional Zone

Opportunities should be sought to incorporate more diverse land uses, such as multifamily housing, into this area. The small area of residential detached homes on Monroe Street and Mt. Vernon Place should be rezoned for potential moderate density development. However, given the difficulty of parcel assemblage due to the number of properties, this area is also encouraged for "middle" housing typologies, such as, but not limited to duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, townhomes, and cottage clusters. A future public park is recommended in this general location.

FOCUS AREAS

Beyond the land use recommendations made in this chapter, there are specific parcels identified by the city as having the ability for transformational redevelopment that serves as a catalyst for Town Center. The city should work with property owners and developers to realize the focus areas identified below and provide flexibility in the regulatory environment, as necessary and appropriate, to achieve these shared visions.

Map 10: Focus Areas



1 Choice Hotels Circle and 220 E. Middle Lane

Prioritize the re-leasing of 1 Choice Hotels Circle following the departure of Choice Hotels International from Rockville into a new headquarters building. Collaborate with the Rockville Economic Development, Inc. and Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation to identify other large office users to take over the space and activate Town Center. Develop the parking lot adjacent to 1 Choice Hotels Circle into a residential building, as previously anticipated. An approved planned development application for the site envisions ~240 residential units at 220 E. Middle Lane. This Plan supports the realization of that approved site plan.

41 Maryland Avenue

Encourage residential development of at least 100 units. If the existing, approved planned development for the parcel is modified, encourage the development of even more residential units on site. Ground floor retail should not be required. Any on-site parking requirements should be waived due to the site's limited size, prime Town Center location, nearby structured parking options, and transit access.

Map 11: 1 Choice Hotels Circle & 220 E. Middle Lane

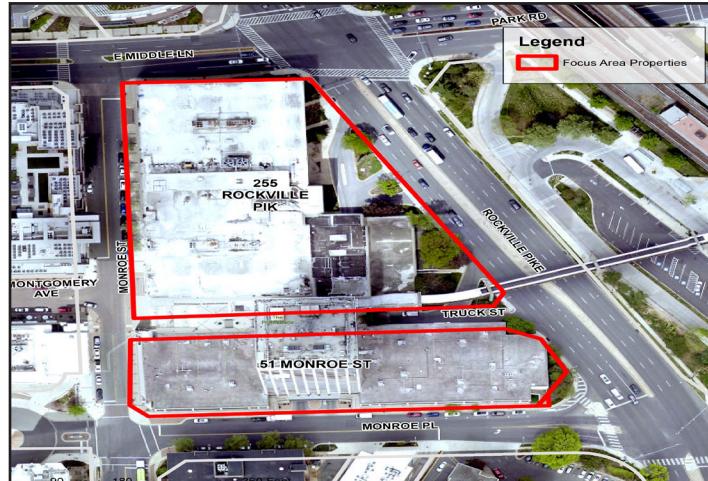


Map 12: 41 Maryland Avenue



Map 13: 51 Monroe Street & 255 Rockville Pike

These properties are desired for high-intensity, mixed-use development and have a land use designation of office commercial residential mix. Require new buildings and, in the case of adaptive reuse, encourage existing buildings, to activate Promenade Park by incorporating ample fenestration, exterior lighting, building entrance(s), wayfinding signage, egress, elevator(s), and/or building amenity spaces on their property fronting Promenade Park to complement the public amenity space (see Action 9.1.1).



380 Hungerford Drive

Work to find a new location in, or near, downtown Rockville for Fire Station #3. Relocation would open new development or reuse opportunities for the current station site, possibly in combination with properties to the north and better accommodate modern fire equipment and fire house standards. Encourage the Fire Department to incorporate affordable housing above and beyond the 15% MPDU requirement into any redevelopment of the site.

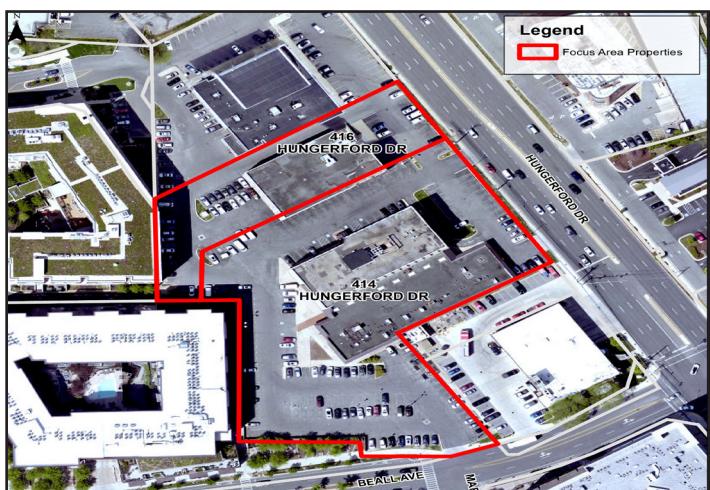
Map 14: 380 Hungerford Drive



414-416 Hungerford Drive

Redevelopment of these parcels should provide for the extension of Maryland Avenue northbound towards Dawson Avenue, as planned for the past several decades, as well as feature entrances, windows, and pedestrian-scale urban design features along both frontages (MD-355 and the Maryland Avenue extension).

Map 15: 414-416 Hungerford Drive



400 & 500 N. Washington Street

Redevelopment of these sites should incorporate pedestrian-scale urban design features along both N. Washington Street and Martins Lane frontages.

For 400 N. Washington Street, any redevelopment should incorporate public green space on the southern edge of the parcel to serve as an expansion of North Street Park.

For 500 N. Washington Street, any vehicular entrances should be on the southern edge of the property.

Map 16: 400 & 500 N. Washington Street





Conceptual rendering showing an improved North Street Park if development occurs on either side of the park (ZoneCo).

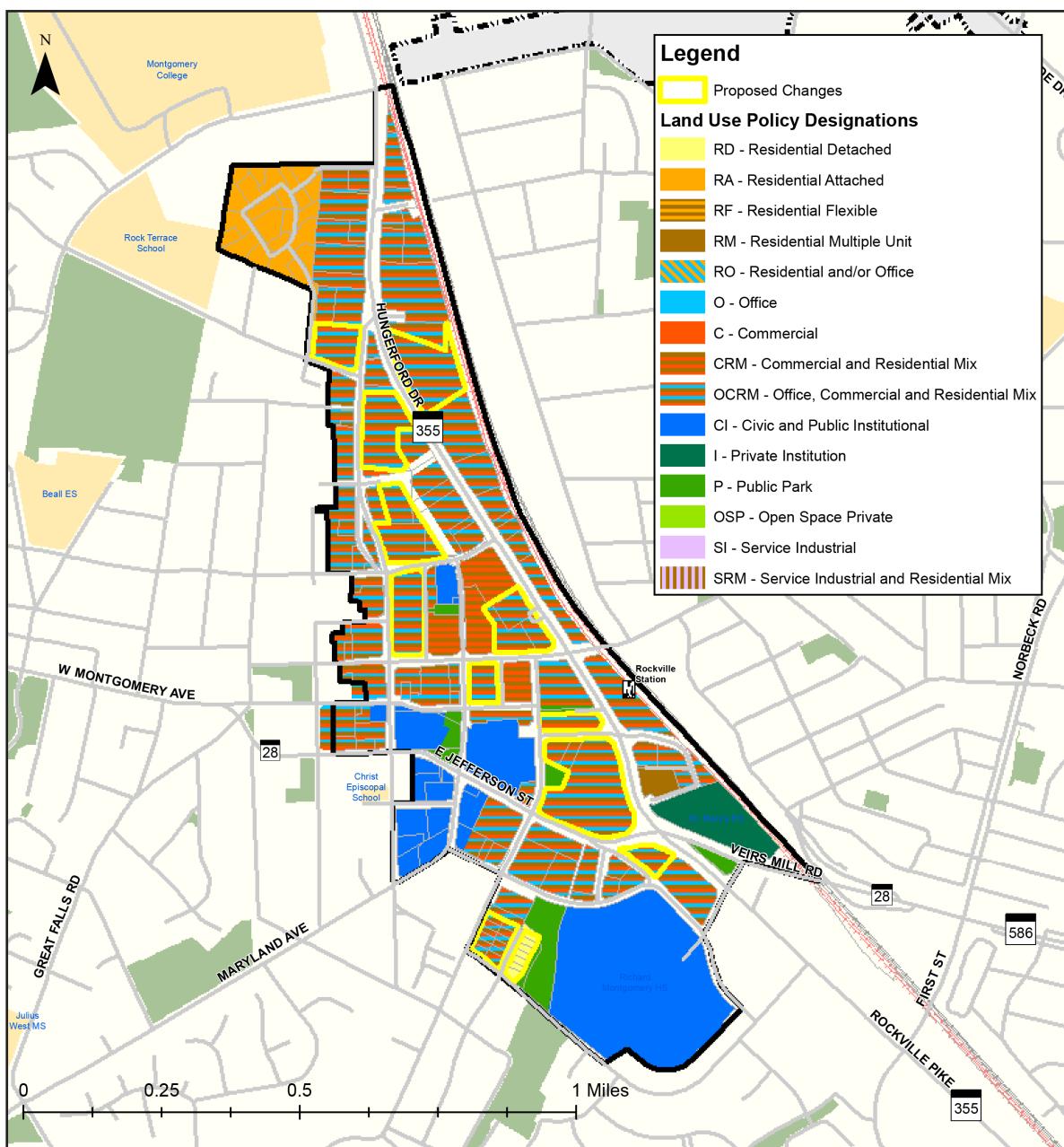


A conceptual rendering showing what development along the N. Washington Street corridor could look like. Setbacks and architectural details create pedestrian-scaled development that serves as a transition to land uses to the west (ZoneCo).

LAND USE POLICY MAP

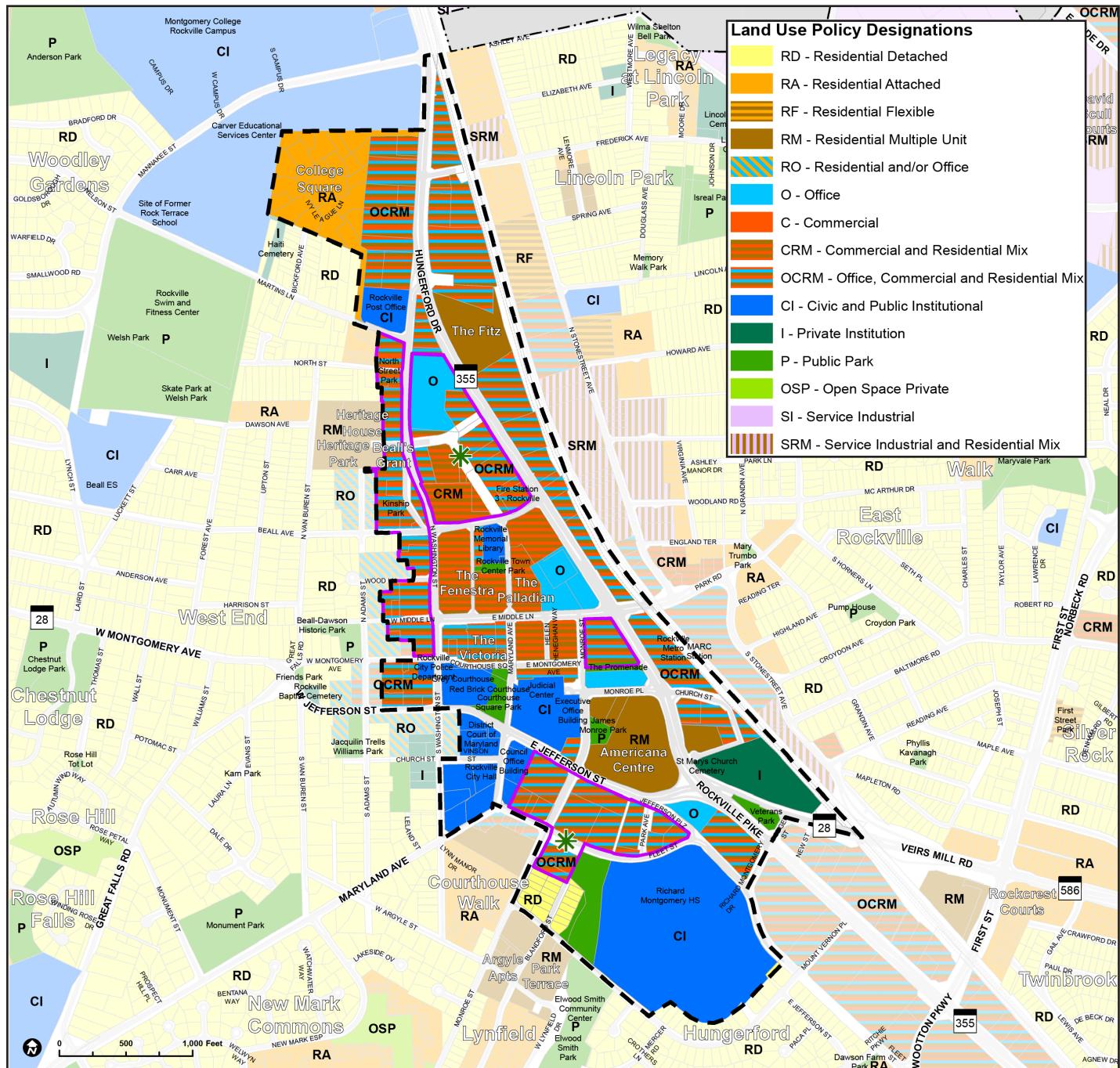
For much of the land in Town Center, this Plan recommends retaining the existing land use policy as established in the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* when it was adopted in August 2021. However, this Plan envisions changes in the land use policy in certain locations to align with the area and site-specific visions described earlier in this chapter. The parcels outlined in yellow on Map 17 identify land where this Plan is recommending a change in the Land Use Policy Map of Planning Area 1 as adopted into the Comprehensive Plan in August 2021. Map 18 shows the original land use policy designations per the 2021 Comprehensive Plan. Descriptions of each of the land use categories presented in this Plan's Land Use Policy Map are consistent with those descriptions found in the Comprehensive Plan.

Map 17: Proposed Land Use Changes



The Plan calls for these changes to better align Town Center's land use policy with both the goals established in this Plan and in direct response to resident feedback. Generally speaking, these changes allow for a taller and denser development pattern and allow for greater flexibility in land use types that are envisioned on each of the adjusted parcels. Maximizing flexibility in the regulatory environment is a key land use tenet for this Plan.

Map 18: Existing Land Use Policy Map



DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

As part of its efforts in preparing the Thrive Montgomery 2050 General Plan, in 2020 Montgomery Planning worked with the city to conduct a Residential Development Capacity Analysis. The purpose of this analysis was to estimate the total potential residential development capacity that exists within the county based on existing zoning. The analysis does not guarantee future development, nor does it take into consideration the likelihood of any given property developing/redeveloping. Rather, this analysis estimates the total number of net new dwelling units that could be created in a redevelopment scenario that maximizes the existing zoning capacity.

According to this analysis, the Town Center planning area could accommodate up to 1,640 net new residential housing units without any of the zoning changes this Plan establishes. Housing units are needed in and around Town Center to support the existing retail, in addition to any new retail that comes online, which is highly desired by members of the community. Additional information on the retail market in Town Center is provided in the Economic Development chapter.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Goal 1

Target appropriate areas for higher density residential developments to reach 3,000 new residential units by 2040. Provide a variety of development types to adapt to marketplace demands and to address missing-middle housing.

Policy 1.1

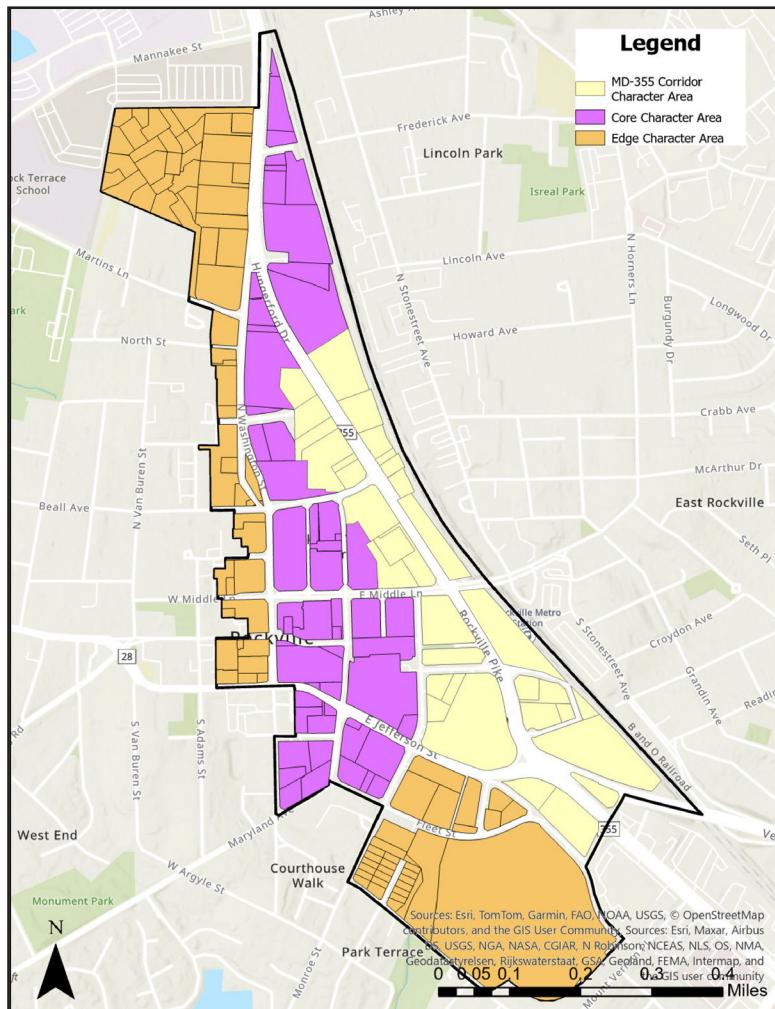
Through the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project currently underway, adopt zoning standards for Town Center that meet the overarching land use goals for the planning area while streamlining and simplifying the development approval process.

Actions

- **1.1.1** - Modify zoning regulations within Town Center to allow and encourage innovative and creative development and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to development. The method to achieve this should be determined through the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite and could include changes to the base zone or a zoning overlay.
- Revised zoning should increase building heights to meet the city's housing goals and attract new residents to Town Center. Revised zoning should create three distinct character areas: the MD-355 corridor; the Town Center core; and the Town Center edge. Building height and site and design standards should be specified for each of the character areas. The MD-355 corridor character area should allow heights of up to 235 feet. The core character area should allow heights of up to 200 feet. The edge character areas should allow heights of up to 85 feet.
- Revised zoning should reflect Town Center's proximity to the Rockville Metro Station by modifying parking requirements, improving accessibility and walkability within the built environment, promoting transit usage and creating people-friendly spaces that do not rely on automobile usage to access and enjoy. See Policy 2.1 for further details on parking requirements in Town Center.

- Revised zoning should enhance the vibrancy of Town Center and encourage around-the-clock activity through careful curation of approved land uses and public amenities through parks, landscaping and public art that is designed in a thoughtful and meaningful way. Revised zoning should determine the open and public use space requirements that are consistent with urban building typologies and best practices.
- Revised zoning should eliminate any unnecessary regulatory barriers that add time, cost, and unpredictability to the development process by streamlining regulatory processes and requirements to allow flexibility in development while still maintaining high standards for urban design and public amenities. Straightforward standards should be adopted within the code that foster high-quality urban design. There should be no requirement for ground floor retail, although street-facing, active ground floor uses, including residential or quasi-retail uses should be encouraged. See Policy 3.1 for further details on building and site design standards.
- Ensure that the new zoning standards for Town Center comply with the State Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, as may be amended.

Map 19: Town Center Character Areas



- **1.1.2** - Create a bonus height program that provides additional height for any development project with a residential component that includes 20% or more moderately priced dwelling units or other deed restricted affordable housing. Properties within the MD-355 corridor and core character areas may receive a bonus of up to 100 additional feet of permitted height. Properties within the edge character area may receive up to 50 additional feet of permitted height.

Table 3: Allowed Heights in Town Center

Character Area	Base Building Height	Bonus Height
MD-355 Corridor	235 feet	100 feet
Core	200 feet	100 feet
Edge	85 feet	50 feet

- **1.1.3** - Modify the Zoning Ordinance to eliminate the Town Center Performance District, which has grown defunct since its creation following the 2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan. Through this district, certain development applications within Town Center are required to be approved under the Level 2 Site Plan process, regardless of the scale of development. Elimination of the performance district will streamline development and reduce regulatory processes.

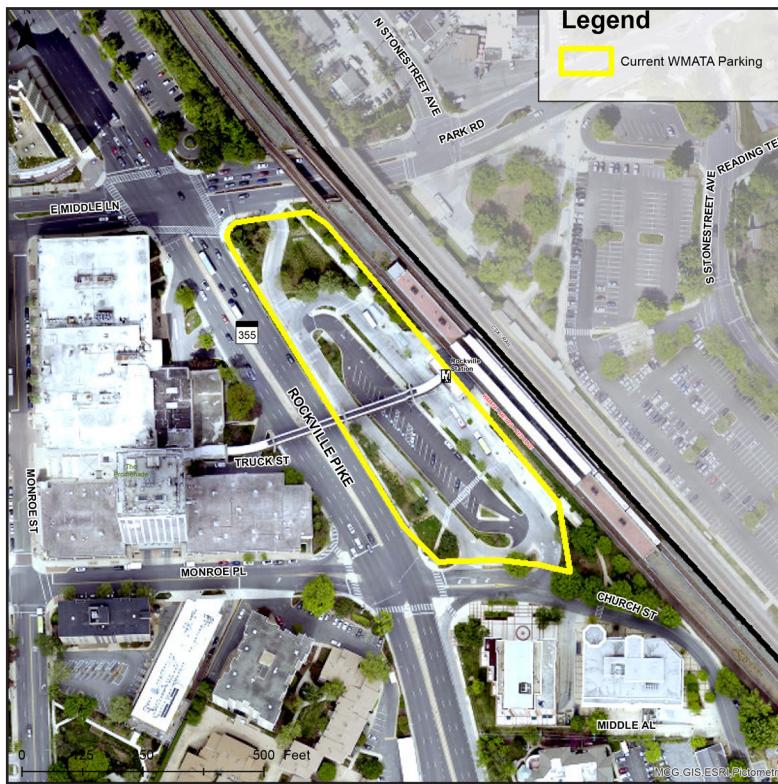
Policy 1.2

Encourage the development of WMATA's Rockville Station property.

Actions

- **1.2.1** - Encourage WMATA to release a joint development solicitation to redevelop their surface parking lots on the southern side of Park Road into mixed-use transit-oriented development that includes housing.

Map 20: WMATA Parking Lot



Goal 2

Amend parking requirements to be reflective of a transit-oriented neighborhood and to provide a more seamless, accessible and user-friendly experience when parking.

Policy 2.1

Examine the existing conditions and needs within Town Center's parking system. "Right-size" minimum parking requirements to combat the high cost of developing new parking, a cost that gets passed on to the consumer in the form of higher rental rates.

Actions

- **2.1.1** - Eliminate minimum off-street parking requirements within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the Rockville Metro Station and within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of BRT stations. As parking minimums are eliminated, add in protections to prevent potential impacts to surrounding residential communities, such as requiring property owners to submit a parking plan when submitting development applications to provide justification for the number of parking spaces in their project. The elimination of off-street parking minimums does not affect any requirements for the provision of loading areas, nor any requirements to provide accessible parking spaces as established through the Americans with Disabilities Act and state code.
- **2.1.2** - Encourage and expand electric vehicle (EV) charging in Town Center in alignment with the *Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan*. Charging needs are greatest at or near multifamily developments, especially low-to-moderate income units that are further from transit nodes, and at larger commercial/institutional centers that cannot be easily reached by transit or means other than vehicles.

Goal 3

Create pedestrian-oriented building and site design standards for Town Center.

Policy 3.1

Through the ongoing Zoning Ordinance Rewrite project, develop standards to unify and create consistent pedestrian-oriented building and site design that provide flexibility for innovative design, yet hold developments to certain architectural standards.

Actions

- **3.1.1** - Create building design standards for Town Center and incorporate these standards into the Zoning Ordinance by the adoption of standards into the updated zoning proposed in Action 1.1.1. Standards should address streetwall character and design features including, but not limited to, building materials, building envelopes, first floor activity generators, upper-story facade setbacks, cornice integration, fenestration, placement of entries, and appropriate transitions to adjacent properties; all of which emphasize pedestrian orientation and human-scaled design.
- **3.1.2** - Develop standards for street furniture, including bus shelters, seating, surface treatments, sustainable and native landscaping, sidewalk widths, and lighting for pedestrian areas that fit within and layer on top of existing roadway classification sections. These standards will incorporate design elements that reduce fall and mobility hazards, provide consistent sidewalk widths and materials, minimize maintenance issues, and adhere to meeting sustainable and resilient environmental standards, as well as create a cohesive sense of place.



TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY



Town Center possesses a variety of multi-modal transportation options that create crucial connections to flanking neighborhoods and to neighboring areas within Montgomery County and the region.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Town Center is proximate to several forms of public transportation. Located within the planning area is the Rockville Metro Station, part of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) system. Rockville Station is the second to last stop on the western red line. In 2024, Rockville Station had 2,379 average daily riders, compared to 3,907 average daily riders in 2019, meaning that ridership has recovered to 60% of its pre-pandemic rate⁶.

Since 2021, the city has been working collaboratively with WMATA and Montgomery County to study the Rockville Metro station and identify opportunities to increase transit ridership through improving site access and incorporating mixed-use development onsite. The Mayor and Council adopted a preferred concept for development at the station in December 2024. From here, the city will work with WMATA and other stakeholders to develop a process and timeline for implementation.

Rockville Station is also served by Amtrak and Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) rail. The Amtrak Capitol Limited provides daily service between Washington, D.C. and Chicago and serves Rockville Station. Other notable stops along the route include Pittsburgh, PA and Cleveland, OH. Rockville is on MARC's Brunswick Line, which connects Union Station in Washington, D.C. to Martinsburg, West Virginia, with a branch to Frederick, Maryland. Service only operates southbound in the morning and northbound in the afternoon and evening. As of January 2023, the average weekday ridership at Rockville station is 165 people⁷. This is down from 483 people in 2019, meaning that Rockville ridership is at about 34% of pre-pandemic levels⁷. A study of the Brunswick Line completed in 2023 calls for 2.3

miles of additional track between Rockville and Washington Grove, a portion of which is within the planning area. This Plan is supportive of this third track, should funding and feasibility analysis show it is possible.

Town Center is served by a variety of bus routes operated by WMATA and Ride On, Montgomery County Department of Transportation's (MCDOT) bus system. Notably, the Ride On 55 route and Metrobus Q routes, which come through Town Center, are some of the most popular in their respective systems. A large part of Town Center south of Beall Avenue is served by Ride On Flex, an on-demand transit service available to anyone. Additionally, MetroAccess provides shared-ride, door-to-door paratransit services from and to most places within Town Center to eligible riders whose disability prevents them from using bus or rail.

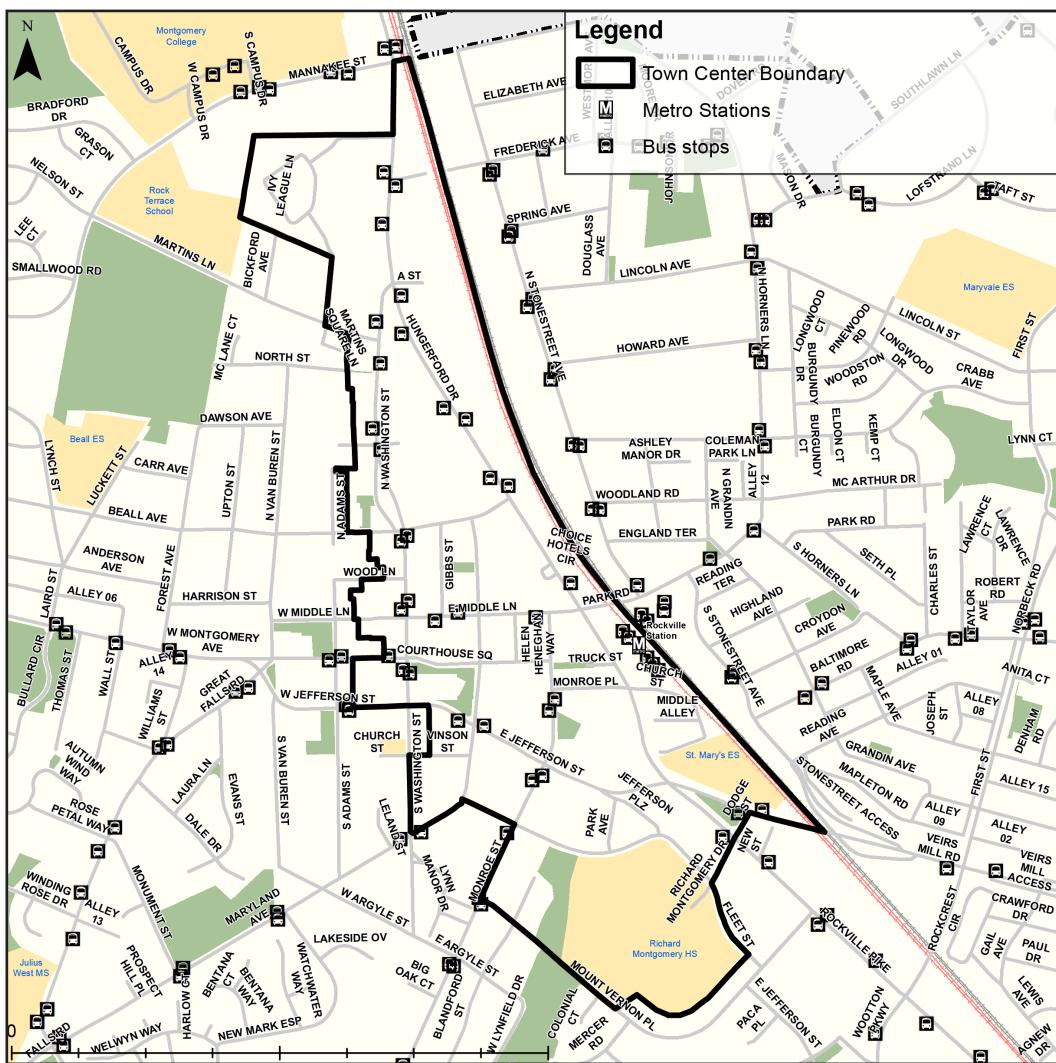
Since 2013, Montgomery County has planned to construct Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes along MD-355 (Hungerford Drive and Rockville Pike) and MD-586 (Veirs Mill Road) as a part of a larger envisioned countywide BRT network. Both routes, which intersect in Rockville, have received construction funding in the county's FY23-FY28 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The first phase of the MD-355 BRT will be constructed from Montgomery College Rockville to Montgomery College Germantown. It is currently in the preliminary design stage and construction is expected to be completed in FY 2028. Further phases are in the preliminary design phase but have not been funded for construction at this time. Eventually, one stop on the MD-355 line will be in Planning Area 1. The Veirs Mill BRT will extend from Montgomery College Rockville to Wheaton Metro Station, with one stop planned in Planning Area 1. The Veirs Mill Road BRT is currently in the final design stage with construction expected to be completed in FY 2027. Implementation of these bus rapid transit routes are noted priorities of the Mayor and Council and are anticipated to bring additional people into Town Center. Through this collaborative effort, the city is consistently in communication with both

entities to determine congestion levels, recommend significant improvements to street design such as adding multimodal paths, increase non-auto driver mode share, and implement Bus Rapid Transit. To be consistent with the 30% BRT plans, the city will need to update several master plans, including the *Bikeway Master Plan*.

While accessibility to a variety of transportation options is an advantage, Town Center faces a number of challenges due to segmented street and transportation system ownership and maintenance. As such, the city is ultimately not the final decision maker for many of the transportation modes and aligned infrastructure. In part to address this

fragmented ownership, the city has adopted several planning documents stating the city's vision and lists of prioritized projects related to transportation. The *Bikeway Master Plan* (2017) and *Pedestrian Master Plan* (2023) directly address bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, while the *Climate Action Plan* (2021) and *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* (2021) speak more broadly about active transportation and transportation infrastructure. Recommendations in this Plan will build on the projects listed and described within these other adopted planning documents while also addressing the needs of the community as identified through the outreach and engagement phase of the project.

Map 21: Public Transportation in Town Center



ROADWAYS

Town Center is located off MD-355, a state-owned road that runs north/south from Frederick to Bethesda. Categorized as a “principal arterial” by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), the segment of MD-355 that runs through Town Center carries an Annual Average Daily Traffic count of between 44,000-47,000 vehicles per day⁸. Also running through Town Center is MD-28, which carries around 24,000 vehicles per day⁸. Town Center is just over one mile away from Interstate 270 (I-270). I-270 is one of the largest highways in the region and sees more than 200,000 cars traveling on it daily.

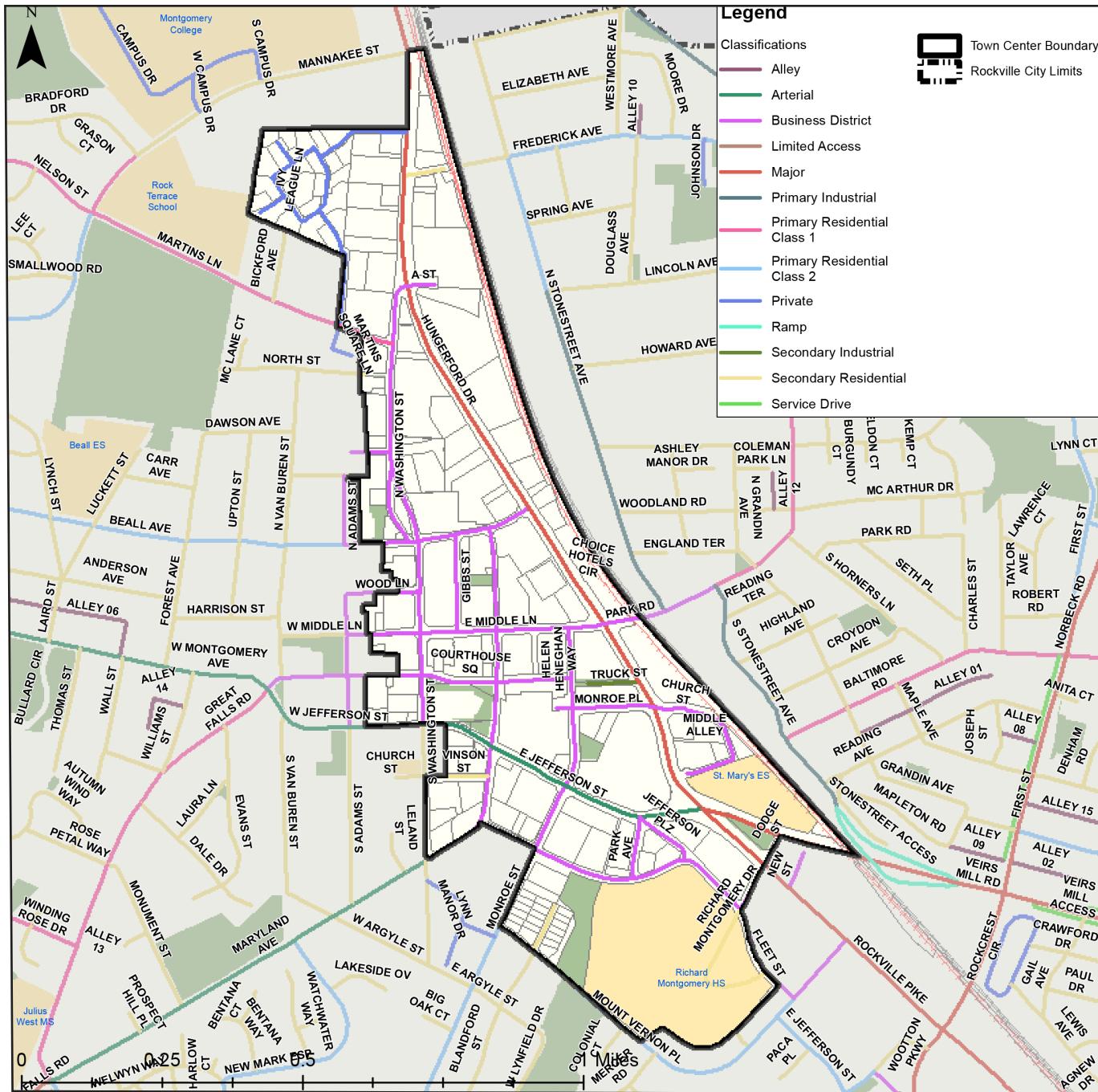
The majority of the city-maintained roads within the Town Center planning area are functionally classified as “business district” streets. Standards for these roadways include a minimum 10-foot pedestrian travel zone and 7 foot minimum landscaped/furniture zone. Depending on the classification as Class I or Class II, standards also call for two or four 11-foot travel lanes, 5-foot minimum bike lanes, and 7-foot minimum parking lanes, for a minimum right of way of either 72 or 94 feet.

