

GREENBELT ROAD and BELTWAY PLAZA

Commercial Corridor

CONCEPT

The Greenbelt commercial corridor, integrated with Beltway Plaza, is envisioned as a cohesive commercial retail and office area that attracts new businesses, strengthens existing businesses and guards against commercial decline through revitalization and redevelopment efforts. Safe and effective pedestrian and vehicular linkages are provided to, through and from the corridor, Beltway Plaza and neighboring communities.

OBJECTIVES

Greenbelt Road commercial corridor and Beltway Plaza are key commercial components of the sector plan. The following objectives, consistent with the overall sector plan vision and sector-wide recommendations, frame the recommendations and design guidelines and seek to:

- Maintain a strong commercial destination within the Sector Plan Area to sustain and attract local and regional customers.
- Improve the overall corridor appearance and spatial organization to produce a unifying image of the commercial corridor and Beltway Plaza.
- Develop merchant and municipality partnerships to formulate mutual physical planning and design policies.
- Facilitate better integration of Beltway Plaza with surrounding communities such as Springhill Lake.
- Improve vehicular circulation along the corridor, at key road intersections and within the Beltway Plaza property.
- Provide linkages that contribute to the sector-wide open space system and link destinations through a connected network of pedestrian and bicycle accessible spaces.

- Ensure building and streetscape maintenance to provide a clean, safe and attractive shopping environment.

EXISTING SITUATION AND ISSUES

The Greenbelt Road corridor, between Kenilworth Avenue and Rhode Island Avenue, is primarily commercial in nature and is a heavily traveled roadway. Currently a six-lane arterial roadway, Greenbelt Road is built to its right-of-way limits and is congested many hours of every day. This roadway serves as a major east-west connection, particularly through this Sector Plan Area and carries many commuters to Cherrywood Lane and then eventually to the Greenbelt station. Along this stretch of Greenbelt Road, retail and office uses exist, the most notable being Beltway Plaza. However, smaller, individual retailers are dispersed on both the north and south sides of Greenbelt Road. Unfortunately, most of the development along this corridor has progressed like other strip commercial areas, sporadic and without continuity.

Beltway Plaza, one of Prince George's County's oldest shopping centers, is the only shopping center in the County constructed in an industrially zoned area. Beltway Plaza covers approximately 44 acres of land and was originally constructed in 1960 as a "shopping plaza"; the structure was later remodeled and now includes an internal mall, a strip center, several adjacent in-line merchants and several out-parcel stores and restaurants. The size, tenant mix and the quantity of stores

qualify Beltway Plaza as a major activity center, as classified by the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance. In recent years, the owners have made diligent efforts to revitalize both the interior and exterior spaces of Beltway Plaza. While the property as a whole is much improved in visual and physical character, there is a need to continue the effort of improving facades, signs, landscaping and site layout, particularly for the commercial establishments west of Cherrywood Lane, known as Beltway Plaza West. Currently the mall contains approximately 112 businesses, primarily discount retailers, as compared to 70 businesses in 1989. This growth has prompted the addition of more leasable space and, thus, required additional parking spaces. Today, a two-story parking garage is located in front of Beltway Plaza and when additional leasable space was constructed, a second parking garage was constructed to the rear of the mall. In the area of Beltway Plaza, the parking lot is generally underutilized except when the movie theaters are busy during peak hours. This creates a situation of limited surveillance and a need to enhance or establish a strong relationship and linkage between Beltway Plaza and the Springhill Lake community.

Beltway Plaza is sited behind many small freestanding commercial buildings fronting Greenbelt Road. These commercial buildings are identified by the trademark building design and unique architectural features. While some of the freestanding buildings in Beltway Plaza have incorporated block and color scheme design features, it is important that the individual business owners continue to improve the uniformity of design themes which can visually tie the buildings to the overall design and character of Beltway Plaza mall and strip shopping center.

Although Beltway Plaza and other strip commercial shopping businesses are within walking distance to the Springhill Lake and Berwyn Heights communities, none are pedestrian-oriented. Linkages to these communities are not well-defined. Pedestrian sidewalks and crosswalks are limited and bike lanes do not exist along Greenbelt Road. Internal circulation patterns and parking areas are not well-defined or coordinated. Although some parking islands and landscape plantings exist, providing these islands throughout the commercial center can help define parking aisles and improve circulation patterns. Along the corridor, numerous curb cuts exist, adversely affecting traffic along Greenbelt Road. Automobile access onto Greenbelt Road from northbound Kenilworth Avenue is very congested and has resulted in motorists detouring through Berwyn Heights to avoid that segment of Greenbelt Road.

