Development and Design Concepts

Introduction

The Riverdale Park mixed-use town center concept is a broad-ranging and comprehensive guide for design and development to be implemented over time through public, private, and nonprofit initiatives. The concept contains:

- An arrangement and mix of uses drawing upon existing town assets including transportation, residential neighborhoods, historic resources, and businesses.
- Indications of how building designs on particular sites will function visually in relation to the town center.
- Proposed high-quality residential development sufficient to help support desirable neighborhood businesses.
- Recommendations for alleys, crosswalks, and street reconfigurations to promote better pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
- Proposals for new public spaces and for improvements to existing public spaces.

The concept proposes uses and physical improvements as shown on Map 3: Riverdale Park Town Center Concept and explained in more detail in Table 1: Building Recommendations and Table 2: Public Space Recommendations. Table 1 includes the location of the recommended redevelopment site, the design function of proposed building(s), recommended uses, recommended heights, and site attributes. The proposed arrangement of uses and buildings protects the historic character of residential neighborhoods, while improving access to services, retail, and flexible office space.

A vastly improved and continuous streetscape along US 1 forms a critical element of the concept proposal. The US 1 concept as shown on Map 4 proposes a street with a wide sidewalk, an attractive streetscape, and bike lanes to create a functional and vibrant town center. The street configurations and streetscape recommendations for US 1 implement the Planning Area 68 master plan recommendation "to make this segment of US 1 a slower-speed, pedestrian-friendly roadway." The proposed configuration on Map 4, along with the figures contained in Table 3, establish the typical dimensions needed to guide future development.

The design principles, shown at the end of this section, are the foundation of the Riverdale Park M-U-TC Zone design standards. These principles are inherent in the development of pedestrian-oriented town centers and describe what the more prescriptive design standards strive toward. The standards were created with the help of community representatives to ensure that future development will comply with the identity,

character and vision of the town center. The design principles are to be used in conjunction with the standards to allow for flexibility in evaluating whether a development proposal achieves the goal of the plan.

The town center concept lays the foundation for an economic development strategy for the Town of Riverdale Park to use as it continues to work with property owners and developers. The Riverdale Park mixed-use town center development plan is a rezoning initiative that will not result in immediate physical changes. Concept implementation depends upon many items, including future funding of the proposed public improvements, as well as increased private development. Strong local oversight and initiative is essential to champion economic development activities. Overall, the success of the town center depends upon strong marketing, the willingness to form partnerships, local volunteerism, and the community's ability to sustain a positive vision of the future.

Development Concept

Land Use

The concept and building and public space recommendations build on the community's existing transportation network, including historic US 1, the B&O and MARC rail lines, and MD 410 (East West Highway), that links the town center to Washington, D.C., Baltimore, communities in neighboring counties, and The University of Maryland. This transportation network generates high traffic volume that could support nationally recognized commercial businesses. Modern retail and service uses depend upon a larger market area than was necessary in Riverdale Park's earlier years. This sector also looks for the opportunity to provide unique or higher quality goods and services to a sufficiently large middle- and higher-income market. It also prefers to locate in pedestrian-oriented environments.

The concept plan proposes locations for commercial and service uses along US 1 that draw on a larger car and public transportation market and concentrates unique and higher quality retail uses on the "home" side of the street, as well as in the picturesque historic core. The "home" side of the street is adjacent to the travel lanes that most commuters use on their way home from work. While driving home, most commuter/shoppers do not make left turns, preferring to make the easier right turn. Retailers choose to locate on the home side of the street, to improve their businesses' odds of succeeding. Clustering retail opportunities will encourage commuters to make the easy right turn and park for convenient access to several stores. The "work" side of the street is ideal for businesses attracting people on their way to work, such as a coffee shop, dry cleaners, and business services.

The residential locations suggested within the concept are to increase available housing choices to attract the mix of income necessary to support a vibrant town center. Mixed-use development is recommended for some of the locations with retail or other small business units on the ground floor and residential or live/work units on the upper stories.