The city’s *Pedestrian Master Plan* calls for roadway standards citywide to be updated to provide, at minimum, five-foot-wide sidewalks on arterial, industrial, and residential streets and minimum of 10-foot-wide sidewalks on business district streets. The document also calls for a seven-foot-wide minimum buffer along all streets. Additionally, the *Pedestrian Master Plan* states that when a brick or cobblestone sidewalk is replaced, concrete, asphalt, or another smooth surface material should be considered for its replacement to limit mobility hazards often associated with uneven walking surfaces.

The *Pedestrian Master Plan* also sets forth a series of recommendations for infrastructure necessary for safe walking and rolling throughout Rockville. Within Town Center, the *Pedestrian Master Plan* calls for the following specific improvements:

- Create a shared use path from Blandford Street’s northern terminus to Fleet Street.
- Create a shared use path on Fleet Street between Maryland Avenue and Park Avenue.
- Create a shared use path on Monroe Street between Fleet Street and E. Middle Lane.
- Create a shared use path connecting Martin’s Lane to S. Campus Drive to access Montgomery College.
- Create a shared use path on MD-355 northbound between Shady Grove Road and Twinbrook Parkway (transects the planning area).

Map 22: Town Center Roadway Classifications



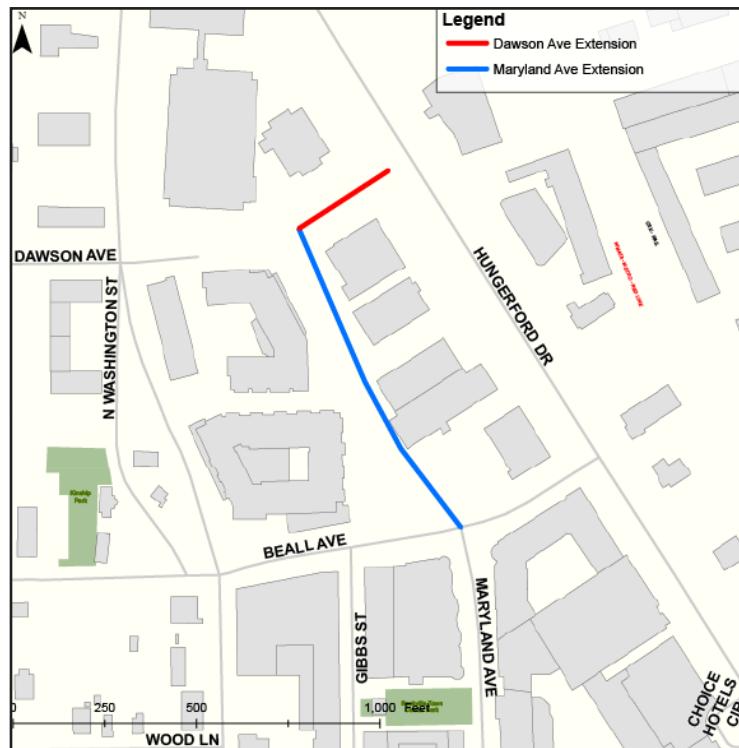
In 2023, the city completed “road diets” on N. Washington Street between MD-355 and MD-28, as well as along E. Middle Lane from N. Washington Street to MD-355. This project restriped the existing roadway, repurposing the right-of-way to provide additional on-street parking; separated and protected bicycles lanes; widened sidewalks; and made additional enhancements to improve the pedestrian realm. These facilities not only make it more comfortable for people walking and bicycling, but also improve traffic safety for everyone, including motorists.

The 2001 Plan called for the extension of the pedestrian “spine” through Town Center by extending Maryland Avenue north from Beall Avenue to Dawson Avenue. This extension would continue the urban street grid while providing streetscape amenities such as street trees, lighting, and sidewalks. This Plan continues to promote and encourage the development of this “spine” throughout Town Center. The property owner of 414 and 416 Hungerford Drive has approached city staff

about the redevelopment of their property, which would dedicate land for much of this extension. Further dedication of land also needs to be coordinated with the owners of 401 N. Washington Street and 430 Hungerford Drive to complete the extension to Dawson Avenue. This extension is in the city’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP 5C11) though it is not currently funded.

Much like the plans for the extension of Maryland Avenue, the city has long planned for an extension of Dawson Avenue that would connect to Maryland Avenue and MD-355. Phase I of the project, extending Dawson Avenue from N. Washington Street to Maryland Avenue, has been completed. Phase II, which would complete the connection from the extended Maryland Avenue to MD-355, is currently in the city’s CIP. The funding source for this project is Montgomery County’s Transportation Impact Tax. Future development within or adjacent to the planned extensions of Maryland Avenue or Dawson Avenue should anticipate dedicating right-of-way to complete these connections.

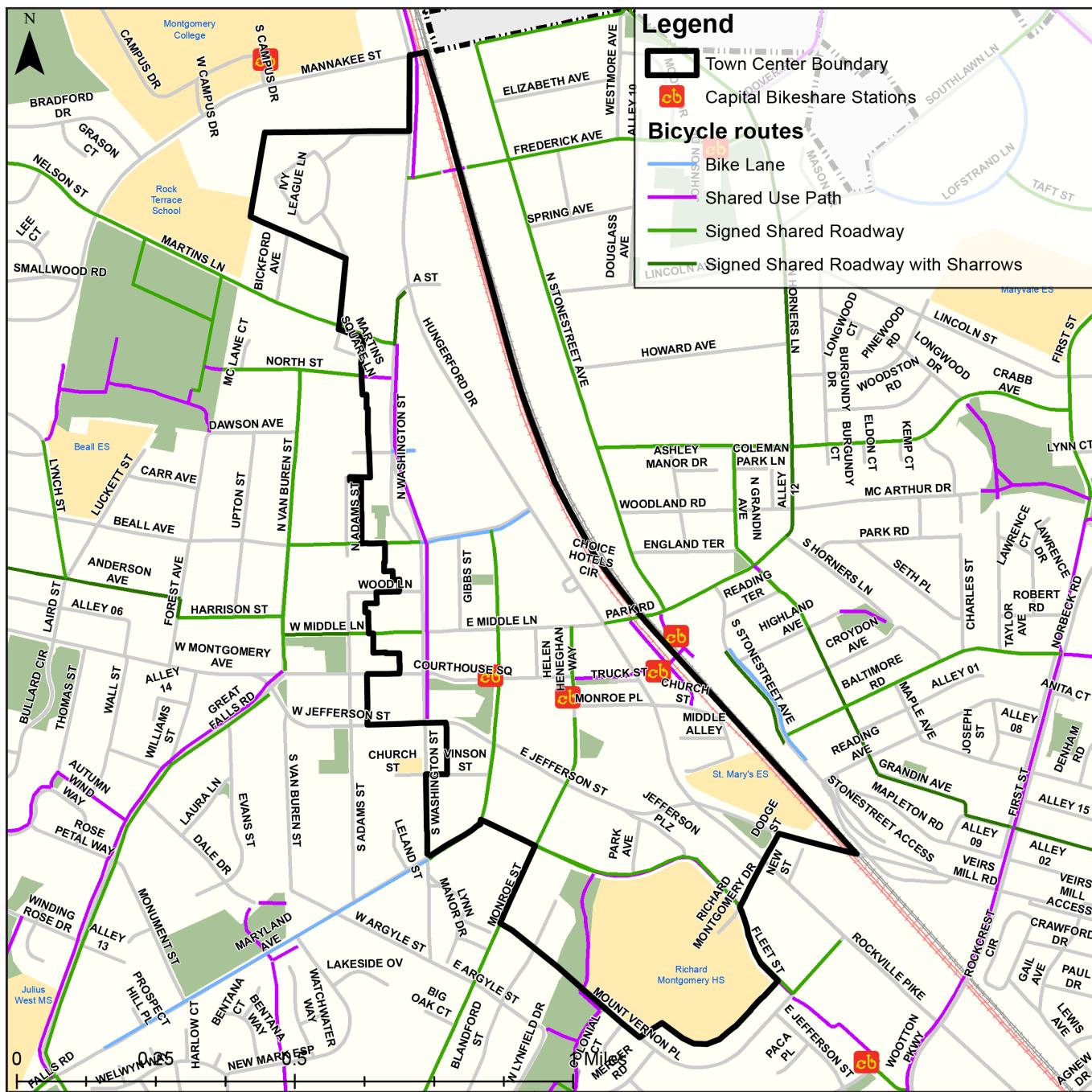
Map 23: Maryland Avenue & Dawson Avenue Extensions



BIKE INFRASTRUCTURE

There are three Capital Bikeshare stations in Town Center, located at E. Montgomery Avenue and Maryland Avenue, Monroe Street and Monroe Place, and Rockville Station. There are two additional Bikeshare stations outside the planning area boundary, but in close proximity to Town Center. There are no Capital Bikeshare stations in the northern portion of the planning area. Town Center has a combination of bike lanes, shared-use paths, and signed shared roadways (with and without sharrows) throughout the planning area, as depicted in Map 24.

Map 24: Bicycle Infrastructure



The *Bikeway Master Plan*, adopted in 2017, is a component of the city's Comprehensive Plan and provides a vision for a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system within Rockville. The plan serves as a guide for improving bicycle infrastructure and programs throughout the city. This Town Center Master Plan supports the vision, goals and projects stated within the *Bikeway Master Plan*, specifically those improvements that have been identified for Town Center, which include:

- Add a bike lane on the extension of Dawson Avenue from N. Washington Street to Hungerford Drive.
- Create a shared use path on northbound MD-355 connecting to Mannakee Street.
- Create a cycle track on southbound MD-355 connecting to Mannakee Street.
- Add a bike lane on Martin's Lane from N. Washington Street to Mannakee Street.
- Place signage indicating a shared roadway on Maryland Avenue from S. Washington Street to Dawson Avenue extended.
- Add a bike lane along Monroe Street from Monroe Place to Fleet Street.
- Add a bike lane on W. Montgomery Avenue between W. Jefferson Street and N. Washington Street.
- Place signage indicating a shared roadway on W. Montgomery Avenue between W. Jefferson Street and N. Washington Street.
- Conduct spot improvements at the intersection of MD-355 and N. Washington Street.

The city's Department of Public Works is frequently assessing bicycle infrastructure within Rockville and identifying areas for improvement. The City is planning on building and installing bicycle parking corrals, one of which will be located within Town Center.

PARKING

There are seven publicly owned and operated parking lots and garages within Town Center. Three of the garages, Garage A, Garage B and Garage C, are owned by the City of Rockville and offer a total of 1,688 parking spaces, of which 973 are unrestricted public parking spaces. WMATA owns two parking lots in the planning area offering 524 spaces for transit riders. Montgomery County offers a juror parking lot and County Council Office Building garage to the public, providing additional parking spaces.

Additionally, several private property owners within Town Center offer parking for their residents, employees, and customers. Many of these private property owners also offer parking paid for at hourly or monthly rates to the general public. There should be continued coordination among the public and private parking providers in Town Center to improve driver understanding on parking options and enhance user experience. The city should conduct outreach and education to Rockville residents and visitors about parking facilities and improvements.

Map 25: Public Parking Lots



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Goal 4

Make transportation related improvements that enhance safety and user experience for all who drive, bike, walk or roll.

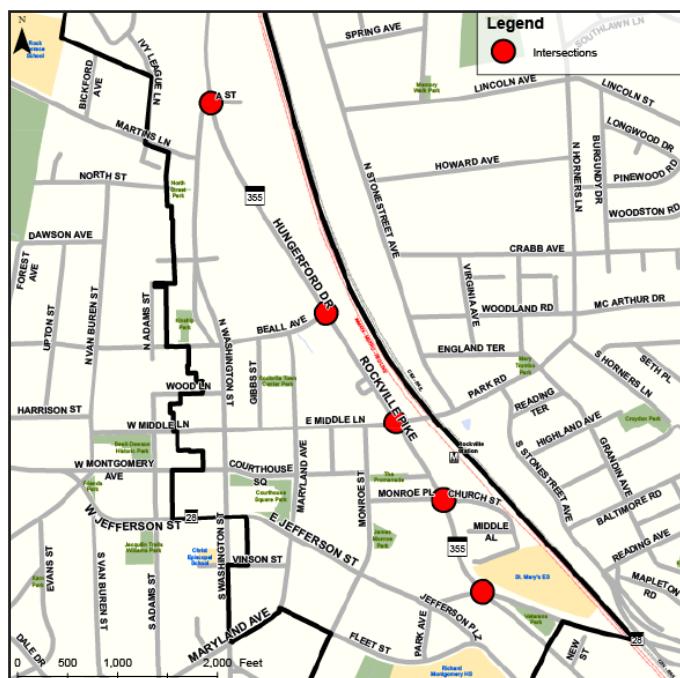
Policy 4.1

Assess and improve the design of the local street system to address concerns of safety, speed, turning movements, and interaction for all users who walk, roll, bike, and drive within the Town Center.

Actions

- **4.1.1** - Coordinate with SHA to improve safety along E. and W. Jefferson Street / MD-28 from MD-355 to S. Washington Street.
- **4.1.2** - Work with SHA to improve the safety and user experience for people walking, rolling, and biking along MD-355. Advocate for expanded continuous and similarly sized sidewalks and hardscape treatments. Carry out improvements throughout the planning area as recommended in the 2023 *Pedestrian Master Plan* and 2017 *Bikeway Master Plan*, as may be amended.
- **4.1.3** - Advance the audits currently underway by SHA along MD-355 to improve safety, mobility, and turning movements in Town Center. Audit locations are the intersection of MD-355 with the following roads: Church Street/Monroe Place; E. Middle Lane/Park Road; N. Washington Street; Beall Avenue; and MD-28.
- **4.1.4** - Pending results of the audit, coordinate with SHA to redesign and reconstruct the intersection of N. Washington Street and MD-355 with a focus on safety enhancements for pedestrians.

Map 26: Intersections Under Audit by SHA



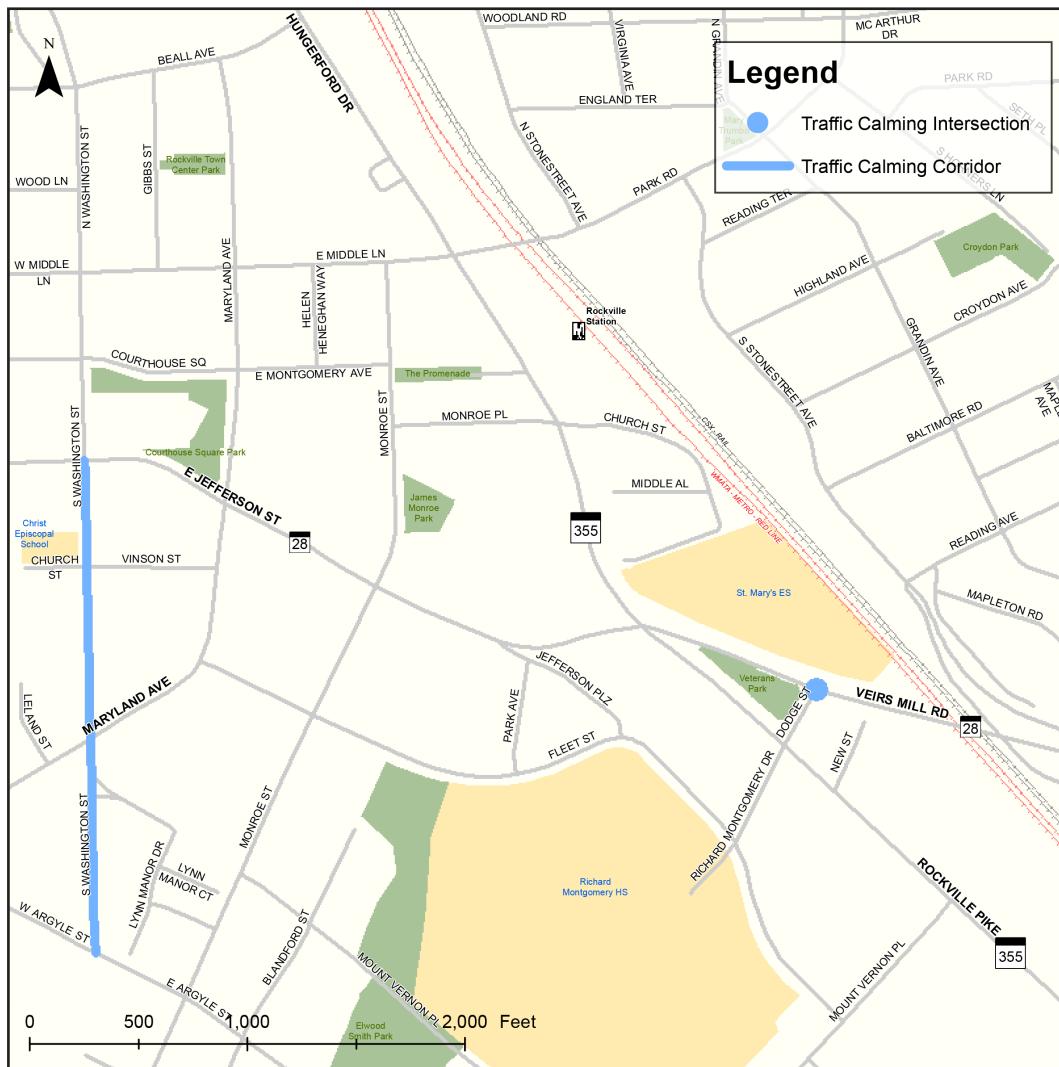
Policy 4.2

In addition to the recommendations suggested in the *Bikeway Master Plan* and *Pedestrian Master Plan*, as amended, implement traffic calming, complete streets, or other design features on local roadways to increase safety and usability.

Actions

- **4.2.1** - S. Washington Street: Add signage indicating a shared roadway for vehicles and cyclists on S. Washington Street from MD-28 to W. Argyle Street, and permitting cyclists to travel southbound on S. Washington Street from N. Washington Street at MD-28.
- **4.2.2** - Veirs Mill Road at Dodge Street - Study the feasibility of implementing safety measures for students and pedestrians to provide an improved crossing experience, potentially including installation of pedestrian hybrid beacons or similar interventions and corresponding signage.
- **4.2.3** - Provide additional bicycle parking within the right-of-way through city investment or through private development.

Map 27: Traffic Calming Locations



Goal 5

Work with WMATA and MCDOT to enhance public transportation systems to increase accessibility, improve ridership, and expand systems.

Policy 5.1

Support Montgomery County's implementation of the planned MD-586/Veirs Mill Road and MD-355 bus rapid transit lines with a focus on serving as many Rockville residents, workers, and visitors as possible.

Actions

- **5.1.1** - Advocate for the Rockville Metro Station stops on the BRT lines to be located as close to the Metro station as feasible to minimize pedestrian crossings and increase pedestrian safety.
- **5.1.2** - Advocate for the east side of MD-355 to have a 10' shared-use path along the full extent of the BRT along MD-355.
- **5.1.3** - Add bicycle lanes along N. Washington from Martins Lane to the planned BRT bike facility along southbound MD-355.
- **5.1.4** - Ensure Town Center bicycle facilities designed and implemented by the city are seamlessly connected to the bicycle facilities related to the BRT.

Policy 5.2

Make improvements to existing bus service and bus stops.

Actions

- **5.2.1** - Advocate to Ride On and Metrobus for the installation of digital displays advertising times and frequency of bus routes, real time notifications of service and associated delays, and methods to provide such information to individuals with visual and hearing impairments, all of which will provide an improved dissemination of information to all riders. Such displays should also note cross Town Center connections and existing bus routes that offer circulation throughout Town Center and to nearby destinations such as Montgomery College.
- **5.2.2** - Review inventory of existing bus stops within Town Center to determine which stops have bus shelters and/or seating. Once an inventory is created, establish a system for determining which bus stops warrant seating and/or bus shelters, and fund a program to improve bus stops that meet warrant criteria.

Policy 5.3

Encourage active transportation as a means to close the "last mile" between transit stations and a rider's final destination.

Actions

- **5.3.1** - Coordinate with WMATA to provide a safe and secure bicycle shelter at the Rockville Metro Station.

Goal 6

Implement wayfinding signage to provide clear direction and awareness of Town Center and its attractions.

Policy 6.1

Improve pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicular wayfinding directing people into and throughout Town Center.

Actions

- **6.1.1** - Adopt and implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan within Town Center. The wayfinding plan should address vehicular, pedestrian, and cyclist level signage needs. Wayfinding should have a dual focus on directing people off main corridors, such as MD-355 or MD-28, into Town Center, as well as providing directional signage to major activity generators within Town Center. Wayfinding signage can also be used to create a sense of place through the incorporation of public art into the wayfinding scheme. The plan should specifically address public parking garages, denote accessible routes to common destinations, and incorporate technology to improve wayfinding.
- **6.1.2** - Add signage along N. Washington Street at North Street Park to provide direction to pedestrians and cyclists that North Street can be used to access the Rockville Swim & Fitness Center and Welsh Park.

Goal 7

Strengthen visual and physical connections between Town Center and adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy 7.1

Enhance interconnectivity between Town Center and other adjacent neighborhoods.

Actions

- **7.1.1** - Complete a feasibility study for improvements on Beall Avenue to improve connections between Town Center and the West End and other neighborhoods to the west. The study should look at incorporating complete street principles to enhance the pedestrian realm and increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists getting to and from Town Center.
- **7.1.2** - Make improvements to the Park Road underpass of the CSX tracks to enhance the connection between Town Center and neighborhoods to its east such as Lincoln Park and East Rockville. Improvements could include enhanced lighting, public art, and/or gateway entry signage.
- **7.1.3** - Make improvements to and coordinate with WMATA to make improvements to the entrance of the western side of the Unity Bridge to enhance connections between Town Center and neighborhoods to its east (see Action 9.2.1).



HOUSING

Residents are key to a vibrant, successful Town Center; however, a lack of housing opportunities within the planning area has led to inflated costs that burden existing residents and a too-small customer base for shops and restaurants. The DC metropolitan region, Montgomery County, and Rockville have been and continue to be in a housing crisis. Housing production has failed to keep pace with population and job growth over the last decade, resulting in housing shortages that drive up rents and home prices. Town Center is no exception to this nationwide trend.

Recognizing the downfalls of low housing supply and acute housing affordability needs, Rockville supported a 2019 resolution by the Montgomery County Council endorsing regional housing targets created by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. This established a target of 1,000 additional housing units in the city between 2020 and 2030 beyond the 3,000 units already forecasted for this period, with a goal of three-quarters of new housing units to be affordable to low- and middle-income households and located within activity centers like Town Center. Furthermore, the Comprehensive Plan establishes a goal to develop more than 8,600 new residential units in Rockville by 2040.

While there is undoubtedly a confluence of factors at play that have led to this nationwide housing crisis, experts largely agree the root cause stems from a lack of supply of housing units. As a result, many communities have implemented policies to relax zoning or speed up construction in an attempt to bring new housing units to the market.

While this Plan only provides recommendations to Planning Area 1, the citywide Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, currently underway, will look at Rockville's zoning ordinance to allow for the development of more housing units. Meeting current and projected housing needs within Town Center will require the construction of both new market-rate and affordable housing units as well as other housing subsidies and services, much of which are done on

a citywide scale rather than specific to the planning area. Montgomery County is advancing many programs and incentives intended to increase affordable housing development, especially near transit. To stay competitive and attract investments in affordable housing, Rockville should consider adopting similar policies alongside other regional and national best practices.

The capacity for new housing construction is primarily addressed in the Zoning and Land Use section of this Plan. As such, the actions in this section primarily focus on policies and processes related to providing below market-rate housing at price points that are affordable to all members of the Town Center community. Though it is not called out by a specific recommended action within this Plan, the city encourages the development of a wide variety of unit types - this refers to different housing typologies (such as townhomes and multifamily apartment buildings), but also provides a mix of units within those typologies (studios, 1-bedroom units, 2-bedroom units, etc.). The city encourages unit mixes in development projects to contain the full range of unit types that the market can support of different sizes and layouts to accommodate the greatest variety of households.



EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

As of December 2022, Town Center has 3,231 existing residential units⁹. Most of the units are multifamily housing units such as apartments or condominiums. 74.7% of housing units within Town Center are renter occupied⁹ and the rental vacancy rate is low, indicating a high demand for rental units.

In the multifamily housing market, a vacancy rate between 5% and 10% is generally desirable and indicates a stabilized property. Throughout the five-year period analyzed, the greatest vacancy rate within Town Center was 2022, when the vacancy rate was at 9%. However, 400 additional units also came onto the market in 2022, so this higher vacancy rate is likely a result of the lease up period where these two new buildings were working to stabilize with their initial residents. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, the nationwide multifamily vacancy rate is 6.5%, and Maryland's multifamily vacancy rate is 7.3%. Town Center's vacancy rate is lower than the state and national average. Due to the turnover of units within an apartment building at the end of a lease cycle and the time it takes to clean, prep, and release a unit, most buildings always experience some degree of revolving vacancy.

Table 4: Town Center Multifamily Rental Building Vacancy Rates

Year	Number of Buildings	Number of Units	Average SF Per Unit	Asking Rent Per SF	Vacancy Rate
2019	4	1,141	932	\$2.20	3.8%
2020	5	1,211	927	\$2.13	6.0%
2021	5	1,211	927	\$2.34	2.1%
2022	7	1,611	893	\$2.41	9.0%
2023	7	1,611	893	\$2.50	5.1%

Source: CoStar Data Pulled July 2023.

According to Redfin market insights pulled in December 2024, the median sales price for homes within the 20850 zip code is \$735,705, and 44.7% of homes sold above list price¹⁰. Redfin considers this zip code to be “very competitive.” On the rental side, the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development establishes Fair Market Rents (FMRs) across the country, which indicate the gross rent for “standard quality units” in a given area. In the 20850 zip code, FMRs are: \$2,170 for an efficiency/studio unit; \$2,200 for a one-bedroom unit; \$2,500 for a two-bedroom unit; \$3,110 for a three-bedroom unit; and \$3,690 for a four-bedroom unit¹¹.

Table 5: Housing Stock / Structure Type

Units in Structure	Estimate of Units	Percentage of Total Units
1-unit detached	185	5.8%
1-unit attached	305	9.6%
2 units	0	0%
3 - 4 units	0	0%
5 - 9 units	158	5.0%
10 - 19 units	52	1.6%
20 or more units	2,480	78%

Most of the existing housing within Town Center is relatively new, having been built in the 1970s or later. Table 6 shows a breakdown of housing units and the year they were built.

Table 6: Housing Units by Year Built⁹

Decade Built	Percentage of Total Units
2020 or later	0%
2010 to 2019	25.1%
2000 to 2009	23%
1990 to 1999	8.7%
1980 to 1989	9.8%
1970 to 1979	20.2%
1960 to 1969	5.4%
1950 to 1959	5.8%
1940 to 1949	1.1%
1939 or earlier	0.8%

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The terms frequently used in housing policy often mean different things to different people. For the purposes of this Plan, housing terms used throughout the document are defined as:

- **Affordable housing:** income or deed-restricted housing that is offered below the market rate for housing. Affordable housing receives a subsidy from public, private, and/or non-profit entities.
- **Housing affordability:** housing affordability is different for every household, depending on their income, wealth, and needs. Households spending more than 30% of their gross income on housing are considered “housing cost burdened” and those spending more than 50% on housing are considered “severely housing cost burdened.”
- **Market-rate housing:** housing that is not subsidized and has a price based on market values such as location, size, amenities, building condition, and demand.
- **Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) program:** a requirement for rental and for sale developments with 20 or more housing units to set aside at least 15% of the homes for households earning a certain income. MPDUs are not owned or managed by the city.
- **Naturally occurring affordable housing:** housing that has relatively low rents compared to the regional housing market, but is not income-restricted, deed-restricted, or receiving a subsidy. Naturally occurring affordable housing is often older and may be ripe for redevelopment if not preserved through intervention strategies.

Around 20% of the housing stock in Town Center is deed-restricted affordable housing. Town Center has two apartment buildings that have been funded by the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which is a federal resource that funds the development of affordable housing.

More than 50% of Town Center’s affordable housing inventory is the result of moderately priced dwelling unit (MPDU) requirements placed on for-profit housing developments. MPDUs have historically been the city’s largest source of new affordable housing. MPDUs are developed for both fee-simple, for sale developments as well as rental units. These units are mixed in with and indistinguishable from market-rate units. Since there is a requirement of all new developments of 20 or more units to provide 15% MPDUs, by its nature the construction of new market-rate housing will also create new affordable housing.

Approximately 36% of homeowners within Town Center are considered housing cost burdened, while 42% of renters are considered housing cost burdened, meaning more than 30% of their gross income is spent on housing expenses.

SENIOR HOUSING

Town Center is also a hot spot for senior housing. There are three senior housing buildings located within Town Center: Brightview West End; Residences on the Lane; and Sunrise of Rockville. These buildings total 428 units dedicated to seniors, which accounts for 15% of the city's senior housing stock. Additional senior living facilities Victory Court and Heritage House are located just outside of the planning area. Planning and urban design decisions should consider this population in addition to people with intellectual and physical disabilities, for which Town Center serves as a hub of community and services.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Goal 8

Increase the number of affordable homes within Town Center.

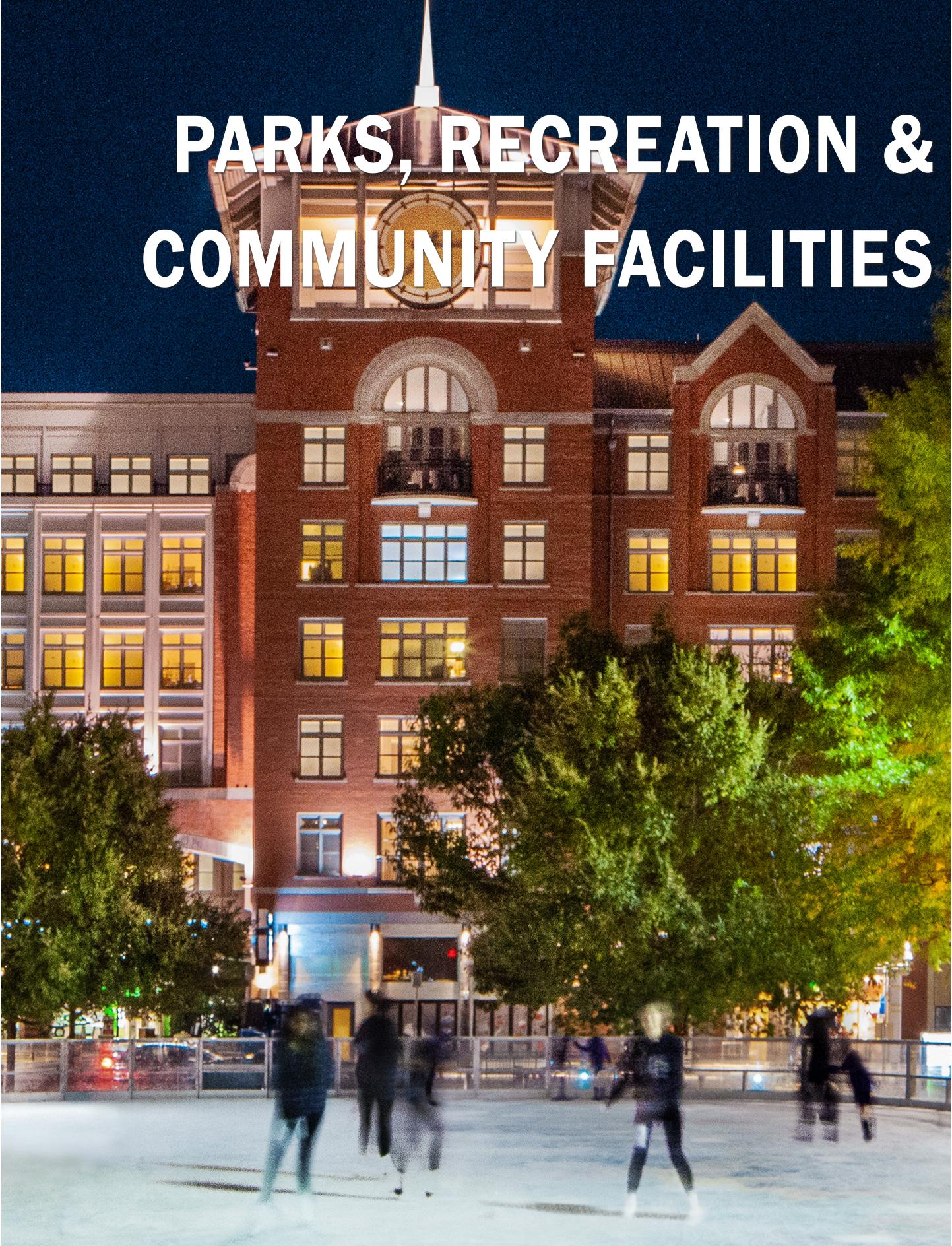
Policy 8.1

Modify regulations and processes to incentivize the development of affordable housing in Town Center.

Actions

- **8.1.1** - Streamline the development approval process for residential projects with more than 25% below market-rate income-restricted housing units located in Town Center. Ensure any changes to the development approval process comply with the State Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, as may be amended.
- **8.1.2** - Establish a property tax abatement, subject to funding, for rental property in Town Center if at least half of units are leased to households with incomes no greater than 60% of the area median income.
- **8.1.3** - Make a recommendation to Montgomery County to consider further reducing the threshold for reducing or eliminating impact taxes for projects that include a certain percentage of MPDUs or workforce housing units (WHUs). Current Montgomery County code states that if a project consists of more than 25% MPDUs/WHUs, the market rate units within the project may have reduced or eliminated impact fees. Advocate for Montgomery County to lower that threshold to 20% for residential projects in Town Center.
- **8.1.4** - Encourage newly constructed or redeveloped city-owned properties to include housing with a minimum of 30% below market-rate income-restricted units.
- **8.1.5** - Actively work with public, private, and philanthropic institutions to assist in the development of affordable housing in Town Center.

PARKS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY FACILITIES



Parks, recreation opportunities, and public community facilities are essential to any community. The city's 2020 *Recreation and Parks Strategic Plan* serves as the city's roadmap for addressing community needs for parks and recreation. This plan complements and informs other planning documents throughout Rockville by making recommendations for improvements to the recreation and park system.

Parks and community facilities look different in various parts of the city. In the more suburban neighborhoods of Rockville, parks tend to be larger in size and accommodate a wider variety of programmed activities such as community centers or playing fields. In more urban areas of the city, public parks tend to be smaller and large fields are often replaced with landscaping, seating, public art, and other amenities that require a smaller footprint.

While it is challenging to add significant new public space into a densely developed area such as Town Center, it is critical to incorporate green and open space into Town Center's environment in order to address environmental impacts such as urban heat island effects and stormwater management, while also improving the health and wellbeing of Town Center's residents.

