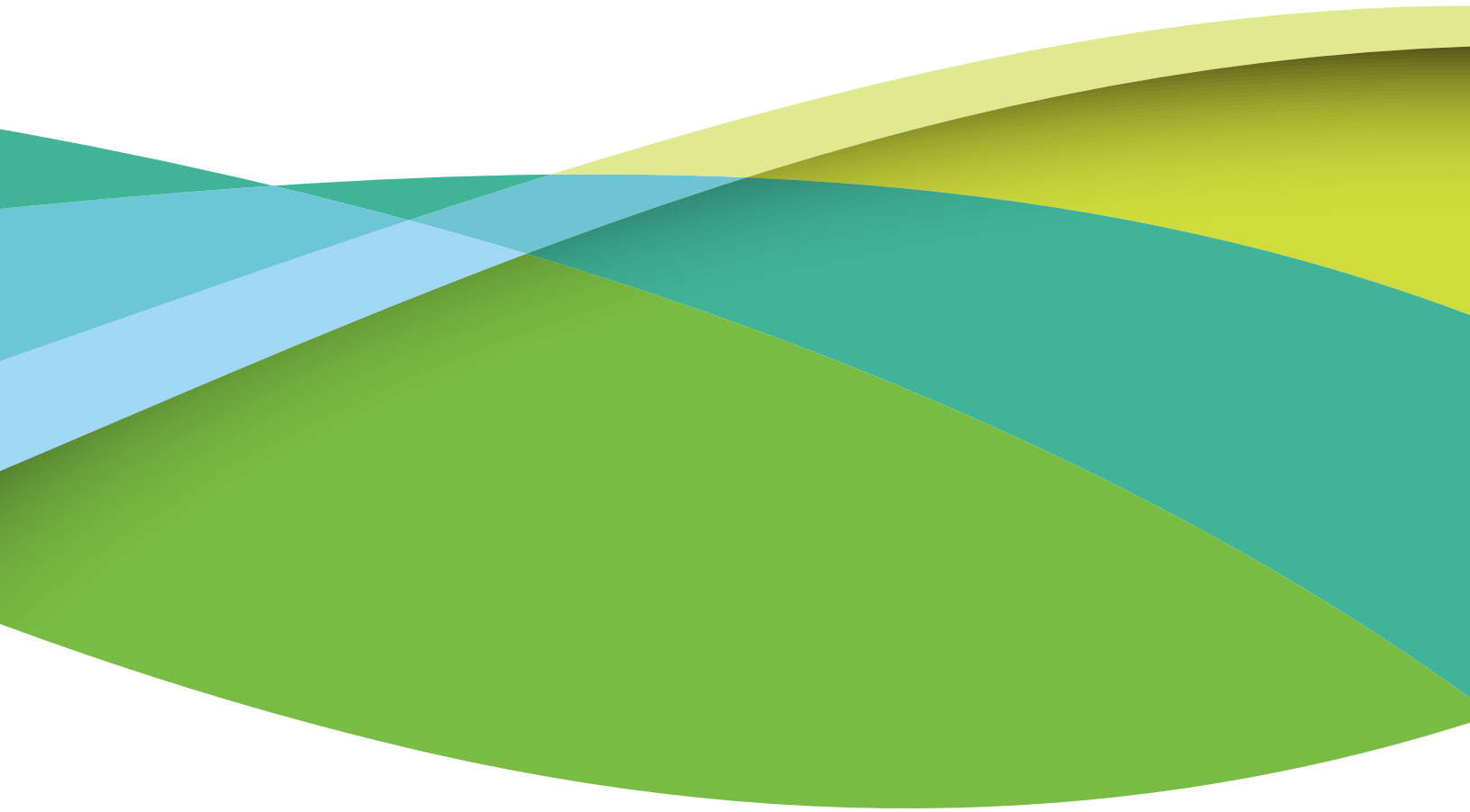


Sustainable Growth

CASE EXAMPLES

CASE EXAMPLE

Baltimore Street Redevelopment Project

General Information

Case Example Category
Infrastructure

Type
Community development, infrastructure, zoning policy.

