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## Ashton Village Center Sector Plan—Worksession Number 1

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**Completed: 10/22/2020**

### Staff Recommendation

To receive guidance from the Planning Board on the land use and zoning, open space, environmental, and historic preservation recommendations in the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan.

### Summary

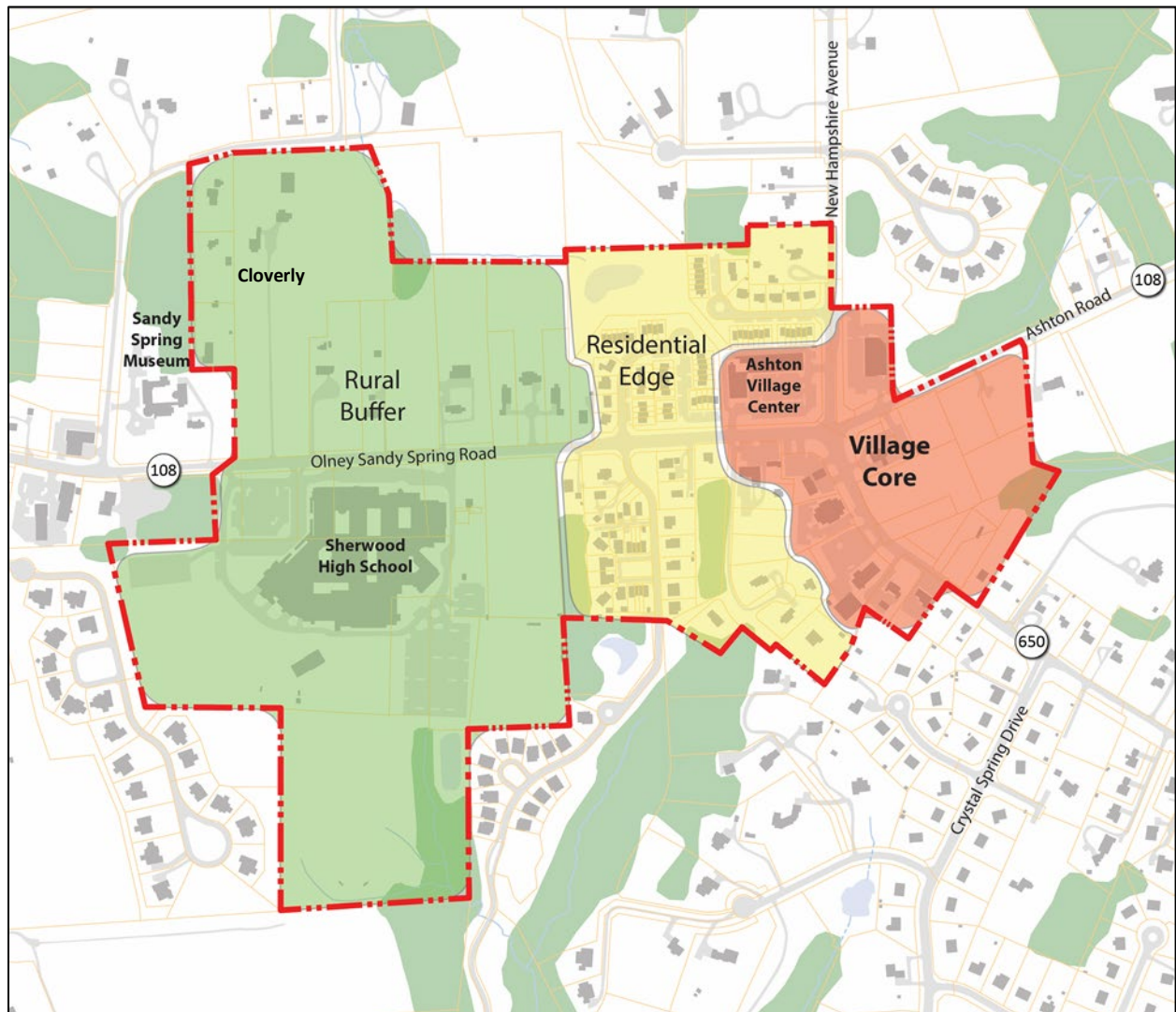
The Planning Board held its Public Hearing for the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan on September 17, 2020. The public record closed on September 24, 2020. A summary of the public testimony is attached to this memorandum. This is the first of at least two work sessions to address the comments received on the Sector Plan draft. The work session topics are proposed as follows:

- October 29—Worksession 1: Land use and zoning, open space, environmental and historic preservation.
- November 19—Worksession 2: Community design and design guidelines, connectivity (transportation and circulation), and implementation.

