Economic Development and Community Character Element

Economic Development

Goal

- To encourage quality economic development that increases employment opportunities and enhances the income and tax base.

Background

The sector plan area is part of the Prince George's County Enterprise Zone. The Enterprise Zone program encourages job creation and capital investment in areas of economic distress. The program is an economic development tool offering state and local incentives and program priority to new or expanding businesses within the zone.

Many existing businesses have been in the area between 10 and 50 years. Business types include auto-related parts sales, repair, bodywork, towing, truck and bus sales, storage, equipment sales and maintenance, food processing, construction-related services, moving/storage, binding, and home improvements. The area was developed in a time of limited controls resulting in fragmented ownership of small lots that do not lend themselves to modern development.

Business owners were attracted to the area by its regional accessibility, availability of existing buildings, low rent and purchase prices, availability of outside storage, and visibility from major thoroughfares. Poor appearance, crime, traffic problems, and utility problems are the negative aspects of the area that contribute to a poor business climate.

Issues

1. Improving road infrastructure to alleviate traffic safety and flooding problems
2. Upgrading utility infrastructure
3. Providing incentives for relocating noxious uses
4. Upgrading of buildings and environmental conditions through private reinvestment
5. Consolidating fragmented lots to sizeable pieces that encourage redevelopment
6. Improving security through public/private partnerships
7. Marketing and promoting the area

Objectives

1. Capitalize on mass transit and redevelopment of the Metro station and Arbor Street areas into a quality pedestrian-friendly and transit-oriented mixed-use Community Center in order to attract office tenants and businesses that create jobs and provide tax revenue to the county.
2. Provide a variety of residential opportunities and the income base to support local businesses.

Recommendations

1. Implement the following short-term actions as a first step in attracting developer interest to the area.

    a. Strengthening streetscape/pedestrian linkages.

    b. Developing realistic plans to improve traffic in, and access to, the area.

    c. Improving infrastructure in the area.

    d. Implementing the regulatory framework along with streetscape improvements that will be a major catalyst for implementation to occur and to improve the overall appearance and image of the area.

    e. Developing a coordinated economic development/marketing strategy for the area and identifying strategies for funding long-term improvements.

2. Encourage the use of county and state business improvement funding and resource programs. The Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) administers the state Enterprise Program and is a good source for other state business improvement resources. The Redevelopment Authority of Prince George's County can assist with predevelopment land assemblage costs and project financing. The Maryland Neighborhood Business Development Program, administered by the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, provides flexible gap financing to small businesses starting up or expanding in locally designated neighborhood revitalization areas. The Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development administers different business improvement initiatives.

3. Coordinate with the Town of Cheverly and WMATA on parking improvements, pedestrian and security upgrades, and joint development opportunities.

4. Establish a Tuxedo Road/Arbor Street Business Association to work for a common cause—strengthening and improving business in the area.

Urban Design

Goal

- To transform the area into a unique place that is visually and functionally cohesive and pedestrian-friendly; an attractive and inviting Community Center with high-quality transit-oriented infill development that creates a sense of place and fosters civic pride.

Background and Issues

US 50 bisects the sector plan area into north and south, while the CSX Railroad tracks bisect the area into east and west. On the southern portion, Amtrak and Metrorail lines run through the area. These barriers create fragmented pieces of land that have distinct land use characteristics and design challenges.

Streetscape along Kenilworth Avenue

Subarea A is primarily an industrial area. The 1994 Planning Area 69 master plan identified many design issues and recommended that action be taken to address the issues. Those issues are still prevalent today and include the extension of trucks into public streets during loading and unloading, insufficient screening of unsightly views, unpaved parking spaces, poor appearance from Kenilworth Avenue, use of razor wire fencing, lack of road curbs to distinguish between roadway and parking areas, code violations, extensive littering, and general lack of maintenance.


