Since 2007, the County has given out more than $2.5 million in grants for the acquisition and restoration of historic properties.

22 historic sites are publicly owned and managed.

M-NCPPC manages and operates 6 performing and visual arts facilities.

The Gateway Arts District was designated in 2003.
2035 Community Heritage, Culture, and Design Goal

Create walkable places that enable social interaction and reflect community character, and preserve and promote our cultural, historic, and rural resources to celebrate our heritage and encourage new investment.

INTRODUCTION

The Community Heritage, Culture, and Design element includes findings, policies, and strategies relevant to Historic Preservation, Arts and Culture, and Urban Design in Prince George’s County.

Historic Preservation

The protection of historic sites and districts within Prince George’s County accomplishes more than just preserving reminders of the county’s past. Historic buildings, structures, and sites provide a sense of place and the context for new development.

A thorough appreciation of context—the architectural and cultural character and setting of an area—is the starting point for designing a distinct place. Context includes the area’s natural and human history, the forms of its settlements, its buildings and spaces, its ecology and archaeology, its location, and the routes that pass through it. It also includes an area’s culture and people—the individuals and groups living in or near it. Taking context into account is crucial because it helps preserve our heritage and identity and seamlessly integrate new development into existing communities.

Arts and Culture

There are number of benefits to public art. It can increase social interaction, create more “eyes on the street”, broaden learning and awareness, contribute to economic development and cultural tourism, and establish a sense of place. Public art can inspire thought, instill pride, raise awareness, and honor events from the past. The presence of public art can also be a sign of a community’s maturity because a commitment to public art requires resources, reflection, and investment.

Live

Preserving and adapting historic buildings can provide a sense of permanence, connect us to our past, and build a collective memory. Promoting art and culture in public places can help foster a unique “sense of place” by reflecting the character and history of our communities. Requiring high-quality urban design will improve our quality of life and health by encouraging the development of walkable, safe, and attractive places welcoming to all Prince Georgians—including our youth and elderly—visitors, and businesses. Designing compact, mixed-use neighborhoods allows us to efficiently use our infrastructure and public resources and support critical services, amenities, and a range of transportation options.

Work

Creating mixed-use, amenity-rich communities makes economic sense. Younger generations (the Millennials) and the businesses that employ these highly educated workers are increasingly attracted to these types of places. Leveraging our historic resources and arts and culture industries helps revitalize neighborhoods, stimulate job growth, and cultivate new destinations in the county.

Sustain

Investing in the reuse and repurposing of our existing infrastructure and buildings reduces our demand for raw materials, our solid waste production, and our carbon emissions. Replacing our historic sites and resources is not an option; they are non-renewable.

Public art often draws inspiration from its location. It integrates its location’s history, culture, and unique social characteristics becoming distinctly part of the community that surrounds it.
Urban Design

Urban design is the process of conceiving and laying out cities, towns, suburban areas, and rural villages. It focuses on designing groupings of buildings, neighborhoods, and the public realm and fostering a sense of place. Urban design is also concerned with the way that people experience and use these places and spaces.

Urban design is equally relevant to the planning and design of urban and suburban established communities as it is to rural areas. Problems such as encroaching sprawl, lack of architectural quality, loss of natural and rural landscapes, crime-prone areas, and unsafe pedestrian and bicycle conditions can be mitigated, or even solved, through forward thinking and context-sensitive urban design.

Where We Are Today

Historic Preservation

Prince George’s County is rich with sites that are significant to the history of our country. These sites are part of the county’s strong cultural heritage and build upon the diversity of its many nationalities and ethnicities.

The county has made significant progress towards preserving its historic assets with the approval of the 2010 Approved Historic Sites and District Plan, the implementation of the Historic Property Grant Program, the passage of legislation to ensure archeological investigations, and pursuit of public education efforts on the value of archeology. The 2010 plan added 98 properties as historic sites and 32 properties as historic resources. Since historic sites and districts can now be designated outside of the master plan amendment process, new sites can be continually added to the county’s inventory of historic properties. Outside of the local designation process, new properties and districts are also being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Historic Property Grant Program, which began its sixth year in 2013, has to-date awarded $2.5 million in grants for the acquisition and restoration of historic properties. Twenty-three historic sites are now protected by perpetual preservation easements held by M-NCPPC. In addition, historic preservation policies and recommendations are integrated into every county master and sector plan.