Following the two work sessions, Staff will return a final time in late November or early December to summarize all the changes that were requested, and to request that the Planning Board vote to approve the Planning Board draft. We anticipate transmitting that draft to the County Council in January 2021.

## Land Uses and Zoning

The proposed land uses and zoning in the Sector Plan, included in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, are intended to strike a balance between protecting the lower density rural character of the Ashton area while providing adequate opportunities for property owners to develop their properties, using the Plan's design guidelines, to create a vibrant rural village center.



*Figure 1. Plan neighborhoods*

The correspondence on the proposed land use and zoning for the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan primarily referenced the Plan's proposals for the southeast quadrant of the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue (MD 650) and MD 108 within the Village Core Plan neighborhood (see Figure 1). There was also a single correspondence about the zoning for the historic property of Cloverly in the Rural Buffer neighborhood and one request to not change the overall density of the zone already in place for a particular property in the southwest quadrant. No comments were received concerning the sunseting of the PD-5 zone that straddles the Village Core and Residential Edge neighborhoods

northwest of the intersection where the Ashton Village Center shopping center and Ashton Village residential community are located.

In each subsection below, there is a summary of the received comments, what the Plan recommends, and a response to the comments received. Existing (Figure 2) and proposed (Figure 3) zoning are shown below for reference.