Streetscape along Arbor Street

Subarea B comprises commercial uses that are mostly auto-related businesses along both sides of

Arbor Street. It also contains single-family dwellings adjacent to the rear of the commercial uses to the north. This area lacks street curbs, street trees, street furniture, and defined sidewalks. In most cases, parking areas are not defined, and truck traffic at fast speeds presents a safety hazard and discourages pedestrian usage.

Subarea C contains the Cheverly Metro Station. The General Plan designates the station area as a Community Center, which calls for a concentration of activities, services, and land uses that serve the immediate community. Barriers created by US 50 to the north and the Beaverdam Creek to the south isolate the Cheverly Metro Station. The station site features an expanse of asphalt parking spaces with an entrance from Columbia Park Road. Pedestrian usage is not maximized due to the distance from residential areas and safety concerns created by indirect pedestrian access to the station.

Subarea D comprises woodland, wetland, floodplain, and an auto-recycling facility. The visual image of the recycling facility requires remedial actions in order to achieve the vision for this area as an attractive gateway to the county and the state.

Recycling Facility

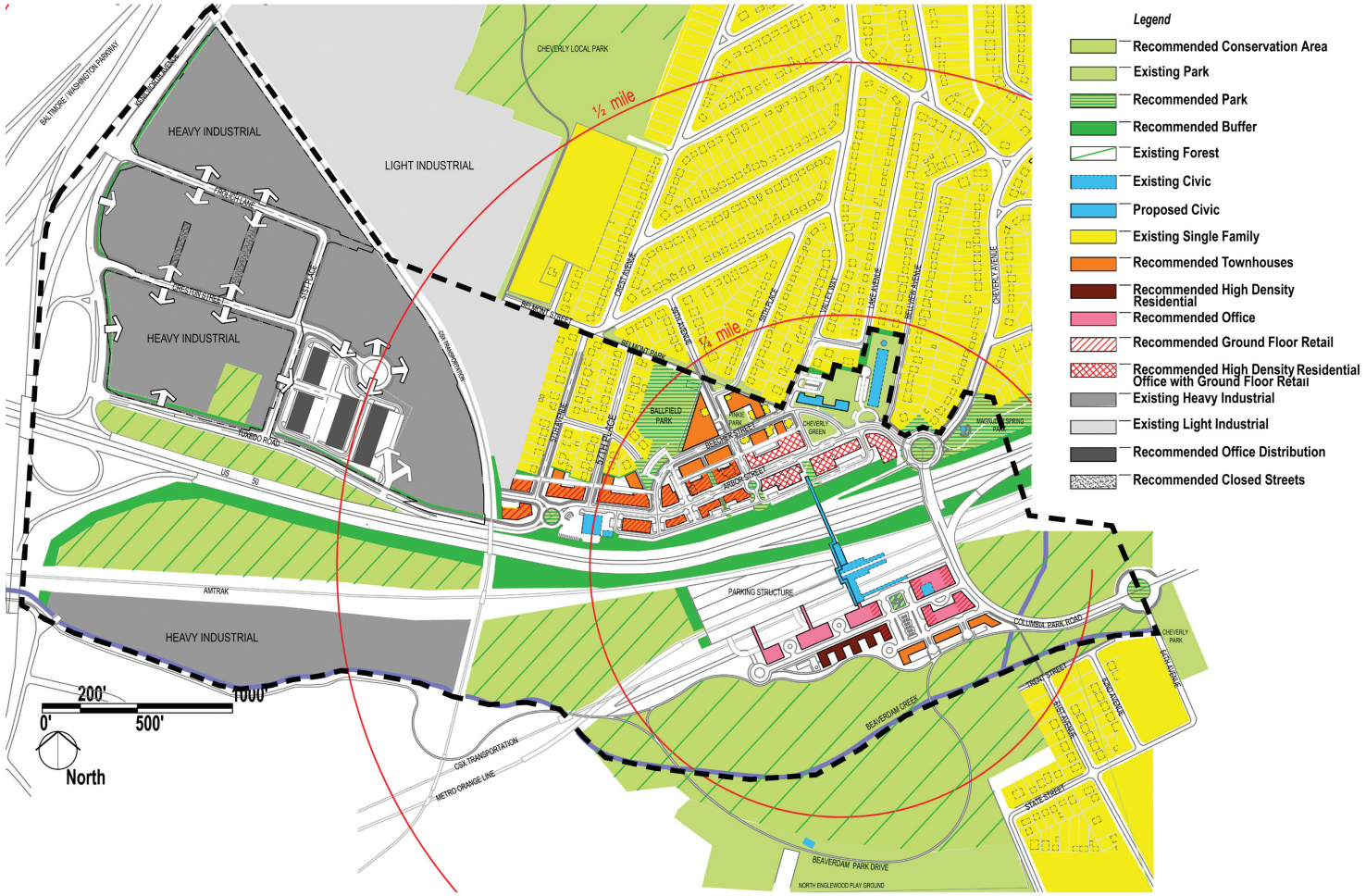
Objectives

1. Connect these distinct areas by a system of well-designed boulevards, pedestrian routes, open spaces, and trails. This system improves both vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and creates a human-scale core area intended to serve as an active transit-oriented community of homes, shops, jobs, and open space. Streetscape amenities are provided along with improved internal vehicular circulation. A linear park/buffer and the addition of sidewalks along the areas' perimeter roadways create a safe and attractive pedestrian edge as well as an aesthetically improved entrance to the area.

2. Bring the industrial areas into code compliance and remove noxious uses.

3. Transform Arbor Street into a main street with retail accompanied and supported by residential and small office uses. Provide a quality human-scaled architectural character and streetscape that are welcoming. Design roads to slow traffic to a safe and smooth flow. Develop civic uses as part of the Community Center including public parks and a public green. Beecher Street evolves into a medium-density residential street, well integrated with the adjacent single-family detached neighborhoods and the existing and proposed open spaces.