Location
Baltimore Street Cumberland, MD 21502

Jurisdiction(s)
Allegany County, City of Cumberland

Completion Date
November 2024

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
City of Cumberland, private building owners, and business owners

Project Size / Scope
Downtown development in the city center inside the City of Cumberland. Total investment from a mix of grants, private funds and federal funding totaled $17.2 million dollars.

Key Features
Infrastructure upgrades, broadband, parking, green infrastructure, affordable and market rate housing, community engagement, and energy efficient designs

Principles Addressed

Economy
Actively advanced through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings for both commercial and residential purposes, demonstrating context-appropriate development that responds to the downtown market

Housing
Enabled directly by Economy and Land principles through the creation of a mix of affordable and market-rate units in the city center, diversifying quality housing options

Land
Fulfilled by prioritizing development and concentrating significant infrastructure investment (including broadband) within the existing city center/historic core

Place
Achieved by leveraging and protecting cultural and historical resources through redevelopment, providing a strong community anchor and renewed public spaces

General Description

This downtown redevelopment project replaced aging water, sewer, and electric lines along historic Baltimore Street while adding fiber optics and modern fire safety infrastructure. These upgrades enabled upper-story residential development and lower-level commercial improvements. Since construction began in 2023, 15 new businesses have opened, seven more are planned, and a vacant historic building is being converted into a 20-room boutique hotel opening next year. Embraced by the community, the project successfully revitalized the historic core, combining architectural charm with modern amenities to attract new residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors.

Lessons Learned: Before the project began, a top priority was keeping construction-zone businesses open and successful. The project team developed a comprehensive business retention plan focused on proactive communication, coordinated marketing, wayfinding, and direct support. While invaluable, the project team learned no plan anticipates every dynamic challenge—from utility conflicts to schedule and traffic shifts.

The biggest takeaway? Success requires adaptability. Maintaining open, consistent communication with business owners, contractors, utilities, and the public allowed us to respond quickly and minimize disruptions.

Other communities undertaking similar projects should invest as much effort into business retention as engineering. Active businesses during construction form the foundation of a thriving downtown afterward. By planning ahead, listening to stakeholders, and staying flexible, communities can soften construction impacts while building long-term trust. Visit the project website.



CASE EXAMPLE

SGA Winner: Retool Gaithersburg, a comprehensive zoning update

General Information

Case Example Category
Policy

Type
Zoning Code.

Location
Gaithersburg

Jurisdiction(s)
City of Gaithersburg

Completion Date
August 2024

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
City of Gaithersburg Mayor & City Council, Planning / Historic District Commissions and Board of Appeals

Project Size / Scope
Comprehensive zoning ordinance modernization

Key Features
visual aids for zoning code, modern best practices

General Description

Retool is the City's effort to comprehensively revise its zoning ordinance with the goals to:
Improve the organization of the code

- Incorporate visual aids to simplify the readability of the zoning code
- Revise zoning code sections to better reflect the City's goals, policies and visions
- Modernize terminology and definitions used throughout the code
- Foster equity and equality. Retool is intended to create a regulatory climate/framework that will foster the City of Gaithersburg's residents, workers, and business owners ability to be resilient; expand opportunities; and grow going forward in manner that reflects the City's (and State's) overall goals.

Lessons Learned: One of the lessons learned was the importance of explaining planning terminology in a way that a layperson can easily understand. Taking the time to explain the purpose behind proposed changes, defining planning terms and what zoning covers, and providing real-life examples of how zoning changes might affect residents helped ensure that the community understood the effects of the update. This approach strengthened our residents overall understanding of zoning and led to valuable feedback.