A key component of the development plan is flexible parking. The number of parking spaces required for residential and business uses are reduced, and commercial uses are encouraged to share parking. Businesses may also reduce the number of parking spaces required if there are employee incentives for commuting, as outlined in the design standards under the Parking and Loading Provision Section. The Town of Riverdale Park currently manages public parking and will maintain a list of all parking spaces, public and private, unless another entity takes responsibility.

Public Spaces

The concept proposes a pedestrian-oriented town enter with an infrastructure of wide, continuous sidewalks, alley short cuts, safe street crossings, and rear access parking. A landscaping/pedestrian amenity strip would buffer pedestrians on the sidewalk from traffic. This plan recognizes that people travel by many modes of transportation.

The plan recommends more crosswalks across US 1 and at all intersecting roads, as well as one mid-way crossing on the block south of MD 410 to reduce walking distances and promote pedestrian activity. Appropriate infrastructure improvements will enable an enjoyable town center experience for diverse users. Alleys reduce curb cuts into sidewalks and allow unsightly service elements to be accessed from the rear, retaining valuable street frontage for storefronts.

The plan proposes land and infrastructure improvements to existing parks to give them a functional place in the social life of the town. These improvements include the addition of kiosks, water elements, landscaping, and play areas. Suggestions are made for an office center plaza and urban forest to serve as a pedestrian and employee amenity and gateway feature at the important US 1 and MD 410 intersection.

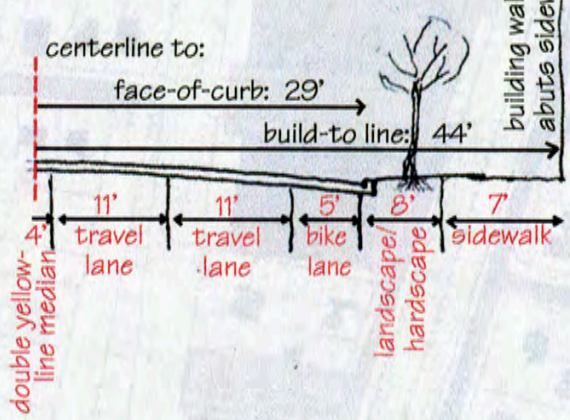
The B&O Railroad and the town's Victorian-styled train station distinguish Riverdale Park from neighboring communities by appealing to children, railroad aficionados, and those who enjoy historic areas. The plan recommends improving the Rhode Island Avenue Trolley right-of-way into a hiker/biker trail as a new community-serving asset. This trail would connect the historic town center with the City of College Park. The concept also proposes the location for a train engine on a green in the historic core. This would be an attraction to both adults and children. New, smaller gateway and historic site parks would reinforce the identity and attractiveness of the Town of Riverdale Park to visitors and residents.

Design pedestrian crossings using the shortest crossing distance (at a right angle to the street direction) and access ramps to make streets safer and accessible to all users.

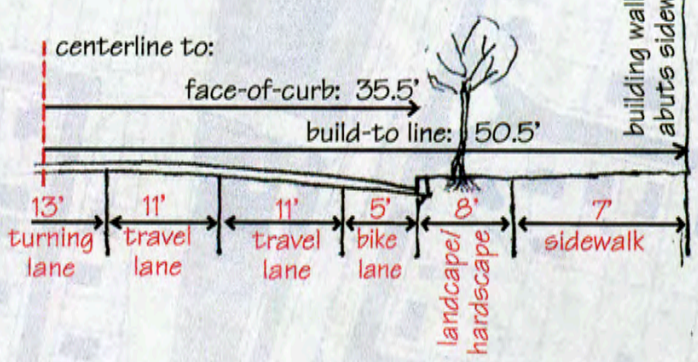
Map 3: Riverdale Park Town Center Concept

(not drawn to scale)