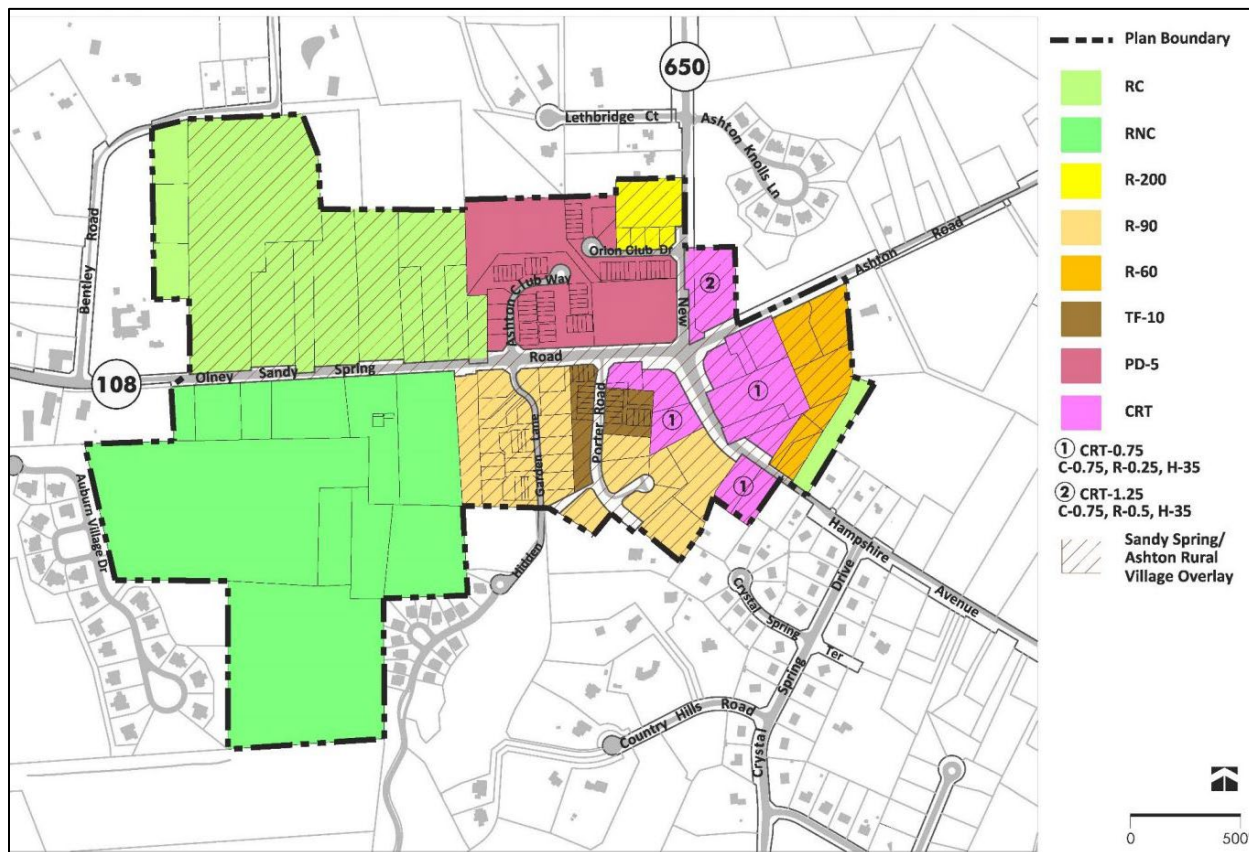


Figure 2. Existing zoning

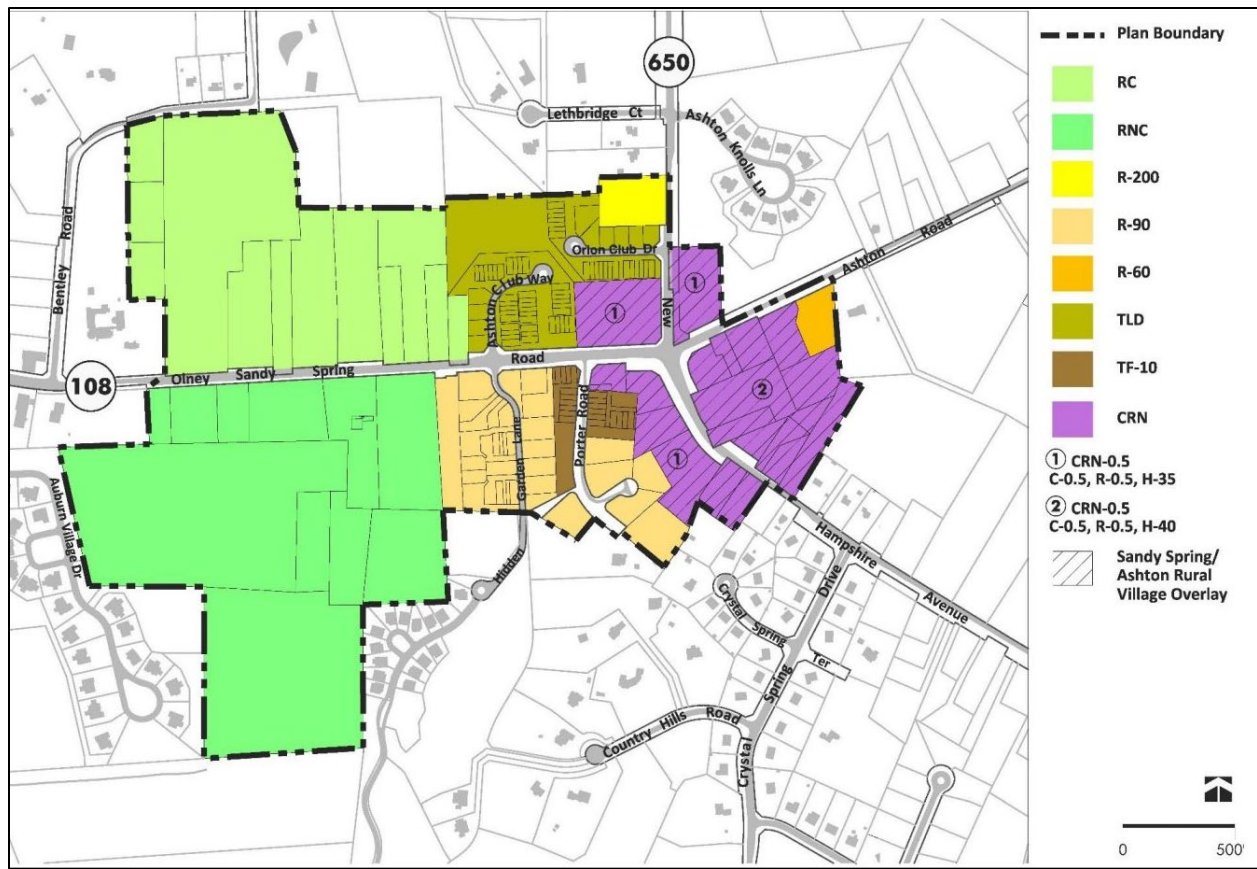


Figure 3. Proposed zoning

### Village Core

The zoning proposed for the Village Core is intended to create a consistent zoning scheme throughout the Core that represents a balance of adequate development density and protection from overdevelopment. For much of the Core, the Plan recommends a reduction in allowed commercial density and an increase in allowed residential density. Even without the recommended zoning, all properties in the Core have room for development above what exists today.

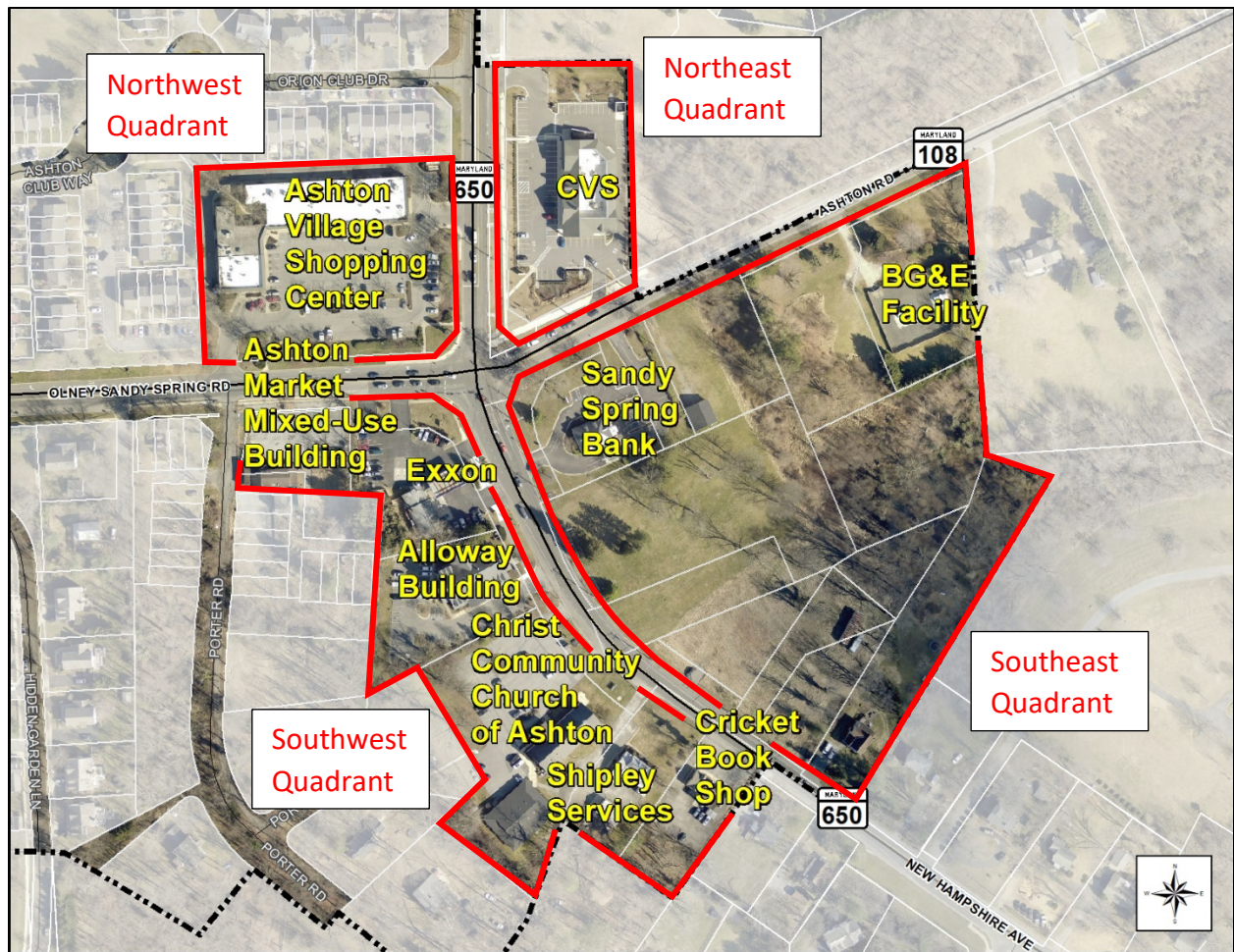


Figure 4. Aerial image of Village Core neighborhood showing the four quadrants and existing businesses and other institutions

#### Northwest and Northeast Quadrants

The four quadrants of the Village Core neighborhood are shown in Figure 4. In the northeast quadrant, the Plan proposes a reduction in commercial zoning and a slight increase in residential zoning. In the northwest quadrant, the Plan proposes replacing the PD-5 zone with an appropriate and consistent zone from the C/R family of zones.

*Comments:* No comments were received.

*Plan Recommendation:* Rezone the northwest quadrant from PD-5 to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35 and rezone the northeast quadrant from CRT-1.25 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35 to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation.

#### Southwest Quadrant

In the southwest quadrant, the Plan proposes changing the CRT zone to a CRN zone and adjusting the commercial and residential FAR limits to be consistent with the rest of the Village Core. One property,

the Christ Community Church of Ashton, is currently zoned R-90. For consistency, the Plan proposes CRN zoning at this location.

*Comments:* The owner of the Ashton Market project on the south side of MD 108 in the southwest quadrant requests retaining the existing overall FAR density of 0.75 for the mixed-use part of the project (see illustration in Figure 5), but found it acceptable to change the main zone from CRT to CRN. The correspondence received proposes CRN-0.75 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35 for the site.

*Plan Recommendation:* Rezone the entire quadrant from the existing CRT 0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35 and R-90 zones to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.

*Staff Response:* The proposed zoning for the Ashton Market site is still well under the approved site plan's commercial (0.23 FAR) and residential (0.11 FAR) densities on the property, and this Plan attempts to standardize zoning densities across the Village Core neighborhood. Staff recommends retaining the Plan's recommendation.



*Figure 5. Sketch of Ashton Market mixed-use building (site plan 820180160) along the south side of MD 108*

### Southeast Quadrant

The majority of the land use and zoning comments received for this Sector Plan are directed toward the southeast quadrant properties. The Plan identifies these properties as an opportunity to provide the true center of the village that Ashton currently lacks. In the second work session, there will be a broader discussion of the Plan's community design recommendations, which seek to guide the form of development in a more nuanced manner than can be achieved simply by a designated zone. The southeast quadrant is currently a mix of zones—mostly CRT and R-60—and this Plan proposes a consistent CRN zone across the entire quadrant, except for the BG&E substation property, which would remain in the R-60 zone.

*Comments:* Numerous correspondents stated that 0.5 residential FAR is too dense and could allow up to 150 residential units and that the 40-foot height is too great. Many requested the height limit be reduced to 35 feet to be consistent with the other three quadrants at the intersection or to protect the rural character. Some have recommended leaving in place the current zones, which are a mix of CRT 0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35, R-60, and RC. Others have suggested something closer to the proposed zone, but with a residential FAR of 0.25 and the height reduced to 35 feet. A third option presented by the correspondents was split zoning, with areas closer to the MD 108/650 intersection using the Plan's

recommended zone and applying a less dense 0.25 FAR residential density and a shorter 35-foot height limit on the southern and eastern edges of the Plan area. Recommendations were also made to change the zoning to anything necessary to restrict new housing to not include multi-family units or to require predominantly detached dwellings.

An opposing view was also raised that the proposed density in the southeast quadrant should be increased to provide “an economically viable” amount of residential development and allow for more commercial density over time. Specifically, the owner of the properties in the southeast corner is requesting that they be rezoned to CRN-0.75 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-45. They are willing to specify that no more than 40% of the site should reach the 45-foot height limit.

No correspondence indicated an issue with the recommended zoning change from CRT to CRN and a few of the correspondents mentioned support for more neighborhood-serving retail and restaurant establishments and were against allowing big box stores, which are all proposals supported by the CRN zoning recommendation.

*Plan Recommendation:* Rezone the properties in the southeast quadrant, except for the BGE property, from CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35, R-60, and RC to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.

*Staff Response:* Staff recommends retaining the Plan’s recommendation. The southeast quadrant is the only quadrant where heights have been recommended for 40 feet instead of 35, to provide some flexibility for such a large site. The recommended zoning reduces total FAR, but it increases the residential component to help generate additional residents to support the existing and future retail in Ashton. Increasing the density would necessitate a higher height limit to accommodate and would become incompatible with the vision of keeping Ashton a rural village. With the proposed zoning, 150 units could be placed on the southeast quadrant only if every unit was an apartment and no commercial space was provided. The Plan recommendations specifically require most of the units to not be multi-family and encourage some commercial uses, so the actual development yield is expected to be significantly less than 150 units. Staff recommends using the Plan’s design recommendations and design guidelines to address building height and massing rather than creating a split zone which could force unintended designs on new development.

## **Residential Edge**

The Residential Edge neighborhood is zoned and used as a predominantly residential area that serves as a transition between the Village Core and the Rural Buffer neighborhoods along MD 108. There was limited correspondence received about this neighborhood, and the Plan makes no recommended zoning changes except for the townhouse portion of the PD-5 Zone and a small section of the R-200 zone that is part of the same housing development.

### PD-5 Zone

The existing PD-5 Zone has been phased out of the Zoning Ordinance, and a new zone is needed to replace it.

*Comments:* No comments were received.

### *Plan Recommendation*

[Recommendation 4.2 #3]: Rezone the residential and open space portions of the Ashton Village development from PD-5 to TLD [Townhouse Low Density]. (Plan edit needed: specify that a small portion of this development is also being rezoned from R-200 to TLD.)

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation.

### Other Zoning Concerns

*Comments:* Concerns that the Ashton Market townhouse development could expand south along Porter Road.

### *Plan Recommendation*

[Recommendation 4.2 #1]: Retain the R-90 and TF-10 zones for all properties south of MD 108 currently in these zones.

*Staff Response:* The Ashton Market development was the result of a floating zone request in 2017. The staff does not support additional rezoning in this area and is reconfirming the R-90 zone for properties south of Ashton Market.

### **Rural Buffer**

The Rural Buffer neighborhood is a residential and institutional area with larger homes on larger properties on the north side of MD 108 and Sherwood High School on the south side. Small-scale agriculture and horse pastures are also found in this area. There is one historic designated property, Cloverly, built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, and is the subject of the only correspondence received for the Rural Buffer (property identified in Figure 1 above).

### Cloverly

*Comments:* The property owners have expressed deep concern over the zoning changes and historic designations that have been enacted over the past 30 years. The concern is that the property was in an agricultural zone when purchased, which allowed more flexibility than the current Rural Cluster (RC) zone. The property owner points out that many of the surrounding properties are already smaller than the RC zone's 5-acre lot size and is requesting enough density to allow for a small village of houses, designed in a way fitting for a rural village and perhaps similar to the Wyndcrest community on the south side of MD 108 in the Plan's Residential Edge neighborhood.

*Plan Recommendation:* Retain the existing RC zone.

*Staff Response:* Staff recommends retaining the RC zone. This property was identified in the 1980 *Sandy Spring-Ashton Master Plan* as part of a rural buffer between the villages of Sandy Spring and Ashton; this was reconfirmed in the 1998 *Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan*. The historic designation of the property requires protection of the environmental setting of the house, especially the viewshed as seen from MD 108, making a large part of the property off-limits to development. The Cloverly property is currently approximately 12 acres in size, so the existing zone allows for one additional lot to be created. One additional lot is likely compatible with the historic designation and environmental setting, but allowing

multiple new dwellings may not be. Changing zoning here would alter the character of the area in a way not compatible with keeping a buffer between the two villages. The property is also located in the Patuxent watershed, and likely in the Primary Management Area due to its proximity to an off-site stream, putting it in an area with special impervious limitations.

### **Sandy Spring/Ashton Rural Village Overlay (SSA Overlay)**

The SSA Overlay zone was created to restrict uses and provide guidelines to achieve a “village scale” of development in both Sandy Spring and Ashton. The 2015 *Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan* removed much of the overlay zone in Sandy Spring because it found that the C/R family of zones offered adequate protections that made the overlay redundant. As part of the research for this Sector Plan, Staff determined that a different approach was needed in Ashton that modifies rather than removes the overlay. Comments regarding the overlay zone changes are varied.

#### General Comments

*Comments:* Concerns that the overlay could be used to usurp the conceptual visions outlined in the Plan.

*Plan Recommendation:* There is not an applicable recommendation.

*Staff Response:* The SSA Overlay zone and proposed changes regulate land uses and the review process and should work in conjunction with the visions of the Plan.

*Comments:* The SSA Overlay zone is where the design guidelines should be encoded into the county’s regulations.

*Plan Recommendation:* There is not an applicable recommendation.

*Staff Response:* The design guidelines should remain in the Master Plan as a chapter, to be enforced through the master plan conformance requirement of the regulatory review process.

#### Other Changes to the SSA Overlay Zone

This Plan recommends removing the list of prohibited uses in the overlay zone and replacing the CRT zone with the CRN zone to achieve a similar result. The Plan also recommends removing the properties in the Residential and Rural Residential zones from the overlay zone because the underlying zones already offer adequate protections to lot sizes and heights. The text of the overlay zone can then be updated to remove unnecessary provisions. The Existing (Figure 2) and Proposed (Figure 3) Zoning maps above show the overlay zone as a hatched area.

Three existing uses in the Plan area, located in the Village Core’s southwest and southeast quadrants, are not allowed under the CRN zone. These existing uses include a filling station (Exxon), an auto repair shop (an accessory use of the Exxon), and a drive-thru associated with a bank (a Sandy Spring bank branch). These businesses are in the immediate southwest and southeast corners of the MD 108/650 intersection and are labeled in Figure 4 above. All three of these uses are Limited or Conditional uses in the CRT zone but not allowed in the CRN zone.

This Plan recommends adding language to the overlay zone to allow the following uses to be considered conforming and be allowed to continue or be altered, repaired, or replaced:

- drive-thru not associated with restaurants,
- filling stations, and
- vehicle repair services.

The Plan also recommends removing text from the overlay zone requiring public water and sewer systems and off-street parking in residential areas to serve nearby commercial uses because these provisions are no longer needed.

### **Recommendations Pertaining to Land Use and Zoning**

The following is a comprehensive list of all of the Plan recommendations pertaining to Land Use and Zoning for the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan.

#### *Area-Wide Recommendations (Section 3.2.5):*

1. Rezone all properties in the northeast, northwest, and southwest quadrants of the Village Core neighborhood to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.
2. Rezone all properties in the southeast quadrant of the Village Core neighborhood to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-40 with the exception of the BG&E substation property, which should retain its R-60 zone.
3. Rezone the residential properties in the Ashton Village development from PD-5 and R-200 to Townhouse Low Density (TLD).
4. Confirm the existing zoning for the properties in the Rural Buffer neighborhood and the remainder of the Residential Edge neighborhoods.
5. Revise the Sandy Spring/Ashton Rural Village Overlay zone to:
  - a. Remove the limitations on land uses.
  - b. Remove or update the residential development standards.
  - c. Remove the development standards for the Commercial/Residential or Employment zones.
  - d. Remove the sewer requirement.
  - e. Remove the use of properties in a residential zone for off-street parking.
  - f. Retain the site plan requirements but remove the requirement for direct accessibility from a sidewalk, plaza, or other public space.
  - g. Allow a drive-thru as a Limited Use if associated with a bank. Do not allow the drive-thru lane to be adjacent to MD 108 or MD 650 under any condition. (Plan edit needed: add filling stations and vehicle repair services to uses that may be allowed to continue or be altered, repaired, or replaced.)
  - h. Revise the purpose statement to reflect these proposed changes.
  - i. Revise the boundary of the SSA Overlay zone to only cover the CRN-Zoned properties.

#### *Village Core Recommendations (Sections 4.1.2 – 4.1.5):*

##### *Southwest quadrant:*

1. Rezone all Village Core properties in the southwest quadrant from CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35 and R-90 to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.

*Northwest quadrant:*

1. Rezone the Ashton Village Shopping Center property from PD-5 to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.
2. If the Ashton Village Center redevelops, encourage a mix of uses with ground floor commercial activity activating the street and with parking behind.