Principles Addressed

Land
Increased residential density via smaller minimum lots.
Set commercial parking ratios by center size, not individual use.
Boosted commercial development by reducing setbacks and raising lot coverage maximums.
Created Mixed Commercial Development (MCD) zones in employment nodes for mixed industrial/commercial use.
Transportation:
Cut parking ratios within ¼ mile of BRT stations.
Counted non-residential EV parking stalls as 1.5 spaces.
Housing:
Made ADUs by-right in all residential zones.
Allowed more housing types in low/medium density zones.
Replaced units-per-acre with minimum lot sizes to boost density.
Reduced setbacks and raised height limits to allow home additions without moving.
Added CD zone density bonuses: up to 30% FAR increase for setting aside 40% AMI affordable units.
Codified "Gap Housing" (e.g., triplexes, bungalow courts) to bridge single-family homes and large multifamily rentals.
Economy:
Expanded by-right non-residential uses in commercial, employment, and industrial zones.
Created the MCD Zone.
Lowered non-residential parking ratios.
Reduced setbacks and increased maximum lot coverage.
Eliminated public hearings for certain use changes, saving time and money.
Established base requirements for mobile commercial uses.
Updated glossary for modern industries and designs.
Streamlined temporary/conditional uses with clear approval criteria.
Equity:
Replaced subjective approval criteria (like "neighborhood identity") with strict Master/Strategic Plan conformance.
Used inclusive, uncoded language and restricted historically inequitable businesses (like check cashing).
Resilience:
Maintained APFO and Affordable Housing sections.
Expanded Site Standards to clarify landscaping, base lighting, and outdoor storage rules.
Lowered overall parking ratios to reduce impervious cover.
Capped maximum residential impervious cover.
Required 30% tree canopy on all surface parking lots.
Counted non-residential EV stalls as 1.5 parking spaces.

SGA Winner: Community Planning Academy – Montgomery Planning

General Information

Case Example Category
Public Program

Type
Education

Location
Montgomery County

Jurisdiction(s)
Montgomery County

Completion Date
Launched Summer 2025

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Montgomery County Planning Department (Montgomery Planning)

Project Size / Scope
The Community Planning Academy (CPA) by Montgomery Planning is an educational initiative designed to inform residents of Montgomery County, MD, about the local planning and development process.

Key Features
Hybrid learning program, offered in English, Spanish and Chinese, meet-a-planner sessions

General Description

The Academy aims to create an informed citizenry who will have a better understanding of how local planning decisions shape their communities and be encouraged to make their voices heard. It is hoped that participants will understand the need for smart growth initiatives and the importance of the county's progressive plans and policies that address housing affordability, economic vitality, environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and more.

Participants explore these topics through a series of online, on-demand and self-paced modules. The course is available in English, Spanish, and Chinese, in a mobile-friendly format ensuring that language and accessibility barriers do not hinder participation. Each 30- to 45-minute module features a blend of video, graphics, voiceover, and engaging content, making the learning experience both informative and enjoyable. The online, mobile-friendly format allows participants the freedom to take the course at their own time and pace. Weekly "meet-a-planner" online meetings provide opportunities to meet and engage with staff and other participants. A graduation ceremony will be held twice a year to acknowledge those who complete the course in the previous six months.

In addition to the core modules, the Academy also provides a comprehensive resource library, along with downloadable summaries of modules to help participants continue learning and engaging with topics of interest.

Principles Addressed

Land: By encouraging more residents to participate in the planning process, the CPA will help them understand the importance of prioritizing development within population centers that are near existing infrastructure and facilities, thereby promoting efficient use of land, reducing urban sprawl, and protecting environmental resources in the county.

Transportation: The CPA will provide the participants the information and resources to learn more about the benefits of planning for an integrated, affordable, climate-friendly, reliable and multimodal transportation network that provides better access to jobs, housing, and services.

Housing: The participants will understand the challenges of how the county addresses the housing affordability challenges through master plans, the development review process, and other inclusive housing policies and programs that accommodate all who want to live in the county.

Economy: By educating the residents about the county's planning process, the Academy will help increase their understanding and support for policies that spur economic growth and resilience in the face of changing market conditions.

Equity: A key goal of the CPA is to increase participation in the planning process by communities that have historically not been able to do so. By putting greater effort into attracting participants from underrepresented communities in the county, the Academy will prioritize the needs of underserved populations, fostering an inclusive planning environment that addresses social equity and justice.

Resilience: The CPA will help residents understand how the county's planning framework addresses the challenges of climate change and accomplishes the goal of creating resilient communities and infrastructure and minimizes the impacts of natural and human-caused threats.