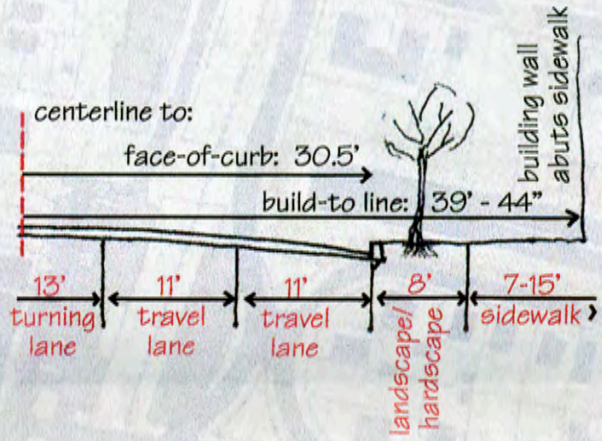
Configuration 1
6419 to 6315 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), east side
4 travel lanes, 2 bike lanes, and double line yellow median with 15' streetscape



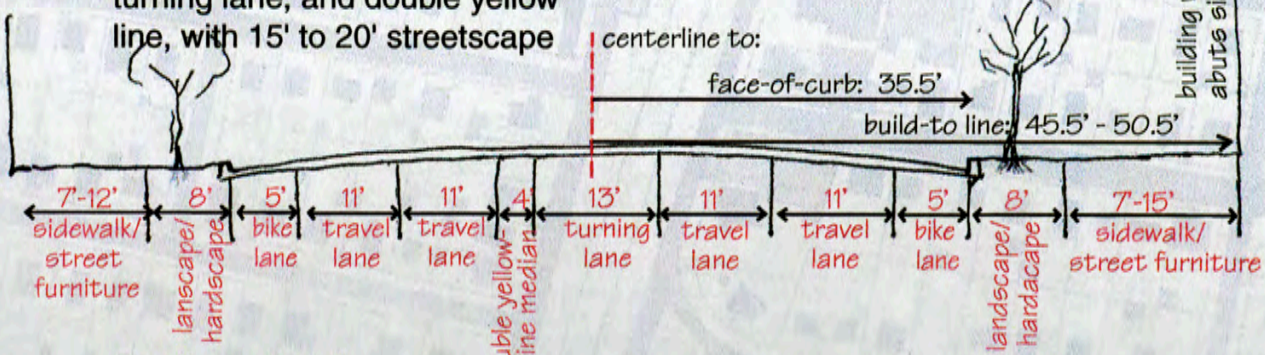
Configuration 2
6311 Baltimore Ave. (US 1) to 4500 East-West HWY (MD 410), east side
4 travel lanes, 2 bike lanes, one turning lane, and double yellow line, with 15' streetscape



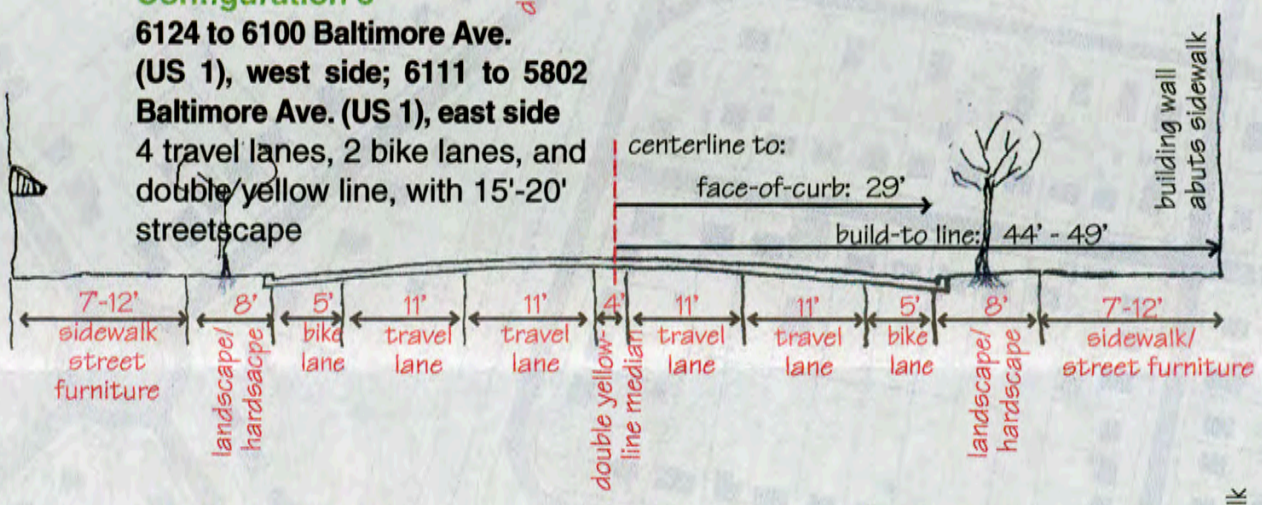
Configuration 3
6241 to 6201 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), east side
4 travel lanes, one turning lane, and double yellow line, with 15'-20' streetscape



