



## Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

August 25, 2023

Eric Fulton, Chair  
City of Rockville Planning Board  
City of Rockville  
111 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Chair Fulton:

Thank you for requesting Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) comments on the City of Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan (Draft), an amendment to the City of Rockville 2040 Comprehensive Plan. We appreciate your participation in the state plan review process. MDP feels that good planning is important for efficient and responsible development that adequately addresses all the elements of the comprehensive plan. MDP's attached review comments reflect the agency's thoughts on ways to strengthen the city's plan amendment as well as satisfy the requirements of the state Land Use Article.

The Department forwarded a copy of the draft amendment to state agencies for review including the Maryland Historic Trust, the Departments of Transportation, Environment, Natural Resources, Commerce, Disabilities, and Housing and Community Development. To date, we have received comments from the Departments of Transportation, Housing and Community Development, and Disabilities and their responses are included with this review. Any plan review comments received after the date of this letter will be forwarded upon receipt.

Please feel free to contact me at (410)767-1401, (or email [chuck.boyd@maryland.gov](mailto:chuck.boyd@maryland.gov) or Susan Llareus, Maryland Capital Regional Planner at [susan.llareus@maryland.gov](mailto:susan.llareus@maryland.gov) ). We appreciate your participation in the plan review process.

Sincerely,

Charles W. Boyd, AICP  
Director, Planning Coordination

Cc: Katie Gerbes, AICP, Comprehensive Planning Manager, City of Rockville  
Bryan Barnett-Woods, AICP, Principal Transportation Planner, City of Rockville  
Joe Griffiths, Manager Local Assistance and Training  
Susan Llareus, Regional Planner for Maryland Capital Region



# Maryland DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

## Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments City of Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan (Draft) Comprehensive Plan Amendment to the Transportation Element August 2023

The Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) received the draft City of Rockville 2023 Pedestrian Master Plan (Draft) as an amendment to its Comprehensive Plan (Rockville 2040) for 60-day review on June 29, 2023. It was then forwarded to other state agencies on July 3, 2023. The statutory requirements of the Land Use Article (LUA) require MDP and specific state agencies to review draft plans, which the following evaluation reflects. Any additional state agency comments will be forwarded to the city as soon as possible.

### **Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendment Summary**

The Draft describes "opportunities for improving the pedestrian experience city-wide, including improvements to publicly and privately owned properties. This plan will help achieve the Rockville Vision Zero Action Plan, to eliminate transportation related fatalities and serious injuries, as well as complement the City's Bikeway Master Plan, which outlines where and how to implement and advance bicycle transportation in the public right-of-way and within City Parks."

### **Municipal Minimum Planning Requirements**

LUA Sections 3-102 and Section 1-509 require municipal comprehensive plans to include a transportation element. This plan amends the Rockville Comprehensive Plan (Rockville 2040), transportation element.

### **Maryland State Visions (Section 1-201 of the LUA)**

Land Use Article Section 1-201 requires Maryland jurisdictions with planning & zoning authority to implement the state's twelve planning visions (visions) through a comprehensive plan. The visions reflect the state's ongoing aspiration to develop and implement sound growth and development policy. In this case, the state vision relating to this amendment to the transportation element states the following:

“(6) transportation: a well-maintained, multimodal transportation system facilitates the safe, convenient, affordable, and efficient movement of people, goods, and services within and between population and business centers;”

## **Plan Analysis**

- The Draft establishes the pedestrian vision and goals and sets forth comprehensive policies and actionable recommendations to address identified concerns on pedestrian travel and to make the city a truly walkable and rollable place for residents and visitors. The Draft’s visions include: “Rockville [is] to be the most walkable city in Maryland and fully committed to improving the pedestrian experience in all aspects of civic life.... In Rockville, pedestrian travel [is] a fundamental consideration in planning, design and development” (page 5). The four goals of the plan are:
  - Goal 1 – Ensure Accessibility.
  - Goal 2 – Advance Equity.
  - Goal 3 – Increase Walking and Rolling.
  - Goal 4 – Institutionalize Walking and Rolling. (Incorporate more supportive pedestrian policies into existing transportation policies and practices” such as “the city’s Complete Streets Policy, the Guidelines for Neighborhood Traffic Management, and the Rockville Vision Zero Action Plan, among others” (page 8).
- MDP acknowledges this Pedestrian Master Plan is consistent with and supports the transportation vision and goals of Rockville 2040. Page 12 contains six goals from the Rockville 2040 plan, adopted in August 2021, that pertain to walking and rolling, as well as pedestrian-specific actions from the Vision Zero Action Plan and the Climate Action plan.
- While the Draft appears to fulfill the intent of the state’s transportation state vision, MDP recommends that it recognize this requirement in Chapter 1: Vision. The Draft acknowledges the vision of Rockville 2040 but does not address the state vision for transportation planning. The Draft should be revised to include the state vision and refer to it when addressing the vision in the goals and objectives and well as a justification for implementation.