The Historic Sites and Districts Plan has been enhanced with the 2010 publication of the Prince George's County, Maryland, Cemetery Preservation Manual, the 2011 publication of the revised Illustrated Inventory of Historic Sites and Districts, and the 2012 publication of the revised African-American Historic and Cultural Resources in Prince George's County, Maryland.

In 2004 the Prince George’s County Planning Board implemented an archeology review initiative to focus on the identification and investigation of archeological sites, to include prehistoric Native American and historic period occupations. The initiative required that potential archeological sites be considered in the review of development applications and that potential means for preservation of these resources be assessed. The following year new regulations mandated the review of all subdivision developments to determine whether archeological investigations should occur on development properties. The new regulations implemented the Guidelines for Archeological Review.

The M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation plays an important role in preserving our heritage and our celebrating our diversity. It manages 22 historic sites, offers programs, operates museums, and hosts festivals that celebrate our history.

The public realm includes streets, plazas, parks, and public infrastructure.
and preserve these communities. The SSBSB Corridor Management Plan developed recommendations for roadway improvement standards appropriate for scenic corridors and rural roads. Through the completion of the plan, the county will be eligible for state and federal funding, include funding for promotion of this historic route as the bicentennial celebration of the War of 1812 approaches.

**Arts and Culture**

In 1988, the Prince George’s County Council approved legislation that required that at least one percent of construction costs of certain new county civic buildings and major renovations of county civic buildings be used for the acquisition and installation of public art. Building on this legislation, the Arts in Public Places (AIPP) program identifies opportunities and partnerships to encourage the installation of public artwork in both civic and private sector construction projects throughout the county. Prominent installations of public art can now be seen at new public libraries and firehouses throughout the county as well as at National Harbor.

The Department of Parks and Recreation manages and operates five performing and visual arts facilities throughout the county, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in the arts. The department also runs Community Arts Services, which provides professional, affordable activities and services in dance, music, theatre and visual arts to county residents, artists and arts organizations. Performances, exhibitions, art classes, camps, and workshops, publications, technical assistance, part-time employment for county artists, and various competitions create opportunities for a diverse community of professional artists and community-based arts organizations, as well as youth, teens, and adults.

The Department of Parks and Recreation manages and operates the Brentwood Arts Exchange at Gateway Arts Center in Brentwood, Harmony Hall Regional Center in Fort Washington, Montpelier Arts Center in Laurel, The Prince George’s Publick Playhouse for the Performing Arts in Cheverly, and the Community Arts Services located in Greenbelt.

**Urban Design**

With the rise of vehicular transportation over the last six decades, our county has largely evolved from a collection of walkable, compact residential neighborhoods, rural villages, and identifiable towns and cities to one of pedestrian-unfriendly, automobile-dominated sprawl. In addition, many of our newer communities increasingly lack an identifiable character or sense of place. Without distinctive physical characteristics, such as public spaces or plazas, a walkable main street, distinctive signage, landscaping, lighting, and architectural details, high quality construction and materials, and other defining features and amenities—our communities are visually blending into each other. Rather than reflecting the values, interests, and cultural and historic heritage of their residents, many neighborhoods have become indistinguishable one from another.
Transformation is on the horizon, though, for some of our aging inner-ring suburban communities. Redevelopment and infill create opportunities for enhanced walkability, connectivity, public amenities, and economic development. Strong design principles, applied correctly and proactively, will provide a structure for shaping or reshaping future development and enhancing the character of our communities and public spaces.

**Challenges and Opportunities**

**Historic Preservation**

Although there is considerable and sustained enthusiasm on the part of some individuals and organizations on specific historic preservation issues, Prince George’s County should place greater emphasis on the preservation of historic neighborhoods and the adaptation and reuse of historic buildings. Our county has historic communities with attractive housing stock and rich cultural history that could support cultural tourism and draw new residents to the area. While there have been several new National Register district designations, this type of designation is largely honorary and does not provide protections or foster community enhancement by itself. Many historic county neighborhoods have not pursued local historic designation as a way to safeguard and enhance their community’s unique character.

Acquiring, restoring, and maintaining historic properties require significant resources, as do managing and staffing historic sites and cultural events. As the county’s buildings and infrastructure continue to age, long-term commitment to investing in our cultural and historic assets will be necessary.

Developing a countywide heritage tourism plan would identify opportunities to advance heritage tourism and support economic development in the county. Possible activities include crafting a comprehensive branding and marketing campaign and partnering with local organizations to pursue grants, loans, and tax credits.