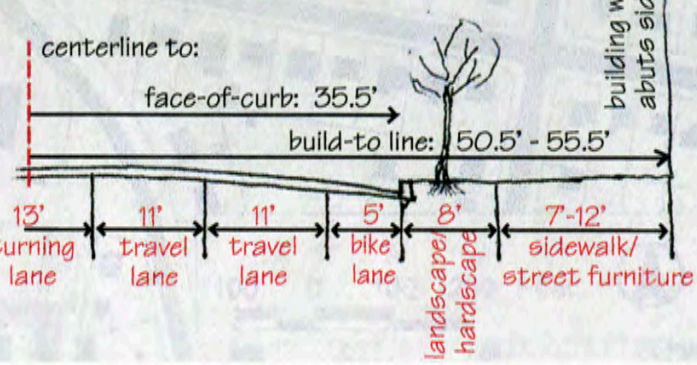
Configuration 4
6228 to 6132 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), west side; 6119 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), east side
4 travel lanes, 2 bike lanes, one turning lane, and double yellow line, with 15' to 20' streetscape



Configuration 5
6124 to 6100 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), west side; 6111 to 5802 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), east side
4 travel lanes, 2 bike lanes, and double yellow line, with 15'-20' streetscape



Configuration 4
5801 to 5731 Baltimore Ave. (US 1), east side
4 travel lanes, 2 bike lanes, one turning lane, and double yellow line, with 15'-20' streetscape



Map 4: US 1 Concept

Table 1: Building Recommendations

Location	Design Function	Uses	Height (in stories)	Attributes
1a SW corner of East West Hwy. and US 1	Gateway signature	Commercial and services first floor, office above	4-6	• Gateway building • Adjacent to public plaza • Distinctive architectural design • Approximately 75,000 cars pass per day
1b US 1 between East West Hwy. and Queensbury Rd.	Infill	Commercial and services adjacent to plaza, office above, residential in rear	4-6	• Adjacent to public plaza • Continues street wall • Excellent parking access • View of Historic Site
1c SW corner of East West Hwy. and US 1	Infill	Commercial first floor, office above	4-6	• Gateway Building • View from upper stories of Historic Site • Distinctive architectural design • Approximately 75,000 cars pass per day
1d SW corner of Queensbury Rd. and US 1	Gateway signature	Office and neighborhood services, possible residential above	4-6	• Work* side of street • Grade change • Gateway to Town Center from Queens Chapel Road/Prince George's Plaza Metro
1e SW of Queensbury Rd. and US 1	Infill	Office and neighborhood service, possible residential above	4-6	• Work* side of street • Grade change • Excellent access to parking • Backs onto residential area • Adjacent to public alley
1f SW of Queensbury Rd. and US 1	Infill	Townhouses, live/work units	3-4	• Quiet • Adjacent to residential neighborhood • Access to commercial businesses and services
2a SE corner of Queensbury Rd. and US 1	Gateway signature	Commercial, office on upper stories	2-4	• Home* side of US 1 • Highly visible to east-west traffic on Queensbury Rd. • Distinctive architecture • Continues retail from adjacent block
2b SE corner of Riverdale Rd. and US 1	Infill	Commercial, office or residential above	4-6	• Home* side of US 1 • Has Historic Site on property
2c East side of US 1 between East West Hwy. and Sheridan St.	Infill	Office, residential, flexible work space	2-3	• Home* side of US 1
2d SE corner of US 1 and Sheridan St.	Infill/ signature, neighborhood compatible	Office, residential, or flexible work space	2-3	• Home* side of US 1 • Corner building