## **Maryland State Elements**

The LUA describes the required comprehensive plan components for a municipality but does not mandate how they are to be addressed. This limited amendment only addresses the transportation element. The requirements of the transportation element can be found in the [Land Use Article § 3-105](#).

## **Conformance to Section 3-201(a) of the LUA**

The following analyzes how the Draft addresses the LUA transportation element requirement that inform this review, and whether other elements related to transportation should be considered in future comprehensive plan amendments in accordance with Section 3-201(a).

**Transportation element:** This element must reasonably project into the future the most appropriate and desirable locations, character, and extent of transportation facilities to move people and goods, accommodate bicycle and pedestrian access and travel-ways, and estimate their anticipated use.

## **Plan Analysis**

- The city may want to clarify in the document that the Draft is adopted as an amendment to Rockville 2040 to provide more details on pedestrian facility planning policies and improvement recommendations to help implement Rockville 2040 and complement related community and transportation plans.
- Refer to Action Item Category 2 regarding working with the state to improve pedestrian facilities on state highways (page 25). The Draft should include a specific action item that calls for submitting pedestrian and bicycle improvement requests to the county annually to be included in the county's Annual Priority Letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation.
- The Draft should provide implementation timeframes e.g., short-/mid-/long-term and ongoing, for all action items which are summarized on pages 51, 52, and 53.
- The ten Action Item Categories on pages 19 and 20 include the addition of street trees as components of a comprehensive pedestrian network. Thus, the pedestrian plan will provide the ecosystem benefits of trees, as well as providing shade for pedestrians for a comfortable walking experience. MDP supports the recommendations regarding street tree plantings on pages 37-38.
- Page 35 calls for updating the zoning code so that new development/redevelopment must "provide pedestrian connections to adjacent properties." This may be better addressed in a subdivision ordinance when easements would normally be established. It is noted that this concept of connecting properties may require cooperation between independent property owners. If adopted as part of zoning requirements, it may be too onerous as an applicant cannot necessarily compel an adjacent property owner to agree to an easement.

## **The City of Rockville is a Sustainable Community**

Rockville is part of the Montgomery County Sustainable Community Action Plan, which includes transportation as a subject. The Action Plan should therefore be reviewed for consistency with the Draft, determining whether its transportation actions conflict with or support Draft recommendations. It is also noted that the sunset date for the plan is listed as November 19, 2023, as listed on the Sustainable Communities Website

The following link is to the Montgomery County Sustainable Communities designation for the areas listed below, which includes the City of Rockville:

[Unincorporated Areas: Aspen Hill, Bethesda/Chevy Chase vicinity, Burtonsville, Clarksburg, Fairland, Gaithersburg vicinity, Germantown, Olney, Wheaton, White Oak and North, West and East Silver Spring Incorporated Municipalities: Barnesville, Chevy Chase,](#)

If MDP can further assist or facilitate assistance/information from other state agencies as Rockville continues processing this amendment, please contact Susan Llareus, Planning Supervisor for the Maryland Capital Region, at [susan.llareus@maryland.gov](mailto:susan.llareus@maryland.gov).

**Maryland Department of Planning Review Comments August 2023**  
**Draft Transportation Element of the Master Plan –**  
**An Element of the City of Rockville Comprehensive Plan Update**

**STATE AGENCY COMMENTS**

The following pages contain comments from other state agencies in support of the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) review of the **City of Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan (Draft), Comprehensive Plan Amendment to the Transportation Element** as part of the standard 60-day review period for municipalities. Comments not included here may be submitted under separate cover, or via the State Clearinghouse. If comments from other agencies are received by MDP, they will be forwarded to the city.

Attachments

- Page # 5      Maryland Department of Transportation
- Page # 7      Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
- Page # 9      Maryland Department of Disabilities

---

August 8, 2023

Ms. Susan Llareus  
Maryland Department of Planning  
301 West Preston Street  
Suite 1101  
Baltimore MD 21201

Dear Ms. Llareus:

Thank you for coordinating the State of Maryland's comments on the 2023 Draft Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan, hereafter referred to as the "the Plan". The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following comments from The Secretary's Office and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA).

**General Comments:**

- Regarding the City of Rockville's Pedestrian Policies, MDOT supports the development of local Vision Zero and complete streets policies, action plans, and design guides to encourage an equitable and data-driven approach to improving safety and accessibility for all users on all roads.
- Regarding sidewalk prioritization, MDOT supports the development of bicycle and pedestrian traffic counts and encourages sharing of that data to facilitate State and local decision-making in short-trip opportunity areas (STOAs) within the City.

Chapter 1 - Vision

Section 1.3 - Plan Goals

- Page 7: Consider introducing the acronym "ADA" after "Americans with Disabilities Act".
- Page 8: The Plan states, "People walking and rolling have a greater degree of freedom when choosing routes..." with the qualifier that they are impacted by other modes. This statement is only true when they have access to a built-out pedestrian network, which in some places is limited. There are more access-controlled highways than pedestrian only facilities; the network is larger for motor vehicles. When advancing equity, an additional goal would be to bring the bicycle and pedestrian networks to parity.
- Page 8: In the last paragraph of "Goal 2", it has "enforcement and roadway design" as two things to change to produce more socially just outcomes. For emphasis purposes, we would encourage flipping them to "roadway design and enforcement".
- Page 8: In the third paragraph of "Goal 4": "...limit the delay for a motorist often comes as the expense...", the word "as" should be replaced with "at".