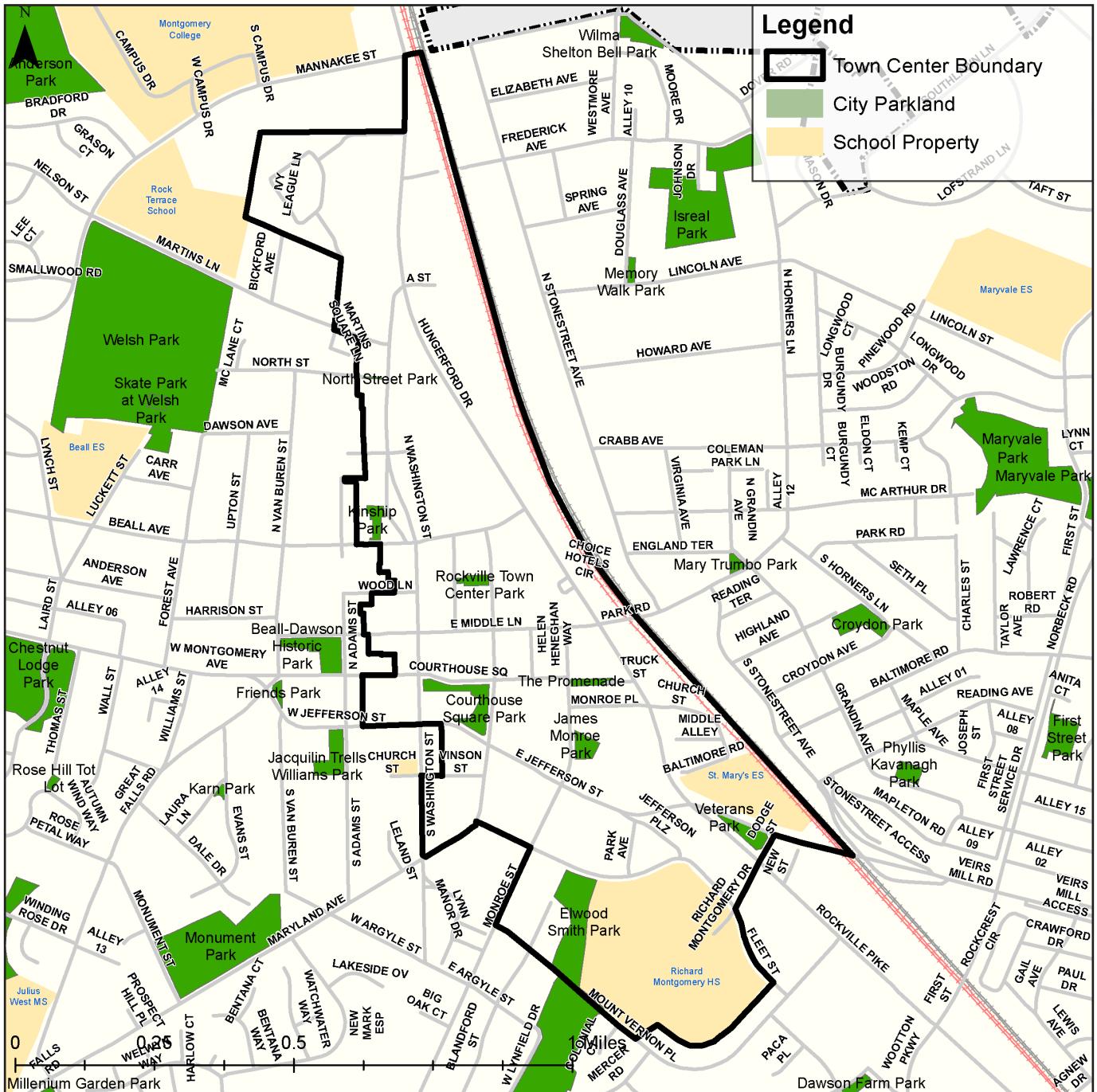
PARKS

The City of Rockville operates eight public parks within Town Center. The majority of these parks are "pocket parks," referring to their relatively small size and location within the urban fabric of downtown Rockville. Seven of the parks within the planning area are less than one acre in size. The largest park is Elwood Smith Park at 7.5 acres, although only a small portion of the park is located within the planning area boundaries; most of the park is within Planning Area 3. The *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* calls for many improvements to parks within Town Center, notably the improvement of Promenade Park and the creation of new parks in the area.

Beyond the publicly owned and operated parks, the city works closely with Morguard, the current owner of the Rockville Town Square development, to program Rockville Town Center Park commonly referred to as Town Square. This 0.4-acre park located at 131 Gibbs Street features drinking fountains, benches, chess boards, and a performance stage. There is also an interactive water fountain and open space area that is transformed into an ice-skating rink during winter months.

Within the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, as well as this document, a land use designation of public park on private property or property not owned by the City of Rockville is strictly for planning purposes. Any such property will not be zoned as "Park" and nothing in the Plan precludes an owner from developing property in accordance with zoning designation and zoning regulations applicable to the property.

Map 28: Parks in Town Center/City



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Rockville Memorial Library is one of 22 branches of the Montgomery County Public Libraries system. The Rockville Memorial Library was constructed in 2006 as a part of the Town Square redevelopment. The facility is approximately 100,000 square feet and provides a variety of services and resources to its users, including collaboration spaces, maker spaces, meeting rooms, study rooms, a piano, and a world languages collection.

There are no community centers – city or county owned – within the Town Center Planning Area. The closest community center is the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center, which is located several blocks west of Town Center's westernmost boundary.

Town Center is home to several emergency response stations. Rockville Volunteer Fire Department's Station 3 is one of four stations belonging to the Fire Department and the only station located in Planning Area 1. There have been ongoing discussions about the future of the Fire Station in this facility. Due to the age of the building and the growing needs to meet calls for service associated with a higher population, the Fire Department is outgrowing the space. There is a limited area of relocation for the Fire Department to retain their current service area, a critical factor in determining if the Station will stay in its longtime location or relocate elsewhere.

In addition to the Fire Department, two police departments are in Town Center: the Rockville City Police Department and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office. Though both police departments are located within the city (and Town Center), the Rockville City Police Department (RCPD) is the primary law enforcement agency responding to calls for service in Rockville. The Sheriff's Office is the law enforcement arm of the County's judicial system and is located within the Montgomery County Judicial Center at 50 Maryland Avenue.

SCHOOLS

There are two schools located within the limits of the Town Center Planning area: Richard Montgomery High School, a Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) high school serving grades 9-12, and St. Mary's Catholic School, a private school serving pre-K through 8th grade.

MCPS is the largest public school system in Maryland and serves all of Montgomery County, including Rockville. Residents within the Town Center Planning Area who send their children to public schools feed into the schools below. Though Richard Montgomery High School is within the planning area itself, the other districted schools fall outside the boundaries of Planning Area 1.

- Elementary Schools: Beall Elementary School, Bayard Rustin Elementary School, College Gardens Elementary School
- Middle School: Julius West Middle School
- High School: Richard Montgomery High School

Montgomery College's Rockville Campus, a community college that serves ~15,000 students every semester, sits adjacent to the Town Center planning area.

The MCPS FY2023-2028 CIP makes only one recommendation impacting Town Center, which is the creation of a new high school, Crown High School, to be located outside of Rockville city limits in Gaithersburg. This school is anticipated to complete construction in FY2027. The boundary lines feeding Richard Montgomery High School will be adjusted and redistricting will take place once Crown High School opens. The goal of this redistricting is to reduce utilization of Richard Montgomery High School, which is currently operating over capacity.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Goal 9

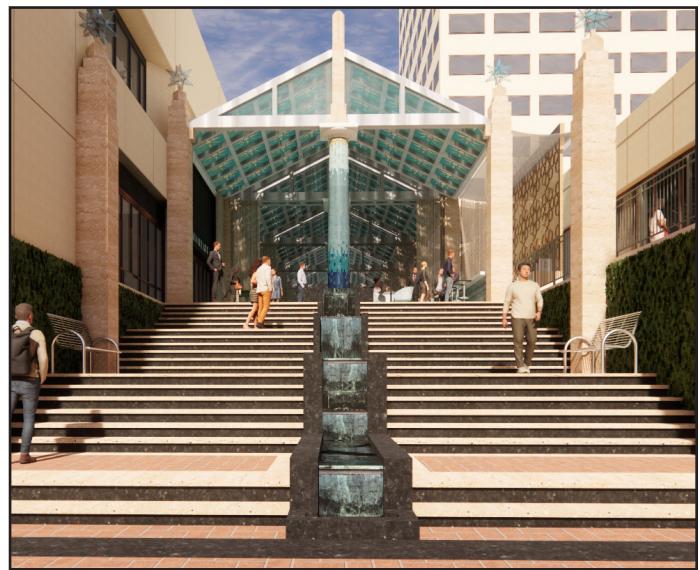
Cultivate Town Center to be an exciting, fun, and innovative place where people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds want to be.

Policy 9.1

Enhance existing parks, community facilities, and programming within Town Center to serve the needs of the community.

Actions

- **9.1.1** - Redesign Promenade Park as a pleasant and inspiring public space and connection between the Town Center core and the pedestrian bridge to the Rockville Metro Station. Partner with WMATA, SHA, and Maryland Transit Administration, MCDOT, and surrounding property owners, and consult with all stakeholders to redesign the park.
 - If redevelopment occurs at either 51 Monroe Street or 255 Rockville Pike, developers should provide any required open space for the project adjacent to Promenade Park in order to expand the area and make it a higher quality amenity.
 - If redevelopment does not occur at either 51 Monroe Street or 255 Rockville Pike, work with building ownership to improve access and provide increased connections from their buildings to Promenade Park.
- **9.1.2** - Continue to support the Rockville Memorial Library to strengthen the library as an anchor of activity within Town Center. Continue to partner with the library for events and programming, encourage the development of new and/or additional programming to meet the evolving needs of the community, and provide letters of support when the library is seeking additional funding from outside sources.
- **9.1.3** - Continue special events and programming in Town Center. Host events, activities, and performances in Town Center to activate this area outside of traditional working hours. This can be achieved through some combination of City of Rockville events, property owner events, licensed events, or partnerships with businesses and organizations (see Action 11.1.2). Continue to evaluate and set parameters for non-City sponsored events allowed in Town Center.



Conceptual renderings showing possible improvements to activate Promenade Park. In this concept, the park is enclosed with a glass roof and activated with a coffee bar to encourage activity. This is one of many possible designs to repurpose this space. At this time, no design of the park has been selected and these images are conceptual only (ZoneCo).

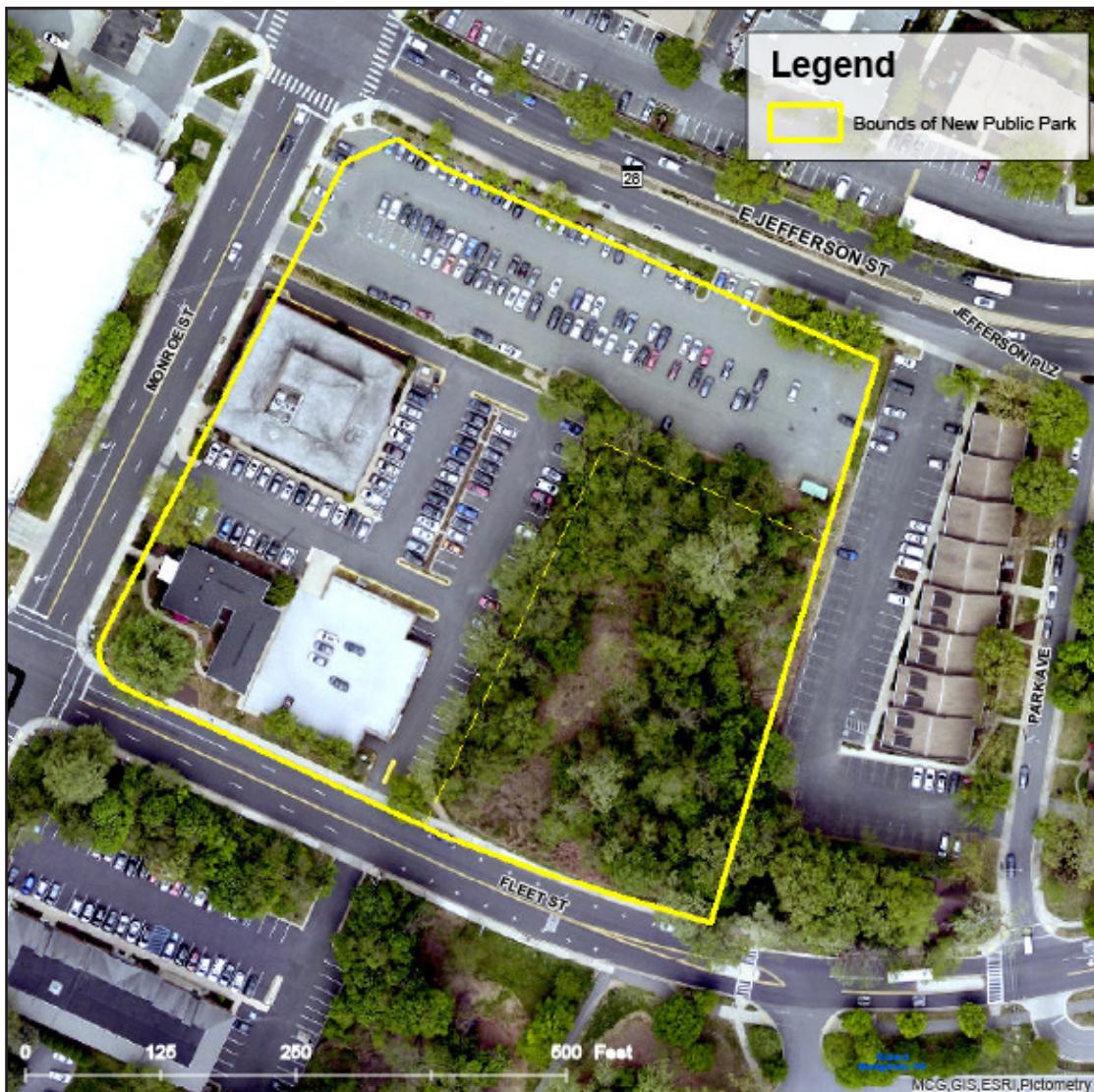
Policy 9.2

Create new parks and community facilities within Town Center.

Actions

- **9.2.1** - Create a pedestrian and bike friendly plaza at the western entrance to the Unity Bridge.
- **9.2.2** - Create a public park within the block bounded by Monroe Street, E. Jefferson Street, Park Avenue and Fleet Street. The Planning Area 1 chapter of the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* calls out the desire for a “large public park and event space” in this vicinity. This Plan refines that recommendation, isolating the proposed park to one specific block. The park should be established by means of land dedication as part of a development project, purchase, land swap, or some other method that would serve as a significant public gathering and event space for the Rockville community and beyond. Once a park is established, continue the existing shared-use path that runs from Elwood Smith Park to Fleet Street, connecting the trail north to E. Jefferson Street.

Map 29: Proposed Public Park



- **9.2.3** - Work with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to acquire property along the existing Mt. Vernon trail to Fleet Street. The city currently maintains the trail and owns the majority of it, though there are small portions of MCPS land under the trail. Clarifying these property rights will ensure property maintenance and access into the future park noted in Action 9.2.2.
- **9.2.4** - Collaborate with WMATA to create a park at 301 Hungerford Drive, the current location of a surface parking lot for Metro users. The lot's narrow dimensions likely preclude it from being a high-density redevelopment option. In that case, the land should be transformed into a high-quality park to serve as an amenity for Metro users.
- **9.2.5** - If the opportunity presents itself, the city should consider acquiring the Shell gas station located at 260 N. Washington Street to redevelop it into a public park. The gas station is located on an island separated by two legs of N. Washington Street. Remediation and reuse of this parcel into green space could create a park amenity for the northern portion of the planning area.



Conceptual renderings showing possible redevelopment of 260 N. Washington Street. In this concept, the western "spur" of N. Washington Street has been closed to expand space available for a park. These renderings are conceptual only - no design or feasibility analysis has been completed for this idea (ZoneCo).

- **9.2.6** - Create a public park along the planned extension of Maryland Avenue. The park should be established in this general area, either by means of land dedication as part of a development project, purchase, land swap, or some other method that would serve as a small gathering and amenity space for visitors to the area.

Policy 9.3

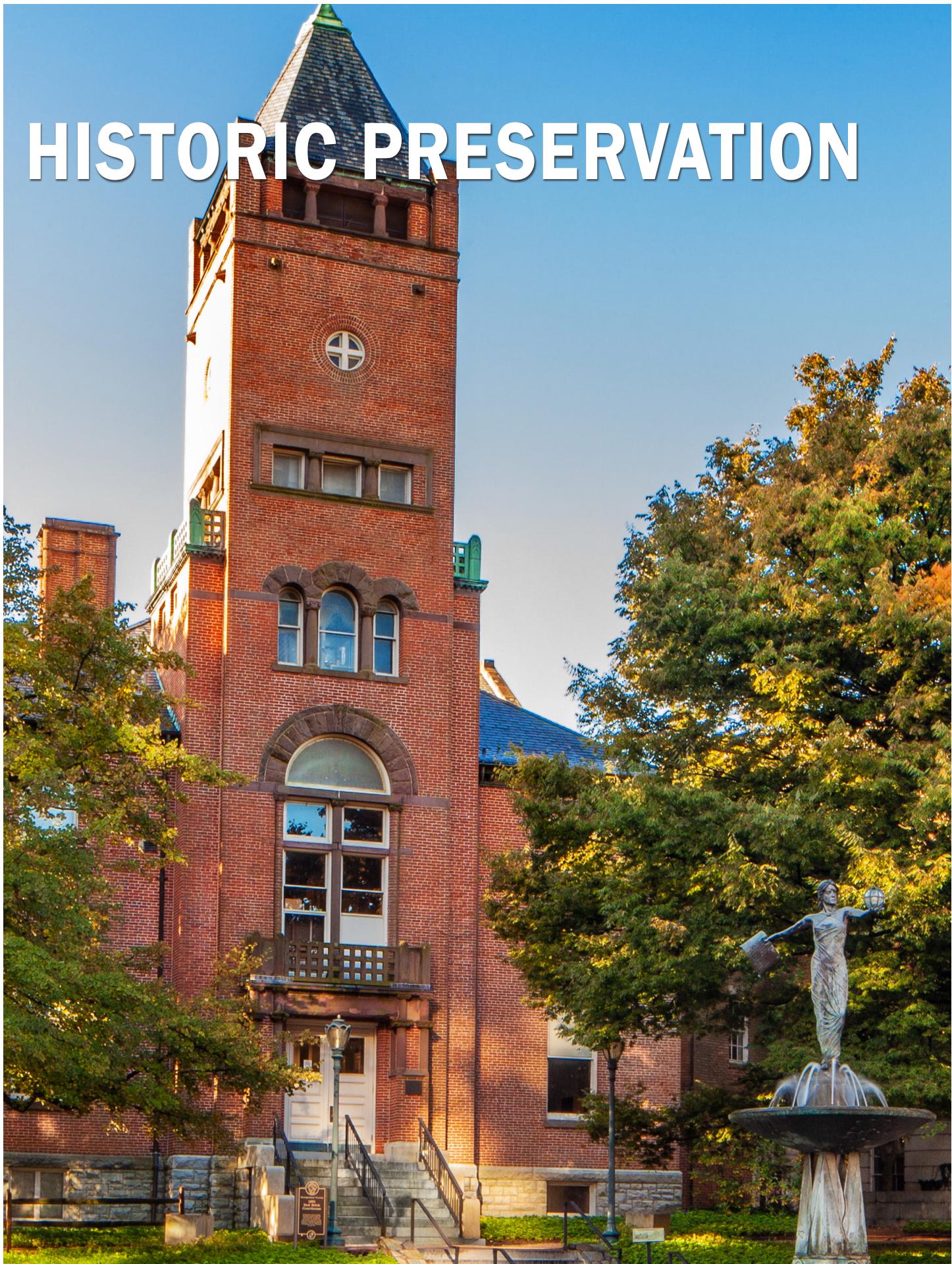
Expand recreation and park programming within Town Center.

Actions

- **9.3.1** - Explore potential for and create a publicly accessible dog park within the Town Center planning area.
- **9.3.2** - Consider a community center as part of a larger development of building(s) in Town Center.
- **9.3.3** - Explore the potential to add publicly accessible turf fields on top of city-owned parking garages/buildings to create public recreational space within existing development footprints.
- **9.3.4** - Explore opportunities to add additional public art throughout Town Center.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION



With a robust history predating European settlement and the founding of the United States, Town Center is Rockville's oldest neighborhood. Policies enacted under the Urban Renewal Program of the mid-1960s were utilized to redevelop the Town Center and most of the area's historic buildings and sites were demolished. Today's remaining historic and cultural resources must be fully and equitably researched, inventoried, and incorporated into the development of a local historic context to provide a full and accountable telling of the area's past and for consideration in future land use planning. Historic preservation is an area of critical state concern as identified by the Maryland Department of Planning and as such, the Maryland Historical Trust has reviewed and endorsed this chapter of the Plan.

NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTIES

There are several historic resources within Town Center that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places is the federal government's official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects deemed significant for their historic, cultural, or archaeological importance. There are nearly 100,000 properties across the country listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including one individually listed property and two districts within Town Center:

- **Rockville Railroad Station:** 2 N. Charles Street.
- **Third Addition to Rockville & Old St. Mary's Church:** 520 Veirs Mill Road.
- **Montgomery County Courthouse Historic District:** Roughly bounded by Maryland Avenue, Courthouse Square, S. Washington Street, and E. Jefferson Street.



Farmer's Banking & Trust Building at 4 Courthouse Square



Rockville Railroad Station at 2 N. Charles Street

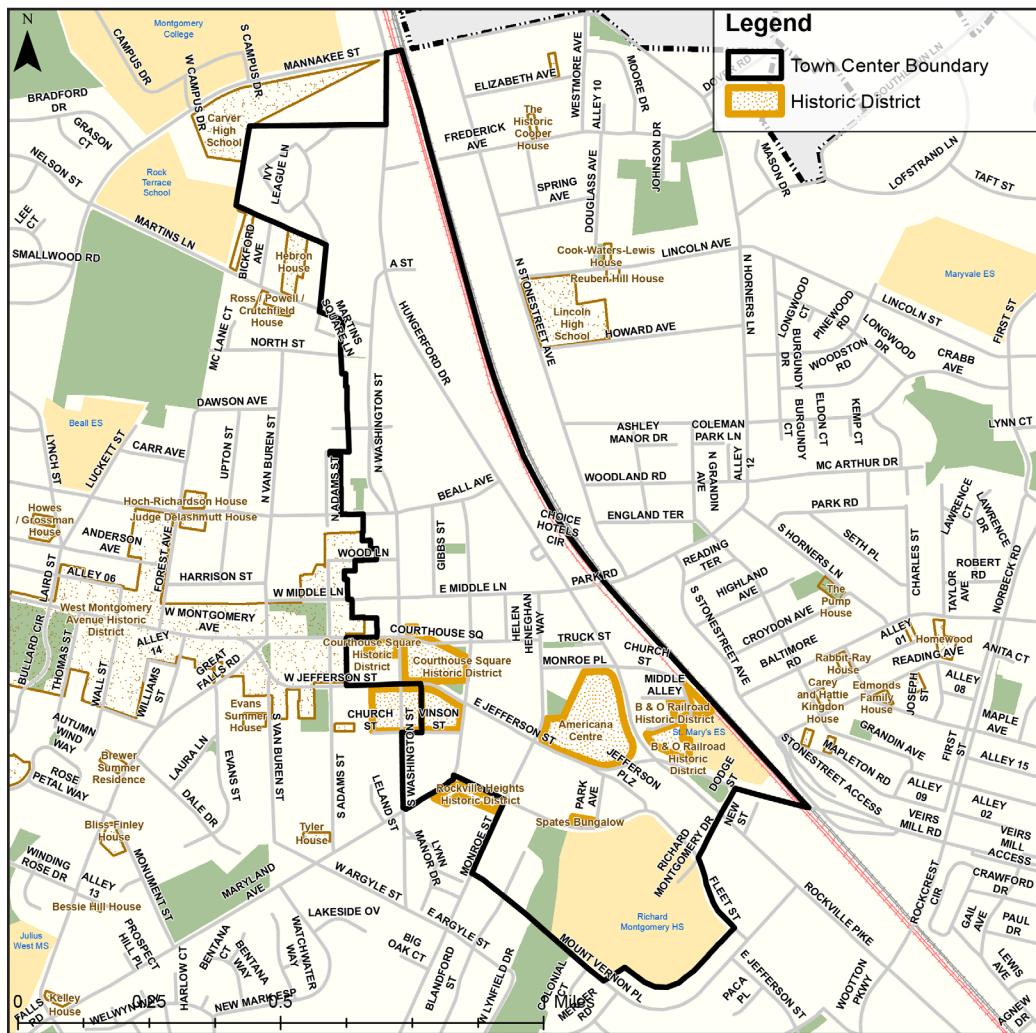
LOCALLY DESIGNATED PROPERTIES

In addition to listing on the National Register of Historic places, the city can locally designate properties as historic districts. These local historic districts carry with them the requirement to consult with the Rockville Historic District Commission before making any alterations to the exterior of the property or site. The Historic District Commission ensures that all proposed alterations to such properties are appropriate and adhere to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Rockville's Technical Guides for Exterior Alterations.

In Rockville, local historic districts may be made up of just one property (single-site historic district) or many properties (multi-site historic district) that together form a larger district. There are currently six local historic districts listed within Planning Area 1:

- **B&O Railroad Historic District:** 98 Church Street – B&O Station; 22 Baltimore Road – Wire Hardware; 520 Veirs Mill Road – St. Mary's Church and Cemetery.
- **Americana Centre Historic District:** 4 – 22 Monroe Street; 100 – 150 Monroe Street.
- **Courthouse Square Historic District:** 20 Courthouse Square – 1891 Courthouse; 27 Courthouse Square - 1931 Courthouse; 2 W. Montgomery Avenue – Old Post Office; 4 Courthouse Square - Farmer's Banking & Trust Building.
- **Spates Bungalow Historic District:** 115 Park Street.
- **Rockville Regional Library:** Demolished.
- **Confederate Solider Monument:** Removed from site, but still listed.

Map 30: Historic Districts in Town Center



RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Goal 10

Document and retain Town Center's history and capitalize on the historic aspects of Town Center to promote heritage tourism.

Policy 10.1

Complete an updated survey of historic and cultural resources located within Town Center.

Actions

- **10.1.1** - Conduct an updated reconnaissance survey of historic resources located within Town Center boundaries. Such a survey will identify any changes or losses to the area. Further, resources that were not previously surveyed or that have gained significance since the original inventory was performed in the mid-to-late 1970s should now be included in the survey.
- **10.1.2** - Update any existing Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) forms for new findings, including demolished resources, and for areas and/or periods of significance not previously addressed. Deliver revised forms to the Maryland Historical Trust for review and approval.
- **10.1.3** - Formulate an amendment to the Montgomery County Courthouse National Register Nomination to address expanded areas and/or periods of significance, missing historical information and contexts, demolished or relocated resources, etc. to modernize the nomination and to fully present an equitable and inclusive history of the area.
- **10.1.4** - Based upon inventory results, identify any additional resources that are eligible for local designation and work with property owners to consider nominating these resources for local historic designation.

Policy 10.2

Develop updated and expanded historic contexts for Town Center.

Actions

- **10.2.1** - Update existing historic contexts for Town Center addressing the period of urban renewal and the results of these policies on the cultural, historic, and natural resources within the planning area.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS

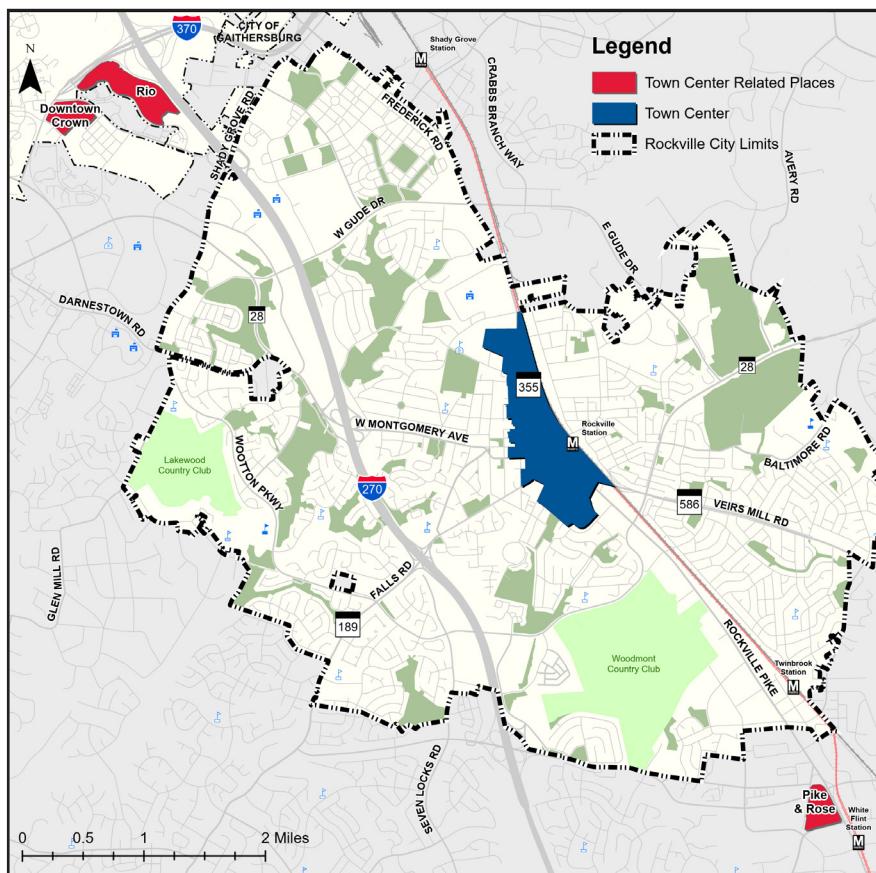


As the county seat of Montgomery County, Rockville is a hub for business within the region. Beyond the plethora of county offices including the Council Office Building and County Executive Office Building, Town Center is also home to Rockville's City Hall, the Montgomery County Circuit and Maryland District courthouses, and hundreds of ancillary businesses that support the operations of those entities. Economic development is an important element of any "downtown" area, and Town Center is no exception. Additionally, Town Center has a hub of retailers that provide goods and services to the thousands of people who visit Town Center on a daily basis. The city should work closely with its existing businesses, property owners and economic development organizations like Rockville Economic Development, Inc. ("REDI") and the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation ("MCEDC") to continue to grow Rockville's economy.

RETAIL MARKET

There are several comparable developments to Town Center within Montgomery County that offer employment/office space, urban living, shopping, dining, and entertainment surrounded by a largely suburban environment. Three of Town Center's biggest retail and residential comparables are Rio and Downtown Crown in Gaithersburg and Pike & Rose in North Bethesda. These centers were consistently mentioned during the outreach and engagement period as places where people spend their time and dollars, or as places they wish could be replicated in Town Center.

Map 31: Comparable Shopping Areas



In mentioning these comparable lifestyle centers, this Plan is not suggesting that Town Center should emulate any one of them, nor that they are direct competitors. Town Center is first and foremost a neighborhood and has amenities like the Rockville Memorial Library and fire station that add to a high quality of life, but don't necessarily have a strong impact on the local economy. Many of these comparable centers, on the other hand, were designed primarily as retail shopping centers with housing and the sense of community found in a close-knit neighborhood as a secondary thought.

According to CoStar, of Town Center's 371,000 square feet of retail space, 7.9% is vacant¹². Pike & Rose, Downtown Crown, and Rio all have higher average rents than Town Center, yet none are currently experiencing this level of vacancy. Montgomery County's overall retail vacancy rate is 5.6%.

When looking at years prior to the pandemic, retail space within Town Center saw vacancy rates of 4-6%, which were higher than the Montgomery County averages for those respective years. After the pandemic, the retail vacancy rate is higher, although not by much. This consistency in retail vacancy despite the pandemic indicates that Town Center as it currently exists may not be able to support the amount of retail space on the market.

Table 7: Retail Market Comparison

Comparable Center	Retail Supply	Retail Vacancy Rate
Pike & Rose	299,000 sf	0%
Downtown Crown	256,000 sf	0%
Rio	644,000 sf	0%
Montgomery County	37,334,000	5.6%
Town Center	371,000 sf	7.9%

Source: CoStar Data Pulled July 2023.

In the retail leasing industry, catchment areas are often used to compare different centers to one another. The purpose of calculating the catchment area is to provide a comparison of an equal amount of geographic space, regardless of the size of the actual development referenced or any political/jurisdictional boundaries. A 1.25-mile catchment area was calculated from the center points of Town Center, Pike & Rose, Downtown Crown, and Rio to compare data between the comparable areas.

When looking at the catchment area surrounding the Town Center, this area has more than 10,000 fewer residents than catchment areas of equivalent sizes of Town Center's comparable centers. As a result, the retail square footage per capita in Town Center is high – significantly higher than at Pike & Rose or Downtown Crown. People are most likely to visit the retail and restaurant establishments within close proximity to their residence or workplace. As can be seen in Table 8, there are nearly twice the amount of people living within 1.25 miles of all the comparable areas than within 1.25 miles of Town Center. With such a comparatively low number of residents within the catchment area, there may not be enough people in proximity to support the existing retail within Town Center, which may explain the higher vacancy rate in Town Center than elsewhere.

A similar finding came out of the 2019 Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel report, which noted that there is more retail and commercial space in Town Center than can be supported. Rockville Town Center cannot truly thrive without residential growth surrounding and supporting its existing retail.

Table 8: Comparable Retail Catchment Areas

Name	Location	Distance from Town Center	Retail Square Footage	People in Catchment Area (1.25 mi)	Retail Square Footage per Capita
Pike & Rose	North Bethesda	3.3 miles	299,000 sf	29,651	10.08 sf
Downtown Crown	Gaithersburg	5.2 miles	256,000 sf	28,952	8.84 sf
Rio	Gaithersburg	4.5 miles	644,000 sf	29,651	21.71 sf
Town Center	Rockville	-	371,000 sf	17,892	20.73 sf

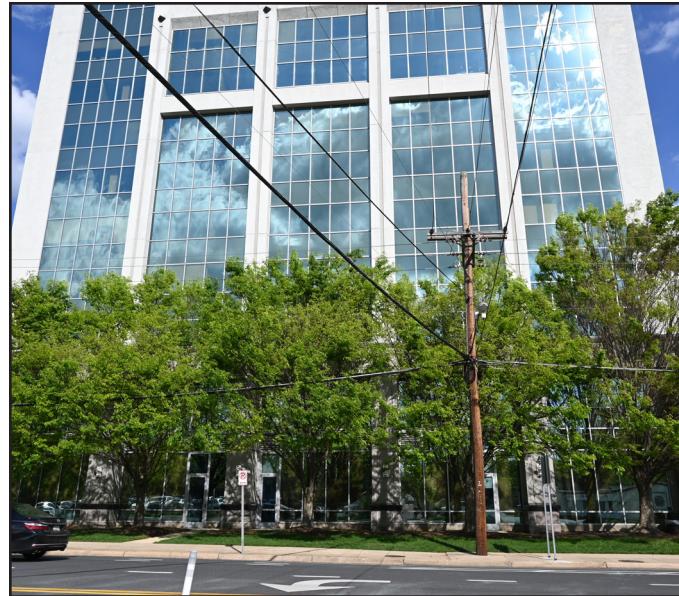
Source: CoStar Data Pulled July 2023.

Several shopping centers located near Town Center along Rockville Pike also offer an array of retail stores, restaurants, and services in a more traditional suburban design oriented towards automobiles. These strip mall shopping centers offer a fundamentally different experience for visitors than areas like Town Center, and although not included in the following market comparisons, do capture a significant part of the commercial market.



OFFICE MARKET

Town Center has more than 2.7 million square feet of commercial office space across 46 buildings. According to 2023 CoStar data, 29% of the office space within Town Center is currently vacant¹². This vacancy rate is significantly higher than the rate experienced by nearby centers of Pike & Rose and Rio. Town Center's vacancy rate is also higher than the average vacancy for Montgomery County as a whole, despite similar average base rents.



It is unlikely there is just one root cause of these high office vacancy rates in Town Center. There is no doubt that the coronavirus pandemic and the transition to remote work, often permanently, has played a part in these vacancy rates. Data from years prior to the pandemic show vacancy rates for office buildings within Town Center to be between 6% and 9%, which is lower than the Montgomery County average of 11-14% over the same period of time. However, from 2021 and beyond, Town Center's office vacancy floats between 22% and 29%, which is higher than the county-wide average.

While Covid-19 is likely a factor, the stunningly high vacancy rate in Town Center is likely a regional anomaly and not the result of the pandemic alone. There are several buildings within Town Center that are considered "distressed" or have entered into receivership as their owners face changing financial situations. Most of these buildings currently have very high vacancy levels and are unlikely to re-lease to new tenants until the property has been sold or otherwise transferred into new ownership. Additionally, much of Town Center's office stock is older and not considered "Class A" space. For many businesses that have continued to operate in the office through and following the coronavirus pandemic, high quality spaces with many amenities are often desired as a way to encourage employees to come into the office. Town Center's office stock lacks many of these highly marketable and in demand spaces, resulting in some companies, such as Choice Hotels, choosing to leave Town Center for newer office buildings elsewhere.

Table 9: Office Market Comparison

Comparable Center	Office Supply	Office Vacancy Rate
Pike & Rose	421,000 sf	3.8%
Downtown Crown	-	-
Rio	103,000 sf	4.8%
Montgomery County	75,893,000 sf	16.4%
Town Center	2,743,000 sf	29.3%

Source: CoStar Data Pulled July 2023.

RESIDENTIAL MARKET

Town Center has seen a surge of new residential development over the past two decades. The majority of this development has been for multifamily rental housing product, though there have been multifamily condominium buildings built during the same time frame. As noted in the housing chapter, 78% of Town Center's housing stock is made up of multifamily buildings with 20+ units and 48% of the housing stock was constructed after 2000⁹. Table 10 shows Town Center's multifamily vacancy rate in 2023 compared to vacancy rates of comparable areas.

Table 10: Residential Market Comparison

Comparable Center	Multifamily Housing Supply (units)	Multifamily Vacancy Rate
Pike & Rose	1,014	6.9%
Downtown Crown	923	2.5%
Rio	784	3.3%
Montgomery County	106,495	6.0%
<i>Town Center</i>	1,611	5.1%

Source: CoStar Data Pulled July 2023.