4. Redevelop the Metro station parking lot with vertical and horizontal mixed-uses. Provide a civic square as a focal point while the proposed street pattern and streetscape design re-creates the urban spirit of the original Cheverly subdivision plan. Construct an attractive and human-scaled pedestrian bridge that links the Metro station development and the main street development along Arbor Street. Construct sidewalks and trails that connect areas within the sector plan area and adjoining communities (Map 12: Redevelopment Concept Plan).



Map 12 Redevelopment Concept Plan

Recommendations

Sectorwide

1. Use unifying themes such as sidewalk materials, architecture, tree planting, and other streetscape elements to link the four subareas into an area with a unified identity.

2. Provide direct pedestrian linkages from the Cheverly Metro Station to other parts of the sector plan area through safe sidewalks, trails, and pedestrian bridge.

3. Provide well-lit public spaces with high-quality and durable street furniture throughout the entire area to encourage gathering and pedestrian mobility.

4. Provide monumental regional and area gateways at strategic locations (Map 4: Sector Plan Vision) to announce entry into the county, the State of Maryland, and the Town of Cheverly. Use high-quality materials, landscaping and visually appealing design and construction.

5. Plant street trees along both sides of all streets to provide shade and define public realm. Street trees should be durable and native species, approved by the appropriate agency.

6. Utilize high-quality building materials such as brick, stone and comparable products on new and infill developments. The materials should be compatible with the redevelopment character desired and surrounding developments that contribute positively to the overall built environment.

7. Screen unsightly service and storage areas from public view. Screen material should be constructed with quality materials and be compatible with built environment.

Subarea A

1. Improve the visual appearance of the existing industrial facilities through the enforcement of existing County Codes that regulate illegal parking and impoundment of abandoned cars, illegal dumping, and general maintenance.

2. Provide driveway entrances to businesses and improve overall circulation by defining travel lanes and driveway entrances using street curbs.

3. Provide adequate and consistent industrial lighting throughout the area.

4. Locate loading and storage areas to the rear of buildings and away from public view.

Subarea B

1. Provide consistent building setbacks from the road to create a street wall that provides pedestrian-friendly spaces and encourages window-shopping.