**Arts and Culture**

Established in 2003, the Gateway Arts District has been a key contributor to the revitalization of the US 1 corridor in Mount Rainier, Brentwood, North Brentwood, and Hyattsville. By supporting local art events and affordable artist workspace and housing, it has helped revitalize neighborhoods, created jobs in arts-related businesses, and sustained a vibrant arts community in the county. As a successful model of a public, private, and non-profit arts partnership, it has been replicated in the county in the 2008 Camp Springs Arts District, as well as throughout the state. Continuing to promote and leverage its achievements will create new opportunities to foster economic development along US 1 and solidify the corridor’s position as an important destination in the county.
Urban Design

As we accommodate population growth in the region and the county, we will continue to be challenged by traffic congestion, loss of open spaces, scenic vistas and viewsheds, nondescript and poorly connected developments, and inadequate pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly facilities. These trends, combined with a lack of critical investment in our older neighborhoods, have eroded our county’s sense of place, ignored the historic context of our communities, and dismissed the importance of centers and the activities that take place there.

Our Zoning Ordinance has historically been unable to reverse these outcomes and has increasingly been an impediment to creating high quality, walkable and compact places featuring a mix of uses. To compensate for the Zoning Ordinance’s age, inadequate, and out-of-date regulations, many of the county’s sector and master plans have relied on Development (or Transit) District Overlay Zones (TDOZ/DDOZs). These regulatory tools function as small zoning ordinances to control the type and appearance of development within a plan’s boundaries. Each of these overlay zone results in unique regulations that dictate permitted uses and key design elements, such as building heights, setbacks, and parking standards.

Why does this matter?

It matters because the overwhelming number and range of different standards and requirements created by the overlay zones make our development process unpredictable and difficult to navigate, and thus costly. As the county continues to streamline its development review and approval processes, it is imperative that the zoning ordinance be revised and that a comprehensive set of modern urban design standards be developed to obviate the need for individualized design-related overlay zones.

A Transit District Development Overlay Zone (TDOZ) creates design standards and guidelines to guide and coordinate development around transit stations, encourage transit use, promote an integrated mix of uses, and enhance connectivity and safety. A Development District Development Overlay Zone (DDOZ) has a similar purpose. It is intended to ensure that development meets established master plan goals, is compact, compatible, and walkable, promotes a sense of place, and encourages economic vitality and investment. New development in TDOZs and DDOZs is generally subject to the approval of a detailed site plan.

We have a range of opportunities to encourage walkable, safer, and more compact communities. Thoughtful design can improve public safety. How a building is “sited”–oriented to the street–where its entrances are located, how its landscaping and lighting is designed and placed, as well as other elements are important factors in promoting pedestrian activity, increasing “eyes on the street”, and limiting lifeless spaces that can support illegal activities. These actions, in turn, are proven crime deterrents.
Our transportation network, in particular our trails and mass transit system, establishes a strong foundation for us to move from an auto-centric county to one in which owning a car is not a necessity. This is particularly important due to the growing number of seniors and other populations who chose to not own or do not have access to a car. As was discussed in the Transportation Element, we have a strong local, regional, and intraregional rail system—composed of 15 Metrorail, eight MARC, and one Amtrak station and 11 proposed stations—and extensive bus and trails networks. If supported and leveraged, these multimodal transportation options can help reduce our reliance on cars, combat sprawl, and promote vibrant and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.

The county’s ongoing effort to develop a Complete Streets policy, as directed by the County Council in 2012, also provides opportunities to improve the physical character of the county. By ensuring multimodal access, complete streets support the visual transformation of spaces, improve public safety, and enhance economic opportunities (see text boxes and Transportation Element).

> Complete streets are roads that accommodate a variety of users—pedestrians, including our youth and seniors, bicyclists, and transit riders, in addition to drivers. Complete streets design standards emphasize human-scaled rather than car-oriented amenities, such as pedestrian-scale lighting, awnings, bus shelters, continuous sidewalks, crosswalks, and landscaping.

In conclusion, now is the time for us strengthen our existing communities by preserving our historic assets, promoting arts and culture, creating new civic spaces, and leveraging and expanding our existing multimodal transportation network. Now is the time for us to foster new neighborhoods featuring a distinct sense of place and character and a mix of uses that are within walking distance of each other or are accessible by convenient and reliable public transit.
Urban Design Policies

Plan 2035 will include urban design principles derived from the February 2013 Community Design Policy Paper. The urban design principles are intended to serve as a guide for developing urban design standards and guidelines in master plans and the review of site plan submissions. While the principles are not legally binding, they embody Plan 2035’s vision and the desired physical form of future (re)development and neighborhood revitalization efforts in our communities. The principles focus on enhancing and promoting community character and connectivity.
Policies and Strategies

Historic Preservation

Policy 1  Promote stewardship of and adaptive reuse of historic resources.