All signs point to a strong market for residential development within Town Center in the future. The Washington, D.C. metropolitan region is facing a housing crisis and is in desperate need of additional housing units, and the market appears to be responding to that need. As of December 2024, development applications have been submitted for two additional residential projects within the planning area. The first project proposes the construction of 48 fee-simple two-over-two condominiums, and the second project proposes ~300 rental multifamily units. City staff have had informal conversations with several other property owners within Town Center about redeveloping their property into housing over the coming years, indicating continued strength in the residential housing market into the future.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

As the city's economic development arm, REDI administers several incentive and grant programs and offers small business development assistance, site selection assistance, fast track development coordination, data and demographic research, business funding and incentive connections, networking and referrals, and a workforce development liaison.



Outdoor restaurant seating. Photo Credit: REDI



Shop Local retail store.

One such program is the Small Business Impact Fund that has provided grants to many businesses in Town Center who are looking to scale-up their business. The program initially focused exclusively on Town Center and Twinbrook, but has since expanded to cover the entire city. Much of the interest from Town Center has come from smaller retailers with a large focus on marketing. The Maryland Women's Business Center, a special initiative of REDI, operates the Shop Local retail incubator in Town Square with a favorable license arrangement with the property owner. The program began in 2018 and provides space, mentorship, expertise, access to investors, and in some cases working capital in the form of a loan or grant. Several graduates have gone on to open storefronts elsewhere in Town Center.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Goal 11

Establish Town Center as a well-known location brimming with diversity and activity.

Policy 11.1

Activate existing retail spaces, attract anchor or destination uses, and support retail growth.

Actions

- **11.1.1** - Develop a unique brand for Rockville Town Center centered around the planning area's diversity and multicultural identity. Coordinate with property owners within Town Center to gather consensus on the need for consistent shared and coordinated marketing strategies that promote the area as a whole. To the extent practical, incorporate arts and culture into Town Center's branding. Work with REDI to promote the new brand and to keep property owners engaged in the coordinated marketing effort if/when properties change ownership.

- **11.1.1.1** When developing the wayfinding signage package outlined as Action 6.1.1, incorporate elements from the brand into wayfinding signage.
- **11.1.2** - Conduct a study to evaluate and determine funding mechanisms for different types of organizations to manage public realm activities and improvements throughout the Town Center Planning Area. Such an organization could provide some combination of the following services: streetscape cleaning and maintenance; wayfinding signage; shared branding; promotion of businesses; public events; etc.
 - **11.1.2.1** If the study and/or discussion with Town Center businesses and property owners determines a management entity is not the best path forward, establish a full-time position in the city dedicated to performing similar duties on behalf of Town Center's businesses.
- **11.1.3** - Attract 'anchor uses' that serve Town Center's user groups of its residents and families, government employees, visitors to local government and courthouse facilities, and the city at-large. Anchors may be large-scale employers, cultural organizations that attract visitors, educational institutions, or any other uses that attract people to Town Center.

Policy 11.2

Develop programs to promote and support local and small businesses and their customers within Town Center.

Actions

- **11.2.1** - Continue working with REDI to activate vacant storefronts with temporary pop-up shops. The program should identify small businesses who will temporarily run their business out of an otherwise vacant retail space. Such a program both promotes and supports small and local businesses and provides a source of revenue to property owners facing vacancies.
- **11.2.2** - Continue to fund and promote REDI's Small Business Impact Fund as a way to scale up small and medium sized businesses in Town Center in addition to the MOVE/Expansion incentive programs that attract new businesses and encourage expansion of existing business footprints.
- **11.2.3** - Create or support the creation of a program to educate business owners and their employees about best practices for serving customers with physical or cognitive disabilities.



SUSTAINABILITY

As the most densely developed and “urban” area of Rockville, it is imperative that sustainability, resiliency, and equity are practiced throughout Town Center. Many actions that support these practices are already incorporated throughout this document. For example, this Plan addresses recommendations within the Climate Action Plan, including goals to maximize transit ridership (C-10), encourage active transportation (C-14), and promote increased density at Metro stations and other activity centers (C-16) through recommended actions in the land use and transportation elements that promote the transit-oriented nature of Town Center and its development patterns.

CLIMATE PROJECTIONS AND RESILIENCY

In 2022, the Rockville Mayor and Council adopted the City’s *Climate Action Plan* (CAP). The CAP identifies 42 actions to guide City policies, programs, plans and investments to reduce carbon, increase equity and expand resiliency. The ultimate goal of the *Climate Action Plan* is to help the city achieve a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Climate projections for the Town Center Planning Area align with projections for the city as a whole as well as the greater Washington-Baltimore Metropolitan Region. According to Rockville’s *Climate Action Plan*, the city is seeing a rise in temperatures consistent with the extreme weather patterns that are anticipated in the mid-Atlantic region due to climate change. The region is seeing increased precipitation intensity and flooding during storm events. Estimates by Montgomery County anticipate that in a 100-year storm event, precipitation may increase from 8.3 inches up to 11 inches¹³.

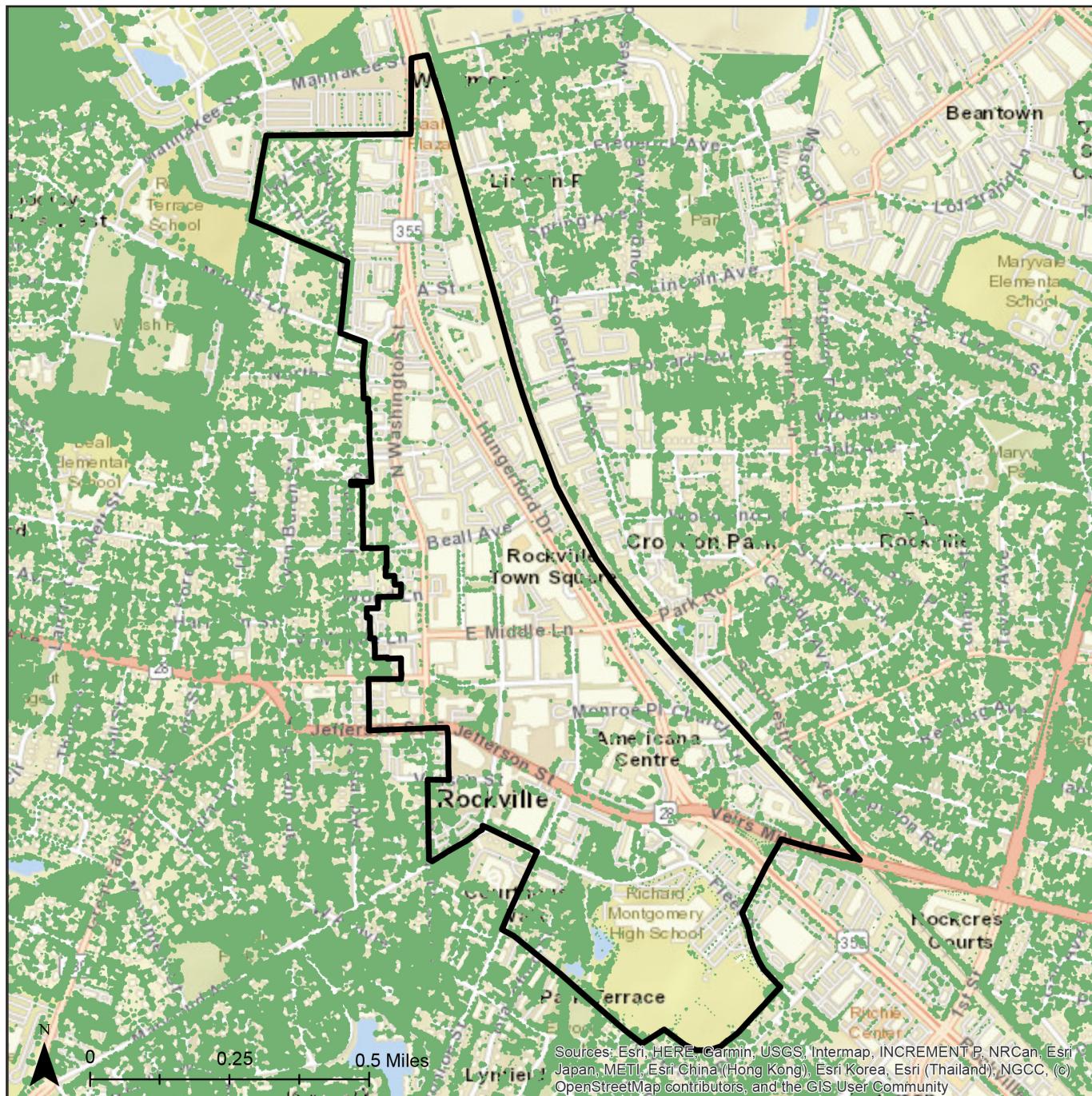
As precipitation events are increasing, so are temperatures. July 2021 was the hottest month on record globally, while July 2020 was the hottest July on record for the state of Maryland. The region’s numbers on summer daytime temperature highs, heat index and heat waves are all expected to increase in the upcoming decades. A 2022 heat-mapping initiative conducted by Montgomery County and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has indicated that the rising temperatures, coupled with the density of the built environment in Town Center, have resulted in a “heat island” effect whereby surface temperatures in Town Center are higher than those found elsewhere in the city¹⁴.

Together, the combination of direct changes in climate produce effects on our urban environment that lead to increased heatwaves and urban heat islands, localized flooding and periods of drought, infrastructure and building stress and damage, poor air quality, habitat and ecosystem changes, and reduced water quality. As one of the most densely developed areas of the city, Town Center is certainly subject to the effects of these environmental changes. Infrastructure within the built environment must take these projections into consideration to adequately handle changing weather events.

TREE CANOPY

Rockville is a designated Tree City by the Arbor Day Foundation, recognizing the city's commitment to the environment and trees in particular. Given its urban development pattern, the tree canopy within Town Center is much less than the canopy elsewhere in the city. Map 32 shows the existing tree canopy within Town Center, as well as the canopy that is visible in adjacent communities such as the West End, New Mark Commons, Lincoln Park, and East Rockville. The majority of the tree canopy currently existing within Town Center is the result of street trees and landscaped spaces within Town Center's parks. Also visible on the map are blocks of Town Center without any tree canopy at all.

Map 32: Tree Canopy



BUILDING ENERGY AND EFFICIENCY

In an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, Montgomery County has adopted Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS). BEPS are minimum energy performance thresholds for existing commercial and multifamily buildings to improve building energy performance and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This Montgomery County law applies in Rockville and requires owners of commercial and multifamily buildings over 25,000 square feet to benchmark their building energy use and report this data annually. A large portion of the qualifying buildings within Rockville are located in Town Center, more than any other planning area.

The city is currently in the process of drafting proposed updates to Chapter 5 of the City Code, including Article XIV, Green Building Regulations. The group working on Article XIV was also tasked with reviewing and proposing amendments to Article VIII, the Energy Conservation Code. Currently, the scope of Article XIV is quite limited, and only applies to a handful of projects. The working group determined that the most meaningful and broad impact would come from amendments to the International Energy Conservation Code. Working with expert input, the city has incorporated several key updates found in the New Buildings Institute's Building Decarbonization Code and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's HVAC System Performance for Energy Codes Technical Brief. The suggestions pulled from these publications were carefully selected and amended by staff to align with the city's *Climate Action Plan* and support the city's shift toward net-zero. Article XIV will incorporate most elements of the 2021 International Green Construction Code as published, with few local amendments at this time; however, the scope and applicability of the Article is proposed to be expanded.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE READINESS PLAN

The city's sustainability team is currently in the process of developing an *Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan*, analyzing the locations of necessary charging stations for equitable access throughout the city and identifying regulatory and policy supports and barriers to electric vehicles adoptions. The ultimate end goal is to favorably position Rockville to receive federal and state infrastructure funding and increase collaboration within multiple levels of government in facilitating electric vehicle adoption. Once the Readiness Plan is complete, the city will set out on a series of planned initiatives to strengthen Rockville's network of electric vehicle infrastructure.



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

As a relatively dense urban environment, the majority of the Town Center Planning Area contains a significant level of impervious surface. These surfaces, such as buildings, paved roads, and concrete sidewalks, are not able to absorb rainwater and other precipitation. As a result, when water hits these surfaces, it is redirected to stormwater management facilities and storm drain systems throughout Town Center.

The city has dedicated environmental compliance inspectors regularly inspect commercial businesses to ensure compliance with pollution prevention and stormwater management regulations. These inspectors visit businesses once a year to perform an unannounced check ensuring compliance with proper regulations regarding stormwater management, grease abatement, and dumpster maintenance, as well as exterior seasonal activity, such as salting during winter weather events. According to the area inspector, the majority of the businesses within the Town Center Planning Area are compliant with the guidelines set forth by the city and rarely require corrective action to come into compliance.

Maryland's first stormwater management law was passed in 1982, at which time new developments were required to follow stormwater best management practices to control flooding and run off. Any development prior to 1982 was not required to mitigate stormwater runoff. As such, negative impacts to the stormwater management and storm drain system from development and redevelopment in Town Center is expected to be limited, in large part due to the fact that current standards require additional 'greening' and stormwater management environmental site design practices that do not currently exist on site with many of Town Center's older buildings and properties.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Ultimately, the *Climate Action Plan* will serve as the city's guide towards achieving carbon neutrality, and this Plan both supports and defers to the *Climate Action Plan* to dictate the policy and programs Rockville has in place to maintain its status as a sustainable and resilient community.

Nearly every recommended action within this Plan is viewed through a lens of sustainability and equity. Though this section only contains five specific recommended actions, there are many actions throughout this document that address preserving and growing Town Center's green spaces and incorporating principles of equitable transit-oriented development into Town Center. The actions listed below are unique to sustainability, and thus captured within this chapter, but are to be implemented simultaneously with the other actions within the Plan that bring sustainable practices and policies to life.

Goal 12

Encourage sustainable and resilient building practices to prevent, withstand, respond to and recover from climate change impacts.

Policy 12.1

Encourage the adaptive reuse of buildings and coordinate with property owners to increase efficiency within existing buildings.

Actions

- **12.1.1** - Encourage and allow flexibility for the adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of commercial properties as market demand changes over time. Work with property owners to find creative solutions to meet the city's regulatory requirements when adaptive reuse projects are proposed.

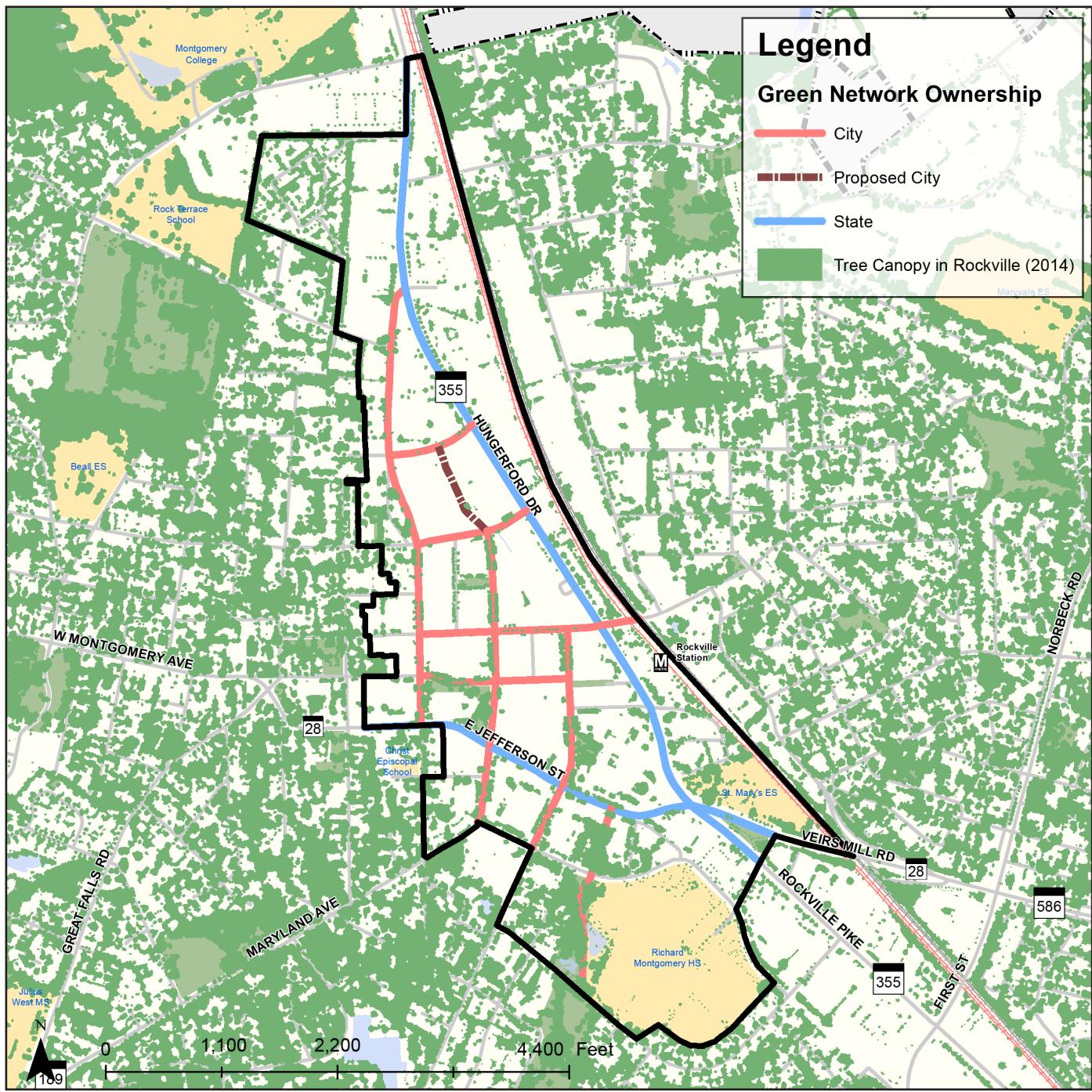
Policy 12.2

Build resiliency in Town Center through the implementation of practices that enable Rockville to thrive in the face of climate change and climate disturbances.

Actions

- **12.2.1** - Ensure that the *Flood Resiliency Master Plan*, currently in development by the Department of Public Works, addresses the unique challenges of Town Center regarding flood prevention and mitigation given its dense and urban development pattern.
- **12.2.2** - Partner with Pepco, Montgomery County, and other property owners to assess the cost and feasibility of developing a microgrid in Town Center to serve as backup power for critical functions. As the seat of government for Rockville and Montgomery County, many operations within Town Center must continue even in weather or climate emergencies. A microgrid is one way to ensure power to critical functions in times of emergency.
- **12.2.3** - Develop and promote strategies to mitigate urban heat island impacts on Town Center. Work with property owners and businesses to implement changes to the built environment that can help tackle the effects of urban heat island, such as providing shade structures, incorporating trees and native plants into landscaping, or building green roofs.
- **12.2.4** - Establish a connected network of green spaces throughout the Town Center Planning Area. As opportunities for development and public space improvements become available, add in green infrastructure such as street trees, bioswales and/or micro-bioretention facilities, or pocket parks along the routes indicated in Map 33 to create a network of green spaces within an otherwise urban environment. Improvements to the right of way of city-owned roads should be consistent with the city's Green Streets Facilitation Guide.

Map 33: Proposed Green Infrastructure



ADEQUATE PUBLIC FACILITIES



Rockville's Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance establishes standards to ensure adequate capacity of public facilities at the time of development application. Facility capacity schedules exist to evaluate the adequacy of water and sewer, schools, and transportation.

WATER SYSTEM

Water is the lifeblood of any community, and in Rockville, the city's water supply system is not just a vital resource; it's a well-planned and dependable foundation for future growth and development. The primary source of this invaluable resource is the Potomac River, which, over the years, has supported Rockville's expansion and evolution. This water resource is harnessed by the city-owned drinking water treatment plant and serves both residential and commercial customers, and acts as the foundation of the city's water infrastructure. The city also has an agreement with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) that allows the city to request as much as eight million gallons per day from WSSC.

Originally established in the 1950s with a capacity of 4 million gallons per day (MGD), the City's Water Treatment Plant has evolved significantly over the years. Through a series of expansions and modifications, it has now reached a capacity of 8 MGD. Further growth is anticipated, with plans to increase its capacity to 9 MGD in the foreseeable future.

To maintain and enhance the city's water supply system, the Department of Public Works' Engineering Division has recently initiated a Water Treatment Plant Master Plan. This forward-looking initiative is designed to ensure that the system remains resilient and capable of meeting future demands. One key aspect of this effort involves updating the city's water demand projections, which are essential for assessing the capacity of the Water Treatment Plant and the availability of water resources.

Rockville's water supply has an allocation permit issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment. This permit allows the city to withdraw up to 7.1 million gallons daily, averaging throughout the year, with a maximum daily limit of 12.1 million gallons. In 2017, the water system efficiently met the city's needs, with an average daily demand of 4.48 million gallons and a peak demand of 6.85 million gallons. Looking forward to 2040, the city anticipates 27,700 households and 72,000 jobs, suggesting an increased peak demand to 8.9 million gallons per day. Rockville's water supply system is well-prepared to accommodate this growth, ensuring that the city's expanding community's water requirements, both in Town Center and citywide, will be met effectively.

SEWER SYSTEM

The City of Rockville takes pride in owning and operating an independent sewerage collection system, a vital component of the city's infrastructure. This system serves approximately 70% of the city and plays a crucial role in managing wastewater efficiently and responsibly. The remaining 30% of wastewater is handled by WSSC Water, a regional wastewater treatment utility.

Rockville's sewer system is an extensive network of approximately 148 miles of sewer mains, supported by two wastewater pumping stations. It is interconnected with WSSC Water's and DC-Water's conveyance facilities, which convey wastewater to the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant in Washington, D.C., ensuring the effective treatment of Rockville's wastewater.

Rockville's sewer system predominantly operates as a gravity-fed network, requiring minimal wastewater pumping stations. Multiple interconnections with WSSC's network ensure reliability and facilitate the seamless transport of Rockville's wastewater to the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Existing agreements regulate the terms for wastewater conveyance, guaranteeing sufficient treatment capacity for Rockville's present and future needs. The City of Rockville's current sewer allocation at the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant is 9.31 million gallons per day (MGD). This allocation is based on a treatment capacity agreement executed in 1975. The projected demand in 2040 for wastewater treatment at Blue Plains is 6.76 million gallons per day, which is well below Rockville's capacity limit. Therefore, if the City grows in population and employment at the projected rate, it still has a substantial surplus capacity at the Blue Plains plant.

To maintain the adequacy of water and sewer capacity, Rockville implements a Water and Sewer Authorization (WSA) process. Developers are required to submit WSA applications outlining their proposed demands on the water and sewer systems. In case of deficiencies, developers are mandated to address them. Property owners hold the responsibility for maintaining and repairing service connections within their properties.

In instances where the city grapples with localized capacity constraints in its wastewater collection system due to increasing growth and new developments, the issue is addressed through a combination of capital improvement programs, developer-led upgrades, and public-private partnerships in specific areas identified with growth constraints. The city also engages in coordination with WSSC Water to identify system improvements for long-term planning, especially in the context of private development projects within or near the boundary of the WSSC. The city is working with WSSC Water and DC-Water to develop a long-term plan to upgrade the regional wastewater treatment system.

SCHOOL CAPACITY

Student generation rates for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) are calculated by the Montgomery County Planning Department. The student generation rates are based on the numbers of students residing within each school zone, broken down by residential dwelling type and grade level. Dwelling types include single-family detached, single-family attached, multi-family low-rise (structures up to four stories in height), and multi-family high-rise (structures that are five stories or higher).

There are multiple factors which may affect student generation that are considered by Montgomery County when developing the generation rates. These factors include the time of occupancy of a unit; the number of bedrooms in a unit; and the date of construction for multi-family housing – multi-family housing built in 1990 or later generally produces fewer students than older construction. MCPS also geocodes all students several times per year, providing an up-to-date understanding of where students are living throughout the school year. The city should continue its practice of sharing data on new developments with MCPS to ensure the school system has the latest and most up to date information for Rockville when looking at student generation rates, capital improvements, and school operations.

Rockville Town Center is located within an Infill Area as determined by MCPS. Infill areas are generally seeing a higher rate of new housing construction, and the predominant housing type being built in these areas is multi-family. Table 11 shows the projected student generation rates, by housing type and grade level, for Montgomery County infill areas as a whole, which are the rates the City uses when reviewing new housing development. Table 12 shows the actual student residents generated in Fiscal Year 2024 for the Richard Montgomery school cluster, which includes the schools that students in Town Center are zoned to attend.

Table 11: Projected Student Generation Rates (Per Housing Unit)

Housing Type	Elementary	Middle	High	K-12
Single-Family Detached	0.202	0.096	0.141	0.439
Single Family Attached	0.161	0.087	0.126	0.374
Multifamily Low-Rise	0.065	0.030	0.040	0.135
Multifamily High-Rise	0.039	0.016	0.018	0.073

Table 12: Richard Montgomery Cluster - Actual Student Generation Rates (Per Housing Unit)

Housing Type	Elementary	Middle	High	K-12
Single-Family Detached	0.168	0.099	0.155	0.422
Single Family Attached	0.143	0.076	0.102	0.321
Multifamily Low-Rise	0.154	0.081	0.118	0.353
Multifamily High-Rise	0.023	0.014	0.018	0.055

Adequate Public Facilities

The adequate public facilities test for schools in Rockville is based on the projected program capacity and projected enrollment set forth in the Montgomery County Planning Board's Annual School Test. In Rockville, capacity is based on 120% or less of the Montgomery County Planning Board's projected program capacity at each school level using the projected school capacity in 5 years and a seat deficit of less than 110 seats at the elementary school less and less than 180 seats at the middle school level¹⁵.

Multifamily high-rise development is by far the most likely housing type to be developed in Town Center over the next 20 years. Assuming all 3,000 target units within the planning area are multifamily, there is more than ample capacity within the existing school cluster to serve students generated by this new development. Bayard Rustin Elementary School, with a projected enrollment of 100% of capacity in the test year, serves the planning area south of MD-28. However, it is unlikely that development on those parcels would exceed the school's capacity limit. Ritchie Park Elementary School may also be above the moratorium limit, though Town Center residents are not zoned to attend that school. As a result, there is no concern for impacts to Ritchie Park Elementary School stemming from this Plan.

Table 13: Richard Montgomery Cluster - Capacity Threshold and Students Generated¹⁵

School	Seats Until Moratorium Threshold	Multifamily High-Rise (Projections)	Multifamily High-Rise (Actual)
Bayard Rustin Elementary	25	117	69
Beall Elementary	254	117	69
College Gardens Elementary	217	117	69
Ritchie Park Elementary*	65	117	69
Twinbrook Elementary*	216	117	69
Julius West Middle	81	48	42
Richard Montgomery High	Open conditionally due to Crown High	52	54

*Town Center residents are not currently zoned to go to these schools, but they are provided in Table 12 as they are within the Richard Montgomery High School cluster.

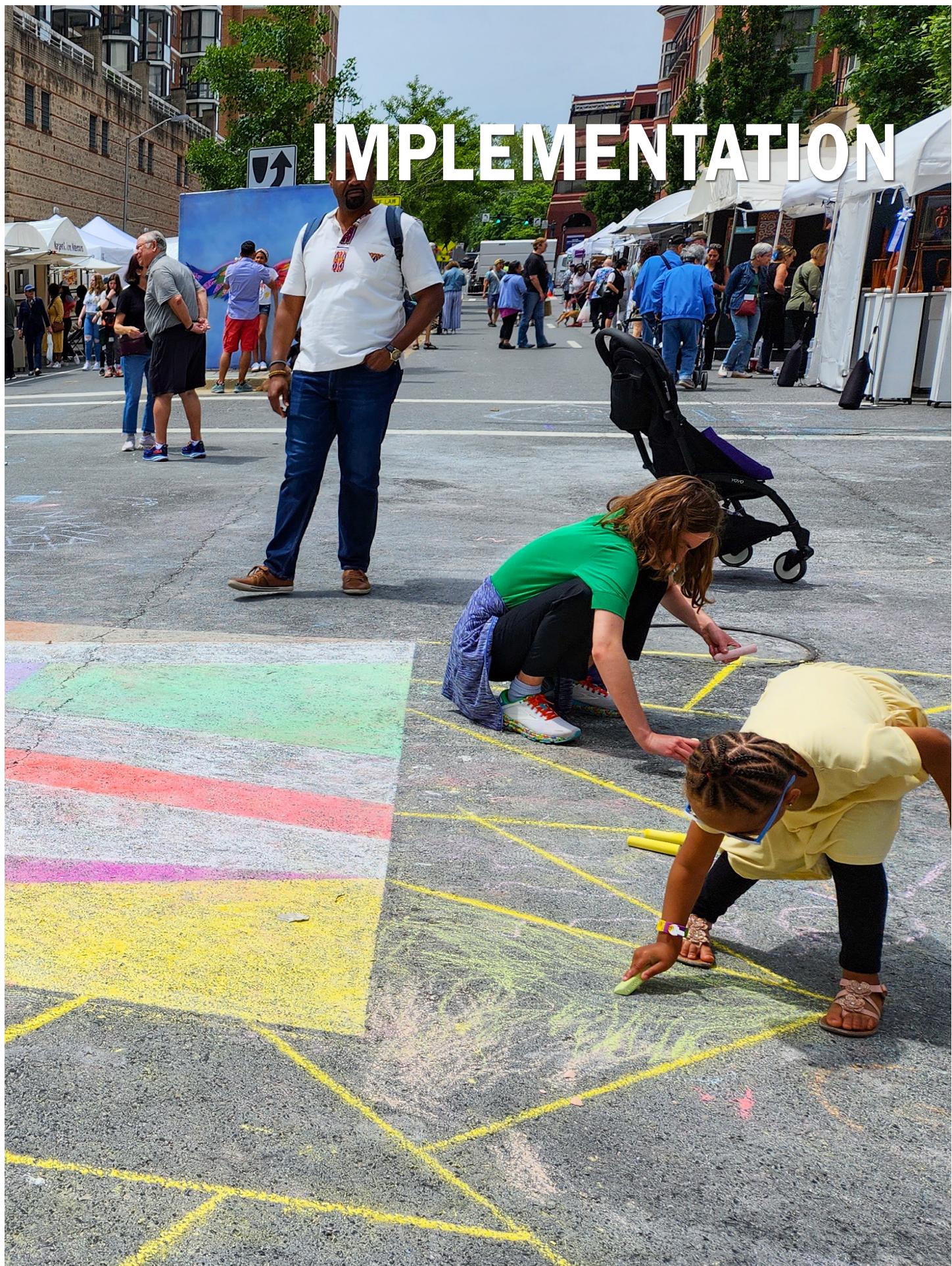
TRANSPORTATION ADEQUACY

The city evaluates transportation adequacy through a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) for all proposed developments or redevelopment projects. The CTR is an integral tool in listing the transportation requirements, addressing the needs of all transportation users, including transit users, motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, and evaluating the adequacy of a multimodal transportation system that accommodates the existing and projected traffic growth based on the established policies and requirements.

The city has established “transit-oriented areas” to be those within 7/10s of a mile from a Metro station, which includes all but the northwestern-most tip of Planning Area 1. The vast majority of Town Center’s roads are classified as business district roads. According to Rockville’s CTR, business district roads within a transit-oriented area must not exceed a volume of 99% of the capacity of the intersection when transportation adequacy is reviewed, and impacts of a development are determined.

At the time of development review, projects must comply with the requirements of the CTR and relevant standards and policies. When required, a development or redevelopment project shall submit a comprehensive transportation report that identifies the new trips generated by the project, as well as existing and proposed transportation conditions on site. Depending on the number of new peak hour trips generated by the project, the property owner may also be required to pay a transportation improvement fee, provide intersection mitigation if the project exceeds intersection impact thresholds, develop a trip reduction plan and/or make a transportation improvement contribution. Given the transit-oriented nature of the planning area and the multimodal transportation options available within the planning area, Department of Public Works staff believe that full build out of the planning area would be supported through existing transportation infrastructure and mitigation that would be required at the time of development.

IMPLEMENTATION



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

To prevent this Plan from “sitting on a shelf,” an implementation matrix has been generated to assign responsibility and timelines to each recommended action in order to help the city properly plan and budget for these activities. The implementation matrix provides three critical pieces of information about each of the recommended actions: the timeframe; the lead implementer(s); and the implementation vehicle.

Each action has been assigned an implementation timeframe of near-term, mid-term or long-term. The timeframes are generally defined as:

- **Near-term:** Anticipated to be implemented 1-5 years after master plan adoption.
- **Mid-term:** Anticipated to be implemented 5-10 years after master plan adoption.
- **Long-term:** Anticipated to be implemented 10-20 years after master plan adoption.

There are some actions which are anticipated to be ongoing and continue in perpetuity. These actions won’t have a start or end date, as these are not standalone, one-off projects, but are actions that need to be consistently evaluated or applied. The implementation matrix identifies these continuous actions by assigning them all three of the aforementioned timeframes.

The lead implementer column of the implementation matrix provides guidance on who should take a leadership role in implementing the recommended action. For most of the recommended actions, the lead implementer is a specific department within the city, although there are recommended actions where agencies or organizations that are outside of city government are recommended to have the lead role. This column simply indicates who will be “in charge” of plan implementation; it does not identify other supporting departments, agencies, and organizations. As each of the action steps start to be implemented, the lead implementer will be responsible for identifying and coordinating with supporting implementers.

Finally, the implementation vehicle column provides insight into how the recommended action will be completed. This column indicates to city staff, as well as the broader community, the anticipated mechanism for implementation. The implementation vehicle for any given recommended action may be one or a combination of multiple vehicles. Possible implementation vehicles listed in this column include:

- **Legislative Action:** The city must take some sort of legislative action to accomplish this item, such as making amendments to the City Code or adopting new regulatory requirements. By their nature, recommended actions that require legislative action must have the support of the Mayor and Council.
- **Development Application:** An application for development by a private property owner is the trigger to implement these actions and/or the private sector will be responsible for implementing the actions through private development.
- **Capital Improvement Program (CIP):** This action requires a high level of municipal investment, so should be planned and budgeted for through the Capital Improvement Program process.
- **Budget/Program Funding:** This action requires funding, but not at a level high enough to require a Capital Improvement Program. Instead, these actions require either one-time funding for a specific project or a stream of dedicated funding in the city’s operating budget.

- **Study or Research:** To complete this action, a separate study must be conducted or outside research completed. This work may or may not require a budget to complete.
- **Advocacy:** The city may not have control over implementation of this recommended action, so it will need to advocate for implementation to outside agencies or groups.
- **Partnership:** The city cannot complete this recommended action on its own, so must partner with other organizations who will implement the recommended action.
- **Zoning Ordinance Rewrite:** The city is currently in the process of updating its Zoning Ordinance, located in Chapter 25 of the City Code. Implementation of these actions will be incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite.
- **Property Acquisition:** The acquisition of real property is required to realize this action.
- **Project:** This action represents a standalone action, task or project needing to be completed by city staff.

As this Plan is intended to be a living document rather than a static, unchanging document, it is possible that the implementation matrix will evolve over time. It will be the responsibility of the Comprehensive Planning Division of the Department of Community Planning and Development Services to monitor the status of all actions and work with lead implementors accordingly to realize the goals, visions, and actions set forth in this Plan.