Ms. Susan Llareus  
Page Two

## Chapter 2 – Planning Process

### Section 2.2 – Survey Response Summary

- Page 14: Tables A through F: Include x-axis label and define the color schemes used.
- Page 14: Table A & B: It appears Table A has one color scheme, which is then flipped for Table B. Consider aligning.

## Chapter 3 – Action Items

### Section 3.2 – City of Rockville Pedestrian Policies

- Page 22: For the gap traffic conditions scores, consider incorporating actual vehicle travel speeds not just posted speed limits.
- Page 23: In Map 3, consider including a definition of what the groupings of sidewalk gaps mean.

### Section 3.5 – Pedestrian Priority Improvements

- Page 28: In the list land uses under 4a), "High-capacity transit stations" is listed as something that encourages pedestrian activity. Would recommend removing "high capacity" as any transit station/stop can generate pedestrian activity.

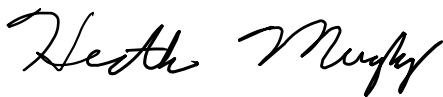
## Chapter 7 – Conclusion and Next Steps

### Action Item Summary Table

- Page 51: The "1f" Action Item isn't center justified in the cell.

Thank you again for the opportunity to review the Plan. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Kari Snyder, Regional Planner, MDOT Office of Planning and Capital Programming (OPCP) at 410-865-1305, toll free at 888-713-1414, or via email at [ksnyder3@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:ksnyder3@mdot.maryland.gov). She will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,



Heather Murphy  
Director, OPCP, MDOT

cc: Ms. Kari Snyder, Regional Planner, OPCP, MDOT

July 25, 2023

Joseph Griffiths  
Manager of Local Assistance and Training  
Maryland Department of Planning  
301 West Preston Street, 11th Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. Griffiths,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan (the “Plan”). When reviewing plans, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (“DHCD”) comments on items for which political subdivisions can strategically leverage DHCD’s resources to accomplish their housing and community development goals. DHCD also reviews comprehensive plans for consistency with relevant statute and, if appropriate, Sustainable Communities Action Plans.

Overall, DHCD staff were impressed with the quality of the Plan. Staff in the DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization reviewed the plan and provided the following comments, which are meant to help realize the Plan’s goals. Many of DHCD’s housing programs cannot directly support the goals and strategies outlined in the Plan. However, Rockville staff may consider leveraging the following DHCD programs that support capital projects:

1. DHCD’s Community Legacy grants can be used to fund streetscape improvements. Planning staff can learn more about Community Legacy online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/programs/CL.aspx> or by contacting Jean Cannon at [jean.cannon@maryland.gov](mailto:jean.cannon@maryland.gov) or 410-209-5806.
2. DHCD’s Community Safety Works grants can be used for infrastructural improvements that increase pedestrian safety. More information on the program can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Pages/csw/default.aspx> or by contacting Christine McPherson, Program Officer, at 410-209-5802 or [christine.mcpherson@maryland.gov](mailto:christine.mcpherson@maryland.gov).
3. Because of Rockville’s Sustainable Communities designation, it has enhanced access to several revitalization programs from DHCD’s agency partners, including the Maryland Department of Transportation, that can help to achieve the Plan’s goals. More information on those programs can be found online at <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/pages/dn/default.aspx>.



We in the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization look forward to continuing our productive partnership with Rockville in its future initiatives. Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Plan. If you have any questions regarding the comments above, please contact me at [carter.reitman@maryland.gov](mailto:carter.reitman@maryland.gov) or 410-209-5849.

Sincerely,

Carter Reitman  
Program Manager, State Revitalization Programs

Cc: Susan Llareus, Maryland Department of Planning  
Jean Cannon, DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization  
John Papagni, DHCD Division of Neighborhood Revitalization





Susan Llareus -MDP- <susan.llareus@maryland.gov>

## Rockville Pedestrian Master Plan for 60-day Review (FYI Only)

1 message

**Bong Delrosario -MDOD-** <bong.delrosario@maryland.gov>

Thu, Aug 3, 2023 at 10:35 AM

To: Susan Llareus -MDP- <susan.llareus@maryland.gov>

Cc: Rita Pritchett -MDP- <rita.pritchett@maryland.gov>

No comments from MDOD other than, "nice job"

--

Thank you,



**Bong Delrosario**

(he, him, his)

Director of Transportation Policy and Programs

Department of Disabilities

[217 East Redwood Street, Ste. 1300](#)

[Baltimore, Maryland 21202](#)

[bong.delrosario@maryland.gov](mailto:bong.delrosario@maryland.gov)

410-767-3649 (O)

443-935-8252 (M)

[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

Check out [CAVMaryland Video](#)

Click here to complete a three question [customer experience survey](#).