2. Provide alleyways to facilitate access to parking and loading and the free flow of traffic on major streets.

3. Provide on-street parking along roadways to create an additional safety barrier between pedestrian space and vehicular lanes.

4. Maintain compatibility in materials and design in building additions and between infill developments.

5. Use decorative walls or trees to buffer incompatible uses. Tree buffers or screen walls should be used to screen the visibility of US 50 from the community.

6. Transition density and building height from Arbor Street, tapering toward the existing single-family residential neighborhood to the north.

Subarea C

1. Construct a human-scaled pedestrian bridge from the Metro station over US 50 to the Arbor Street area.

2. Provide a pedestrian connection from the Metro station to the residential subdivision to the south.

3. Redevelop the station parking lot with a high-quality, mixed-use of primarily office and residential with ground-floor retail facing a central public plaza.

4. Provide a well-designed parking garage between the CSX and Amtrak rail lines to accommodate the displaced surface parking spaces at the station and to provide shared parking for new infill developments. The parking structure could allow for ease of construction phasing, and its distance from habitable structures could result in much lower construction costs.

5. Minimize surface parking. Below-grade structure parking is strongly encouraged in the lower-lying areas adjacent to Columbia Park Road. The structure parking should be developed as part of the mixed-use facilities facing Columbia Park Road.

6. Provide two well-defined vehicular access points into the station site development. Utilize an internal circulation street pattern and streetscape design that re-create street grid patterns of the original Cheverly subdivision plan.

Subarea D

1. Install a vegetative buffer along the property boundary of the auto-recycling facility to block the view from the elevated Metrorail tracks.

2. Provide quality environmental design for the future conservation area should the properties become available for sale at a future date. If it is designed for recreational use of any kind, adequate access, quality materials, and construction should be employed.

Guidelines for Subarea C

Standards and guidelines are developed for Subareas B and C, repectively, where new zones are introduced and have the potential for major redevelopment. Development district standards for Subarea B are included in the Development District Overlay Zone chapter of this plan.

The following statements, guidelines, and urban design principles for Subarea C should guide future development to accomplish the area's urban design goals and objectives.

Site Design

The design goal for the Metro station area is to create an active, pedestrian-friendly urban environment, sensitively designed to achieve compact mixed-use development.

1. Site Planning and Building Blocks

Site planning for the entire area should be based on a street grid or modified grid pattern allowing for plazas, kiss-and-ride, waiting, and pick-up areas.

Street wall defines consistent public space

3. Access and Circulation

Two vehicular access points should be provided from Columbia Park Road and efficiently routed to various destination points, such as any parking structure and the kiss-and-ride area, to avoid conflicting traffic patterns.

4. Parking

Parking structures and on-street parking should serve the parking needs of the commuters, businesses, and residents. Shared parking arrangements and a reduction in parking requirements by at least 25 percent should be promoted to encourage walking, biking, and the use of transit.

5. Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening

Landscaping should be used to beautify the street and public spaces, buffer incompatible uses, and screen unsightly views. Loading areas should be sited away from public views, where possible, or properly screened. If surface parking is needed, it should be screened with a low wall of the same material as the building it serves, and accented with plants and flowering materials.

6. Monument/Freestanding Signs

Monument/freestanding signs that are located at the entrances into the area should be low and ground-mounted; not exceed eight feet in height; constructed with high-quality materials that are compatible with the associated building materials; and accented with plant and flowering materials.

7. Stormwater Management

Stormwater micromanagement techniques that minimize land consumption and improve the quality of stormwater runoff should be applied. Bioretention areas, infiltration trenches, and reuse of stormwater shall be considered on all developments.

Building Design

The design, height, scale, and massing of buildings are defining elements to the character of an area. The Metro station is seen as the place for higher-intensity development with building heights up to eight stories. Therefore, the design and articulation of architectural elements contribute to its sense of place and identity.

1. Building Height

Building heights should be derived from the intensity yield from floor area ratio (FAR) that ranges between .25 and 1.0. The signature building or landmark should not exceed eight stories. Residential density should range between 15 to a maximum of 30 dwelling units per acre.