Addressing these numerous issues will help strengthen this commercial corridor and maintain consistency with the goals of the sector planning effort.



Greenbelt Road.



The Beltway Plaza parking garage fronting onto Greenbelt Road.



Several freestanding chain restaurants are located in the parking lot of the Beltway Plaza property along Greenbelt Road.



Pedestrians walk through the rear parking lot of Beltway Plaza without a designated path to reach Breezewood Drive and Springhill Lake.

DESIGN POLICIES

These policies, although not mandatory, guide the Greenbelt Road Commercial Corridor/Beltway Plaza concept, include public-sector actions and frame the Development District Standards contained in the SMA section for development, re-development and/or revitalization along Greenbelt Road.

1. Retain existing retail and office uses.
2. Form an advisory Greenbelt Road business association to facilitate redevelopment and/or rehabilitation of existing commercial properties with improvements to existing signs, facade treatments, landscaping and screening of service, loading and trash areas, rooftop utility and/or other visual features to improve circulation, buildings and street appearance, sign consistency, and to sustain profitable economic interests in this area. This advisory committee should participate in site plan review for any development, redevelopment or revitalization efforts along the commercial corridor.
3. Redevelop and/or upgrade facades and buildings with quality materials and colors to create a vibrant, clean, organized and attractive commercial corridor and pleasant street edge for passing motorists and pedestrians.
4. Create an organized and accessible commercial corridor with convenient vehicular access and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly elements when development or redevelopment occurs.
5. Improve the streetscape along Greenbelt Road by providing sidewalks along both sides of the street and incorporating elements such as street furniture, street trees, lighting, special paving, crosswalks and consistent signs. These improvements should be evaluated and considered

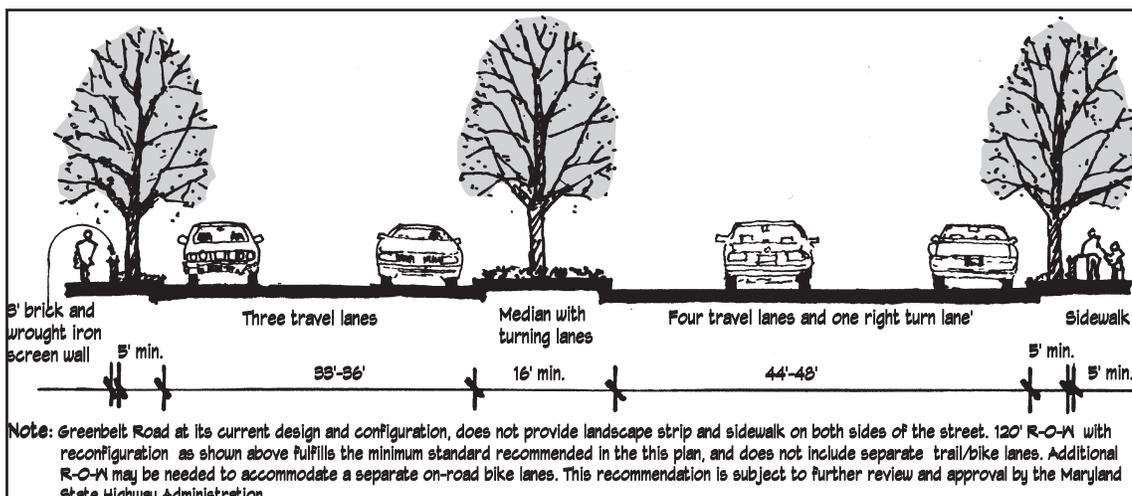
during any State Highway Administration (SHA) streetscape improvement studies for Greenbelt Road.

6. Evaluate Greenbelt Road for trip demand and efficiency which may include improving signaling and/or adding turning lanes. Coordinate Greenbelt Road improvements with connecting roadways, such as MD 201, Rhode Island Avenue and US 1. These improvements should be evaluated and considered during any SHA streetscape studies for this length of Greenbelt Road.
7. Evaluate the reality of providing a Class II hiker/biker trail along Greenbelt Road/MD 193 in both directions to meet the needs of commuting bicyclists. However, if this is not feasible, provide designated bike lanes and/or extra-wide curb lanes. These improvements should be evaluated and considered during any SHA streetscape studies for Greenbelt Road.