Table 1 (cont'd): Building Recommendations

Location	Design Function	Uses	Height (in stories)	Attributes
2e East side of US 1 between Sheridan St. and Tuckerman St.	Infill	Bed and breakfast, flexible work space, or residential	2-3	• Home* side of US 1 • Two large adjacent parcels
3a East side of US 1 between Oliver St. and Madison St.	Signature Triangle Building	Residential or office	4-5	• Requires distinctive design • Adjacent to gateway park and Historic Site • Close to commercial • Utility lines in rear
3b East side of US 1 between Oliver St. and Madison St.	Infill	Residential, office, and retail if sufficient adjacent storefronts	6-8 (with step back) highest at SE end due to grade change	• Highest point in the town center • Excellent views • Home* side of US 1 • Close to proposed grocery store site • Utility lines in rear
3c SE corner of US 1 and Cleveland Ave.	Signature, infill	Residential	5-7	• Close to DeMatha High School, also Hyattsville commercial center • Utility lines in rear
3d SE corner of US 1 and Madison St.	Gateway signature	Destination grocery store, residential	6 stories on US 1	• Home* side of US 1 • Adjacent to Hyattsville, DeMatha, and close to University Park • Quiet street • Surrounded by two potential town centers with proposed foot, bicycle, and vehicle access
3e South side of Madison St.	Infill	Residential	4–5 with setback	• Quiet • Close to single-family residential and neighborhood retail/grocery
4a Lafayette Ave. and Queensbury Rd.	Infill	Commercial, residential above	3-4 with appropriate setback	• In historic core • Straddles block • Existing parking • Adjacent to through traffic on Queensbury Rd. • Gateway building • Across from small park
4b SW corner of Queensbury Rd. and Baltimore Ave.	Rehabilitation/ Infill	Commercial/ office flex space first floor, residential/office upper stories	2-3	• Close to established retail, MARC station • Excellent access to parking • Neighborhood gateway to town center • Across from child activity area
4c South of Riverdale Rd.	Infill	Commercial first story, office/residential second	2-4	• Adjacent to destination retail and dining • Close to MARC station • On-site rear parking

Table 1 (cont'd): Building Recommendations

Location	Design Function	Uses	Height (in stories)	Attributes
4d Natoli Pl.	Redevelop-ment	Multifamily residential	3-4	• Adjacent to public activity center, MARC station, town center commercial • Retains existing trees • Has character of single-family homes
4e South corner of Queensbury Rd	Rehabili-tation	Entertainment	1	• Gateway location, prime corner near MARC station and on route to US 1 • Historic building
5a Rhode Island Ave.	Infill	Flexible workspace, good location for trail-related business or outdoor cafe	4-5	• Close to MARC station • Excellent access to parking • Adjacent to planned hiker/biker trail
5b Rhode Island Ave.	Infill	Flexible workspace and/or residential	4-5	• Requires sound barriers on train side • Close to MARC station • Excellent access to parking • Adjacent to planned hiker/biker trail • Adjacent to existing stream • Adjacent to community park
5c Rhode Island Ave.	Infill	Flexible workspace and residential, either multifamily, condominiums, townhouses, residential; should consider arrangement around a courtyard or forecourt	4-6 with adequate tree buffer	• Requires sound barriers on train side • Close to MARC station • Adjacent to planned hiker/biker trail • Adjacent to existing stream • Adjacent to community park
5d Rhode Island Ave.	Infill	Flex and residential, either multifamily, condominiums, townhouses	4-7 with adequate tree buffer	• Requires sound barriers on train side • Close to MARC station, commercial town center • Adjacent to planned hiker/biker trail • Adjacent to community park • Adjacent to 33-acre developable parcel

* The home side of the street is adjacent to the travel lanes that most commuters use on their way home from work. The work side of the street is adjacent to the travel lanes that most commuters use on their way to work.

Table 2: Public Space Recommendations

Location	Description	Program	Benefits
1 US 1 and East West Hwy. intersection	Urban forest	• Where space allows, plant double row of trees with paved area for café or park-like seating	• Double and single rows of similar trees as a counterpoint to modern edifices • Green gateway to town center • Creates sense of arrival at a destination
2 Rhode Island Ave. trolley right-of- way	Hiker/biker trail	• Add paved trail • Clear undergrowth between park and trail • Upgrade community park • Improve pedestrian access to street grid across right-of-way • Retain existing trees	• Connects town center to College Park for bikers and joggers • Connects western neighborhoods to eastern industrial and north to south • Adds a considerable amenity to town center
3 Mabelle Munch Park	Pedestrian destination	• Close Lafayette St. and redirect traffic to Natoli Pl., doubling size of park • Add a kiosk that sells ice cream or coffee, a small fountain, a small play area, shade trees and limited flower beds	• Creates a child-oriented destination in town center • Places several attractions in same location for safety • Increases social interaction
4 McDonald's access and Beale Circle Park	View corridor between commercial plaza and Beale Circle Park	• Create a plaza with a double row of small trees such as crape myrtles, decorative paving, and a fountain that has a visual connection with Beale Circle Park • Improve Beale Circle Park by adding circulation paths, a kiosk, and a tot lot that focus on central fountain or pool/fishpond features, some of which are visible from US 1 • Add connection of pedestrian pavers across the parking lot between US 1 and Beale Circle Park	• Adds useable public space to US 1 area • Creates a walkable outdoor destination • Creates amenities for office and commercial employees, as well as shoppers and residents • Creates a community event area
5 Gate to Riversdale Mansion Historic Site	Riversdale Gate Park	• Close Harrison Ave. access by adding an alley to double the size of site • Create a destination and visual gateway to neighborhoods and town center by adding vertical fountains, plantings, and suitable seating	• Adds a contemplative spot along US 1 • Creates a gateway and a neighborhood amenity • Improves pedestrian comfort • Redirects traffic away from neighborhood
6 Intersection of US 1 and Madison St.	Gateway plantings	• Add coordinated plantings to the three corners that do not obscure the neighborhood beyond	• Signifies arrival to Riverdale Park town center • Gateway to neighborhoods
7 Rhode Island Ave. south of Riverdale Rd.	Activity park	• Add caboose/train engine/old passenger car, a tot lot, and shade trees • Place outdoor café table/chairs in parking lot so that parents can watch children and drink coffee/eat ice cream	• Creates destination • Close to neighborhood, bike trail and commercial core • Gateway to historic town center from neighborhoods

Design Concept

Building Design

The design types of the proposed buildings are listed in Table 1: Building Recommendations. The proposed buildings are categorized as signature, infill, and compatible. A signature building is located on a site that has a very public face making design considerations more important, such as a street corner or view terminus. A gateway signature building is one that is located where the building may be a visitor's first impression of the town center. In this case, creative, unique and coherent designs are appropriate to distinguish the town from other places and communicate messages of quality, economic vitality, and stability. Infill buildings are built between other buildings and may be less noticeable to the general public. Here, quality design is important, but the building does not need to distinguish itself from its neighbors. Compatibility requires that the building should incorporate positive elements of nearby buildings to avoid a jarring contrast in the streetscape. This is especially important when transitioning from the abutting residential neighborhoods to the town center. Some sites may also require rehabilitation to bring them into conformance with town center design principles and to promote residential and commercial vibrancy.

US 1 Street and Streetscape

The concept features an enhanced streetscape for US 1 (see Map 4) produced in coordination with State Highway Administration (SHA) staff. The streetscape standards replace the existing suburban standards that require buildings to be set back far from the street and sidewalk. Buildings will be sited closer to the street, adjacent to wider sidewalks that will be separated from vehicular traffic by a minimum eight-foot-wide strip containing street trees, landscaping, and pedestrian amenities. The new build-to line, which replaces the Zoning Ordinance setbacks, mimics traditional development patterns and permits a larger building envelope because the setback and landscaped front bufferyard are no longer required.

The town center streetscape width varies from a minimum of 15 feet to a maximum of 23 feet. Within this area the following is required:

- Sidewalk—An unobstructed seven-foot-wide walkway that is located adjacent to the street wall formed by the buildings.

- Landscaping/Pedestrian Amenity Strip—Includes street trees and landscaping, and space for the placement of amenities such as benches, post office boxes, and pedestrian-oriented lights.

The US 1 concept builds upon the private/public partnership initiated by the Town of Riverdale Park along the first block of US 1, south of MD 410, to create a functional and attractive town center streetscape. The town has worked with private property owners to construct wider decorative sidewalks (15–20 feet wide) on both sides of the road. The eastern sidewalk is completed, and design drawings for the western side are being completed.

The town will continue to coordinate streetscape improvements with property owners and developers to implement the concept. This is particularly important since some of the required streetscape improvements will be on private property, although primarily within the master planned roadway. Implementation on private property will be the responsibility of individual applicants in coordination with the Town of Riverdale Park with the provision of appropriate easements, where necessary. The enhanced streetscape will improve the attractiveness of the area to both residents and visitors, and with increased foot traffic, provide a better retail location for new businesses.

In addition to the wide streetscape, the plan recommends a revised lane configuration for US 1. A four-lane roadway with turning lanes at selected intersections is recommended. The plan also includes slightly wider travel lanes, 11 feet, to comply with AASHTO standards for safety. And finally, to improve access and circulation for cyclists, a five-foot-wide bike lane has been recommended along most of US 1 in the town center. This will facilitate bicycle commuting to The University of Maryland and other communities along US 1 and implement the bikeway recommended in the Planning Area 68 master plan. Since the recommended lane configuration may require road widening in the future, a projected face-of-curb has been calculated from which new development will measure build-to-lines. The projected face-of-curb is to be measured from the centerline of the existing roadbed.

The US 1 concept contains specific proposed street configurations, including turning and bicycle lanes, widths from the street centerline to the future face-of-curb, and the widths for the landscape/pedestrian amenity strip and sidewalks. The specifications on this concept are to be used in combination with Table 3: US 1 Proposed Roadbed and Streetscape Dimensions. This plan shall be used to calculate build-to lines and design the streetscape for all new development until the SHA has adopted a new plan.

Table 3: US 1 Proposed Roadbed and Streetscape Dimensions

US 1	Width of Road Bed (in feet)	Distance from Centerline (in feet)		
		To Face-of-Curb	To Building	
			15' Streetscape	20' Streetscape
Double-line median; 4 travel lanes	48	24	39	44
Add 2 bike lanes	58	29	44	49
Add 1 turning lane	61	30.5	45.5	50.5
Add 1 turning lane & 2 bike lanes	71	35.5	50.5	55.5

View of envisioned future US 1 streetscape.

Overall Design Principles

The design principles are the backbone of a human-scale town center. Essential to the success of the town center, they support the goal of the development plan:

> *To create a human-scale town center through attractive development that creates a sense of place and supports commercial and residential vitality.*

These design principles function together and must not be taken as separate elements with varying degrees of importance. They are based on tenets of human-scale design, crime prevention through environmental design, and traditional main street design guidelines.

- Create a comfortable pedestrian environment and an attractive streetscape.
- Provide continuous interest along the sidewalk through animated storefronts and buildings that engage the passerby with visual information, variety, color, and changes in building mass, shading, and lighting.

Build in natural surveillance and increase safety by connecting residences to streets and alleys through windows, balconies, porches, stoops and gardens.

- Enhance pedestrian and area safety by encouraging a strong visual connection between the interiors of buildings and the sidewalk, private oversight of public space, and the provision of uniform pedestrian-oriented lighting.

- Provide a sense of enclosure through development that abuts the sidewalk creating a street wall.

- Enhance users' interest and enjoyment of the street surroundings by retaining historic details; emphasizing the first story through architectural detailing; designing new structures to signal a hierarchy of massing (base, middle and top), highlighting building openings, defining uses, and clearly delineating public from private uses.

- Create an attractive town center by placing on-site parking behind, beside, or beneath buildings.

- Enliven the street through banners, pedestrian-oriented signage, and other decorative commercial "branding" advertisement.

- Soften the streetscape and increase attractiveness through flowers, shade trees, and street furniture.

- Increase a sense of place by encouraging public art, fountains, gardens, and other amenities on private development and at gateway and park locations.

Architectural detailing frames storefront windows, doorways, and the ground floor and creates places people enjoy walking.

Pedestrian amenities make the street comfortable and inviting.