THIS PAGE IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

Topic	Action Number	Action
Zoning & Land Use	1.1.1	Modify zoning within Town Center to allow and encourage innovative and creative development in Town Center and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to development. The method to achieve this should be determined through the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite and could include changes to the base zone or a zoning overlay.
Zoning & Land Use	1.1.2	Create a bonus height program that provides additional height for any development project with a residential component that includes 20% or more moderately priced dwelling units or other deed restricted affordable housing. Properties within the MD-355 corridor and core character areas may receive a bonus of up to 100 additional feet of permitted height. Properties within the edge character area may receive a bonus of up to 50 additional feet of permitted height.
Zoning & Land Use	1.1.3	Modify the Zoning Ordinance to eliminate the Town Center Performance District, which has grown defunct since its creation following the 2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan. Through this district, certain development applications within Town Center are required to be approved under the Level 2 Site Plan process, regardless of the scale of development. Elimination of the performance district will streamline development and reduce regulatory processes.
Zoning & Land Use	1.2.1	Encourage WMATA to release a joint development solicitation to redevelop their surface parking lots on the southern side of Park Road into mixed-use transit-oriented development that includes housing.
Zoning & Land Use	2.1.1	Eliminate minimum off-street parking requirements within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of the Rockville Metro Station and within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of BRT stations. As parking minimums are eliminated, add in protections to prevent potential impacts to surrounding residential communities, such as requiring property owners to submit a parking plan when submitting development applications to provide justification for the number of parking spaces in their project. The elimination of off-street parking minimums does not affect any requirements for the provision of loading areas, nor any requirements to provide accessible parking spaces as established through the Americans with Disabilities Act and state code.
Zoning & Land Use	2.1.2	Encourage and expand electric vehicle (EV) sharing in Town Center in alignment with the <i>Electric Vehicle Readiness Plan</i> . Charging needs are greatest at or near multifamily developments, especially low-moderate income units that are further from transit nodes, and at larger commercial/institutional centers that cannot be easily reached by transit or means other than vehicles.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
X			CPDS - Zoning	Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
X			CPDS - Zoning	Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
X			CPDS - Zoning	Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
X			CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Partnership
X			CPDS - Zoning	Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
X	X	X	CPDS - Development Review DPW - Traffic & Transportation DPW - Environmental Management	Partnership Budget / Program funding

Topic	Action Number	Action
Zoning & Land Use	3.1.1	Create building design standards for Town Center and incorporate these standards into the Zoning Ordinance by the adoption of standards into the updated zoning proposed in Action 1.1.1. Standards should address streetwall character and design features including, but not limited to, building materials, building envelopes, first floor activity generators, upper-story facade setbacks, cornice integration, fenestration, and placement of entries; all of which emphasize pedestrian orientation and human-scaled design.
Zoning & Land Use	3.1.2	Develop standards for street furniture, including bus shelters, seating, surface treatments, sustainable and native landscaping, sidewalk widths, and lighting for pedestrian areas that fit within and layer on top of existing roadway classification sections. These standards will incorporate design elements that reduce fall and mobility hazards, provide consistent sidewalk widths and materials, minimize maintenance issues, and adhere to meeting sustainable and resilient environmental standards, as well as create a cohesive sense of place.
Transportation	4.1.1	Coordinate with SHA to improve safety along E. and W. Jefferson Street / MD-28 from MD-355 to S. Washington Street.
Transportation	4.1.2	Work with SHA to improve safety and user experience for people walking, rolling, and biking along MD-355. Advocate for expanded continuous and similarly sized sidewalks and hardscape treatments. Carry out improvements throughout the planning area as recommended in the 2023 <i>Pedestrian Master Plan</i> and 2017 <i>Bikeway Master Plan</i> , as may be amended.
Transportation	4.1.3	Advance the audits currently underway by SHA along MD-355 to improve safety, mobility, and turning movements in Town Center. Audit locations are the intersection of MD-355 with the following roads: Church Street/Monroe Place; E. Middle Lane/Park Road; N. Washington Street; Beall Avenue; and MD-28.
Transportation	4.1.4	Pending results of the audit, coordinate with SHA to redesign and reconstruct the intersection of N. Washington Street and MD-355 with a focus on safety enhancements for pedestrians.
Transportation	4.2.1	S. Washington Street - Add signage indicating a shared roadway for vehicles and cyclists on S. Washington Street from MD-28 to W. Argyle Street, and permitting cyclists to travel southbound on S. Washington Street from N. Washington Street at MD-28.
Transportation	4.2.2	Veirs Mill Road at Dodge Street - Study the feasibility of implementing safety measures for students and pedestrians to provide an improved crossing experience, potentially including installation of pedestrian hybrid beacons or similar intervention and corresponding signage.
Transportation	4.2.3	Provide additional bicycle parking within the right-of-way through city investment or through private development.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
X			CPDS - Zoning	Zoning Ordinance Rewrite
X			CPDS - Zoning Department of Public Works	Legislative Action Project
	X		Department of Public Works	Partnership
	X		Department of Public Works	Partnership
	X		Department of Public Works	Partnership
		X	Department of Public Works	Partnership
	X		Department of Public Works	CIP
		X	Department of Public Works	Study or Research CIP
	X		Department of Public Works	Budget/Program Funding

Topic	Action Number	Action
Transportation	5.1.1	Advocate for the southbound Rockville Metro Station stop on the BRT to be located on the south side of E. Middle Lane.
Transportation	5.1.2	Advocate for the east side of MD-355 to have a 10' minimum shared-use path along the full extent of the BRT along MD-355.
Transportation	5.1.3	Add bicycle lanes along N. Washington from Martins Lane to the planned BRT bike facility along southbound MD-355.
Transportation	5.1.4	Ensure Town Center bicycle facilities designed and implemented by the city are seamlessly connected to the bicycle facilities related to the BRT.
Transportation	5.2.1	Advocate to Ride On and Metrobus for the installation of digital displays advertising times and frequency of bus routes, real time notification of service and associated delays, and methods to provide to such information to individuals with visual and hearing impairments; all of which will provide an improved dissemination of information to all riders. Such displays should also note cross Town Center connections and existing bus routes that offer circulation throughout Town Center and to nearby destinations such as Montgomery College.
Transportation	5.2.2	Review inventory of existing bus stops within Town Center to determine which stops have bus shelters and/or seating. Once an inventory is created, establish a system for determining which bus stops warrant seating and/or bus shelters, and fund a program to improve bus stops that meet warrant criteria.
Transportation	5.3.1	Coordinate with WMATA to provide a safe and secure bicycle shelter at the Rockville Metro Station.
Transportation	6.1.1	Adopt and implement a comprehensive wayfinding plan within Town Center. The wayfinding plan should address vehicular, cyclist and pedestrian level signage needs. Wayfinding should have a dual focus of directing people off main corridors, such as MD-355 or MD-28, into Town Center, as well as provide directional signage to major activity generators within Town Center. Wayfinding signage can also be used to create a sense of place through the incorporation of public art into the wayfinding scheme. The plan should specifically address public parking garages, denote accessible routes to common destinations and incorporate technology to improve wayfinding.
Transportation	6.1.2	Add signage along N. Washington Street at North Street Park to provide direction to pedestrians and cyclists that North Street can be used to access the Rockville Swim & Fitness Center and Welsh Park.
Transportation	7.1.1	Complete a feasibility study for improvements Beall Avenue to improve connections between Town Center and the West End and other neighborhoods to the west. The study should look at incorporating complete street principles to enhance the pedestrian realm and increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists getting to and from Town Center.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
X			Department of Public Works	Partnership
X			Department of Public Works	Partnership
	X		Department of Public Works	CIP
X	X	X	Department of Public Works	CIP Partnership
X			Department of Public Works	Advocacy
X			Department of Public Works	Study or Research CIP Partnership
X			Department of Public Works	Partnership
X			Department of Public Works REDI	Study or Research Partnership Budget/Program Funding
X			Department of Public Works	Budget / Program Funding
X			Department of Public Works	Study or Research

Topic	Action Number	Action
Transportation	7.1.2	Make improvements to the Park Road underpass of the CSX tracks to enhance the connection between Town Center and neighborhoods to its east such as Lincoln Park and East Rockville. Improvements could include enhanced lighting, public art and/or gateway entry signage.
Transportation	7.1.3	Make improvements and coordinate with WMATA to make improvements the entrance of the western side of the Unity Bridge to enhance connections between Town Center and neighborhoods to its east (see Action 9.2.1).
Housing	8.1.1	Streamline the development approval process for residential projects with more than 25% below market-rate income-restricted housing units located in Town Center. Ensure any changes to the development approval process comply with the State Housing Expansion and Affordability Act, as may be amended.
Housing	8.1.2	Establish a property tax abatement, subject to funding, for rental property in Town Center if at least half of units are leased to households with incomes no greater than 60% of the area median income.
Housing	8.1.3	Make a recommendation to Montgomery County to consider further reducing the threshold for reducing or eliminating impact taxes for projects that include a certain percentage of MPDUs or workforce housing units (WHUs). Current Montgomery County code states that if a project consists of more than 25% MDPUs/WHUs, the market rate units within the project may have reduced/eliminated impact fees. Advocate for Montgomery County to lower that threshold to 20% for residential projects in Town Center.
Housing	8.1.4	Encourage newly constructed or redeveloped city-owned properties to include housing with a minimum of 30% below market-rate income-restricted units.
Housing	8.1.5	Actively support partnerships between public, private, and philanthropic institutions to assist in the development of affordable housing in Town Center.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.1.1	Redesign Promenade Park as a pleasant and inspiring public space and connection between the Town Center core and the pedestrian bridge to the Rockville Metro Station. Partner with WMATA, SHA, Maryland Transit Administration, MCDOT, surrounding property owners, and consult with all stakeholders to redesign the park.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.1.2	Continue to support the Rockville Memorial Library to strengthen the library as an anchor of activity within Town Center. Continue to partner with the library for events and programming, encourage the development of new and/or additional programming to meet the evolving needs of the community, and provide letters of support when the library is seeking additional funding from outside sources.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
X			Department of Public Works	Study or Research CIP Partnership
		X	Department of Public Works	Study or Research CIP Partnership
X			CPDS - Development Review	Legislative Action
X			Housing & Community Development	Legislative Action
X			Housing & Community Development	Advocacy
X			Housing & Community Development	Legislative Action
X	X	X	Mayor and Council	Partnership
	X		Recreation & Parks	CIP
X	X	X	City Manager	Advocacy Partnership

Topic	Action Number	Action
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.1.3	Continue special events and programming in Town Center. Host events, activities, and performances in Town Center to activate this area outside of traditional working hours. This can be achieved through some combination of City of Rockville events, property owner events, licensed events, or partnerships with businesses and organizations (see Action 11.1.2). Continue to evaluate and set parameters for non-city sponsored events allowed in Town Center.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.2.1	Create a pedestrian and bike friendly plaza at the western entrance to the Unity Bridge.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.2.2	Create a public park within the block bounded by Monroe Street, E. Jefferson Street, Park Avenue and Fleet Street. The Planning Area 1 chapter of the Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan calls out the desire for a “large public park and event space” in this vicinity. This Plan refines that recommendation, isolating the proposed park to one specific block. The park should be established by means of land dedication as part of a development project, purchase, land swap, or some other method that would serve as a significant public gathering and event space for the Rockville community and beyond. Once a park is established, continue the existing shared-use path that runs from Elwood Smith Park to Fleet Street, connecting the trail north to E. Jefferson Street.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.2.3	Work with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to acquire property along the existing Mt. Vernon trail to Fleet Street. The city currently maintains the trail and owns the majority of it, though there are small portions of MCPS land under the trails. Clarifying these property rights will ensure property maintenance and access into the future park noted in Action 9.2.2.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.2.4	Collaborate with WMATA to create a park at 301 Hungerford Drive, the current location of a surface parking lot for Metro users. The lot's narrow dimensions likely preclude it from being a high-density redevelopment option. In that case, the land should be transformed into a high-quality park to serve as an amenity for Metro users. The site could also be considered as a new home for the Rockville Farmers Market.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.2.5	If the opportunity for redevelopment presents itself, the city should consider acquiring the Shell gas station located at 260 N. Washington Street to develop it into a public park. The gas station is located on an island, separated by two legs of N. Washington Street. Remediation and reuse of this parcel into green space can create a park amenity for the northern portion of the planning area.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.2.6	Create a public park along the planned extension of Maryland Avenue. The park should be established in this general area, either by means of land dedication as part of a development project, purchase, land swap, or some other method, that would serve as a small gathering and amenity space for visitors to the area.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
X			Recreation & Parks	Budget / Program Funding Partnership
		X	Recreation & Parks Department of Public Works	CIP
		X	Recreation & Parks	Property Acquisition CIP
	X		Recreation & Parks	Property Acquisition
	X		Recreation & Parks CPDS	Partnership
		X	Recreation & Parks	Property Acquisition CIP
X			Recreation & Parks Private Property Owners	Partnership Property Acquisition CIP Budget / Program Funding

Topic	Action Number	Action
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.3.1	Explore potential for and create a publicly accessible dog park within the Town Center planning area.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.3.2	Consider a community center as part of a larger development of building(s) in Town Center.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.3.3	Explore the potential to add publicly accessible turf fields on top of city-owned parking garages/buildings to create public recreational space within existing development footprints.
Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	9.3.4	Explore opportunities to add additional public art throughout Town Center.
Historic Preservation	10.1.1	Conduct an updated reconnaissance survey of historic resources located within Town Center boundaries. Such a survey will identify any changes or losses to the area. Further, resources that were not previously surveyed or that have gained significance since the original inventory performed in the mid-to-late 1970s should now be included.
Historic Preservation	10.1.2	Update any existing Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (MIHP) forms for new findings, including demolished resources and for areas and/or periods of significance not previously addressed. Deliver revised forms to the Maryland Historical Trust for review and approval
Historic Preservation	10.1.3	Formulate an amendment to the Montgomery County Courthouse Square National Register Nomination to address expanded areas and/or periods of significance, missing historical information and contexts, demolished or relocated resources, etc. to modernize the nomination and to fully present an equitable and inclusive history of the area.
Historic Preservation	10.1.4	Based upon inventory results, identify any additional resources that are eligible for local designation and work with property owners to consider nominating these resources for local historic designation.
Historic Preservation	10.2.1	Update existing historic contexts for Town Center addressing the period of urban renewal and the results of these policies on the cultural, historic, and natural resources within the planning area.
Economic Development	11.1.1	Develop a unique brand for Rockville Town Center centered around the planning area's diversity and multicultural identity. Coordinate with property owners within Town Center to gather consensus on the need for consistent shared and coordinated marketing strategies that promote the area as a whole. To the extent practical, incorporate arts and culture into Town Center's branding. Work with REDI to promote the new brand, as well as to keep property owners engaged in the coordinated marketing effort if/when properties change ownership.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
X			Recreation & Parks	Study or Research CIP
		X	Recreation & Parks	CIP Property Acquisition
	X		Recreation & Parks	Study or Research CIP
X			City Manager	Budget/Program Funding
X			CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Budget / Program Funding Study or Research Partnership
	X		CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Budget / Program Funding Study or Research Partnership
		X	CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Budget / Program Funding Study or Research Partnership
	X		CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Legislative Action Partnership
	X		CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Budget / Program Funding Partnership
X			REDI City Manager	Study or Research Budget / Program Funding

Topic	Action Number	Action
Economic Development	11.1.1.1	When developing the wayfinding signage package outlined as Action 6.1.1, incorporate elements from the brand into wayfinding signage.
Economic Development	11.1.2	Conduct a study to evaluate and determine funding mechanisms for different types of organizations to manage public realm activities and improvements throughout the Town Center Planning Area. Such an organization could provide some combination of the following services: streetscape cleaning and maintenance, wayfinding signage, shared branding, promotion of businesses, public events, etc.
Economic Development	11.1.2.1	If the study and/or discussion with Town Center businesses and property owners determines a management entity is not the best path forward, establish a full-time position in the city dedicated to performing similar duties on behalf of Town Center's businesses.
Economic Development	11.1.3	Attract 'anchor uses' that serve Town Center's user groups of its residents and families, government employees, visitors to local government and courthouse facilities, and the city at-large. Anchors may be large-scale employers, cultural organizations that attract visitors, educational institutions, or any other uses that attract people to Town Center.
Economic Development	11.2.1	Continue working with REDI to activate vacant storefronts with temporary pop-up shops. The program should identify small businesses who will temporarily run their business out of an otherwise vacant retail space. Such a program both promotes and supports small and local businesses and provides a source of revenue to property owners facing vacancies.
Economic Development	11.2.2	Continue to fund and promote REDI's Small Business Impact Fund as a way to scale up small and medium sized businesses in Town Center in addition to the MOVE/Expansion incentive programs that attract new businesses and encourage expansion of existing business footprints.
Economic Development	11.2.3	Create or support the creation of a program to educate business owners and their employees about best practices for serving customers with physical or cognitive disabilities.
Sustainability	12.1.1	Encourage and allow flexibility for the adaptive reuse or rehabilitation of commercial properties as market demand changes over time. Work with property owners to find creative solutions to meet the city's regulatory requirements when adaptive reuse projects are proposed.
Sustainability	12.2.1	Ensure that the <i>Flood Master Plan</i> , currently in development by the Department of Public Works, addresses the unique challenges of Town Center regarding flood prevention and mitigation given its dense and urban development pattern.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
	X		Department of Public Works	Budget / Program Funding
X			CPDS - Comprehensive Planning	Study or Research
X			City Manager	Budget / Program Funding
X	X	X	REDI	Partnership
X			REDI	Partnership
X	X	X	City Manager	Budget / Program Funding
	X		REDI	Project Budget / Program Funding
X	X	X	CPDS - Development Services	Legislative Action
X			DPW - Environmental Management	Project

Topic	Action Number	Action
Sustainability	12.2.2	Partner with Pepco, Montgomery County, and other property owners to assess the cost and feasibility of developing a microgrid in Town Center to serve as backup power for critical functions. As the seat of government for Rockville and Montgomery County, many operations within Town Center must continue even in weather or climate emergencies. A microgrid is one way to ensure power to critical functions in times of emergency.
Sustainability	12.2.3	Develop and promote strategies to mitigate urban heat island impacts on Town Center. Work with property owners and businesses to implement changes to the built environment that can help tackle the effects of urban heat island, such as providing shade structures, incorporating trees and native plants into landscaping, or building green roofs.
Sustainability	12.2.4	Establish a connected network of green spaces throughout the Town Center Planning Area. As opportunities for development and public space improvements become available, add in green infrastructure such as street trees, bioswales and/or microbiorention facilities, or pocket parks along the routes indicated in Map 33 to create a network of green spaces within an otherwise urban environment. Improvements to the right of way of city-owned roads should be consistent with the city's Green Streets Facilitation Guide.

Near	Mid	Long	Lead Implementor(s)	Implementation Vehicle
	X		DPW - Environmental Management	Study or Research
X	X	X	DPW - Environmental Management	Partnership
		X	Recreation & Parks	CIP Property Acquisition Partnership

FOOTNOTES

¹ "Rockville Business District." City of Rockville, March 2024. <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/2196/Rockville-Business-District>

² "Esri Community Profile: Forecasts for 2022 and 2027," Esri, January 2023.

³ "2020 Census Results for the City of Rockville." City of Rockville, September 2022. <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/46314/Census-Results-09192022>

⁴ "At Risk Population Profile." Esri, ACS, Esri-Data Axe. Esri forecasts for 2022, 2027 and 2016-2020.

⁵ "Community Engagement Report: Town Center Master Plan Update." City of Rockville, October 2023. <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/50090/Community-Engagement-Report-Town-Center-Master-Plan-Update>

⁶ "Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Ridership Data Portal." WMATA. Accessed December 2024. <https://www.wmata.com/initiatives/ridership-portal/>

⁷ "MARC Brunswick Line Expansion Study Technical Report." Maryland Area Regional Commuter, January 2023. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/mta-website-staging/mta-website-staging/files/Transit%20Projects/MARC%20Brunswick%20Study/Brunswick%20Line%20Technical%20Report%20-%20Jan%202023.pdf>

⁸ "MDOT SHA Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) Locations." Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration, June 2023. <https://data-maryland.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/mdot-sha-annual-average-daily-traffic-aadt-locations/explore?location=39.067890%2C-77.132118%2C15.88>

⁹ "2021 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates Data Profile." U.S. Census Bureau, 2021.

¹⁰ "20850, MD Housing Market." Redfin, December 2024. <https://www.redfin.com/zipcode/20850/housing-market>.

¹¹ "The FY 2024 Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD HUD Metro FMR Area Small Area FMRs." HUD Office of Policy Development and Research, February 2024. https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/fmr/fmrs/FY2024_code/2024zip_code_calc.odn?zcta=20850&metro_code=METRO47900M47900&year=2024

¹² CoStar Group, 2023. www.costar.com

¹³ "Montgomery County Climate Action Plan." Montgomery County, Maryland, June 2021. <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/climate/Resources/Files/climate/climate-action-plan.pdf>

¹⁴ "Community Heat Mapping in Montgomery County." Montgomery County, Maryland, 2022. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/389babe7ce654fdd87701488ae72e8b6>

¹⁵ "Supplemental School Data for FY2024-2029." Rockville, Maryland, July 2023. <https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/49079/School-Test-SY2024-29>



APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Community Engagement Report: Town Center Master Plan Update

Release Date: October 2, 2023



Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the City of Rockville Department of Community Planning and Development Services, Comprehensive Planning Division. Internal assistance was provided by the Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation and Parks, City Manager's Office, and Rockville Economic Development, Inc.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	7
The Need for an Update	7
Project Phases	8
Plan Objectives	8
Town Center Geography	9
Methodology and Process for Getting Feedback.....	11
Engage Rockville Website	11
Kickoff Listening Sessions.....	15
Tabling at Community Events	16
Focus Group Roundtables	20
Discussions with Businesses.....	20
Residential Door Hanging	21
Stakeholder Interviews	21
City Boards, Commissions, and Task Forces	22
Who We Heard From	24
Listening Session Demographics.....	24
Survey Demographics	26
Summary of Feedback.....	31
Survey Results.....	31
Reaction Map Results.....	43
Idea Board Results	46
Word Cloud Results	48
Vote with Your Dollars Exercise Results.....	50
Scenario Question Results.....	52
Kickoff Meeting Small Group Activity.....	56
Focus Group Roundtables Results.....	59
Major Takeaways & Themes	65
Land Use and Housing	65
Business and Economic Development	65
Transportation.....	65
Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities	66
Other	66
Next Steps.....	67

Executive Summary

The Department of Community Planning and Development Services for the City of Rockville is pleased to present its Community Engagement Report on the Town Center Master Plan Update project.

This report summarizes all activities performed by staff throughout the outreach and engagement phase of the Town Center Master Plan update project. The report provides insight into the methods of outreach, shares findings received from each outreach method, and details several key takeaways and major themes that will need to be addressed in the update to the Town Center Master Plan. The Community Engagement Report itself does not make any recommendations, but rather shares findings and popular topics of discussion to date. Ultimately, the final version of the Community Engagement Report will become an appendix to the updated Master Plan.

Engagement Opportunities and Participation Metrics

Staff utilized 10 different methods to collect feedback from the public during the outreach and engagement phase. Given how data was collected, it is hard to tell exactly how many unique individuals interacted with staff during the outreach and engagement phase. Anecdotally, staff is aware of many individuals who provided feedback through multiple avenues. That said, staff confidently believes more than 1,000 unique individuals have participated in at least one method of providing feedback during this process. The table below outlines the major outreach efforts undertaken by staff and their associated participation metric(s).

Methodology	Participation Metric
Kickoff Listening Sessions	4 events with 100 total attendees
Tabling at Community Events	12 events with 713 total participants
Focus Groups	13 focus groups with 130 total attendees
Stakeholder Interviews	11 organizations or individuals
City Boards & Commissions	8 boards and commissions
Engage Rockville Survey	752 respondents
Engage Rockville Reaction Map	143 pins from 13 users
Engage Rockville Idea Board	10 ideas from 5 users
Residential Door Hangers	~2,000 distributed
Business Visits	~150 visited

Demographics of Respondents

Ensuring representative feedback is one of nine objectives set forth in the project proposal for the Town Center Master Plan Update. There were two main mechanisms for collecting demographic information throughout the outreach and engagement phase: demographic request forms completed at the kickoff listening sessions and a demographic page on the Engage Rockville survey.

The demographic information gathered from both methodologies was similar. Generally, those who provided feedback are primarily Rockville residents, though most participants did not actually live within the boundaries of the Town Center planning area. There was a fairly even age distribution that is generally reflective of both Rockville and Town Center's age demographics. There are two specific areas of note where the demographics of those who provided feedback do not align with demographics of Town Center of the City as a whole. There was an overrepresentation of females in this process, as well as an overrepresentation of people who identify as white. Since these demographics are not truly representative of Rockville or Town Center, the survey results should be reviewed with that in mind.

Major Takeaways and Themes

Through the outreach and engagement period, several themes emerged. These themes continued to repeat in conversations across multiple groups and through different engagement methodologies. Major takeaways and themes gathered through this phase include:

- Land Use and Housing
 - Desire to see more density, particularly in the form of housing.
 - The increasing need for affordable housing.
- Business and Economic Development
 - Desire to see fewer retail vacancies.
 - Desire for more diversity in retail options, especially more retailers that don't involve dining.
 - Tentative interest in an entity of some sort to support Town Center.
- Transportation
 - Desire for more and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Need for improved wayfinding signage for pedestrians and vehicles.
 - Desire to see improvements to signage and accessibility of existing parking garages.
 - Tentative interest in closing additional streets to vehicles and making them pedestrian only (example: Gibbs Street).
- Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities
 - Desire to see more parks and additional greenspace, including landscaping and streetscapes.
 - Desire for more events in Town Center.

- Desire to see improvements to Promenade Park, enhancing the connection to the pedestrian bridge to Metro.

Ultimately, the updated Master Plan should address each of these takeaways in some way.

Introduction

In January 2023, Community Planning and Development Services (CPDS) staff received instruction from the Rockville Mayor and Council to embark on an update to the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*. As Town Center has shifted from a traditional, enclosed shopping mall to a mixed-use destination there has been much progress, yet there are still challenges that must be addressed. The Rockville Town Center Master Plan Update (“Update”) will seek to build on Town Center’s strengths and position the planning area for decades of prosperity and vitality.

The purpose of this Public Engagement Report is to report on the process for soliciting community feedback on Town Center and the master plan Update, as well as to summarize findings gathered during the outreach process that lasted from April through September 2023. This document does not make any recommendations regarding Town Center, nor does it represent the City’s thoughts and feelings on the planning area. Instead, this report shares what the community has reported to staff, and identifies several recurring themes and ideas generated throughout this phase of the project.

The information contained within this report will be used in the development of the Town Center Master Plan Update that is envisioned to be released to the public in early 2024.

The Need for an Update

The current *Rockville Town Center Master Plan* was adopted by Mayor and Council in October 2001. Despite being more than 20 years old, this is the most recent area master plan. In the subsequent two decades since plan adoption, Town Center has evolved into a mixed-used destination and job center for the City. However, due to increasing regional competition and an ever-changing retail and office market, Town Center faces a number of challenges. Via an updated master plan, recommended actions will be developed to help guide and direct Town Center’s success in the coming decades.

Since the creation of the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*, Rockville has adopted additional city-wide goals, policies, and initiatives. These include Vision Zero initiatives to end traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030, goals to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, housing production goals to develop more than 1,000 new residential units in Rockville, and to further racial equity and social justice. An update to the master plan will bring Town Center further into alignment with these important goals.

Most recently, in August 2021, the Mayor and Council adopted *Rockville 2040: Comprehensive Plan of the City of Rockville, Maryland* (Comprehensive Plan). The Comprehensive Plan makes several recommendations for City land use, policies, and projects. Within the document, an entire chapter is dedicated to the Rockville Town Center planning area. While elements of the Comprehensive Plan supersede the *2001 Rockville Town Center Master Plan*, this chapter identified City Project 1 as “conduct a planning effort leading to the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan amendment to Planning Area 1 that updates and replaces the 2001 Town Center Master Plan.”

The overarching goal of the master plan update is to strengthen Town Center by creating a cohesive vision for the planning area that meets the City's goals and provides a clear path for implementation.

Project Phases

The Update process has been divided into several distinct phases to manage workflow and ensure plenty of opportunity for the public to engage in the process. Project phases and their associated proposed timelines for the Update are:

• December 2022 – March 2023	Project Preparation
• April – September 2023	Outreach & Engagement
• October 2023	Release of Public Engagement Report & Comment Period
• October – December 2023	Plan Drafting
• January – April 2024	Planning Commission Review, Hearing(s) & Recommendation
• April – June 2024	Mayor & Council Review & Hearing(s)
• July 2024	Plan Adopted by Mayor & Council

During the Planning Commission and Mayor and Council review phases there will be multiple opportunities for the public to review and provide comment on the draft plan. These comments will be provided to each respective body accordingly.

Plan Objectives

The project proposal was endorsed by Mayor and Council on January 30, 2023. Endorsement of the project proposal provides direction to staff on the scope of work, project objectives and project timeline. The project proposal for the Update outlined several objectives for the project. The nine endorsed objectives are:

1. Provide an environment conducive to and supportive of living, working and entertainment.
2. Accommodate a variety of densities, scales, uses and typologies of development that are sensitive to an urban neighborhood environment and flexible to the marketplace.
3. Enhance links to public and active transportation options and parking which improve their visibility and accessibility.
4. Provide improved connections from neighborhoods to Town Center.
5. Minimize the divisive impact of Rockville Pike and the Metro/CSX rail lines.
6. Make Town Center a unique, high-amenity destination for local and regional customers.
7. Utilize urban design to establish zoning and density requirements that will assist in defining, placemaking and activating the public realm of Rockville Town Center.
8. Provide an environment that is safe and appealing for pedestrians and bicyclists.

9. Establish Town Center as a welcoming and affordable place for people of all incomes and backgrounds to live.

Furthermore, the project team established four clear principles for community outreach and engagement. These principles guided and steered the direction of the outreach and engagement phase of the update. They are:

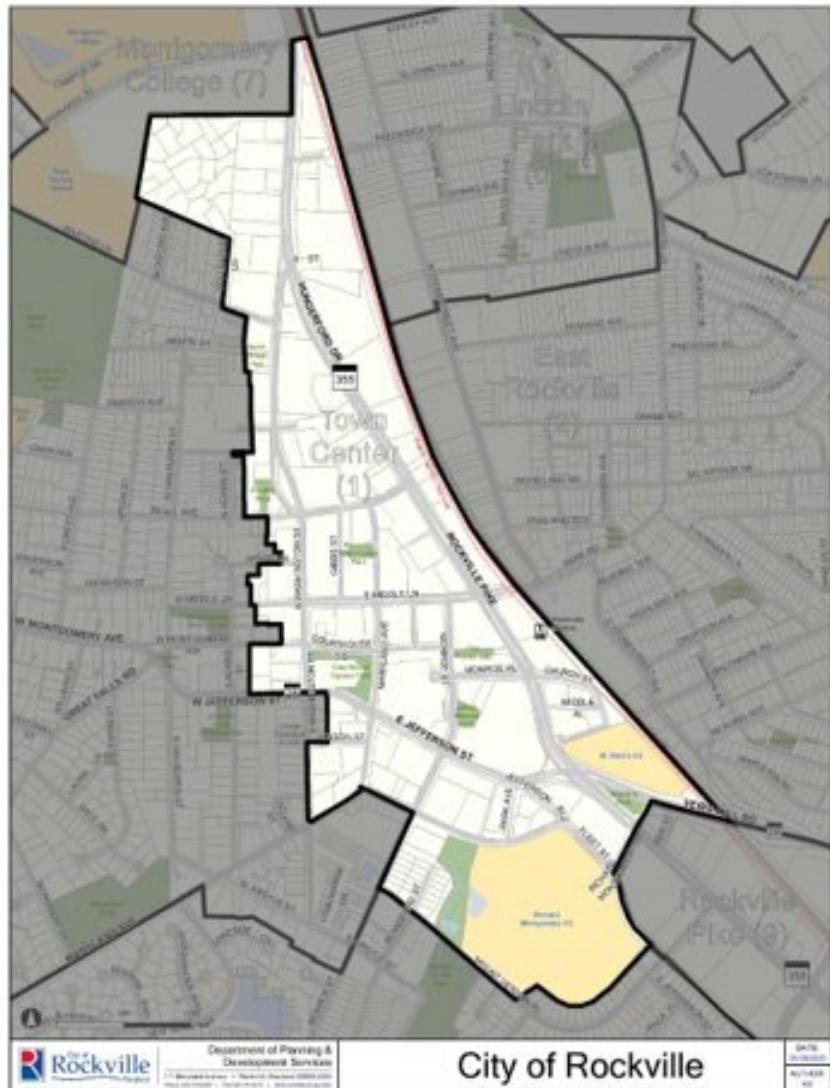
1. Meet people where they are.
2. Ask for clear and specific feedback, as well as provide opportunities for general feedback.
3. Meaningful engagement is ongoing and builds a relationship.
4. Strive for representational engagement and prioritize outreach to often underrepresented segments of the community.

Town Center Geography

As laid out in the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, our city is divided into 17 distinct geographic planning areas. These planning areas group together similar land uses and building character to make concentrated units of geography or districts. The challenges, opportunities, needs, and desires of each of these planning areas vary, and the ultimate goal in the future is that many of these planning areas will have their own master plan, which will be adopted into the Comprehensive Plan through an update to that specific Planning Area chapter.

The Town Center planning area is known as Planning Area 1. Planning Area 1 is bounded by Richard Montgomery High School to the south; by the Metro/CSX tracks to the east; falls just shy of Mannakee Street and Montgomery College to the north; and loosely follows the boundary of N./S. Washington Street to the west. The Rockville Metro station is located within the Town Center boundary, as is the entirety of the Town Square development and many of the Montgomery County government offices and Rockville City Hall.

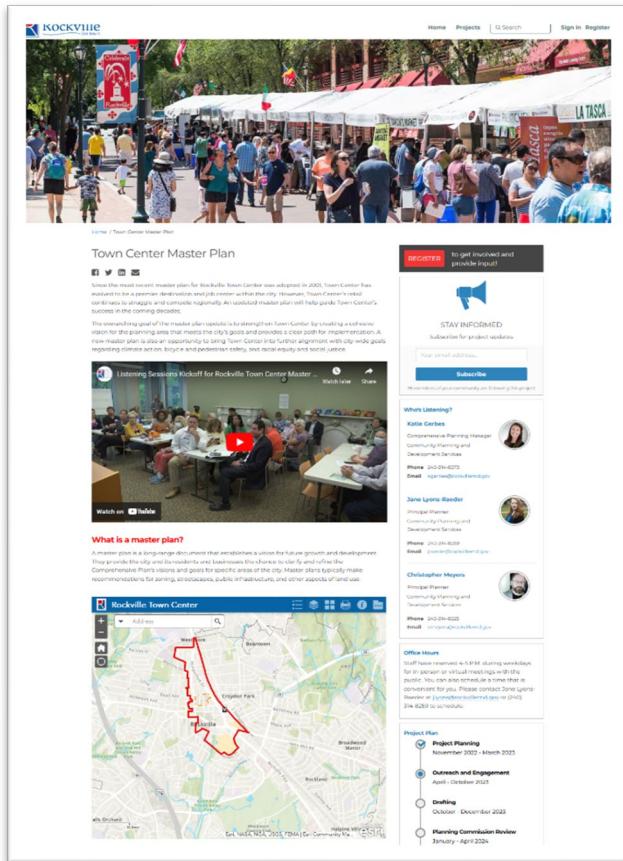
Map 1: Town Center Planning Area Boundary



The feedback provided from the community in this report encapsulates the thoughts, ideas and concerns presented to staff regarding this specific Town Center geography.

Methodology and Process for Getting Feedback

The City utilized a variety of tools during the outreach and engagement phase to gather feedback from the community and visitors to Town Center. This section outlines each of the methodologies and processes used by CPDS during this phase.



A screenshot of Town Center Portal on Engage Rockville.

Engage Rockville Website

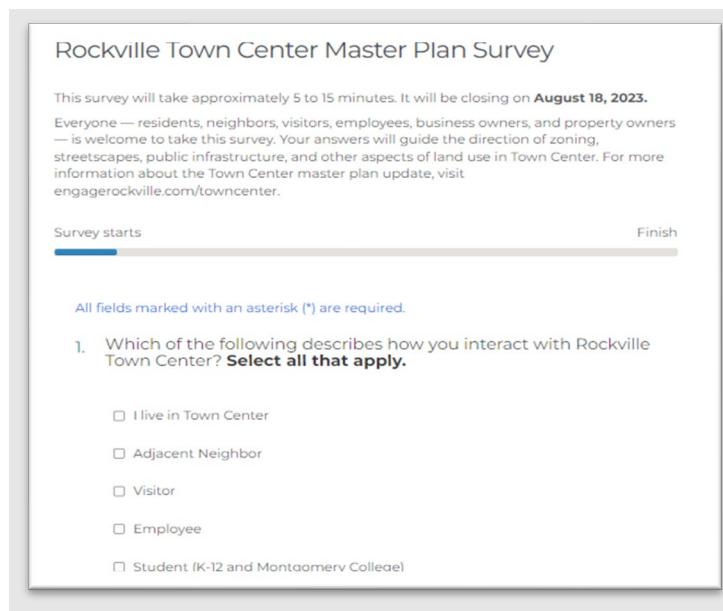
The City of Rockville uses a website known as Engage Rockville as a primary platform for collecting feedback and input from its community. This site enables projects to have their own unique project pages on which residents can stay updated on project progress, provide input via a variety of widgets, and interact directly with staff. The Town Center Master Plan page on Engage Rockville (www.engagerockville.com/towncenter) was designed to be the central hub and repository of information for the public during the Update. The main elements of the website include a project schedule, key dates for public meetings, a library of relevant reports and documents, monthly blog posts hosted in a “news feed,” and contact information for project staff.

During the outreach and engagement phase of the project, staff also added three additional tabs to the Engage Rockville page to solicit feedback: a survey, a reaction map, and an idea board.

Each of these elements of the website were open to the public from March 28, 2023 until August 18, 2023.

Survey

The primary method for collecting feedback on the Engage Rockville site was through the survey. This survey utilized “skip logic” to ask different questions to those taking the survey based on their previous responses. One of the first questions on the survey asked people to indicate how they primarily interact with Rockville Town Center. Possible answers included: I live in Town Center, adjacent neighbor, visitor, employee, student, business owner, government/nonprofit executive, commercial or multifamily property owner. Depending on the response selected by the survey taker, the taker was directed to different set of questions. For example, the questions being asked to people who identify as living in Town Center are slightly different from those who have identified themselves as owning a business in Town Center. The survey allowed people to identify themselves in multiple groups and could respond to multiple “skip logic” sections of the survey.