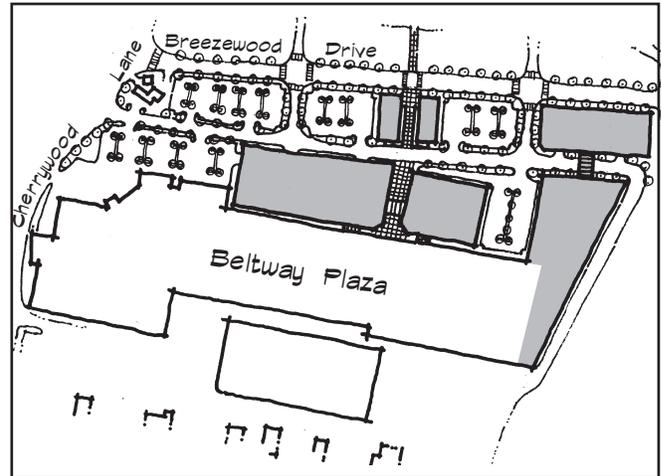
The streetscape along Greenbelt Road can be enhanced with the removal of utility poles and cables and the addition of street trees and hedge plantings.

8. Consider relocating utility poles and cables underground during streetscape, redevelopment or revitalization improvements to improve the overall visual appearance of the corridor, reduce visual clutter, and avoid conflicts with proposals to add street trees along both sides of Greenbelt Road. These improvements should be evaluated and considered during any SHA streetscape studies for Greenbelt Road.



Illustrative cross section through Greenbelt Road between Kenilworth Avenue and Rhode Island Avenue.

9. Evaluate the potential for light-rail connections along or across Greenbelt Road connecting regional employment, residential and shopping districts primarily with the Prince George's County High-Technology Triangle.
10. Relocate the existing school bus storage lot, adjacent to the Greenbelt Middle School, to another location within the County. Reuse this property as a park-school facility.
11. Request that SHA conduct a transportation improvement study to evaluate and improve vehicular access from northbound Kenilworth Avenue turning onto Greenbelt Road to alleviate vehicular cut-through traffic in Berwyn Heights.
12. Encourage Beltway Plaza ownership, with assistance from the City of Greenbelt and M-NCPPC Planning Department staff, to undertake a comprehensive study to evaluate a rear-facing orientation toward Springhill Lake. This study should determine the most appropriate timing and design to improve the image of these two facing developments and improve vehicular and pedestrian access. During the planning phase, consideration should be given to the following:
 - a. Orienting the rear facade of Beltway Plaza toward Springhill Lake.
 - b. Providing convenient, direct pedestrian and/or vehicular access to enhance and strengthen the connection between Beltway Plaza and Springhill Lake. This facade and rear parking lot area should be accented with human-scale elements to promote a convenient, efficient and attractive pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment, well-linked to Springhill Lake.
 - c. Providing retail space for additional neighborhood-oriented retailers closer to Breezewood Drive as the market conditions demand for the benefit of adjacent residents in Springhill Lake. Commercial development should not change the residential character of Breezewood Drive.
 - d. Coordinating infill development or redevelopment between Beltway Plaza and Beltway Plaza West, across Cherrywood Lane.
13. Consider developing a gateway at the intersection of Greenbelt Road and Cherrywood Lane during the SHA streetscape study to:
 - a. Identify this as a primary portal leading to the Greenbelt Metro Station, Beltway Plaza and Springhill Lake community.