HD1.1 Identify and pursue opportunities to reuse economically viable and historically significant structures threatened by neglect and possible demolition.

HD1.2 Continue to provide incentives to encourage the preservation and/or adaptive reuse of historic resources.

HD1.3 Utilize the master plan process to evaluate potential historic sites and districts for possible designation.

HD1.4 Review and update the Historic Preservation Ordinance to reflect best practices.

HD1.5 Support the development of state legislation, such as tax credits, that reward LEED® or equivalent green building certification for the rehabilitation of historic structures and communities.

Policy 2  Encourage local historic district designation of eligible communities to protect their historic character and the county’s diverse heritage.

HD2.1 Using established criteria, identify communities with contributing character to be protected through designation.

HD2.2 Promote rehabilitation financing options and incentives available to designated historic districts.

Policy 3  Integrate historic resources, sites, and districts into the county’s development pattern by promoting compatible urban design and enhanced connectivity.

HD3.1 Encourage compatible and context-sensitive design of surrounding development and appropriate streetscape enhancements and façade improvements.

HD3.2 Link historic resources and sites with the county’s trails and sidewalk system, where appropriate.

Policy 4  Enhance and expand heritage tourism as a component of the county’s economic development.

HD4.1 Develop a countywide heritage tourism plan to celebrate the county’s unique history, stimulate local economic development, and fund capital improvement projects.

HD4.2 Design a comprehensive branding and marketing campaign with a countywide focus to elevate the profile of the county’s cultural and heritage attractions.

HD4.3 Encourage planning and coordination of events between local cultural resources.

HD4.4 Partner with local organizations to identify opportunities and pursue grants, loans, and tax credits to promote cultural and heritage tourism.
Policy 5  Encourage greater incorporation of archeological resource protection through site identification and preservation into land use and comprehensive planning processes.

HD5.1 Evaluate and amend county regulations to strengthen the protection of archeological resources.

HD5.2 Conduct archeological surveys on properties in the process of being evaluated for historic sites or historic district status.

HD5.3 Promote the public understanding of the significance of archeological resources.

Policy 6  Protect the character of historic and scenic viewsheds.

HD6.1 Utilize HARPP and other funding sources to protect key element of historic viewsheds.

HD6.2 Utilize scenic easement tax credits to protect historic viewsheds and vistas.

CASE STUDY

Scenic vistas and viewsheds, such as the Mount Vernon Viewshed, are important components of the scenic, cultural, and historic qualities of our communities. Preserving and protecting a viewshed generally applies to how new development relates to a scenic and historic roadway. For example, while residential development on exposed ridgelines is prized for its scenic views, this highly visible development also adversely impacts surrounding residential and natural areas and mars rural character. How our communities and landscapes are seen from the road is critical to the experience of residents, visitors, and passers-by and their perceptions about the quality of these scenic areas. Design standards are an effective way to protect a viewshed and should address issues such as the size and siting of new structures, tree removal, lighting, signage, and landscaping.
Arts and Culture

Policy 7  Promote cultural and arts awareness, exploration, and expression in Prince George’s County.

HD7.1 Increase awareness of our communities’ diverse heritage and cultural traditions by promoting cultural preservation programs and activities.

HD7.2 Partner with nonprofit and for-profit arts, culture, music and educational organizations to foster opportunities for life-long cultural exploration for all residents.

HD7.3 Establish partnerships to develop appropriate performance spaces, exhibit areas, and venues.

HD7.4 Establish a brand for arts, culture, and historic preservation to promote the county’s history, diversity, and cultural heritage and spur economic development and tourism.

HD7.5 During the master plan process, identify opportunities to support arts and culture in the county. Opportunities include incorporating public art and informal performing arts spaces in public parks and plazas, developing public-private partnerships, and celebrating cultural heritage through architecture and urban design.

Policy 8  Support the established Gateway and Camp Spring arts and cultural districts to foster synergies among artists and arts-related business opportunities and promote the districts as destinations and economic generators in the county.

HD8.1 Continue to support local artists and arts organizations and attract new artists through incentives, such as affordable housing and work space.

HD8.2 Increase opportunities for artists to participate in the creative delivery of public services, the planning and design of capital improvements, and in the design and delivery of public information.

Urban Design

Policy 9  Use urban design to guide development, promote community health, protect our natural, historic, and cultural resources and quality of life, and enhance mobility.