The screenshot shows a survey page titled "Rockville Town Center Master Plan Survey". It includes a message about the survey duration and closing date, a progress bar, and a list of interaction categories with checkboxes.

Rockville Town Center Master Plan Survey

This survey will take approximately 5 to 15 minutes. It will be closing on **August 18, 2023**.

Everyone — residents, neighbors, visitors, employees, business owners, and property owners — is welcome to take this survey. Your answers will guide the direction of zoning, streetscapes, public infrastructure, and other aspects of land use in Town Center. For more information about the Town Center master plan update, visit engagerockville.com/towncenter.

Survey starts **Finish**

All fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

1. Which of the following describes how you interact with Rockville Town Center? **Select all that apply.**

I live in Town Center
 Adjacent Neighbor
 Visitor
 Employee
 Student (K-12 and Montgomery College)

A screenshot of the survey on Engage Rockville.

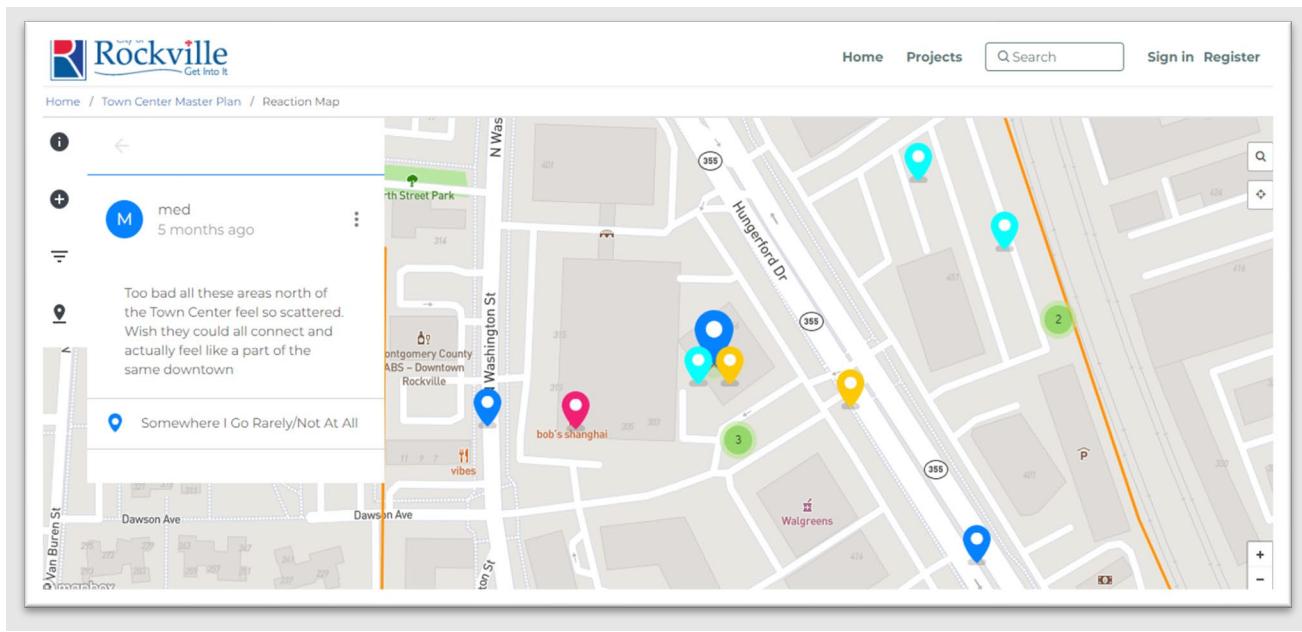
Regardless of a survey taker’s response to the earlier questions, the last page of the survey asked all users to provide demographic information. This section was entirely voluntary, though staff found that approximately 80-99% of survey responses completed this section, depending on the question. The demographic information is important to the City to ensure we are getting representational feedback during this process. Demographic information asked in the survey included:

- Do you live within the City of Rockville?
- What is your home address zip code?
- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What is your race and ethnicity?
- What are the primary languages spoken in your household?
- What is your total gross household income?

Reaction Map

The reaction map widget provided an opportunity for users of the Engage Rockville site to identify and comment on specific locations in Rockville Town Center by adding "pins" based on the following categories and prompts:

- **Spot I Love** - Where in Town Center do you love? Why do you love this spot? Examples could include Town Square, your favorite shop, or the best place to sit and read a book.
- **Needs Improvement** - Where in Town Center could be better? Examples could include an intersection you don't feel safe crossing or a spot that needs better signage. You can also upload a photo to show us exactly what you're talking about.
- **Somewhere I Go Often** - Where do you go all the time? This might not be a spot you love, but it's a place you need for your daily life. Examples might include a convenience store, bus stop, or grocery store.
- **Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All** - Where do you not usually venture in Town Center? This could be because it is not accessible (for example, poor sidewalks) or does not interest you. Include a comment to let us know what might make it easier or more attractive for you to go there.
- **New Ideas/Things I'd Like to See** - Is there something Town Center doesn't have that you wish it did? Examples might include parks/greenspace, bike lanes, murals, or other missing services.
- **Other** - Have something to say that doesn't fit into one of these categories? Use this pin!



A screenshot from the Engage Rockville reaction map feature showing pins of varying colors.

Idea Board

The idea board concept is simple; this widget allowed for users to post their ideas for the future of Town Center and let users “like” or “upvote” one another’s responses.

A screenshot of the idea board on the Engage Rockville site showing tiles of different ideas.

Kickoff Listening Sessions

To publicly kick off the Update process, the City hosted four listening sessions with members of the community in April 2023. Two of these meetings were in-person meetings held at the Rockville Memorial Library, while the other two meetings were held virtually via the Webex meeting platform. Meetings took place on the following dates:

- Thursday, April 13 at the Rockville Memorial Library
- Wednesday, April 19 at the Rockville Memorial Library
- Saturday, April 22 held via Webex
- Tuesday, April 25 held via Webex

Aside from a few small changes to take into consideration the logistics of an in person versus virtual meeting, the listening sessions were identical to one another – the same overview presentation was given at each, and the same exercises were conducted to receive feedback from meeting attendees. At these meetings, attendees were invited to provide insight to the City team in the following ways:

- Contribute to a word cloud by texting their responses to questions to a specified number.
- Select their preference when provided with a series of “this or that” scenario questions.
- Allocate “play” money to different community amenities according to how each amenity is prioritized for each attendee.
- Provide qualitative feedback through a small group mapping exercise.

In total between all four of the listening sessions, a total of 100 individuals attended one or more meetings.



Small group discussions at the April 19, 2023 Listening Session.



Interactive word cloud activity at the April 13, 2023 Listening Session.

Tabling at Community Events

Knowing that only a small segment of the population has the time, interest, and ability to attend a two-hour public meeting, it was important to get input from other folks who experience Town Center in their everyday life outside of a formal meeting setting. To do this, the City set up tables at 12 community events within the Town Center planning area, or nearby, over the course of a 10-week period. Some of these events were large, annual festivals that gather a big crowd; others were smaller, more locally focused events. In total, staff tabled at the following places during this period:

- May 7, 2023 | Rockville Arts Festival
- May 13, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- May 19, 2023 | Bike to Work Day (two locations in the city)
- May 20, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- May 27, 2023 | Hometown Holidays
- June 3, 2023 | MoCo Families for Safe Streets Rally
- June 17, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- June 17, 2023 | Lincoln Park 13nd Anniversary & Juneteenth Celebration
- June 17, 2023 | Suds & Soles 5k
- June 24, 2023 | Rockville Farmer's Market
- June 24, 2023 | Rockville Pride
- July 12, 2023 | Senior Housing Expo

The purpose of tabling at community events was twofold. First, the City wanted to promote the Update effort and educate residents and visitors on how to be involved in the process. This was

primarily achieved through the distribution of flyers promoting the project and associated Engage Rockville site, as well as chatting with individuals who stopped by the table at each of these events. Additionally, the City also sought feedback from folks at these events relative to their experiences, desires and wishes for Town Center. At most of the events, the table contained some sort of interactive question or activity for passersby to participate in. These activity boards contained the same questions that were asked of attendees at the four kickoff listening sessions to validate the responses received.

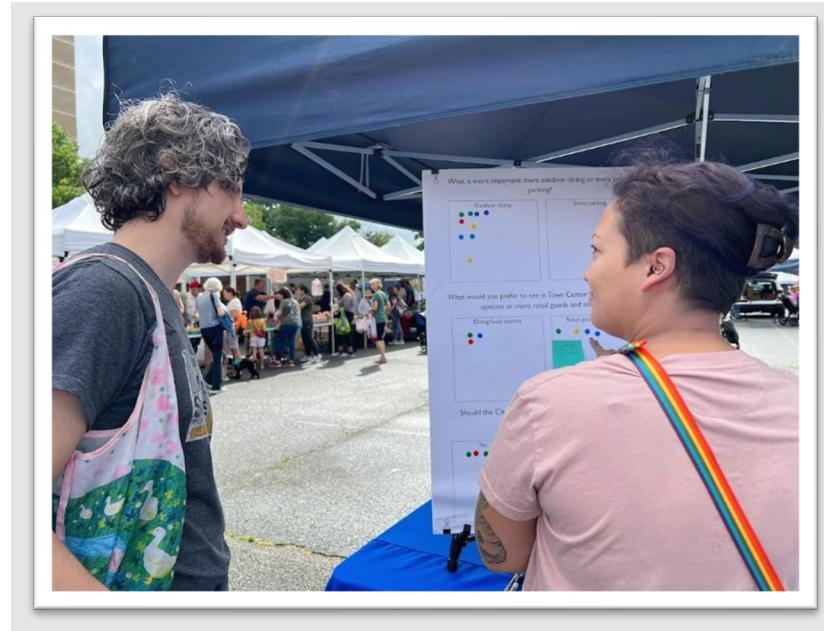
It is challenging to quantify the exact impact and exposure tabling had on this project and its participation rates. There was no mechanism to count the number of people who walked by a table or grabbed a flyer without stopping to participate in activity at the table. That said, staff do have a count of the number of individuals who participated in the activity boards. Table 1, below, lists each event that had an activity board along with the number of participants on the activity board at said event.

Table 1: Tabling Event Dates and Activity Board Responses (if applicable)

Date	Event	Responses
May 7	Arts Festival	204
May 13	Farmer's Market	64
May 19	Bike to Work Day	n/a
May 20	Farmer's Market	29
May 27	Hometown Holidays	188
June 3	Safe Streets Rally	n/a
June 17	Farmer's Market	60
June 17	Lincoln Park Day	n/a
June 17	Suds & Soles 5k	24
June 24	Farmer's Market	60
June 24	Pride	61
July 12	Senior Housing Expo	23



Rockville resident and Maryland State Senator Cheryl Kagan provides feedback on an activity board during Rockville's Pride event.



Two residents contemplate their responses to the activity board at the June 24 Farmer's Market.



The project team's table at the Rockville Arts Festival.

Focus Group Roundtables

With a stated engagement goal of representative participation, staff held 13 focus group roundtables to ensure participation in the Update. These roundtables targeted often underrepresented groups in public engagement processes, as well as specific groups of stakeholders that are likely to have a very distinct point of view and unique insight into the challenges and opportunities within Town Center that hadn't already been expressed during the outreach and engagement phase.

The roundtables were curated to remain small and intimate, as one purpose of the roundtables was to spotlight voices that haven't been heard. While all roundtables were open to the public, they weren't heavily advertised to keep the group size small enough to enable robust discussion. Often upon the initial invitation to participate in a roundtable, guests informed staff of additional individuals who should be involved in the effort. Attendance at roundtables varied based on the focus group, but often included a combination of individuals representing their own interests who met the focus group criteria and organizations that work in the space/represent individuals in the focus group criteria.

Table 2 lists the roundtables that were hosted during this phase.

Table 2: Roundtable Meeting Dates & Attendees

Focus Group	Date	Number of Attendees
Faith Based Community	July 11, 2023	4
Adjacent Communities	July 12, 2023	5
Affordable Housing Nonprofits & Developers	July 19, 2023	6
Senior Citizens	July 20, 2023	18
BLVD Ansel Apartment Building	July 24, 2023	9
Black and African American Community	July 25, 2023	7
Asian American and Pacific Islander Community	July 26, 2023	3
Property Owners and Developers	July 27, 2023	12
Latino Community	August 3, 2023	12
Individuals with Disabilities	August 9, 2023	24
BLVD 44 Apartment Building	August 17, 2023	10
Arts Community	August 23, 2023	17
LGBTQIA+ Community	August 30, 2023	3

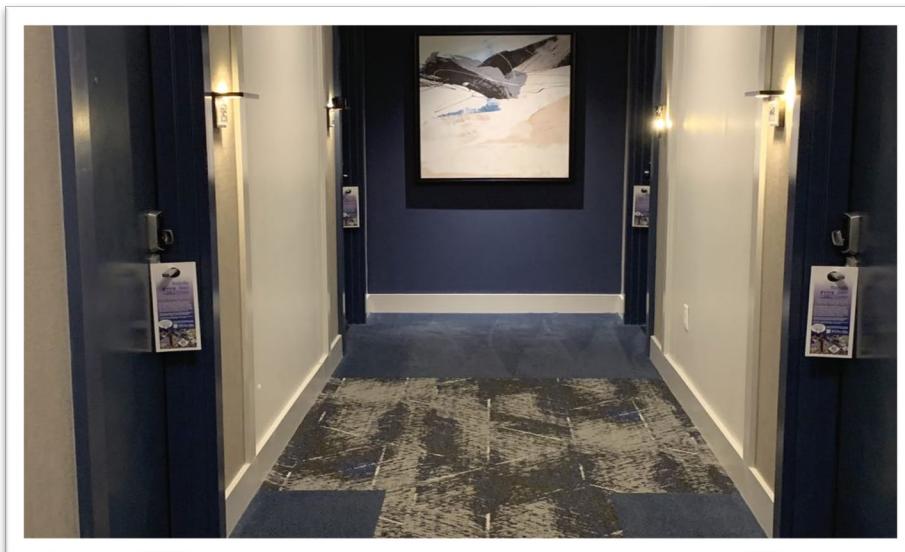
Discussions with Businesses

A critical voice in the outreach and engagement process that staff did not hear much from initially was the small business community – folks who own businesses located in Town Center or employees of businesses/organizations within Town Center planning area. Given that Town Center is an economic engine for the City, it was imperative to talk to these stakeholders.

To solicit feedback from these stakeholders, staff created an online business community survey and accompanying flyer. Business owners as well as employees were invited to participate. Staff canvased the Town Center by going door-to-door and distributed flyers to each business visited. Staff stopped at nearly 150 businesses.

Residential Door Hanging

The Town Center planning area is primarily made up of renters – nearly 75% of residents within the area rent their home. Historically renter populations have a less than representative turn out to public meetings when compared to homeowners. To combat this trend and ensure Town Center's rental population was fully aware of the Update and opportunities for input, City staff set out to place informational door hangers on the doors of residences in the area. Over the course of three days City staff visited nearly every residential address within the Town Center planning area. All single family detached and townhouse units within the planning area received a door hanger. For the multifamily buildings, staff worked closely with building management to distribute the door hangers. Most buildings allowed staff to go door to door and physically place a hanger on each front door. A handful of other buildings would not allow staff access to the entire building or complex, but instead allowed a stack of door hangers to be left in communal spaces such as mailrooms and lobbies. In total, nearly 2,000 door hangers were distributed throughout the planning area.



Informational door hangers left for residents in an apartment building.

Stakeholder Interviews

Throughout the entire public engagement process, staff offered the opportunity to meet one on one with individuals or organizations to provide feedback into the Update process. The opportunity for stakeholder interviews was advertised on the Engage Rockville website, at all public meetings and roundtables, as well as in email correspondence with stakeholders throughout the planning process.

Staff created a robust list of stakeholders that included more than 200 contacts. All contacts were emailed at least twice during the public outreach process to solicit feedback. Some of these groups took staff up on the offer to participate in an interview, while others attended relevant roundtables. Further, some contacts chose not to directly provide feedback, but shared the opportunity to provide input to their networks.

Table 3: Stakeholder List Summary

Category	Number of Contacts
Residential Complexes	21
Commercial Properties	19
Nonprofit and Public Sector Organizations	69
Civic Associations	24
City Boards & Commissions	25
Businesses	44

In total, staff completed 12 stakeholder interviews. These included:

- Action Committee for Transit
- College Living Experience
- Greater Rockville Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Committee
- Federal Railway Administration
- Main Street Connect's "Food for Thought" Program
- Maryland State Highway Administration, District 3 Traffic Office
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Richard Montgomery High School Student Government Association
- Rockville Housing Enterprises Board of Directors
- Thomas S. Wootton High School Student Government Association
- Washington Area Bicyclists Association
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

City Boards, Commissions, and Task Forces

The City of Rockville has 25 boards, commissions, and task forces that consist of appointed representatives charged with studying, advising, or making recommendations on a variety of topic areas to staff and the Mayor and Council. Staff reached out to each of these bodies with an invitation for staff to attend a meeting to provide an overview of the Update project and solicit feedback from members. In total, staff met with eight boards and commissions, as outlined in Table 4. Staff met with some of these groups once, while others invited staff to multiple meetings to continue discussion.

Table 4: Boards, Commissions and Task Force Dates

Board/Commission	Initial Meeting Date
Asian Pacific American Task Force	May 2, 2023
Bicycle Advisory Committee	May 3, 2023
Environmental Commission	September 7, 2023
Historic District Commission	May 18, 2023
Human Rights Commission	April 26, 2023
Pedestrian Advisory Committee	May 11, 2023
Recreation and Parks Advisory Board	July 27, 2023
Transportation and Mobility Committee	March 28, 2023

There was not a specific briefing to the Planning Commission during the outreach and engagement phase like there was for other boards, commissions, and task forces. As the land use body in Rockville, the Planning Commission received a briefing and provided input into the project proposal in early 2023. The Planning Commission will continue to get regular updates throughout the project, ultimately leading up to a dedicated phase of the project for Planning Commission review, public hearing(s), and recommendation.

Who We Heard From

The two mechanisms for collecting demographic information throughout the outreach and engagement phase were the optional demographic requests presented at the kickoff listening sessions and through the survey on Engage Rockville. Detailed demographic information from participants in each of those groups is provided in this section.

Listening Session Demographics

A total of 100 individuals attended one of the four kickoff listening sessions. During the listening session, attendees were encouraged to self-report their demographic information. 88% of attendees lived within the City of Rockville, and 31% of those individuals reside within the boundaries of Town Center. Age distribution of kickoff listening session participants is fairly evenly split among several different age bands: 16% were between 25 – 34; 23% between 35 – 44, 16% between 45 – 54; 13% between 54-64; and 31% over 65. The largest share (49%) of attendees have lived in their current residence for less than five years, though 46% have lived there more than 10 years. Listening session attendees were overwhelmingly white (84%), with only 4% of attendees identifying as Black or African American, Asian and Pacific Islander and Other.

Figure 1: Do you live in Rockville?

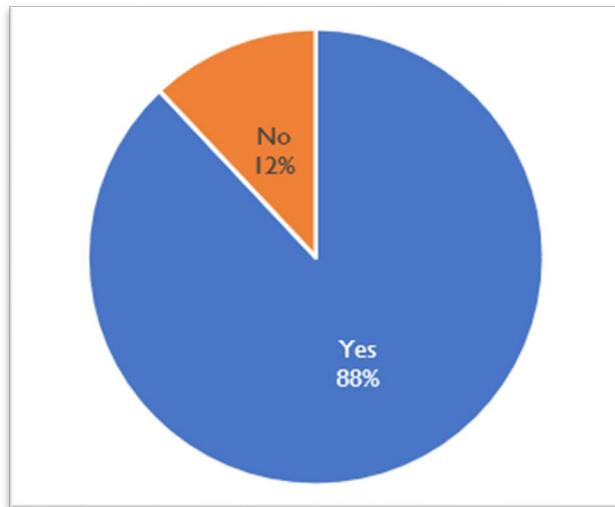


Figure 2: Are you a Town Center resident?

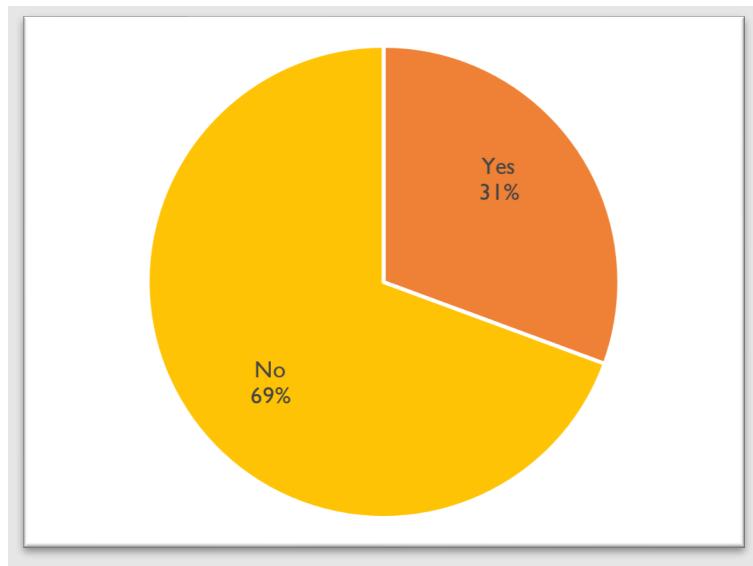


Figure 3: How old are you?

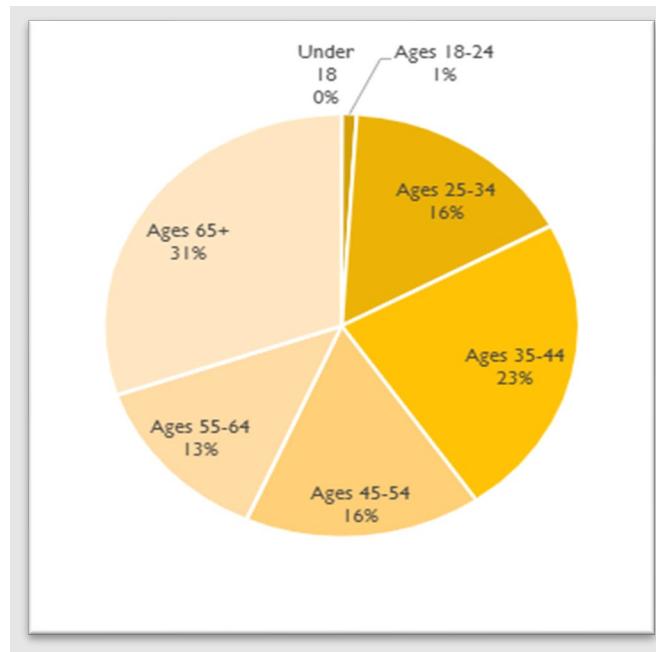


Figure 4: How many years have you lived in your current place of residence?

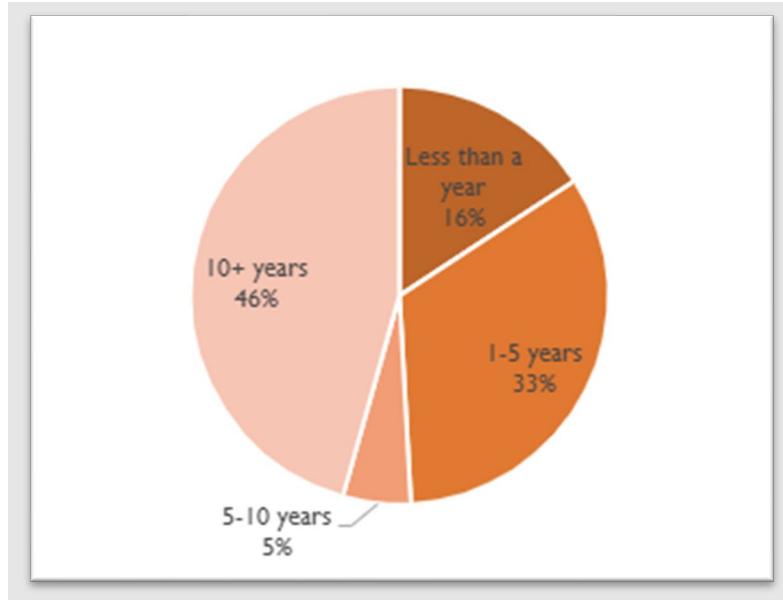
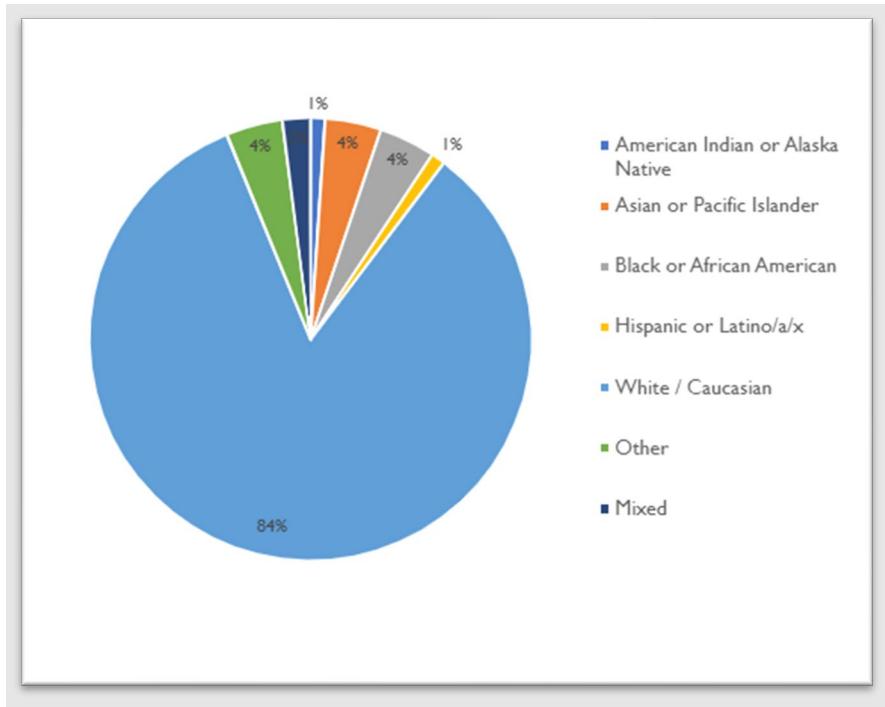


Figure 5: What is your race or ethnicity?



Survey Demographics

In total, the City received 752 responses to the survey while it was open on the Engage Rockville site. Table 5 breaks down how many survey responses were received from each of the user group options.

Table 5: Survey Responses by User Group

User Group	Number of Responses
Lives in Town Center	147
Adjacent Neighbor	403
Visitor to Town Center	341
Employee Working in Town Center	33
Student (K-12 and Montgomery College)	7
Business Owner	17
Government or Nonprofit Executive	19
Commercial or Multifamily Property Owner	4

Generally, survey respondents lived outside of Town Center but in Rockville, were mostly women, made over the median household income, were mostly white, and spoke English. The City recognizes that these results are not truly representative of Rockville or Town Center residents' demographics, and thus the survey should be reviewed with that in mind.

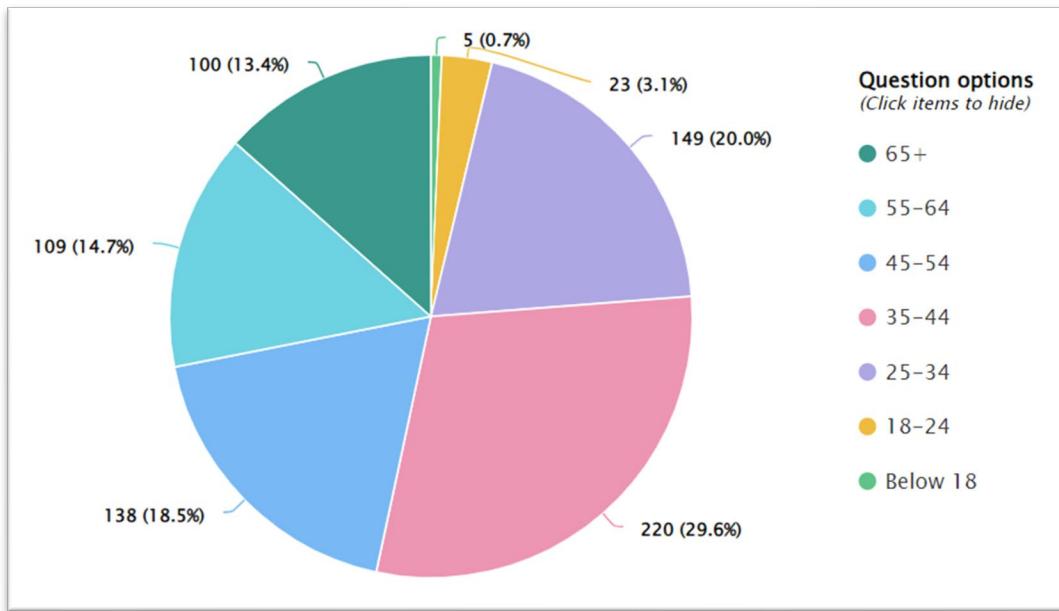
Types of Respondents

The survey was primarily taken by people living outside of Town Center, mostly people who identified primarily as adjacent neighbors (38.8%) or visitors (38.2%). With a Town Center population estimated at 4,020, this represents feedback from 3.5% of Town Center residents. The overwhelming number of respondents indicated that they lived within the City of Rockville (84.9%). The most frequently shared ZIP codes outside of Rockville were Potomac, North Bethesda, Germantown, and Gaithersburg – all at less than 1%.

Age and Gender

The age breakdown of survey respondents was largely reflective of Town Center and Rockville's population demographics. The most significant takeaway is that people under 18 were underrepresented in the survey, with only 0.7% of the respondents being under 18, compared to 11.5% of Town Center's population being under 18 years old. The Town Center residents who completed the survey were even more likely to be under the age of 44, and especially between the ages of 25-34 (31.7%). Further, women were overrepresented in survey respondents, at 59.9% compared to men at 38.8%.

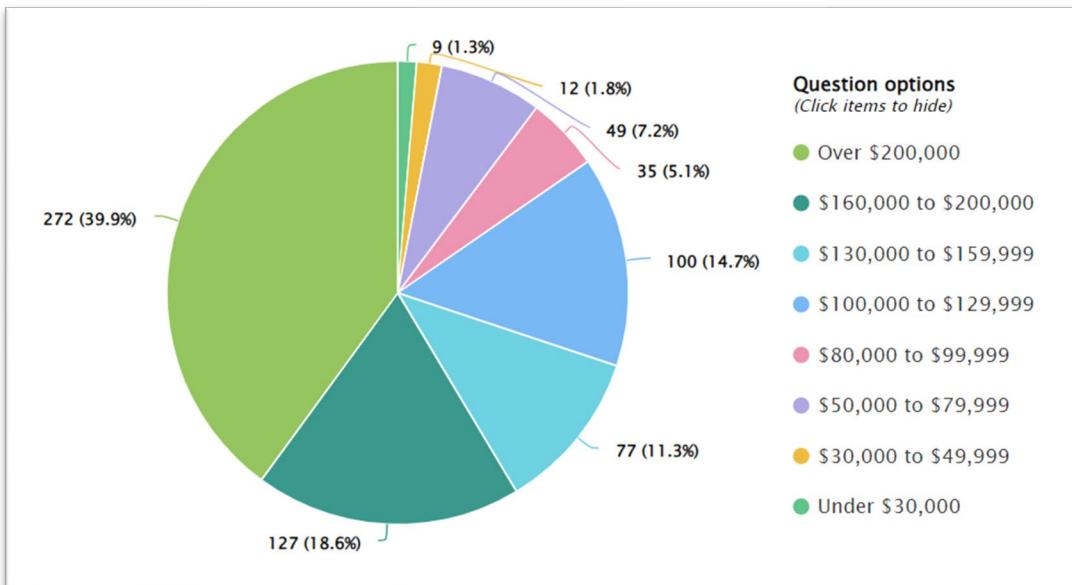
Figure 6: What is your age?



Household Income

The vast majority (84.5%) of survey respondents had a household income of over \$100,000. For context, the median household income of Town Center is \$96,773 and of Rockville is \$106,576, meaning that if the survey respondents were representative of the population, about half would have a household income over \$100,000.

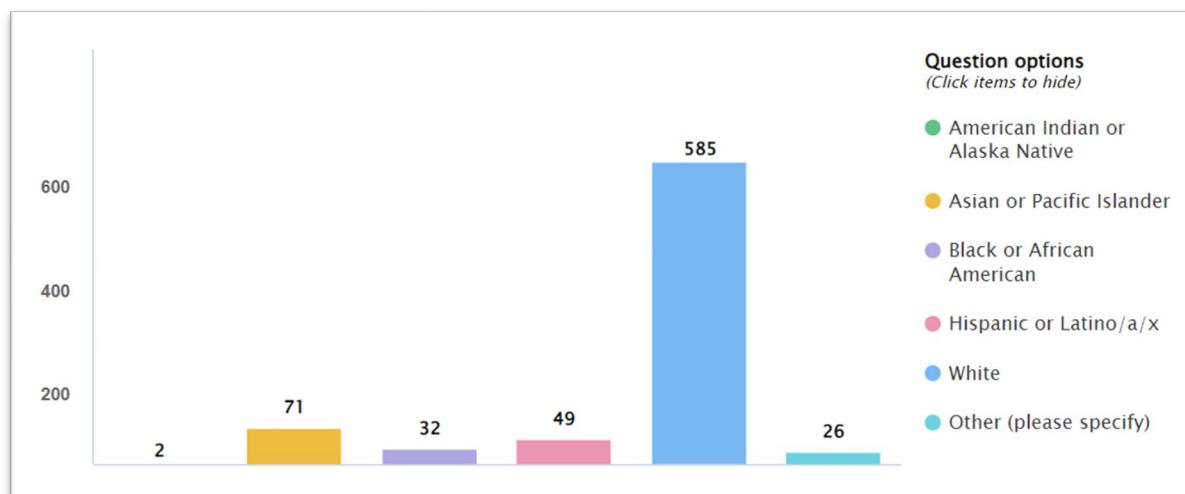
Figure 7: What is your total household income before taxes?



Race and Ethnicity

The majority of survey respondents identified as white (80.6%), which is an overrepresentation of this race when compared to the demographics of Town Center or the City as a whole. It should be noted that people of more than one race or ethnicity had the opportunity to select multiple options, so may have selected white and another race. 26 respondents (3.5%) selected more than one option. After white, the most frequent selections were Asian or Pacific Islander (9.8%), Hispanic or Latino/a/x (6.7%), and Black or African American (4.4%). The demographics of Town Center resident respondents largely follow this pattern. This compares to the overall demographics of Town Center as follows: white (47.6%), Asian (25%), Black (13.3%), Hispanic Origin (13%), some other race alone (4.6%), and two or more races (9.3%).

Figure 8: What is your race and ethnicity?



Languages Spoken

English was the overwhelming most spoken language by respondents at 98.4%. The most spoken languages after English were Spanish (6%), Chinese (3.5%), and French (1.5%). This compares with 3.7% of Town Center's residents speaking Spanish, 18.1% speaking Asian-Pacific Island languages, and 8.6% speaking Indo-European languages (not including English). 4.3% of respondents indicated they spoke another language not listed. It should be noted that the survey was available to be translated via Engage Rockville's translation function, as recommended by the Public Information Office.

Table 6: What are the primary languages spoken in your household?

Language	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
English	726	98.4%
Spanish	44	6.0%
Other	32	4.3%
Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese and Hokkien)	26	3.5%

French	11	1.5%
Persian (including Dari and Tajik)	4	0.5%
Tagalong (including Filipino)	3	0.4%
Arabic	3	0.4%
Japanese	3	0.4%
Vietnamese	1	0.1%
Korean	1	0.1%
Swahili	1	0.1%

Housing Status and Length of Residency

Respondents who identified themselves as residents of Town Center or its adjacent neighborhoods were asked about their housing status. Homeowners are more represented in the data than renters; the actual split of homeowners to renters in Town Center is 23.5% to 74.7%. However, this still shows that Town Center residents were significantly engaged in the survey.

Table 7: Housing Status

	Total from Survey	Town Center	Adjacent Neighborhoods
Rent	21.5%	51.2%	5.3%
Own	64.4%	42.4%	82.4%
Staying with family or friends temporarily	1.3%	0.6%	1.5%
Supportive housing	11.7%	4.1%	0%
Living in a shelter	0%	0%	10.2%
Without permanent shelter (ex: living on the street, in a car)	0%	0%	0.6%
Other	1.0%	1.7%	0%

The distribution of Town Center residents who completed the survey is largely reflective of the general Town Center population regarding the amount of time they have lived in their current place of residency.