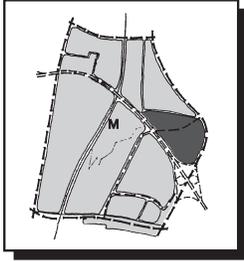
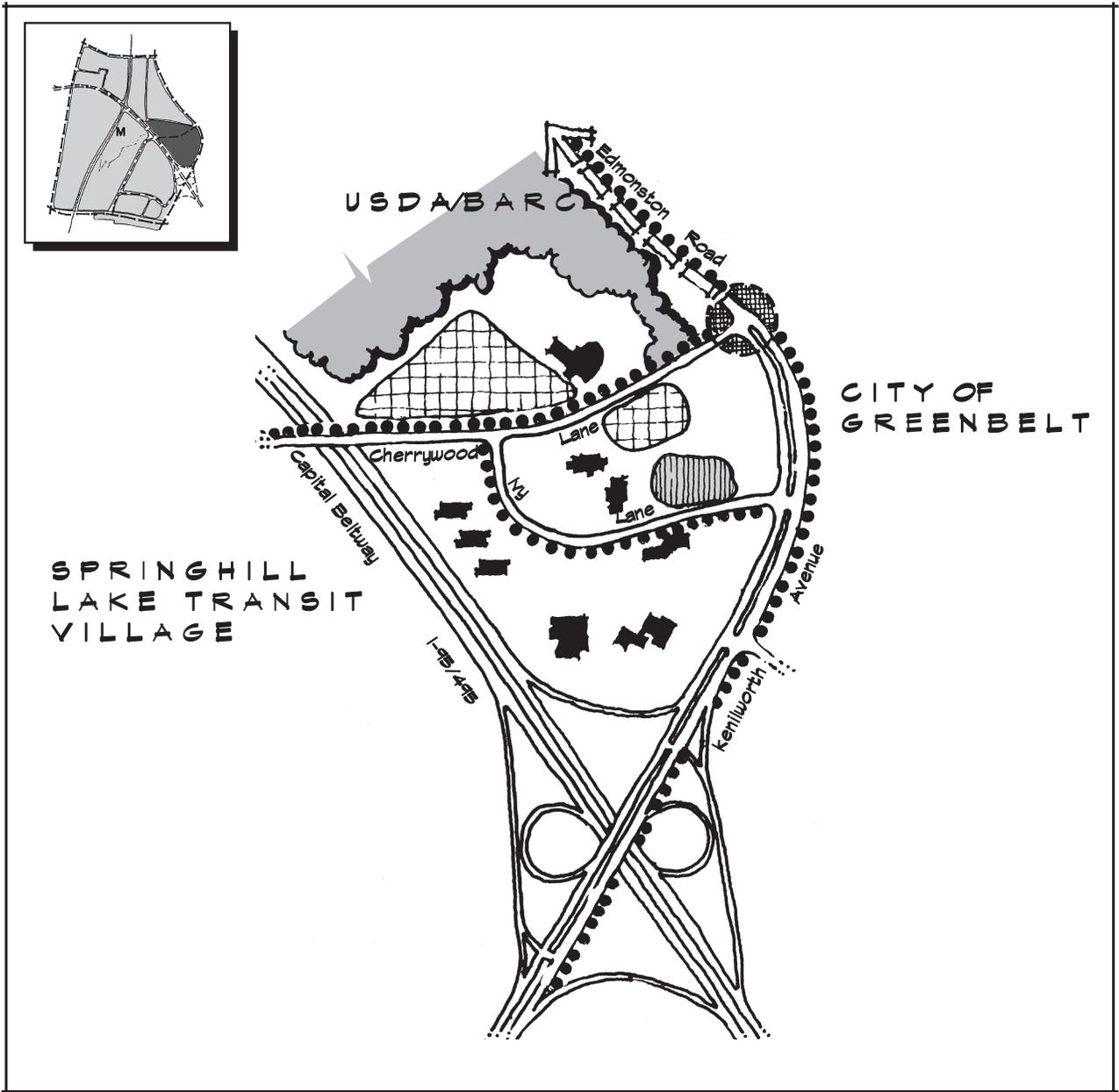
Access to Beltway Plaza can be improved for Springhill Lake residents with the addition of sidewalks, crosswalks and the visual interest of store-fronts and plazas.

- b. Visually enhance this intersection.

Design elements should include special landscape plantings, signs, accent lighting or other features deemed appropriate during planning and design stages. This gateway should be planned and designed with coordination from SHA, the City of Greenbelt, the Town of Berwyn Heights, the City of College Park, and affected property owners. The planning process should determine the responsibility, location, orientation, height, elements, maintenance and implementation.

14. Analyze Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques when developing all site and landscape plans, including parking areas, and identify relevant techniques to be employed in the proposed development at the time of Conceptual Site Plan review.
15. Design large-scale, or big-box, retail development in a manner that attracts passing motorists and pedestrians, respects local building scale and characteristics and contributes to the overall quality development and redevelopment proposed near the Greenbelt Metro Area.

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|  | Approved Pipeline Office Development |  | Existing On-Road Bike Lane |
|  | Environmental Envelope |  | Proposed Road Improvement |
|  | Historic District |  | Primary Gateways and Focal Points |
|  | Existing Buildings | | |