Monument signs identify a place.

Well-articulated facade design and form promote visual interest.

Garages designed to resemble traditional buildings are more pleasing than those with long horizontal openings.

2. Building Facade and Storefront

Building facades should provide elements of architectural scale and proportion that relate to a pedestrian scale. Large expanses of identical building walls should be avoided. Facades that provide a regular and frequent pattern of architectural variety through modulation of wall plane, detailing, color, texture, material, and the incorporation of art and ornament are encouraged.

The ground floor uses facing the streets or public square should be built with a 15-foot ceiling height to accommodate ground floor retail uses.

3. Emphasis of Building Entries

Primary-building entries should provide opportunities to create unique and distinguishing entrances along the street through the use of distinctive form, detail, materials, color, ornament lighting, and signage.

4. Materials and Architectural Details

High-quality building materials, such as brick, stone, and granite stone base or any comparable material that may include green design material, should be used on the facade of all buildings. Reflective and tinted glass should not be used on the ground floor of any buildings and ribbons or bands of glass should not be used for windows.

5. Parking Garage

Below-grade parking garage is preferred; however, at-grade parking should be designed and articulated to avoid the look of a traditional open parking garage.

6. Projections and Recesses

Projections and recesses should be used to add interest to buildings, especially to highlight entrances. Awnings and canopies made of high-quality materials and proportional by design and placement should be used, where appropriate, especially over doors and windows. The color should be compatible with primary building materials and with adjacent buildings.

7. Building Signs

Building signs should be incorporated into the overall architectural design of the building, appropriately located, and constructed of durable high-quality materials. Signs should be coordinated for compatibility throughout the area.

8. Building Lighting

Exterior building lighting within this area should be cohesive as a unifying element while providing adequate visibility and safety. All exterior light fixtures should direct glare to specific locations and away from adjoining buildings.

Public and Private Open Spaces

Open spaces provide relief and interest within a built environment, and should be carefully designed and treated to provide safety, soften the streetscape, and provide pleasure and comfort to users. In this context, the streetscape, parks, and plazas should encourage pedestrian mobility and outdoor activities and create pleasant bus waiting and gathering places that project a positive impression.

1. Streetscape

Streetscapes should include on-street parking, curbs and gutters, wide sidewalks, street trees (stand-alone or in grates), appropriate light poles, and other amenities that contribute to a lively and vibrant streetscape experience.

Wide sidewalks allow for pedestrian amenities, such as outdoor cafes and street furniture that are key to a lively, vibrant streetscape experience

2. Parks and Plazas

Parks and plazas should be designed as an important component of the overall development to be easily accessible and usable. Plazas should incorporate design elements such as fountains, public art, or sculpture and be made comfortable by using architectural and landscape elements to create a sense of enclosure and security. Pavements of varied physical texture, color, and pattern should be used to guide movement and define functional areas.

Plazas should incorporate design elements such as fountains, public art, or sculpture.

3. Walkways and Crosswalks

Walkways and crosswalks should be wide, safe, and well lit and provide strong connections internally and with adjoining communities. Special pavement should be used to define pedestrian zones and be equipped with appropriate pedestrian amenities, such as benches and trash receptacles.

4. Street Trees and Planting

Street trees should be planted on both sides of the street to soften the street edge (subject to regulations and approval of DPW&T). Trees should be planted in tree grates along walkways on major pedestrian corridors or planted in landscaped strips between the road curb and sidewalks. Trees should be planted in medians, where provided.

Street trees soften the street edge and provide shade for pedestrians.

5. Street and Site Furniture

Street and site amenities should be provided as appropriate to create pedestrian comfort. Bus shelters should be designed and constructed to complement building style and materials. Street furniture should include, but not be limited to, bicycle racks, bus shelters, benches, trash receptacles, sculpture, and fountains.

6. Lighting

Street lighting should be pedestrian-oriented, human-scale, and contextually compatible with the architectural style of the entire development. Lighting variation should be used where special effect is desired to enhance overall visibility.