HD9.1 Rewrite the Prince George’s County Zoning Ordinance to include consistent urban design standards and guidelines that can be utilized in the master plan process, instead of creating individualized Development District Overlay Zones.

HD9.2 Locate and promote opportunity sites for future public buildings, civic spaces, and urban parks during the master plan process.

HD9.3 Require new developments at all scales to be designed around an interconnected street network rather than limited access culs-de-sac.

HD9.4 Enhance the public realm by installing public amenities and art in central places and ensuring public buildings model high quality urban design and architecture and multimodal access.
HD9.5 Evaluate the phasing strategies for large-scale developments to ensure that each phase of the project can meet established urban design goals and requirements for the project area, even if subsequent phases are delayed or not completed.

HD9.6 Coordinate building and streetscape design by orienting building frontages towards the street.

HD9.7 Identify and prioritize areas for street tree installation.

HD9.8 Implement tree planting initiatives at county entry points and key gateways and along all major transportation corridors.

HD9.9 Implement urban design solutions to ensure appropriate transitions between higher intensity and density development and surrounding lower-density residential neighborhoods. Urban techniques include decreasing (stepping down) building heights, reducing development densities, and otherwise modifying architectural massing and form.

**Related Policies and Strategies**

See Policy 4 in the Transportation and Mobility Element for Complete Streets.

See Strategy 1.6 in the Transportation and Mobility Element for Improved Connections Within and Between Existing and New Developments.


See Policy 3 in the Natural Environment Element for Greening the Built Environment.

**Policy 10** Encourage crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles in all developments.

HD10.1 Continue to coordinate with county, municipal, and other police agencies, as well as the Maryland National Capital Park Police, during the preparation of master plans and the development review process.

HD10.2 Provide training for staff on CPTED principles.

**Policy 11** Research and apply urban design best practices during the master plan process and when evaluating development proposals.

HD11.1 Explore the use of LEED® for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) rating system, which provides comprehensive sustainable design strategies and metrics, to ensure that development projects meet the Plan 2035 Natural Environment goal.

HD11.2 Promote the use of the Planning Assistance to Municipalities and Communities Program as a tool to complete small-scale urban design analyses to address urban design challenges and opportunities.
HD11.3 Initiate urban design contests to explore innovative products, such as accessory units, eco-communities, co-housing, and modern multifamily units.

HD11.4 Expand the use of 3D modeling to visualize and evaluate urban design proposals during the master plan process, development review, and when siting public buildings.

HD11.5 Prepare streetscape analyses of roadways and the adjacent public realm, as appropriate, to identify implementation strategies, such as adding bike lanes, widening sidewalks, or planting street trees to support Complete Street recommendations.

**Related Policies and Strategies**

*See Policies 3 and 4 in the Housing Element for Universal Design and Housing Types for Vulnerable Populations.*

**Policy 12** Emphasize compact design strategies for new development and redevelopment in Regional Transit Centers and Local and Suburban Centers.

HD12.1 Identify and address the barriers to the redevelopment of existing parking lots as development sites.

HD12.2 Include block size, building placement, and density requirements in the Prince George’s County Zoning Ordinance that support walkable, mixed-use development in identified Regional Transit Centers and Local and Suburban Centers.

**Policy 13** Preserve and enhance the county’s rural and agricultural character.

HD13.1 Initiate historic preservation efforts in rural areas that support rural and agricultural character.

HD13.2 Implement the recommendations of the Star-Spangled Banner Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan and support the Croom and Aquasco Roads Scenic Byway Advisory Committee.

HD13.3 Amend applicable codes to implement context-sensitive design for roadways and residential and commercial development to preserve the county’s rural character.

HD13.4 Use conservation subdivisions, easements, or other site planning tools when developing in Established Communities near Rural and Agricultural Areas to cluster development and preserve land for resource protection or open space.

**Related Policies and Strategies**

*See Strategy 1.8 in the Transportation and Mobility Element for Coordinated Implementation of Transportation and Mobility Improvements to Preserve Rural Character.*

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Community Design Policy Paper, February 2013
2001 Approved Anacostia Trails Heritage Area Management Plan
2010 Approved Historic Sites and Districts Plan
2011 Illustrated Inventory of Historic Sites and Districts, Prince George’s County, Maryland
2012 African-American Historic and Cultural Resources in Prince George’s County, Maryland
2010 Prince George’s County Landscape Manual
Rural Villages Study and Prince George’s Star-Spangled Banner Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan