

UPPER MARLBORO STREETSCAPES

Great streetscapes should create comfortable, attractive environments and facilitate pedestrian use of the public realm. Many of Upper Marlboro's neighborhood streets and minor streets convey a sense of beauty through their tree canopies and contain sidewalks for connectivity. Upper Marlboro's main streets, however, lack amenities such as continuous sidewalks and frequently appear stark and barren. The town core, the most important part of Upper Marlboro's public realm, has streetscapes marred by above-ground utility wires, surface parking lots with no landscaping or screening, few street trees or benches for pedestrians, vacant ground-floor storefronts, blank walls, and gaps in the street wall that detract from pedestrian comfort.

URBAN DESIGN STRENGTHS

The Urban Design Summary Analysis (Map 6) highlights many of Upper Marlboro's greatest strengths and resources to build upon, including connections, historic resources, community facilities, dedicated open spaces, and other community destinations.

URBAN DESIGN STRENGTHS: Community urban design assets to protect and build upon

- Historic, "country" town character centered around a small town core
- Walking distance to traditional services
- Great recreation facilities, including civic spaces
- Welcoming community signage
- Stable neighborhoods
- Historic architecture



Main Street

- Greenbelt surrounding Upper Marlboro, which protects character
- Good roadway access
- Double waterfront location: Western Branch and Schoolhouse Pond
- Comfortable pedestrian scale and character

URBAN DESIGN WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

Upper Marlboro has many urban design challenges that need to be addressed, including physical barriers, poor connections, image problem areas, isolated areas, and undevelopable areas.

URBAN DESIGN WEAKNESSES: Problems to overcome and turn into assets

- Lack of cohesive identity
- Narrow main street
- Littering on main roads; town is dirty in appearance
- Office/service uses dominate street-level spaces



Quality Pedestrian Linkage



Boardwalk and Trail System



Inventory of Historic Homes

- Visual and pedestrian impact of overhead utilities
- Limited directional signage
- Incompatible signage design: town gateway signs (red), historic attraction signs (brown), and wayfinding signs (blue)
- Gaps in the commercial street wall on the town's main streets
- Scale of the County Administration Building and the courthouse overwhelms the small-town environment
- Isolated community center and recreation facilities
- Unattractive surface parking lots
- Discontinuous or no sidewalks
- Difficult north-south pedestrian connectivity through town
- Few distinctive gateways
- County Administration Building parking deck sits on a prime gateway parcel

URBAN DESIGN THREATS: Challenges to overcome

- Out-of-the-way public amenities attract littering
- Missing pedestrian linkages
- Low level of building maintenance
- Impressions conveyed by multiple bail bond companies and law offices in the town core
- Endangered historic structures
- Suburban infill development patterns
- Proliferation of signs
- Deteriorating public spaces



County Overshadows Town



Missing Walks



Overhead Utilities on Main Street



Bail Bond Offices



Incompatible Signage Systems



Gaps In Commercial Fabric

URBAN DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

Although the town core and adjacent neighborhoods currently face many aesthetic and connectivity challenges, a number of potential improvements funded by public and private investment could make the town more inviting to residents, businesses, and visitors.

URBAN DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES: Potential public and private improvements

- Potential for adaptive use of some buildings, especially in the town core
- Potential façade improvements for town core businesses
- Old Marlboro Pike walkways and crosswalks
- Hierarchy of potential redevelopment sites
- Pedestrian versus vehicular street and business orientation
- Potential infill on the county parking structure site
- Potential infill at the town maintenance garage, county child care center, fire department, and surface parking lot sites
- Streetscape improvements (benches, trees, etc.) in the town core
- Sidewalk construction for connectivity within the town core and between the town core and surrounding residential areas
- Shared parking to reduce the number of surface parking lots
- Parking access, screening, and surface improvements



Centralized Parking



Historic Port Site Interpretation



Showplace Arena Infill Development



School Reuse/Redevelopment



ADA Access



Extension of Sidewalks

RECOMMENDATIONS

URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVES

A series of urban design initiatives will address better linkages and walkability improvements, as well as public realm enhancements:

GOAL 1: ENHANCE PUBLIC ACCESS TO AND USE OF THE TOWN CORE'S AMENITIES.

Action 1: Create a Judges Drive walkway loop extension.

Although the area south of the courthouse possesses an attractive pastoral character with manicured street trees and a mature tree canopy, it lacks sidewalks and limits pedestrian circulation options. A walkway along the south side of Judges Drive is proposed to connect Water Street with Governor Oden Bowie Drive in the northeastern portion of the town core.

Action 2: Develop a new Western Branch trail system with passive recreation and trailhead parking facilities at the east Main Street/MD 725 crossing and the Water Street crossing at the Old Port site.

Western Branch and Depot Pond present recreational opportunities in close proximity to the town. Currently, an informal parking lot along Main Street/MD 725 provides access to the eastern portion of Western Branch where people fish. Offering access to both bodies of water and developing a trail system that links Depot Pond, Western Branch, the new Schoolhouse Pond community center, and the town core could create the community's prime outdoor recreational outlet. Two organized trailhead parking facilities, one on the site of the existing informal parking along Main Street and a second one at the Old Port site west of



Comparable Public Open Space and Plaza



Example of Comparable Waterfront Amphitheater Space



Comparable Civic Park and Open Space

Water Street, can provide easy access to both ends of the proposed trail. All site development and improvements will have to be closely coordinated with the Army Corps of Engineers. The proposed site improvements should follow green building principles and include permeable parking surfaces, stormwater retention and remediation, and lighting compliance with the Dark Sky Initiative.

Action 3: Consider constructing a new Schoolhouse Pond community amphitheater, park, playground, and pavilion with associated boardwalk maintenance improvements.

To create a multiuse community gathering space that takes advantage of and builds on the town's existing character, a softscape-design community amphitheater could be constructed on the southeastern side of Schoolhouse Pond. The amphitheater should be designed to withstand flooding, as it is located in the 100-year floodplain zone, and should include a minimum amount of impervious surfaces. The new passive recreational space would fulfill the need for an outdoor community gathering space, and the activities encouraged in the amphitheater should be compatible with and respectful of adjacent residential uses. A playground, seating areas, and a community pavilion also should be included in the new park to welcome daytime family uses. Additionally, maintenance and enhancement of the existing boardwalk system and appropriate lighting compatible with the Dark Sky Initiative would help link the new proposed park/amphitheater with the community.

GOAL 2: IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN ACCESS AND CIRCULATION THROUGHOUT THE TOWN.

Action 1: Improve the Boys and Girls Club recreation park and trail improvements.

The preparation of a park improvement plan will include walking trails, planting areas, seating, and picnic areas. The improvements will help connect the park with the Board of Education building, adjacent neighborhoods, and proposed walkways along Old Crain Highway, creating an inviting recreational space for the community. (Map 7)

Action 2: Create new neighborhood park and walkway/bikeway linkages within the new single-family residential infill on the Clagett and Smith sites.

A passive park is suggested as part of the new single-family neighborhood development on the Clagett and Smith sites. The proposed single-family units fronting the park and the streetscape network that accompanies the proposed park design aim to create a safe neighborhood space that provides opportunities for community gathering and socialization.

Action 3: Develop a Depot Pond trail system that connects to the community center and proposed Western Branch trail.

As described earlier, recreational opportunities should be expanded to the western side of the town to take advantage of the natural assets of the community. The proposed trail system should provide a loop around Depot Pond and connect with the new community center.



Map 7: Boys and Girls Club Park and Trail Improvements



Example of Comparable Trail System



Example of Comparable Neighborhood Park

GOAL 3: IMPROVE THE APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN CORE AND OTHER IMPORTANT UPPER MARLBORO DESTINATIONS.

Action 1: Enhance the Main Street, Pratt Street, Water Street and Elm Street streetscapes through utility relocation, expanded brick walkways, pedestrian-scale lighting, and coordinated site furnishings.

A series of physical improvements needs to be undertaken to create a more vibrant and walkable environment in the town core. A walkable street is characterized by physical comfort: it possesses definition, encompasses qualities that engage the eyes, and blends the boundaries where the public and private realms meet. To accomplish this in the town core, the primary action should be to eliminate the presence of utility poles. Ideally the utilities should be buried underground, but since this action could become cost-prohibitive, it is recommended that poles be relocated to the rear of the buildings. Additionally, integrated paving patterns as well as expanded brick paving would contribute to a more intriguing and unified town core identity. Associated site furnishings and lighting will help animate the street environment and transform it into an inviting space. The illustration shows the vision for a walkable and lively Main Street in Upper Marlboro's town core.

Action 2: Develop a coordinated and consistent public signage system.

The town core contains a number of directional and informational signs maintained by different levels of government. These signs are of different sizes, colors, and designs, and in some locations their groupings partially obscure some of the information contained on the signs. A new



Vision Sketch: Main Street

signage system should coordinate town, county, and state signs and ensure proper placement to provide a more unified look for the town core.

Action 3: Develop a gateway park/plaza at Main Street and Governor Oden Bowie Drive.

A new gateway public park/plaza is proposed at the corner of Governor Oden Bowie Drive and Main Street. This space will play an important role in the public realm, as it highlights the eastern entrance to the town core. The park/plaza should be defined by new office/retail development along the edge of the existing County Administration Building parking deck. The new park/plaza, along with its associated walkways and crosswalks, will help link Governor Oden Bowie Drive visually and physically with Main Street, creating a gateway landmark to the town.

Action 4: Work with the county to make Show Place Arena festival grounds pathway and landscape improvements.

Although the Show Place Arena/Prince George's County Equestrian Center complex is outside the town boundaries, it is an important publicly owned property and a major destination for visitors to Upper Marlboro. The town should work with the county to enhance this important event center. Improvements to the festival grounds should include pathways and plantings, along with landscaped parking areas. The improved space could be used for larger outdoor community gatherings and festivals. Additionally, the improved festival grounds may provide opportunities for extending Show Place Arena activities outdoors.



Vision Sketch Overlooking the Town Eastward