Summary of Feedback

This section of the document summarizes feedback received by staff throughout the entirety of the outreach and engagement phase of the project. The ideas, views, and concepts presented on the following pages do not necessarily represent the City's opinion but come directly from members of the community who have participated in this process. In many cases, information presented below includes direct quotes from interviews, public meetings, and online feedback tools.

Furthermore, this section provides highlights of feedback through each engagement tool. In many cases, feedback is consistent among many methodologies, but there are instances where feedback received via one methodology contradicts or is the opposite of feedback received through a different tool. For example, the idea of adding a dog park to Town Center was discussed frequently in the survey and highly ranked during the "Vote with Your Dollars" exercise but was ranked quite low in one of the scenario questions. Staff are aware of these discrepancies, and readers of this document should be aware that they will see different feedback on similar topics between different engagement tools.

Finally, not everything presented within the Summary of Feedback will be addressed or brought forward in the updated Master Plan. All ideas will be taken into consideration by staff as they draft the Update but may or may not be reflected in the plan itself. As the purpose of this Community Engagement Report is to presenting findings, the community should expect to see staff recommendations for the planning area when the draft master plan is released for public consumption in early 2024.

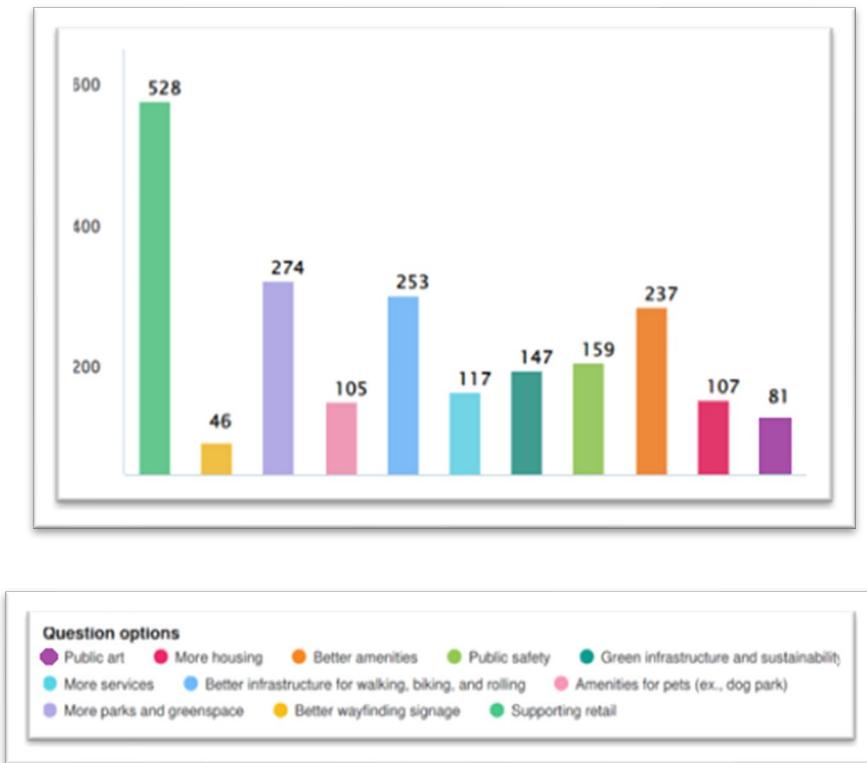
Survey Results

The survey posted on Engage Rockville received a total of 752 responses. Much of the information provided in the subsections below is an aggregation of all of the survey responses. Typically, these results are presented as themes. The survey did, however, utilize conditional logic and only asked certain questions to certain respondents. The subsections below that are titled with a specific group of people display the findings from that particular subset of the survey respondents.

General Priorities

Respondents were given a list of 11 possible general priorities for Town Center and asked to pick their top three. The most popular options selected were supporting retail (70.7%); more parks and greenspace (36.7%); better infrastructure for walking, biking, and rolling (33.9%); and better amenities (31.7%). When looking only at Town Center residents, better infrastructure for walking, biking, and rolling increases to the second highest priority at 38.6%, followed by more parks and greenspace (34.5%), and public safety (32.4%).

Figure 9: Top priorities for Town Center



General priorities were also revealed in the qualitative answers provided in response to the survey. A list showing all qualitative written responses aggregated follows, organized by the most frequent to least frequent responses. Note that there were also many comments about the importance of saving the movie theater, but those were not counted since the Regal Theater is no longer planning to cease operations.

- More/better retail and other activity options (93)
 - People are especially interested in a hardware store, more affordable retail options, and an anchor store.
- More variety of restaurants or better restaurants (80)
 - People were especially interested in affordable restaurants, family-friendly restaurants, cafes, salad/health-oriented restaurants, and bars.
 - Overrepresentation of Asian cuisine.
- Better pedestrian/bike infrastructure, safety, and connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods (45)
 - Many respondents especially noted feeling unsafe when walking along and across MD-355. Most respondents indicated this unease was present throughout the planning area, though the intersection of MD-355, and E. Middle Lane / Park Road was mentioned multiple times as a particularly challenging intersection.
- More housing/density (31)

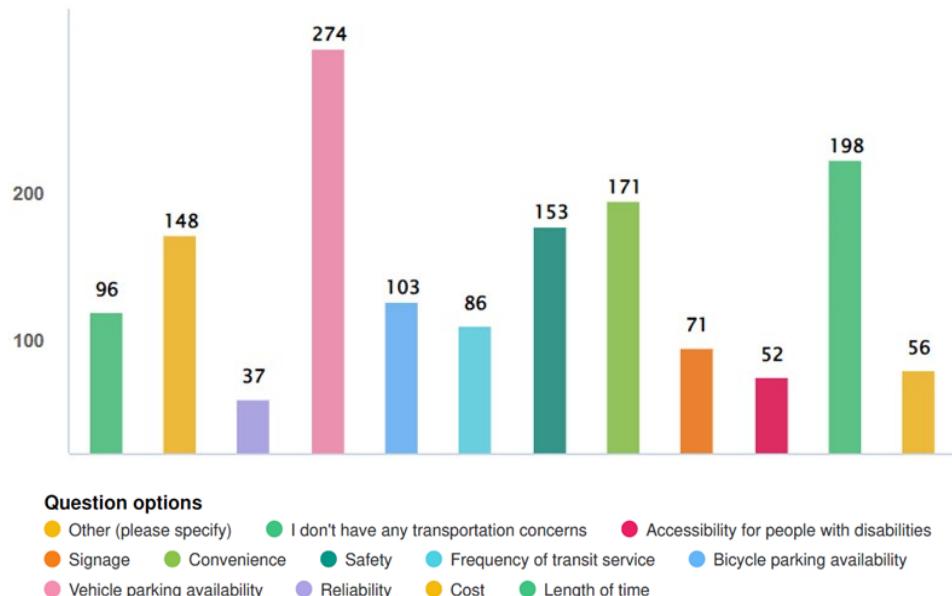
- More events and concerts (29)
 - Many people disliked that Hometown Holidays moved out of Town Center.
 - Many want the farmer's market to move to Town Square.
- Retaining businesses and filling vacant businesses (25)
 - Several respondents mentioned the City providing incentives to businesses.
- Easier, more accessible parking (24)
- Dog park and other pet-friendly places (20)
- Longer free parking or free parking (19)
- More parks and open/green space (18)
- Better, more affordable grocery options (18)
- Playground (12)
- More chain restaurants and businesses (11)
- Slower/safer roads (11)
 - Many respondents spoke about deprioritizing cars.
- Better transit access (10)
- Better signage and wayfinding (9)
- Support Gibbs Street closure (9)
- "Destination feel" (9)
 - Many people pointed to Pike & Rose and Rio as places that felt more like destinations.
- More local/mom & pop businesses (9)
- More road closures to traffic (8)
 - Several people mentioned closing Maryland Avenue.
- Affordability/high rents for businesses (8)
- Crime and public safety (8)
- Pick up/drop off parking spaces/short-term parking (7)
- Outdoor eating options (7)
- Make 355 a complete street/narrow 355 (6)
- Noise at night in Town Square (6)
- Marketing/branding, disseminating information (6)
- Gathering places (6)
- Town Square is too enclosed/does not connect well with the area around it (5)
- Public seating (5)
- Rooftop bar (5)
- Transit frequency (4)
- Traffic/ease for driver (4)
- Food trucks (4)
- Support for Dawson's Market (3)
- Entertainment venues (3)
- More nightlife (3)

- Redevelopment of vacant lots and surface parking lots (3)
- Community or youth recreation center (3)
- Electric vehicle charging stations (3)
- Do not support Gibbs Street closure (2)
- Less parking (2)
- Does not like scooter clutter (2)
- Homeownership options (2)
- Public art (2)
- Plaques remembering sites lost to urban renewal (2)
- High housing costs (2)
- Native flowers and trees (2)

Transportation

When asked to identify the top three aspects of transportation that could be improved within Town Center, respondents' top answers were vehicle parking availability (36.8%), no concerns (26.6%), convenience (23%), safety (20.5%), and cost (19.9%). However, the answers to this question shifted significantly when looking only at Town Center residents. Among residents, safety was the top priority (37.2%), followed by vehicle parking availability (30.3%) and no concerns (22.8%).

Figure 10: What aspects of transportation within Town Center can be improved?



When asked to identify the top three aspects of transportation connecting to Town Center that could be improved, respondents primarily said no concerns (34.7%), vehicle parking availability (24.6%), convenience (19.4%), frequency of transit (18.4%), and safety (17.9%). Together, these responses point to a perception related to a lack of vehicle parking, but generally that

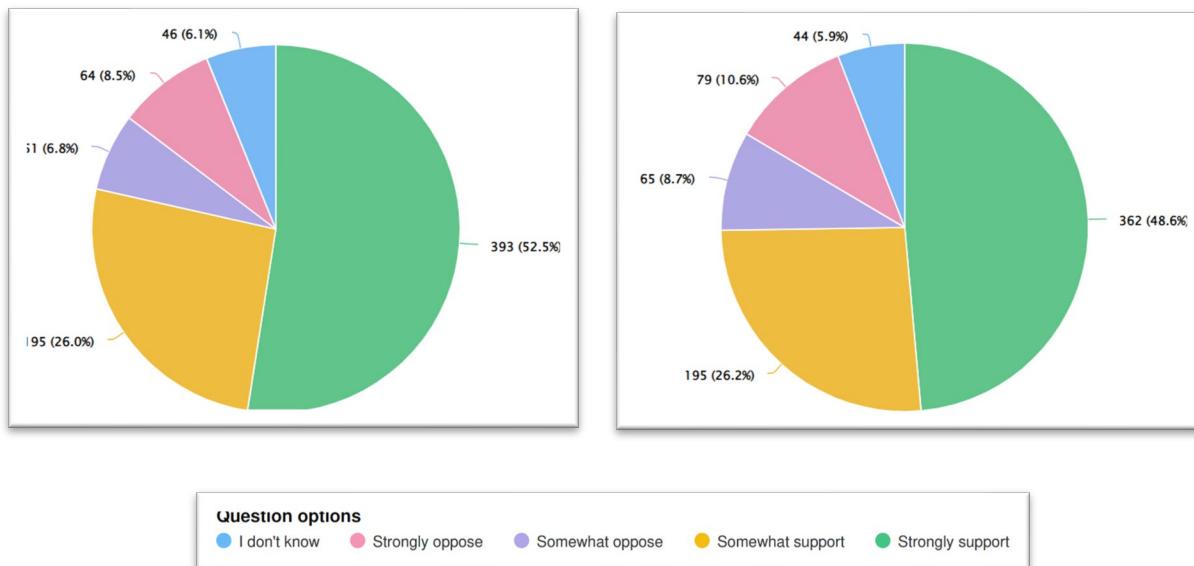
transportation is not a top concern for people who visit Town Center. Again, when looking only at Town Center residents, the top responses significantly shift to instead include no concerns (27.3%), safety (25.2%), frequency of transit service (25.2%), and convenience (20.3%). Vehicle parking availability drops to 17.5% of responses.

People responded that it is primarily very easy or easy to use most modes of transportation when traveling to and from Town Center. When traveling within Town Center, respondents primarily say that all modes of transportation are either very easy or easy, with bicycling, taking the bus, and driving being not as easy for some. The distribution of these responses is largely reflected when looking exclusively at responses from Town Center residents.

Road Diets and Complete Streets

Respondents were reminded that the recently adopted *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan* envisions Rockville Pike and other roadways as multi-modal and pedestrian-friendly with high-frequency bus service, including the planned MD-355 bus rapid transit (BRT) project. Achieving this could require design changes such as more frequent crosswalks, adding bike lanes, adding bus-only lanes, installing street trees, and narrowing travel lanes to reduce speeding. Given that, 78.5% of respondents were somewhat or strongly supportive. Feedback was reduced to 74.8% when respondents were told that the changes might result in slower vehicle speeds. Town Center residents are overall slightly even more in favor of road diets and even more likely to strongly support.

Figure 11: Road Diets. The right chart depicts the answers for when asked if they would support these or similar roadway changes if they result in slower vehicle speeds.

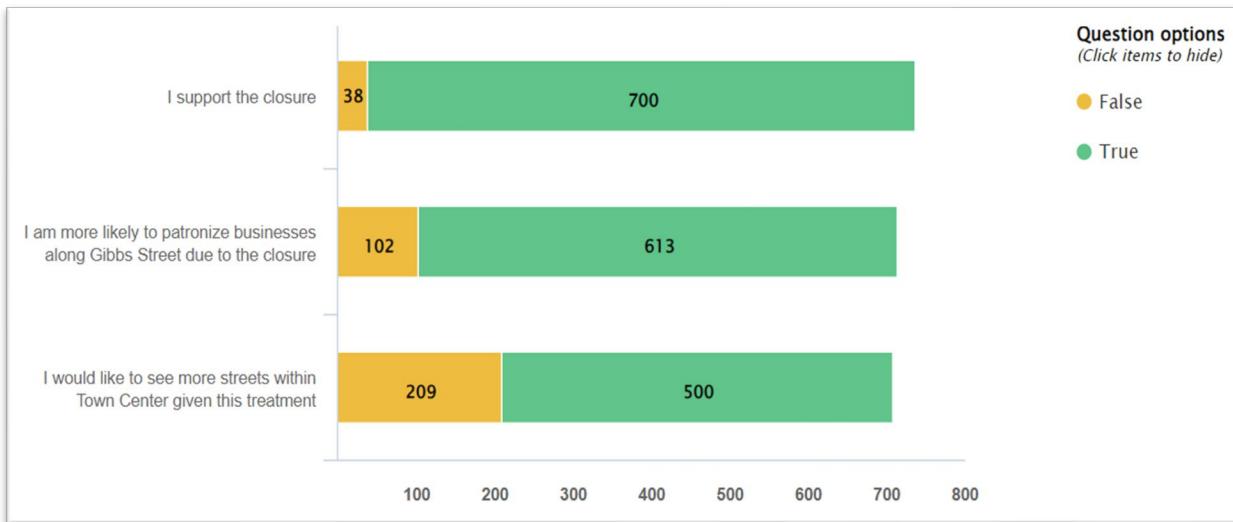


Gibbs Street

The overwhelming majority of respondents (94.9%) support the closure of Gibbs Street to vehicular traffic. Slightly fewer people (85.7%) said that they are more likely to patronize

businesses along Gibbs Street due to the closure and 70.5% said that they would like to see more streets within Town Center given this treatment. Still, this number is high enough that it warrants discussion as to what other streets might make sense to be closed to vehicle traffic. Responses from Town Center residents largely mirror the general responses.

Figure 12: Gibbs Street Responses



Parks and Public Space

Respondents were asked to pick their top three parks and public space concerns. The top results were amenities (44.2%), few options (38.9%), and no concerns (24.5%). This indicates a need to add new amenities to existing parks and more aggressively pursue the creation of new parks with amenities within Town Center. The distribution of responses when looking only at Town Center residents is almost identical.

Public Services and Community Facilities

Survey respondents were asked to compare certain community services with other neighborhoods. Most people agreed that Town Center's libraries are good or very good (85.5%). The rest of the public services (parks and greenspace, community centers, schools, and public safety) were largely rated as either good or average. The distribution of responses is largely identical when looking only at responses from Town Center residents, with a slightly higher favorability for parks and greenspaces and community centers. Based on the responses, the biggest areas for improvement are Town Center's parks and greenspaces and community centers.

Figure 13: In comparison to other neighborhoods, how do you rate Town Center's availability of public services?

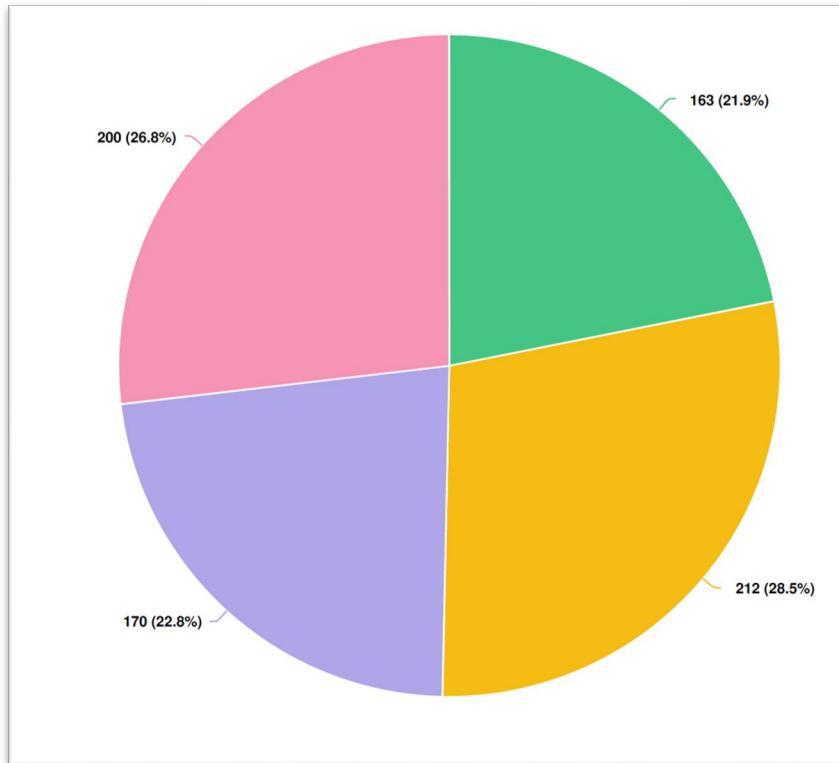


Development

When asked how new buildings along Town Center's borders with adjacent neighborhoods should be designed, there was a relatively even split between the four options, with 28.5% saying there should be a gentle decrease in building height closer to the border, 22.8% saying there should be a significant decrease, 21.9% saying tall buildings should be allowed throughout all of Town Center, and 26.8% saying that they did not have a preference.

Responses exclusively from Town Center residents are nearly identical to the general responses. Adjacent neighbors' responses were also largely similar, with slightly more respondents choosing a significant decrease rather than a gentle decrease. The percentages of adjacent neighbor respondents selecting that they did not have a preference and would like to see tall building throughout Town Center were essentially identical to the general population of respondents.

Figure 14: Development Height Preferences



Question options

- I don't have a preference
- A significant decrease in building heights closer to the border of Town Center with tallest buildings only allowed at center and near Metro
- A gentle decrease in building height closer to the border of Town Center and neighborhoods
- Allow tall buildings throughout all of Town Center

MD-355

When asked how Town Center could be better integrated into Rockville Pike/Hungerford Drive (MD-355) as a destination, the top three responses were: redevelopment of buildings along MD-355 with a focus on ground-level activity (71.5%); more sidewalk, bike lane, and trail connections (53.3%); and improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings (51.1%). Responses exclusively from Town Center residents largely mirror the general responses. It is notable that the two options related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure were more highly favored than the two options related to wayfinding signage.

Town Center Residents

Residents were primarily attracted to living in Town Center due to its walkability and bikeability, proximity to Metro and other transit options, and nearby amenities. Schools and housing prices played less of a role in the decision. A few of the concerns related to housing with the Town

Center are cost and safety, followed by location, quality, and noise. Few people responded that they feel they have limited housing choices.

A majority of residents feel that they can meet most (35%) or some (47%) of their daily needs in Town Center, though very few (4%) said that they can meet all of their daily needs.

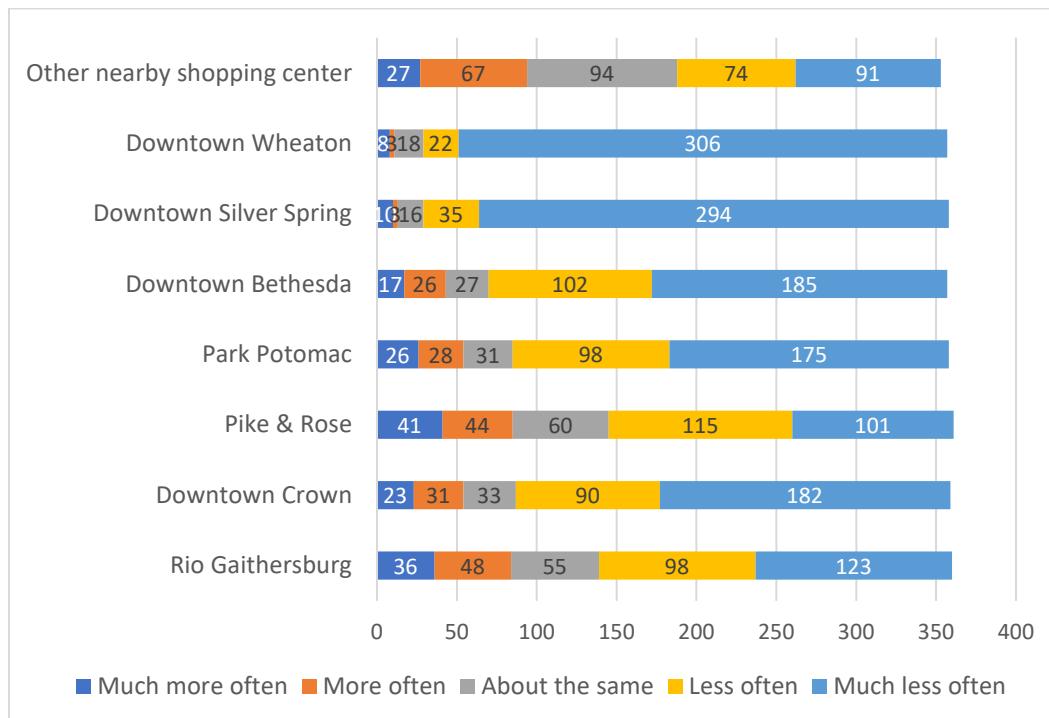
Adjacent Neighbors

Respondents in this section were primarily from West End or Woodley Gardens East-West (46%); followed by East Rockville (25%); Hungerford, New Mark Commons, Fireside Park (Parkside Landing), or Lynfield (14%); Rockville Pike (10%); and Lincoln Park (5%). This breakdown is not surprising given Lincoln Park and Rockville Pike's comparatively smaller populations.

Respondents in adjacent neighborhoods are frequent visitors to Town Center. Over half visit once a week or more, and 31% visit once a month or more. They are primarily coming to Town Center for its restaurants (30.9%), followed by groceries and the farmers market (18.2%), and the library (17.3%).

Based on the responses to this survey, Town Center's biggest competitors are Pike & Rose, Rio and Downtown Crown in Gaithersburg, and other nearby, nonspecific shopping centers. However, adjacent neighbors still say that they primarily go to these activity centers less often or much less often than Town Center. When going to other places, the primary reason is the retail options (34.1%), followed by amenities (17.4%) and parking (17.4%).

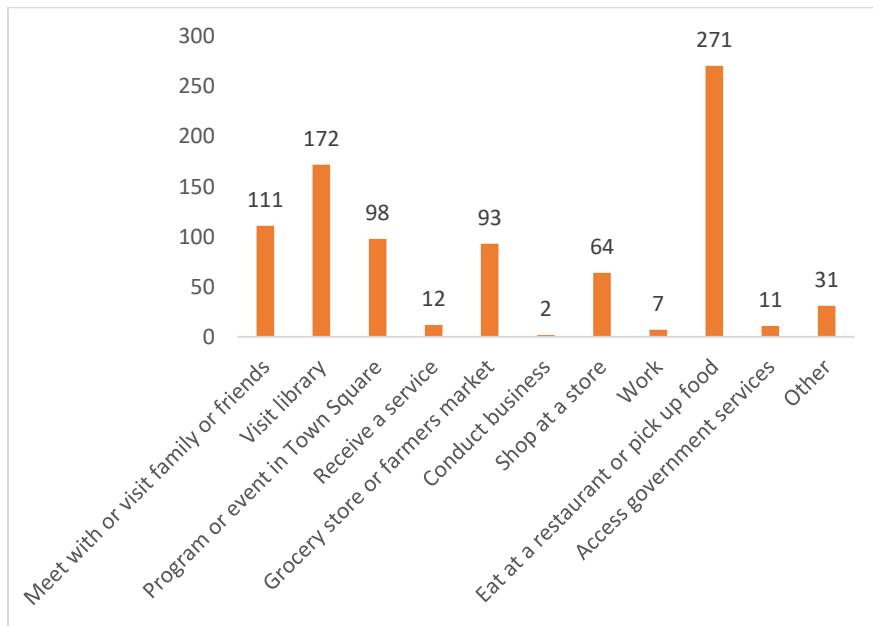
Figure 15: How often do you go to the following locations compared to Rockville Town Center?



Visitors

Those who self-identified as visitors primarily come to Town Center once a month or more (39%) or once a week or more (34%) and would be categorized as relatively frequent visitors. They are primarily visiting Town Center to eat at a restaurant or pick up food (31.1%), followed by visiting the library (19.7%) and meeting with or visiting family or friends (12.7%). This, along with the responses from adjacent neighbors, indicates that the library is a bigger draw for Town Center than previously anticipated.

Figure 16: What reasons do you visit Town Center? Select the top three.



Visitors to Town Center who responded to the survey are primarily visiting Town Center, but also visit other nearby shopping centers including Rio in Gaithersburg and Pike & Rose. It is clear these are Town Center's major economic competitors. When choosing to visit other locations, visitors do so for the retail options (29.9%), amenities (16.6%), parking (14.5%), and because they are closer to their home (12.6%). The distributions of both these responses closely mirror the responses from adjacent neighbors; pointing to a perception by many that Town Center needs more competitive retail options, better amenities, and/or better parking solutions, all reasons respondents indicated they visit other shopping centers over Town Center.

Employees

Of the 20 respondents who identified as working in Town Center, they are overwhelmingly going into the office three days a week or more (74%). 78% visit Town Center businesses besides their own about once a week or more. They would be more likely to do so if there were different or expanded options (50%), if they had more time for breaks or lunch (25%), and if there were more options closer to their work (14%).

Students

A total of seven students filled out the survey: four students from Richard Montgomery High School, two from Montgomery College, and one who identified as an elementary schooler. Four respondents said that Town Center felt either welcoming or very welcoming to young people, although one said it felt extremely unwelcoming.

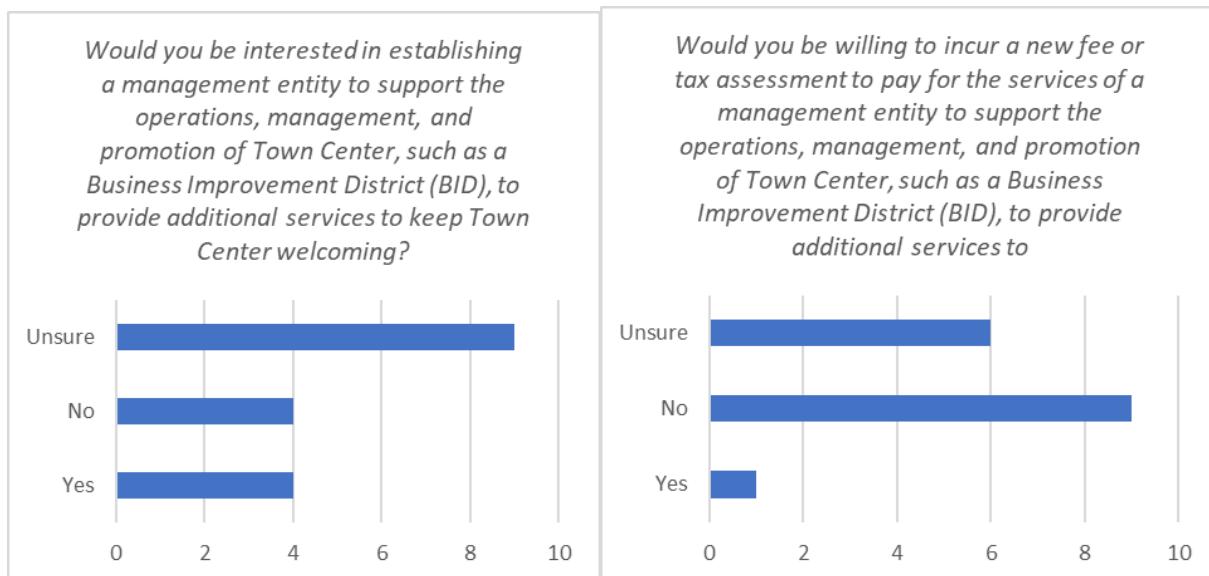
The four Richard Montgomery students who completed the survey primarily traveled to school via walking or wheelchair/other mobility device or school bus. The school bus, Ride On or Metrobus, car (driving self), car (driving with parents/others/carpool), taxi or rideshare, Metro, bicycle, and walking all received two or more responses saying they were either difficult or very difficult to use. This potentially points to Richard Montgomery needing improved accessibility with multiple modes of transportation.

Business Owners

17 business owners or managers completed the survey. Most had been operating their business for 10+ years (47%), although 29% had been operating 1-5 years. A majority of respondents have 75-100% of their employees in the office or place of business on any given weekday.

Most respondents were unsure (53%) about establishing a management entity to support the operations, management, and promotion of Town Center. Even more were unsure (38%) or opposed (56%) when asked if they would be willing to incur a new fee or tax assessment to pay for the services of a management entity.

Figure 17: Questions about forming a Business Improvement District (BID) or other similar entity.



Business owners chose to locate in Town Center primarily because they live nearby (21%) and proximity to transit (15%). The biggest concerns expressed by business owners about continuing to operate here were cost of living for employees (25%), rising commercial rents or business

expenses (22%), followed by marketing and promotion (13%), relationship with property owner or landlord (13%), and other (13%).

Government or Nonprofit Executives

10 government or nonprofit executives completed the survey. They have operated in Town Center for varying lengths of time, and primarily come from the social services or nonprofit (40%), other (30%), and health (20%) sectors. Respondents ranged in size from zero full-time employees to 100, and from one part-time employee to 75. Five organizations said that on any given weekday about 25-49% of their employees are in the office; two organizations said 50-74%; and two said 75-100%.

Respondents said that they are primarily located in Town Center due to the customer/user base. Other top reasons included being near other businesses or organizations needed to operate their organization, and proximity to transit. Their greatest operational concerns were marketing and promotion (20%), employee recruitment (15%), rising rents (15%), and cost of living for employees (15%).

In the long-form response to the question of what the City could provide to retain or expand your organization in Town Center, two respondents mentioned more interesting tenants. Others mentioned free parking on weekends, closing Maryland Avenue to through traffic, grant or other funding support, and marketing or promotional support. Most respondents either had no interaction with the permitting or licensing process within the City or had generally positive interactions.

Commercial or Multifamily Property Owners

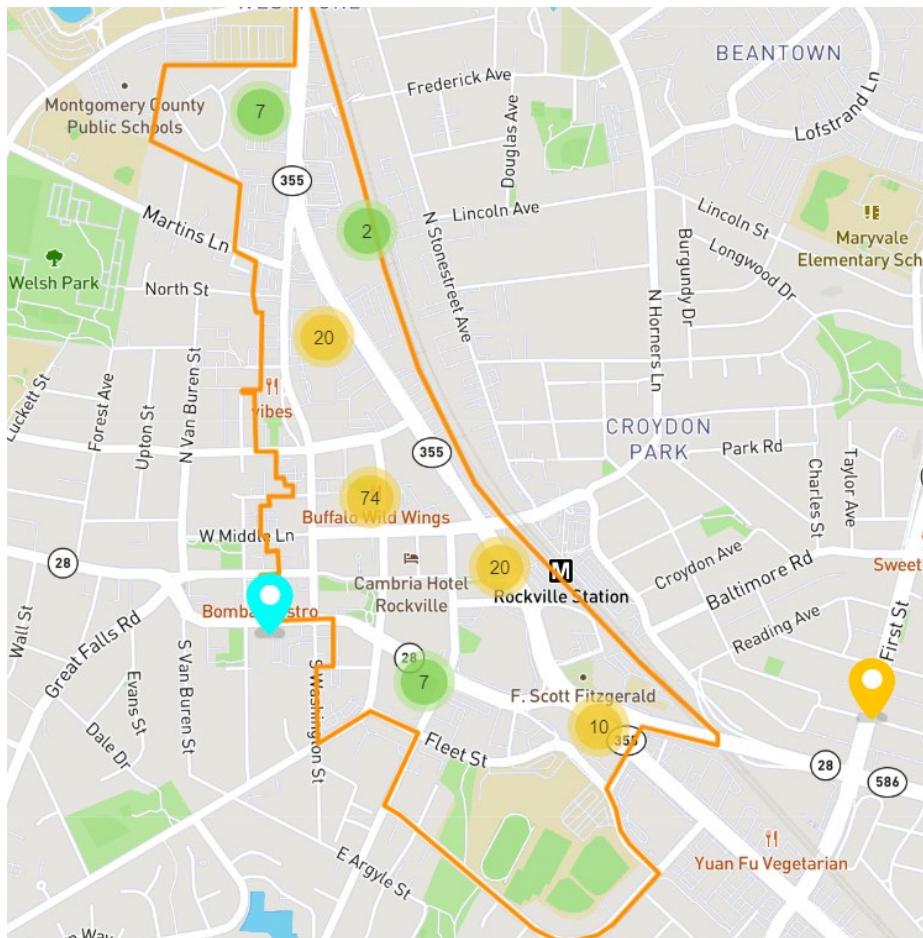
Four commercial or multifamily property owners completed the survey. They either owned one (50%) or two (50%) properties that were either residential (50%) or mixed-use (50%). The top reasons respondents gave for purchasing their property in Town Center were that they lived in the planning area or nearby, the property was close to their job, near to Metro and other transit options, walkability or bikeability, customer base, and the rent that can be charged.

Half of the respondents were happy with their current property and not interested in redeveloping. The other half said that they were interested in redevelopment, with one property owner hoping to redevelop soon and the other waiting for the right time. Two respondents described the development process in Rockville as challenging, with one saying that they had not interacted with the development process and the other not responding.

When asked about the biggest opportunity for their property, those with the most responses were improved public infrastructure (50%) and reinvestment or renovation of existing property (50%). The major challenge, as selected by one respondent, was parking.

Reaction Map Results

While the reaction map widget was active on the Engage Rockville website, participants used it to place individual “pins” throughout the Town Center. These user-placed pins captured participant feedback in six defined comment areas: “Spot I Love,” “Needs Improvement,” “Somewhere I Go Often,” “Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All,” “New Ideas/Things I’d Like to See,” and “Other.”



Map showing location of feedback pins on the Reaction Map.

“Pin” feedback varied from participant to participant. Some participants pinned a unique concept, while others supported an already posted comment, or even posted a contrasting viewpoint. On occasion, a participant provided multiple thoughts or recommendations in a pin.

Upon closing of the reaction map, the City received 143 different pins/comments from a total of 13 users. A breakdown of the number of pins within each of the categories is provided in Table 8.

Table 8: Reaction Map Pins by Category

Category	Number of Pins
Spot I Love	18
Needs Improvement	44
Somewhere I Go Often	1
Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All	12
New Ideas/Things I'd Like to See	55
Other	13

A summary of feedback provided through the reaction map is outlined in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of Reaction Map Comments

Pin Category	% of Pins	Feedback Received
Spot I Love	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space, Bandshell, and Ice Rink in Town Square. • Water features / fountains throughout Town Center. • Outdoor Dining. • Retail Options in the Area (Dawson's Market, Great Wall Supermarket, Paris Baguette) • Metro Access. • Gibbs Street Closed as a pedestrian way / "streetery." • Courthouse Square.
Needs Improvement	31%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Square Landscaping and Furniture. • Various Buildings with Open / Vacant Retail Spaces. • Area South of MD-28 feels under-utilized; low density; redevelopment potential as being close to Metro. • Promenade Park: flooding takes place as the drains back up; lighting is poor; main transportation entrance and it should reflect; redevelopment potential; not welcoming and difficult to find if not familiar with it; promenade stairs need cleaning and repair; add greenery, resurface walkway, add color to this bland space. • Utility poles in the right-of-way; consider burying these lines. • Area north of Beall Avenue could use a master planning initiative for redevelopment

		<p>as it does not connect with the Town Square; seems piecemeal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juror's parking on Jefferson Street. • Vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle connections from Town Center to adjacent neighborhoods and parks; sidewalks need improvement; bike lanes are confusing. • "Mixing bowl" intersection of Viers Mill Road and MD-355 is dangerous for pedestrians. • Various crosswalks and intersections are unsafe: Middle Lane and MD-355; Maryland Avenue and Middle Lane; Jefferson Street and Monroe Street; Viers Mill and MD-355. • Desire more variety in tenants and what is offered in Town Center; too many restaurants; need a bookstore, a bike shop, a skate shop, better fast casual restaurant options; a pharmacy; corner stores for quick grab items, and a hardware store. • When there are loading docks, trucks do not pull all the way and block sidewalks and drive aisles through Town Square.
Somewhere I Go Often	1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Executive Office Building and plaza.
Somewhere I Go Rarely/Not at All	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MD-355 between Beall Avenue to Martin's Lane. • 255 Rockville Pike. • MD-355 between Middle Lane and Beall Avenue. • Rockville Memorial Library.
New Ideas/Things I'd Like to See	39%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog Park, green space, community use at Maryland Avenue and Middle Lane. • Consider moving City Hall to 255 Rockville Pike and redeveloping the current site as mixed-used containing residential, retail, and public spaces. • Create multiple gateway entries for the Town Center. • Improve access to Veteran's Park and allow it to serve as a branded eastern green gateway. • Redevelopment of area east of MD-355 between Middle and Martins Lanes. • Move Farmer's Market somewhere else as the parking lot is unattractive and the intersection is dangerous; consider a year-round farmer's market and find an anchor to help support it. • Courthouse Square: add improved and accessible outdoor furniture (benches, tables,

		<p>etc.); consider new use for courthouse that would bring more vitality to Town Center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of Fire Station and buildings to the north into a mixed-use site thereby expanding Town Center's footprint to the north; consider saving the façade of fire station. • Consider ways to improve interactivity and connectivity with F. Scott Fitzgerald's grave at the St. Mary's Cemetery. • Consider untapped potential with the library; bring in a maker space at an hourly rate; host more events. • Connect existing parks via new smaller parks to create a network of green and open spaces for the Town Center. • Green medians and other traffic calming measures. • Create a unified sidewalk design and bring expanded street furniture throughout the Town Center to help universally brand it. • Abandon the western portion of N. Washington Street, combine lots, and provide new redevelopment potential. • N. Washington Street needs denser buildings and uses. • Connect Town Center to Montgomery College; consider a bike and pedestrian trail. • United States Post Office is a redevelopment opportunity; place USPS in the ground floor of a new building there. • Develop other crossings over the railway corridor into adjacent neighborhoods; additional bridges would help bring circulation into the Town Center.
Other	7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of CVS negatively impacts the community.

Idea Board Results

The idea board widget on Engage Rockville saw 10 new ideas added by 5 unique users, and a total of 9 “likes” were given to various ideas. Table 10 shows the ideas presented on the idea board and the number of “votes” supporting each idea. The ideas listed in Table 10 are direct quotes from the Idea Board.

Table 10: Idea Board Responses

Idea	Supporting Votes
Allow unlimited residential density within 1 mile of Town Center and remove parking requirements to increase walkability and affordability.	0
Our County differentiates itself with its connection to science (like Universities at Shady Grove or NIH), and yet Rockville Science Center could be so much more. Why not embrace this idea more and expand it?	3
Keep Gibbs Street closed. It never offered much of a throughfare for traffic but has allowed for so much more livable community space. I don't think it's any coincidence that most of the new and successful restaurants are along it.	3
Use underused/unleased retail space as a satellite location for senior center/adult day program/elder-focused programming.	1
Identify space for intergenerational day programming (day care w/adult day program on same site).	0
Increase the safety and joy of pedestrian travel while slowing down traffic. In accordance with the ULI report, narrowing down the smaller streets into one-way streets is a great idea. It will slow traffic down to allow safer passage of pedestrians and will open more space for pedestrian travels whether by walking, cycling, skateboarding, or other. This will also give drivers and passengers more time to look around and see things they may want to stop and visit.	0
Shuttle service to and from Montgomery College to increase library use and retail sales. A shuttle service that brings students from the college down to the square, to the theater at the most, will significantly increase sales, use of spaces, community events, and many more unseen benefits. Students will minimally purchase food and drinks, but their potential is enormous.	1
Rockville Town Center/Square Theme of Balance. The ULI report suggests differentiating Rockville from other town squares like Downtown Crown/Rio and Pike/Rose. I think a good theme could be something about balance. Crown/Rio and Pike/Rose are big and have big chains in them. Rockville is smaller and needs something more desirable than a big chain. A huge focus today is on balancing life: work/life, city/nature, time/money, etc. Rockville's theme should focus on balance and can represent that easily by adding green spaces: on roofs, bridges, sidewalks, etc. showing that it is possible to live both in a city and nature at the same time. Other features of the area could include yoga studios, self-help facilities, space in the library for self-help, podcast broad-casting studio, zen-like spaces, life coaches, a Garden where people can buy plants, vegetarian stores/restaurants, a small river, etc.	1
Break up MASTER PLAN to start change NOW. From my understanding, this plan is to be completed in 2040. However, I am concerned that by the time it finishes, the facts will have changed, the culture may change, and other unknown changes may occur. The past 4 years have opened our eyes to the fact that we need to incorporate change into our plans so that we can pivot and adapt accordingly. I would urge the council to consider separating its aspects into smaller sections and to have a structure of decisions based on the results of those changes, rather than have one huge plan. For example, the plan should incorporate if/then statements for each issues needing solved. For businesses closing, say you add transit from the college to the town square. If business profits increase above a threshold, then move on to other issues to solve. If	0

business profits maintain or decrease, then proceed with additional, riskier, measures like adding a residential building. Once that building finishes, repeat the process, but proceed with other issue if/then statements while it is being built. The if/then method will allow flexibility in actions needed to resolve issues while still having a plan for the next 15+ years. The difference is that the current plan does not incorporate any changes that could occur between now and 2040. The if/then plan will incorporate possibilities of changes thought of, and flexibility for changes not thought of while also allowing smaller changes to start immediately! It much easier to get 1 smaller project going than to get 15+ years of projects approved to start going.

With Mosaic District in mind for future development would be nice.

0

Word Cloud Results

At the kickoff listening sessions and in some of the roundtable and stakeholder interviews attendees were encouraged to provide feedback to the City by submitting answers to questions through a word cloud. Word clouds are clusters of words that are depicted in different sizes. Larger and bolder words indicate that response was given multiple times, whereas smaller words indicate the response is less frequent. Word clouds are a dynamic and interactive tool for meeting organizers and attendees to view feedback in real time, on demand.

The word clouds below display a summary of the responses to each question asked at all the meetings combined.

Figure 18: What one word would you use to describe Town Center?



Figure 19: What is your favorite thing about Town Center?



Figure 20: What one thing would you change about Town Center?

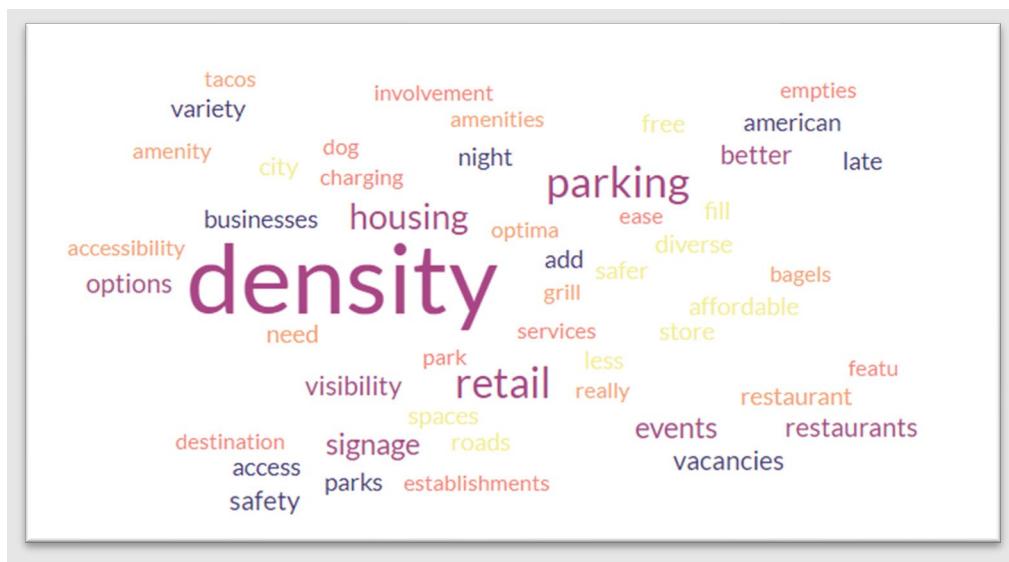
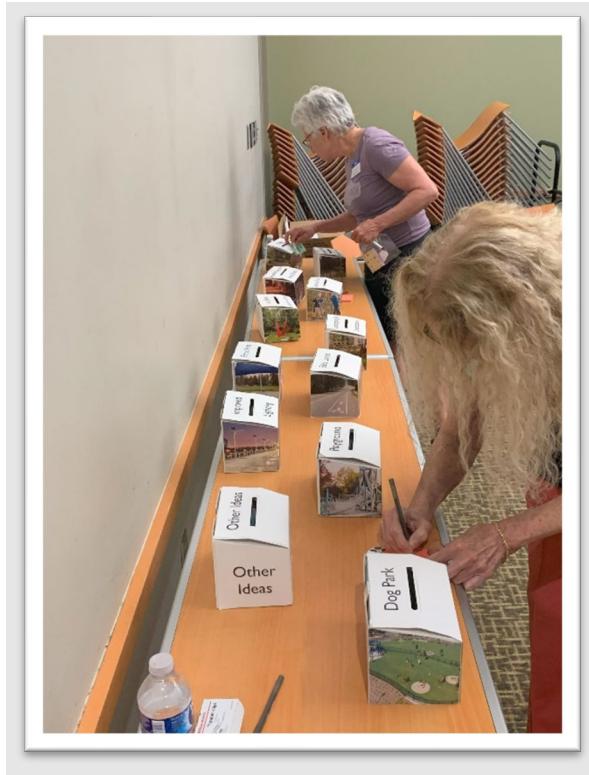


Figure 21: What should Town Center be known for?



Vote with Your Dollars Exercise Results

During the kickoff listening sessions, attendees participated in an activity known as “Vote with your Dollars.” In this exercise, each attendee was given a predetermined number of play “Rockbills.” Attendees needed to allocate their Rockbills among different 11 options for amenities that could be added to Town Center. There was also an “other” category where participants could indicate a specific amenity to allocate money to instead of the predetermined options. Attendees needed to associate a dollar value with each of the amenities, with the only rule being that given the denominations of money, it would be impossible to vote for every amenity. Much like what occurs during the City’s annual budget process, meeting attendees had to allocate a limited number of resources (Rockbills) across many great wishes and desires (amenities).



Attendees of the April 13 Listening Session participate in the Vote with your Dollars activity.

Table 11 lists the aggregated results of the Vote with your Dollars activity. Amenities that are in blue rows indicate the predetermined amenity options provided to all meeting attendees. Amenities that are in green rows indicate those amenities that were generated by meeting attendees through the “other ideas” option.

Table 11: Vote with your Dollars Activity Results

Amenity	Dollars Allocated	Percentage of Total
Arts/Performance Events	\$308	13.62%
Landscaping and Streetscapes	\$272	12.02%
Dog Park	\$242	10.7%
Sidewalk and Trail Improvements	\$234	10.34%
Playground	\$199	8.8%
Bike Lanes	\$193	8.53%
Parks	\$170	7.52%
Exercise Park	\$141	6.23%
Improved Lighting	\$120	5.31%
Picnic Facilities	\$98	4.33%
Art Park / Sculpture Garden	\$90	3.98%
Housing (mid-rise or townhouses)	\$75	3.32%
Community Center / Meeting Space	\$14	0.62%
Arts & Entertainment District	\$12	0.53%
More Density in SF Dwelling Units; Less Parking	\$10	0.44%

Tunnel MD-355	\$10	0.44%
Infrastructure for Street Festivals	\$10	0.44%
Cultural Events and Programming	\$10	0.44%
Promenade Park Improvements	\$10	0.44%
Professional/Family Theater	\$8	0.35%
Town Center Entrance Signage	\$7	0.31%
Black Museum	\$6	0.27%
Shuttle Bus to Metro	\$5	0.22%
Better Access from Lincoln Park and Historic District	\$5	0.22%
Visibility	\$5	0.22%
Safety	\$3	0.13%
Guest and Overnight Parking	\$2	0.09%
Music Theater	\$1	0.04%
More Fun Stuff	\$1	0.04%
Daycare Center	\$1	0.04%

Scenario Question Results

Throughout the kickoff listening sessions, as well as at tabling events, staff posed a series of scenarios to seek insight into people's attitudes and feelings. Each of these scenario questions had predetermined answers and participants were invited to place one dot sticker in the box that aligned with their preferred answer to the question. Participants were directed to only select one of the provided answers – they were not allowed to add a new option or select more than one of the provided answers. Most scenario questions only had two possible responses, though a handful contained three options.

The intention with the scenario questions was to get participants thinking critically about what is most important to them and make decisions between two or more tradeoffs. In some cases, the responses to the scenario questions were opposites or mutually exclusive – an environment where all responses are possible is unlikely. Other scenario questions had a potential compromise between the options that could be reached, but for the purposes of this exercise, participants were directed to only select one choice.



Attendees at the April 19 Listening Session provide answers to scenario questions.

Table 12 reports the aggregated findings of each of the scenario questions posed during the outreach and engagement phase of the project at both the listening sessions and tabling events.

Table 12: Scenario Question Results

What is more important?		
	Free /low-cost parking	71%
	Parking as close to destination as possible	29%
What would you prefer?		
	Free/low-cost parking that is more difficult to find	30%
	Paid parking that is easier to find	70%
What would you prefer?		
	One large, highly amenitized central open space in Town Center	59%
	A series of smaller open spaces scattered throughout Town Center with less amenities in each	41%
What is more important?		
	New open space for people	73%
	New open space for dogs/pets	27%
What is more important?		
	A better pedestrian bridge to the Rockville Metro Station	24%
	A more pleasant experience crossing Rockville Pike (MD-355)	76%
What is more important?		
	More outdoor dining	87%
	More street parking	13%
What should Town Center's streets prioritize?		
	Safety and functionality for all users	95%
	Speed for vehicles	5%

Regarding commercial establishments, what would you prefer to see?		
	More dining/food options	42%
	More retail goods and services options	58%
How should connections between Town Center and Montgomery College be improved?		
	Construct additional walking/biking paths	45%
	Improve transit/shuttle connections	41%
	Provide additional micromobility options	7%
	No improvements need to be made	6%
Should the City be involved with incentivizing businesses to come/stay in Town Center?		
	Yes	59%
	No	10%
	Only in very specific cases	31%

In addition to the questions posed in Table 12 above, staff also asked participants three questions pertaining to Town Center's streets and preferences on what various streets should look like. The findings from these three questions are provided in Table 13. The map and imagery/description that accompanied each of the questions are also provided below in Figures 23 – 25.

Figure 22: What should the business district roads in Town Center look like?

What should the business district roads in Town Center look like?



Business district roads are **pink** on this map.



OPTION 1: One travel lane in each direction, landscaped center medians, on street parking on both sides, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 2: One travel lane in each direction, no center median, bike lanes on both sides, on street parking on both sides, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 3: One travel lane in each direction, no center median, sidewalks on both sides, street trees on both sides.

Figure 23: What should the arterial roads in Town Center look like?

What should the arterial roads in Town Center look like?



Arterial roads are red on this map.



OPTION 1: One to two travel lanes in each direction, landscaped medians/separated turning lanes, bike lanes on both sides, on street parking on both sides, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 2: Two travel lanes in each direction, on street parking along one side, no center median/turning lane, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 3: Two travel lanes in each direction, on street parking, on both sides, continuous center turning lane, minimal bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure.

Figure 24: What should the major roads in Town Center look like?

What should the major roads in Town Center look like?



Major roads are yellow on this map.



OPTION 1: Three travel lanes in each direction, landscaped center median, sidewalks with street trees on both sides.



OPTION 2: Three travel lanes in each direction, center median with designated turn lanes, sidewalks on both sides.



OPTION 3: Three lanes of travel in each direction, bus rapid transit lane in the center, bike lanes on both sides, sidewalks on both sides.

Table 13: Scenario Questions Responses Specific to Streets

What should the business district roads in Town Center look like?		
	Option 1	52%
	Option 2	43%
	Option 3	5%
What should the arterial roads in Town Center look like?		
	Option 1	83%
	Option 2	11%
	Option 3	7%
What should the major roads in Town Center look like?		
	Option 1	15%
	Option 2	13%
	Option 3	72%

Kickoff Meeting Small Group Activity

During each of the kickoff listening sessions, all meetings concluded with a small group activity. Meeting attendees were divided into several groups, with most groups having between 5 and 10 participants. In these groups, participants were presented with a map of the Town Center planning area and prompted by staff to indicate/mark up the map with their thoughts and ideas. Staff acted as facilitators and asked questions to spark conversation, such as:

- Where do you think there are opportunities for development/redevelopment? What type of buildings would you like to see? What land uses?
- Where would you want to see new open spaces? What works with the existing open spaces? What doesn't?
- Are there uses you would like to see in certain places in Town Center?
- Which road corridors should be redesigned? How should they be changed? Do the current transportation options work for you?
- Are there community facilities that are missing from Town Center? What are they? Where should they go?

Findings from the small group discussions varied from meeting to meeting and group to group. Table 14 summarizes the most frequently recurring comments and themes throughout all the small group discussions.

Table 14: Summary of Findings from Small Group Discussions at Kickoff Listening Sessions

Theme	Subcategory	Comment
Transportation	Automobile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current vehicle speeds are a concern. • Maryland Avenue can be dangerous to drive at night. • MD-355 doesn't allow many left turns, which makes Town Center hard to get to. • MD-355 should be developed into a boulevard.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving through Town Center can be challenging with pedestrian focused streets.
	Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciate 2 hours of free parking in public garages but would like more time free. Many people don't know about 2-hour free parking. There are limited parking options for overnight guests. Parking can be hard to find if you don't know where you are going; consider signage. Transform underutilized parking into something else.
	Pedestrians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD-355 is very intimidating to cross on foot. Many crosswalks in Town Center still feel unsafe as they are not properly illuminated, or traffic goes too fast. Sidewalks are too narrow. Many sidewalks create hazards with different materials (bricks, etc.), poor maintenance, curb cuts and ramps not aligning, etc. Would like to see additional bike paths. Traffic calming is needed throughout Town Center. Need more benches and places to sit and rest while walking. Would like to see more pedestrian only streets like Gibbs Street. Intersection of Rockville Pike/Viers Mill is dangerous to cross. Extend Maryland Avenue north of Beall Avenue.
	Public Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Center does not feel connected to the Metro; Metro itself feels disconnected from nearby neighborhoods. Support of proposed MD-355 bus rapid transit project. Discussion of shuttles within or bringing people to Town Center from nearby areas.
Development & Built Environment	Building Density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area around Metro should be high density. N. Washington Street corridor has potential for redevelopment/increased density. Support of additional density in Town Center and acknowledgement that some parcels are underutilized. Town Center seems to need more residents to support the existing businesses. Edges of Town Center can have mid-rise density to transition into other neighborhoods.
	Open Space and Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desire to see more park like spaces. Consider ways to connect current and future greenspaces to one another and to other regional parks. Community gardens/public greenhouse. Indoor recreation space as well as outdoor space. Would like to see more pocket parks, especially as area continues to develop.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Square is heavy on hardscape; want some natural/green areas.
	Retail and Commercial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice Hotels headquarters could become business/tech incubator. • Creation of a business improvement district. • Dining options aren't diverse, especially in terms of price point. • Would like to see people-oriented chains and services. • Current grocery stores do not meet needs. • Would like to maintain small businesses. • Restaurants don't seem to stay; many come and go regularly. • Retail should be concentrated to get critical mass.
	Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more affordable and multigenerational housing options. • Senior housing options are limited; what does exist is expensive. • Consider redevelopment of Choice Hotels building and properties on MD-355 into mid/high-rise residential buildings. • Need to bring in mix of affordable and market rate housing. • If redevelopment sites contain affordable housing, need to allow current residents to move back into project.
	Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop surface parking lots. • 255 Rockville Pike is redevelopment site near Metro. • Add additional townhomes, mid/high rise development and mixed uses. • Develop the Metro parking lots. • Create public-private partnerships to make things happen. • Vacant lot at intersection of Maryland Avenue and E. Middle Lane can be developed. • Conversion of some portions of parking garages into more active uses (ex: rooftop).
Cultural	Arts & Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider creating an arts and entertainment district. • Bring in new galleries and art uses. • Connect to history of F. Scott Fitzgerald. • Want new performance spaces, such as a theater. • If the Regal closes, the City will need to find another anchor to replace it. • Have events throughout Town Center, not just in Town Square. • Desire for additional programming – movies, concerts, dancing, athletic events, etc.
	Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate Rockville's diversity and multiculturalism. This can be done through art and events.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a natural congregation of Asian businesses – make that Town Center's identity.
	Montgomery College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract college students into the Town Center. • Make physical connections to the College via buses and multi-use paths. • Consider residential options for students to live closer to the college and help create a more focused town and gown atmosphere.
Other	Branding and Placemaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to create entry and wayfinding signage to bring people into Town Center. This is important for people walking and driving. • Many buildings are not welcoming; there is no activity on the ground floor. • Town Center should be a regional destination. • Highlight the strengths/great characteristics of Rockville.
	Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been recent issues of cars hitting pedestrians or driving into spaces they should not (like Ice Rink at Town Square). • There does not seem to be City police officers walking around area. • There have been recent incidents of attempted robbery of stores.
	Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surrounding areas should remain residential in nature. • Improve connections between surrounding neighborhoods and Town Center; railroad line is a physical and metaphorical barrier. • Strengthen all neighborhoods with welcome signage.

Focus Group Roundtables Results

During the outreach and engagement period, staff held 13 curated focus groups. Major discussion points from each of the roundtables are summarized in this section.

Faith Based

- Montgomery County is investigating a model for developing affordable housing on property owned by churches and other religious uses.
- Many congregants spend time in Town Center before/after church services as a continued form of fellowship.
- Access to Metro and public transportation is key to membership of churches. There is interest in a circulator shuttle service within Town Center.
- MD-355 can be a challenge – people cannot see Town Center from the roadway, so continue driving past it.
- There seems to be an uptick in vandalism and homelessness.
- As congregations are aging, many would like to downsize and stay local. Additional options for aging population located in Town Center, whether specific senior living or smaller housing options, could meet that demand.

Adjacent Communities

- Most people in surrounding communities cite Town Center as a draw for them to come to the area and patronize Town Center frequently.
- Crossing MD-355 to get to/from Town Center is dangerous and unwelcoming.
- E. Middle Lane is major access point for neighbors getting to Town Center. There is general support for the road diet underway along E. Middle Lane.
- There appears to be a wall around Town Center, where people do not know it exists. Town Center is a beautiful cocoon, tucked away from everything else, which can be both good and bad.
- Signage goes a long way in creating a sense of place. This is lacking in Town Center.
- Would like to see more done in Town Center to address climate change – alternative energy, native plantings, more street trees, etc.
- Need to redevelop 255 Rockville Pike.
- Varying opinion on how Town Center should transition into surrounding neighborhoods. Representatives believe people are open to a transition of 3-4 stories on the edges. Concern with development in transition areas is traffic to surrounding neighborhoods.

Affordable Housing

- There is a scarcity of land to develop/redevelop in Town Center. As a result, process to purchase land is highly competitive and affordable housing developers are not able to pay inflated land values, so cannot compete in the marketplace.
- Discussion on merits of a right of first refusal program and if it should be considered in Rockville. Group consensus was mixed.
- Opposition from surrounding neighborhoods has prevented affordable housing developments in Town Center in the past. There is a lack of understanding by the population at large of what affordable housing is and what it looks like; need to educate our community to reduce pushback.
- To develop affordable housing, some sort of subsidy is necessary. Tools exist to provide that support (soft cost programs, payment in lieu of taxes program, etc.) but would need to be legislated and funded by the City.
- Predevelopment costs money and can kill deals. Streamlined processes and/or lower fees for affordable housing development could go a long way in increasing the production and affordability of units.
- Desire to see MPDU program expanded to have a lower threshold or requirement to provide higher percentage of units.
- City's spoken desire for affordable housing isn't echoed in their processes. Other jurisdictions are more collaborative, speed up processes, etc.

Senior Citizens

- Would like to see additional programming and events throughout Town Center. It feels like the vibrancy of Town Center has diminished in recent years.

- Vacancy in retail lowers the level of energy in Town Center, making other shopping areas more desirable.
- Living in Town Center is expensive – housing, restaurants, and shops are all pricey. This is pricing people out.
- Sidewalks, particularly brick sidewalks, are a trip hazard for those with limited or declining mobility.
- The library is a strong asset and anchor.

BLVD Ansel Apartment Building

- Town Square is a welcoming place; it is built as a place for people to convene.
- Need a greater diversity of retail options beyond places to eat. The non-food retail options that exist are at a very high price point.
- Dawson's is not an affordable grocery store option and Giant is far away. Most people leave Town Center to do their grocery shopping.
- Need shops for everyday needs – pharmacy, affordable groceries, pet care, etc.
- Metro is a great asset but also a missed opportunity – a lot more can be done to this part of Town Center to activate it.
- Finding handicap accessible parking is a challenge throughout Town Center.
- Town Center is experiencing the “missing middle” of housing. There are rental apartments or million-dollar homes and few housing products in between.

Black and African American

- Restaurants and dining options are a big draw into Town Center.
- Mixed feelings from the group on the closure of streets, such as Gibbs Street, for pedestrian only access. Many like the closure to cars, but it does make the area less accessible.
- There are not many other draws to the area beyond dining – need more activities and entertainment.
- Getting to Town Center from the east is dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists and even drivers.
- To keep up with competitors, we need to be innovative and creative in Town Center. Encourage development in the northern end of the planning area.
- Branding and signage is missing in Town Center. People do not know Town Center exists - we need to help navigate people to Town Center and tell its history.

Asian American and Pacific Islander

- It feels like Town Center shuts down at night and closes when the government worker population leaves. It needs to feel active at all times of day. Increased lighting can help make Town Center more attractive at night.
- Language access can be an issue, especially in older populations where English is not the first or primary language. Signage could also include visual icons in addition to destinations written in English (example: photo of a book directing to library).

- For the Asian community specifically, word is spread through newspapers, newsletters, and local community groups. To inform this community, need to work through those avenues.
- Many members of the community have difficulty using public transit, so are isolated. There are programs to increase access, but it is still an issue.
- Affordability is a problem. There is a wide range of incomes within the Asian population, but there doesn't seem to be many activities that are free or low cost.
- Town Center should embrace its multicultural identity – host programs of all different cultures and celebrations. Within the Asian community there is a lot of diversity, so should not brand Town Center as Chinese only.

Latino/a/x

- Visit Town Center for the library, dining options and festivals/events.
- Strengths of Town Center include the Metro, lots of activities for young kids, and that it feels like a safe, walkable area.
- Customer service in many of the businesses is really poor, especially towards non-native English speakers.
- Housing is not affordable in this area, forcing diverse communities out.
- Parking can be an issue – it costs money, can be hard to find and involves a fair amount of planning.
- Would like to see more cultural and entertainment uses within Town Center. Especially to celebrate Latin events and holidays.

Individuals with Disabilities

- There is an organic concentration of individuals with intellectual disabilities that has developed in the Town Center area, which has created a nice sense of community.
- Idea to train businesses on interacting with individuals with “invisible” disabilities tied to the Hidden Sunflower program.
- There is a lot of access to public transportation, but systems can be confusing and hard to use for people with disabilities. Public transit operators, notably within the Ride On bus system, don't always follow the rules and procedures they should when interacting with people with physical disabilities. MetroAccess drivers have similar issues.
- There needs to be more affordable housing. Many people with disabilities are living on extremely low stipends, so they cannot afford the existing “affordable” housing. Support staff for individuals also have lower incomes but need to live near their clients.
- The brick sidewalks are a major impediment to those needing mobility assistance.
- Main Street Apartments/Main Street Connect are great resources to have in Town Center.
- Desire to see more businesses willing to hire individuals with disabilities. Some businesses are, but many do not take advantage. This community is an untapped asset in Rockville.

BLVD 44 Apartment Building

- Public transportation access was a huge draw to live in this area and proves to be a successful way to move around.
- Town Center, particularly Town Square, feels very pedestrian friendly. Enjoy the closure of Gibbs Street.
- Enjoy the variety of events that take place in Town Center.
- The area could benefit from increased density, particularly residential density.
- Would like to see more retail options that aren't tied to food – more activities and hobbies than dining options.
- Desire to see a community center in Town Center.
- Missing an affordable, accessible grocery store and nearby pharmacy to meet daily needs in Town Center.

Arts

- VisArts located in Town Center is a strength for the visual arts community.
- There are a lot of creative people living or doing work in Town Center, but they are not necessarily attached to an entity or organization, so it is easy to miss them.
- Would like to see more arts and entertainment uses located in Town Center. Examples include black box theater, busking areas, galleries, etc.
- Would like to make it easier for community performing artists to make use of Town Square and the stage that exists. Groups have tried in the past, but the process is arduous.
- Most of the performing arts groups associated with Rockville are based at the Fitzgerald Theater and do not have a need to come to Town Center. Would like to see improved physical connections between the Town Center and the Fitzgerald Theater.
- Ideas for art related pop ups in vacant retail spaces, as well as wayfinding/advertising signage promoting the arts community.

LGBTQIA+

- The atmosphere in Town Center is friendly, welcoming, safe and has really nice aesthetic value.
- Metro accessibility is a huge strength of Town Center.
- There are too many first-floor vacancies throughout Town Center. It gives the appearance that the area is failing or unsafe. There needs to be more residential density to support the existing retail.
- Would like to see more free events/reduced barriers for lower income people. Paying to park in Town Center can be a deterrent.
- Desire to see more LGBT events and activities throughout Town Center, outside of June. Pop up events, weekly specialty nights at restaurants, etc.
- Would like to see more visual support of LGBTQIA+ community. Some ideas include pride flag in windows of business, statement art pieces, rainbow crosswalks.

- There's a need for well signed and promoted gender neutral bathrooms in Town Center. This is true for permanent bathrooms, as well as temporary bathrooms for events.

Major Takeaways & Themes

Despite receiving feedback through several different mechanisms, many of the same themes and commentary emerged throughout the entire outreach and engagement phase of the project. Staff view this consistency as a good thing, as it stresses the importance of these comments. Below are the major takeaways and themes that emerged throughout the phase, although it should be noted that the opinions described here are not necessarily unanimous among everyone who provided feedback. The Town Center Master Plan will need to address each of these themes.

Land Use and Housing

- Desire to see more density and housing.
 - Additional residents are needed to support restaurants and retail.
 - Buildings should be tallest close to Rockville Station, but denser redevelopment is desired throughout, especially along MD-355, to the north of Town Square, and along North Washington Street.
 - Reuse vacant commercial office buildings and transform them into residential buildings.
 - Flexibility should be encouraged.
- Need for more below-market rate, income-restricted housing units.

Business and Economic Development

- Strong desire for fewer vacancies.
 - It is okay for the City to use incentives to support business retention/attraction.
- Desire for more restaurant and retail options.
 - Especially retailers that either cater to everyday needs or act as a draw for visitors.
 - Strong desire to see experiential activities in Town Center.
- Pike & Rose, Rio, Downtown Crown in Gaithersburg, and nearby shopping centers are the biggest competitors to Town Center, primarily due to their retail/restaurant options and amenities.
- There is a tentative interest in some sort of entity to support the operations, management, and promotion of Town Center, but businesses are wary of having to pay for such services.

Transportation

- Streets should be redesigned to prioritize safety over speed.
 - Pedestrian safety on MD-355 especially needs to be addressed.
- Easier to find, more accessible parking is more important than parking being free or at lower price point.
- Desire for more and better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Better bike and pedestrian connections with adjacent neighborhoods and Montgomery College
- Strong need for improved wayfinding signage.

- Keep Gibbs Street closed and consider other options to close streets to vehicular traffic, whether permanently or for pop ups/events.
- There is interest in a circulator bus, especially to connect Montgomery College and Town Square.
- Transit accessibility and walkability are huge draws for residents, businesses, and other users.
 - Transit service is generally good but could be better, particularly more frequent bus service.

Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

- Desire to see more parks and greenspace.
 - A dog park at E Middle Lane and Maryland Avenue.
- Would like to see more events in Town Center.
 - Bring the farmer's market and other City events to Town Square.
- Add new amenities within existing parks.
 - Desire for a playground.
- The library is a bigger pull than it often gets credit for.
- Opportunities exist to enhance Promenade Park by adding landscaping, seating areas and lighting so it can be used as a gathering space in addition to a pathway to transit.
- Desire for more landscaping and greenery in streetscapes.

Other

- Public safety can be improved.
- There is a perception that Town Square is the same as Town Center.
- Town Center should be more of a regional destination.

It should be noted that many of these themes also intersect with more global issues in Rockville such as climate change and sustainability, affordability, racial equity, and social justice, etc. Many of these topics are intertwined, and work that impacts one theme often also has other secondary or tertiary impacts on others. As an update to the master plan seeks to address the major takeaways outlined above, it will also need to acknowledge the intersectionality that exists.

Next Steps

Next Steps for the Community Engagement Report

This document will be released for the general public to review in October 2023. During this time, the entirety of the document will be posted on the Engage Rockville site for the project. Additionally, Staff plan to host two public meetings – one in person and one virtual – to share the report takeaways. At these meetings, findings from the report will be presented and meeting attendees will have the opportunity to review and confirm such findings.

After the comment period ends, staff will review all feedback received and make edits to this document accordingly. The new document, with its incorporated edits based on feedback from the community, will be the basis for the draft of the actual Town Center Master Plan. The final version of the Community Engagement Report will be published as an appendix to the Town Center Master Plan.

Next Steps for the Town Center Master Plan

The current project schedule envisions a draft of the Town Center Master Plan will be available for public review in early 2024. The City will post the draft document on the Engage Rockville site, as was done with this community engagement report, and will accept commentary on the draft plan. Staff will continue their extensive outreach efforts to inform the community of the opportunity for review and comment on the plan. These efforts may include but are not limited to: social media promotion of the Engage Rockville website; email blasts to all individuals who have provided feedback on the project to date; tabling at community events and gathering spaces; and presentations to City boards and commissions and stakeholder groups. Additionally, there will be a public process before two different bodies, the Rockville Planning Commission and the Rockville Mayor and Council, during which public comment and testimony on the plan will be accepted.

It is envisioned that the updated Master Plan will be amended into the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*. The State of Maryland requires all comprehensive plans, as well as amendments to comprehensive plans, to undergo a mandatory review by state agencies prior to any public hearing on the plan. During this review, the State will review for consistency with their plans and policies and will provide the City with a list of comments for consideration. The City will follow this procedure and plans to include any comments from the State in documents transmitted to both Planning Commission and Mayor and Council for their respective review and consideration.

The first public body to be presented the draft plan will be the Rockville Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is an appointed body that is responsible for formulating master plans within the City, as well as making decisions on development applications, subdivision plans and project plans. There will likely be five meetings where the Town Center Master Plan will be discussed before the Planning Commission. These meetings include:

- Introduction and Overview of the Draft Plan
- Public Hearing #1
- Public Hearing #2
- Discussion and Instructions to staff based on public hearings
- Approval and Resolution to Transmit to Mayor and Council

All Planning Commission meetings are open to the public. Staff will be promoting the opportunity for members of the public to testify with their thoughts on the Town Center Master Plan at either of the public hearings. It is possible that the Planning Commission may request additional meetings to fully review and recommend the master plan. A schedule of these meeting dates will be determined in early 2024 and posted on the Engage Rockville site, as well as in the Agenda Center on the City's website.

Following the Planning Commission's recommendation to move the Town Center Master Plan forward, the plan will be presented to the Rockville Mayor and Council. As is the case for the Planning Commission, it is estimated that the Town Center Master Plan will be discussed at five meetings before the Mayor and Council:

- Introduction and Overview of the Draft Plan
- Public Hearing #1
- Public Hearing #2
- Discussion and Instructions to staff based on public hearings
- Adoption of the plan

Once adopted by the Mayor and Council, the updated Town Center Master Plan will replace the Planning Area 1 chapter of the *Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*. From there, staff will begin the process of implementing the recommended actions contained within the Master Plan. All new development applications for the Town Center planning area will be responsible for conforming to the guidelines, standards, and policies recommended within the master plan. Additionally, the adopted Master Plan will assist with internal tasks such as budgeting, staff work plans, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) planning, and inter-agency coordination with state and county agencies.