Place: The county's General Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, and other plans and policies emphasize the importance of public spaces that encourage social interaction and value of cultural, historical, and natural resources. By educating residents on the benefits of well-designed public spaces, the Academy will promote community cohesion and cultural preservation.

Ecology: One course module is dedicated to environment and climate change. The participants will learn the importance of sustainable environmental practices, including the conservation of forests, streams, wetlands, and other sensitive environmental resources, and how the protection and preservation of these resources is a critical component of the county planning and development process.

COMPASS

Cecil On-Demand Mobility Platform and Service Solution Program

General Information

Case Study Category
Transportation

Type
Transportation pilot

Location
Cecil County

Jurisdiction(s)
Cecil County

Completion Date
2021

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Cecil Transit Division, Cecil County Department of Community Services

Project Size / Scope
A 12-month pilot project to increase accessibility to jobs and services for Cecil County residents in substance use recovery to supplement fixed bus service

Key Features
Pilot project, community engagement, mobility

Principles Addressed

Transportation
Established an affordable and reliable network that addresses critical access barriers to jobs, treatment, and services

Equity
Prioritized an underserved population (individuals in recovery) who often lack reliable mobility options, ensuring their specific needs are addressed

Economy
Contributed to improved employment rates and financial independence, fostering community self-sufficiency and market participation

General Description

The COMPASS (Cecil on-demand Mobility Platform and Service Solution) was a project funded by an Integrated Mobility Innovation pilot grant from the Federal Transit Administration to provide mobility on demand services to individuals in recovery houses for substance use disorders. Rides were booked through a smart phone app or web browser in partnership with Uber and underwent a gradual expansion of service. It was intended to provide information on how on-demand transit can benefit rural counties and allow participants greater access to services, treatment, and jobs, with fewer missed trips and greater financial independence, and ultimately provide an adaptable service model to address other community priorities.

Lessons Learned:
COMPASS was found to be used for trips to errands, employment, and medical providers. It had a high level of user satisfaction, decreased missed appointments, improved recovery and employment rates, and increased levels of self-sufficiency. It identified a gap in transit services that could be filled and addressed through this micro-transit program. COMPASS had difficulties maintaining drivers, a problem common to many transit agencies in 2021, and leasing vehicles for the short-term study. It remains to be seen if the model is sustainable and replicable in other areas of the county.



CASE EXAMPLE

Habitat for Humanity – West All Saints Street Project

General Information

Case Example Category
Housing

Type
Housing

Location
100, 104, and 108 West All Saints Street, Frederick, MD

Jurisdiction(s)
Frederick City

Completion Date
2027

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County, MD (for the Frederick County Affordable Housing Land Trust) and Zavos Architecture + Design

Project Size / Scope
2 income-restricted condominiums on a Community Land Trust

General Description

The West All Saints Residential Condominium Project is developing 12 units of affordable housing on a land trust, making this the most ambitious project Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County has undertaken to date. The first homeowner moved into this innovative project in early 2025, the second in July and the completion of the remaining four units in Phase I slated for late 2026. An additional six units of Phase II are projected for completion in 2027.

The Phase 1 units range from two to three bedrooms, all with high-efficiency appliances and designed with the health of the occupants in mind. A core tenet of this project is to create sustainable positive change for the community.

The historic properties at 100, 104, and 108 West All Saints Street sat empty for more than 20 years and are often recognized by the Mural of Hope - sunbeams and families in windows – that can be seen on Ice Street. In the past, these properties were seen as unwanted and blighted, decreasing property values in the neighborhood. But Asbury United Methodist Church sold the property to Habitat in 2020 – making an investment in the neighborhood and lasting affordability. Habitat for Humanity of Frederick County saw them as an opportunity to build strength, stability, and self-reliance.





Principles Addressed

Economy
The Economy principle is realized by the reuse of a dilapidated and underused property and transforming it into functional residential units.

Housing
By increasing the housing stock for low- to moderate-income residents, this project serves as a pathway to property ownership for community members that would otherwise be left out of the housing market. The legal structure of ownership (condo model on a land trust) diversifies the typology of units available, directly embodying the Housing principle.

Land
The compact design and reuse of vacant structure fulfill the core tenet of the Land principle.

Place
The iconic murals along one side of the structure showcase the Place principle, by retaining the historic identity of the building and maintaining visual interest for the community.

Equity
The creation of permanently affordable (upon resale) in an historic Black neighborhood with rapidly escalating home prices contributes to the Equity principle.

CASE EXAMPLE

Millrace Dry Pond Retrofit

General Information

Case Example Category
Infrastructure

Type
Green infrastructure, habitat restoration

Location
Glen Burnie

Jurisdiction(s)
Anne Arundel County

Completion Date
2020

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Anne Arundel County, Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration (BWPR) Project Manager Gerry Inglesby

Project Size / Scope
Outdated and overwhelmed dry detention stormwater facility

Key Features
Ecosystem restoration, green infrastructure

Principles Addressed

Ecology
The primary focus, restoring the site into a wetland ecosystem that actively treats stormwater runoff, conserves water resources, and creates new habitat.

Land
Advanced by optimizing the productivity of a previously underutilized, overwhelmed dry detention pond, supporting efficient asset use within a population center.

Resilience
Intersects with Ecology by addressing community flooding concerns and minimizing the impact of natural threats associated with increased rainfall events.

.

Place
Fulfilled by incorporating passive recreational areas into the new ecosystem design, transforming a non-functional space into a public space that encourages social interaction.

General Description

The Millrace Dry Pond Retrofit project transformed an outdated and overwhelmed dry detention stormwater facility into a thriving wetland ecosystem with passive recreational areas for residents to enjoy.

Prior to restoration, this nearly 5-acre green space would be entirely unusable for days after an average rainstorm because the stormwater backed up, ponded over the majority of the parcel, and slowly infiltrated/evaporated. Through the application of innovative and cost-effective techniques, this project accomplished the complementary goals of stormwater management, water quality enhancement, habitat creation, and public engagement.

Lessons Learned:
Based on the site evaluation, the facility was an ideal candidate for a retrofit within the existing footprint. It was a collaboration between the public and private sector, addressing community flooding concerns and reworking an underutilized area.





CASE EXAMPLE

Montgomery County Sustainable Communities Designation for Scotland Kinship Community

General Information

Case Example Category
Plans & Policies

Type
Community Development, Equitable Investment

Location
Scotland Community, Montgomery County

Jurisdiction(s)
Montgomery County

Completion Date
Sustainable Communities designation approved. Implementation ongoing

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs

Project Size / Scope
Designated about 15 acres to Montgomery County's Sustainable Communities and will seek funding to support the rehabilitation of 25 owner-occupied properties.

Key Features
County acknowledges past racist policies toward Scotland community; now targeting investment using race-, place-, and income-based analysis to drive equitable redevelopment.

General Description

Montgomery County recently amended its Sustainable Communities boundary to include the Scotland Community, a kinship community founded by freed enslaved people during Reconstruction. Historical county government neglect and intentionally unjust policies have left many of the homes facing health and safety issues, such as interior flooding, failing plumbing, ADA barriers, and other concerns.

The addition of the Scotland Community to the county's Sustainable Communities boundary will enable it to access state revitalization program funding for which it would otherwise be ineligible. The county's comprehensive plan, Thrive Montgomery, describes the history and injustices of kinship communities on pages 11, 12, and 47.

Principles Addressed

Equity
Demonstrated through intentional, targeted action to counteract historical county injustice, prioritizing investm ent to ensure this kinship community gains access to resources once denied

Resilience
Advanced by minimizing both natural (e.g., failing plumbing, interior flooding) and human-caused threats (historic neglect) through the targeted rehabilitation of 25 owner-occupied homes.

Housing
Enabled by improving the quality, safety, and accessibility of existing housing stock (addressing ADA barriers and structural issues), accommodating current residents and supporting increased household wealth







CASE EXAMPLE

Signal Station North - An Arts District's Plan for Equitable Lighting

by the Neighborhood Design Center *project no. 3888*

General Information

Case Example Category
Infrastructure

Type
Lighting

Location
Signal Station North, North Avenue

Jurisdiction(s)
City of Baltimore

Completion Date
2021

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Neighborhood Design Center partnered with a coalition of Station North Stakeholders. The arts district received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Central Baltimore Partnership.

Project Size / Scope
Multiple blocks within the arts district that were deemed the most in need of additional lighting after investigations into the night-time quality of the neighborhood.

Key Features
Lighting infrastructure and design in the public realm, community engagement, analyzing current conditions, creating prototype projects

General Description

This project identified a community in need of improving the comfort level within the public realm from a night-time perspective. Lighting improvements were desired to improve cultural activities, street life and investment in the community. Lighting the public spaces was anticipated to improve wayfinding and provide a sense of time and place. The data gathering included evaluating the current lighting conditions and mapping residents' experiences in public spaces based on the lighting. This process included identifying destinations, popular routes, and undesirable routes and assessing residents' comfort levels in these spaces. By engaging residents to explore the night-time community with various lighting options, the community began to understand the restorative and transformative effect lighting can provide to the community. The final product was a comprehensive Lighting Plan document with recommendations for creative placemaking opportunities related to lighting for the community. Project installation of the demonstration project is supported by the Central Baltimore Partnership via the State Bond Bill and is required to be permanent.

Lessons Learned
A key take-away for this placekeeping project relates to the residents' engagement and ultimate understanding of how important lighting is in establishing a sense of place in the night-time landscape. Communities throughout the state could reassess their night-time lighting to invite community residents to move through the public realm with a sense of comfort and safety.

Principles Addressed

Place
Addressed by improving the night-time quality of the public realm through strategic lighting, which provides a stronger sense of identity and encourages social interaction and street life.

Equity
Demonstrated by the extensive community engagement that mapped residents' comfort levels and routes, ensuring the prioritized need for safety and well-being is addressed in the public realm design

Economy
Intersects with the other principles, as the improved sense of comfort and safety provided by the lighting enables small businesses to extend hours and fosters greater investment in the arts district

Featured in photos is one of several lighting installations.
Sparkling Indigo at Blue Light Junction
Title: Sparkling Indigo
Partner: Blue Light Junction
Lead Designer: Flux Studio Ltd.
About: Inspired by a community co-design process, Sparkling Indigo takes inspiration from the nearby community garden, using light to evoke the power of growth for neighbors and visitors alike.





CASE EXAMPLE

WalkHoward

Case Example Category
Planning Project

Type
Plan & Policy

Location
Howard County

Jurisdiction(s)
Howard County

Completion Date
2020

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
Howard County Office of Transportation

Project Size / Scope
WalkHoward is a plan for a connected, comfortable, and safe pedestrian network throughout Howard County.

Key Features
Pedestrian infrastructure, community engagement

Principles Addressed

Transportation
Prioritized by focusing on a safe and comfortable non-motorized network that creates energy-efficient access to transit, services, and employment centers

Equity
Embodied through the plan's focus on designing safe infrastructure for users of all ages and abilities, ensuring diverse community sectors are included in the pedestrian network

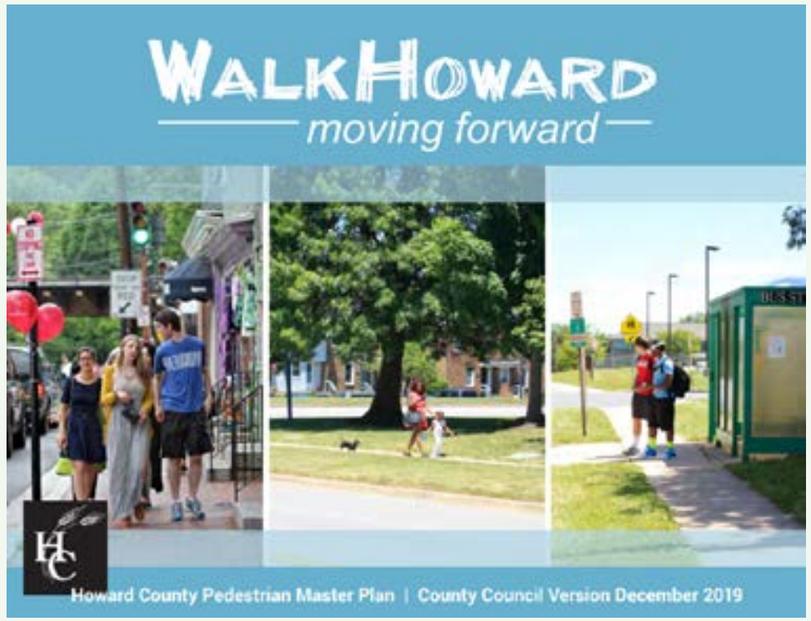
Land
Supported by the commitment to retrofitting existing infrastructure and integrating transit, which promotes efficient asset use and concentrates improvements within established population centers

Economy
Linked by integrating healthy infrastructure with structured capital projects, responding to the market demand for integrated, walkable communities

General Description

WalkHoward was developed as a successor to the 2007 Howard County Pedestrian Plan, with a greater focus on the integration with transit service and the health benefits of walking, an emphasis on infrastructure improvements in manageable sections, and includes structured capital projects as an avenue for implementation. The county analyzed current conditions near bus routes and pedestrian networks throughout the county, including current sidewalk conditions, intersections with difficult crossings, bus stops, and new connection needs to create the full recommendations. It included both information received from online surveys and public open houses and that from data analysis and field work. WalkHoward has a sister plan for bicycle facility recommendations, BikeHoward, and both are enacted through the 2019 Howard County Complete Streets legislation, which provides guidelines for implementing the plans through retrofits of existing infrastructure, capital improvements, and improvements as part of a subdivision and land development to create opportunities for safer, more accessible streets for users of all ages and abilities.





CASE EXAMPLE

Weather It Together - Protect Our Historic Seaport

Case Example Category
Planning Project — Capacity Building and Planning for Resilience

Type
Plan & Policy

Location
City of Annapolis

Jurisdiction(s)
Anne Arundel County

Completion Date
2018

Project Owner(s) / Policy Proponent(s)
City of Annapolis

Project Size / Scope
This project was focused on the City of Annapolis and its historic seaport

Key Features
Hazard Mitigation Plan focused on Historical Resources and Preservation through capital projects and policy recommendations.

General Description

An interagency group (national, state, local) led by the City of Annapolis produced one of the nation's first hazard mitigation plans for cultural resources in 2018. This award-winning plan and process formed the basis for the Maryland Historical Trust's (MHT's) statewide Weather It Together program, which developed guidance documents and trainings geared toward local historic communities. The plan – one of the first of its kind in the country – addresses the growing threats to historic resources as a result of the changing climate where the risk of flooding has put these assets at risk of damage or destruction. The process utilized FEMA's guidance as a baseline interaction of resilience and adaptation with historical resources is explored in this plan and seeks to maximize preservation while implementing protection from extreme weather events. Subsequent flood mitigation projects, including the topographic elevation of Burtis House (an MHT easement property) and the redevelopment of City Dock, are in process. Pending additional consultation and review, these projects may also serve as examples for other jurisdictions.





Principles Addressed

Resilience
The core focus, integrating adaptation measures and hazard mitigation planning to minimize the impact of rapid and unexpected natural threats (climate-induced flooding) on historic resources

Place
Supported by Resilience, as the process prioritizes the protection of cultural and historical resources that serve as essential anchors to the character and identity of the city

Economy
Intersects with Place and Resilience, as the sustained preservation of these protected cultural assets ensures continued tourism and attracts funding, resulting in a positive impact on local economic initiatives

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

Wes Moore, Governor

Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Rebecca L. Flora, AICP, LEED ND / BD+C, Secretary

Kristin Fleckenstein, Deputy Secretary

Maryland Department of Planning
120 East Baltimore Street, Suite 2000
Baltimore, MD 21201
Planning.Maryland.gov
(410) 767-4500 | (877) 767-6272