*Northeast quadrant:*

1. Rezone the property from CRT-1.25 C-0.75 R-0.5 H-35 to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35.

*Southeast quadrant:*

1. Retain the R-60 zone for the BG&E property.
2. Rezone all other properties in the southeast quadrant from CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35 (Plan edit needed: also include R-60 and RC as “from” zones) to CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-40.

## **Community Facilities and Open Space**

### **Open Space and Parks**

There are no county-owned parks within the Plan boundary; however, there are outdoor recreational facilities at Sherwood High School and a small privately-owned, uninviting open space in front of the CVS at the northeast corner of the intersection of MD 108 and New Hampshire Avenue.

The Plan envisions two opportunities for large gatherings/neighborhood greens: in the privately-owned open space behind the townhouses adjacent to an existing stormwater pond northwest of the intersection and part of the undeveloped land in the southeast quadrant (identified by green asterisks in Figure 6). The Plan also acknowledges the existing smaller private open spaces interspersed throughout the Plan area.



Figure 6. Recommended open spaces

Policy guidance from previous plans, the 2017 *Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan*, and the Park and Open Space Hierarchy, along with community input during the planning process, led to identifying the open space needs and opportunities within the Sector Plan area. Although located in a rural part of the county with vast amounts of private and passive open spaces, residents of Ashton can benefit from new accessible open spaces created to meet their active lifestyle needs. These new village center open spaces meet the criteria to be considered as Urban Open Spaces under the *Legacy Open Space Functional Master Plan*, which would allow for Legacy Open Space implementation tools to support the creation of these spaces.

#### Ashton Village Community Open Space

*Comments:* The Ashton Village townhouse community is against the county outright buying privately-owned HOA open space for any public use and requested revised Plan language to limit their open space to only be used for a limited number of community events. The HOA did not support the idea of making their playground available to the general public.

#### *Plan Recommendation*

[Recommendation 3.5.3 #3]: Consider options to make the Ashton Village HOA's common area more accessible and usable to the public.

*Staff Response:* Staff proposes the following text change to the language on page 36:

A community playground is situated between the two cul-de-sacs (Ashton Club Way and Orion Club Drive), as well as approximately 3.2 acres of private open space in and around a stormwater pond. This space is identified as a “common area” for the community on the record plat. Options should be explored to make this space more accessible and usable to the public.

Staff believes that language regarding a potential public/private shared use agreement as discussed on page 56 of the Plan is the only way such a space could be formally used, and in listing this discussion as a “potential” agreement, and to “explore” with the HOA shows this is not intended to be forced, but rather discussed. Staff recommends retaining the language on page 56.

#### Open Space in the Southeast Quadrant

*Comments:* The correspondence received generally supported the Plan’s open space recommendations for a community gathering space in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of MD 108 and New Hampshire Avenue. Most of these correspondents agreed that a gathering space in the southeast corner should be located near the environmental buffer in the southeast quadrant. However, one correspondent thought the primary gathering space in the southeast corner would be better suited near the intersection of MD 108 and New Hampshire Avenue. The property owner of the southeast quadrant did not object to the idea of providing some sort of public gathering space along with a development in the quadrant but requested some text changes to the Plan to clarify allowing a mix of public open spaces and private open spaces that may be fenced off from public use. Correspondence was also encouraging of the recommendation to protect the existing trees at the corner of MD 108 and MD 650 and the property owner did not raise any objections to this.

#### *Plan Recommendations*

[Recommendation 3.5.3 #4]: New development in the southeast quadrant of the MD 108/650 intersection should provide a publicly accessible public green space large enough to act as a civic gathering space. This space is encouraged to be adjacent to the environmental features to help space feel larger. Any green space in this area should have direct frontage to a public or private road.

[Recommendation 3.5.3 #5]: Consider using a linear neighborhood green or other similar open space that would connect a new public green in the southeast quadrant to MD 650.

[Recommendation 3.5.3 #6]: Designate a small open space area adjacent to the southeast corner of the intersection of MD 650 and MD 108 to protect the existing large shade [trees]. (Plan edit needed: add word “trees” to the end of this recommendation.)

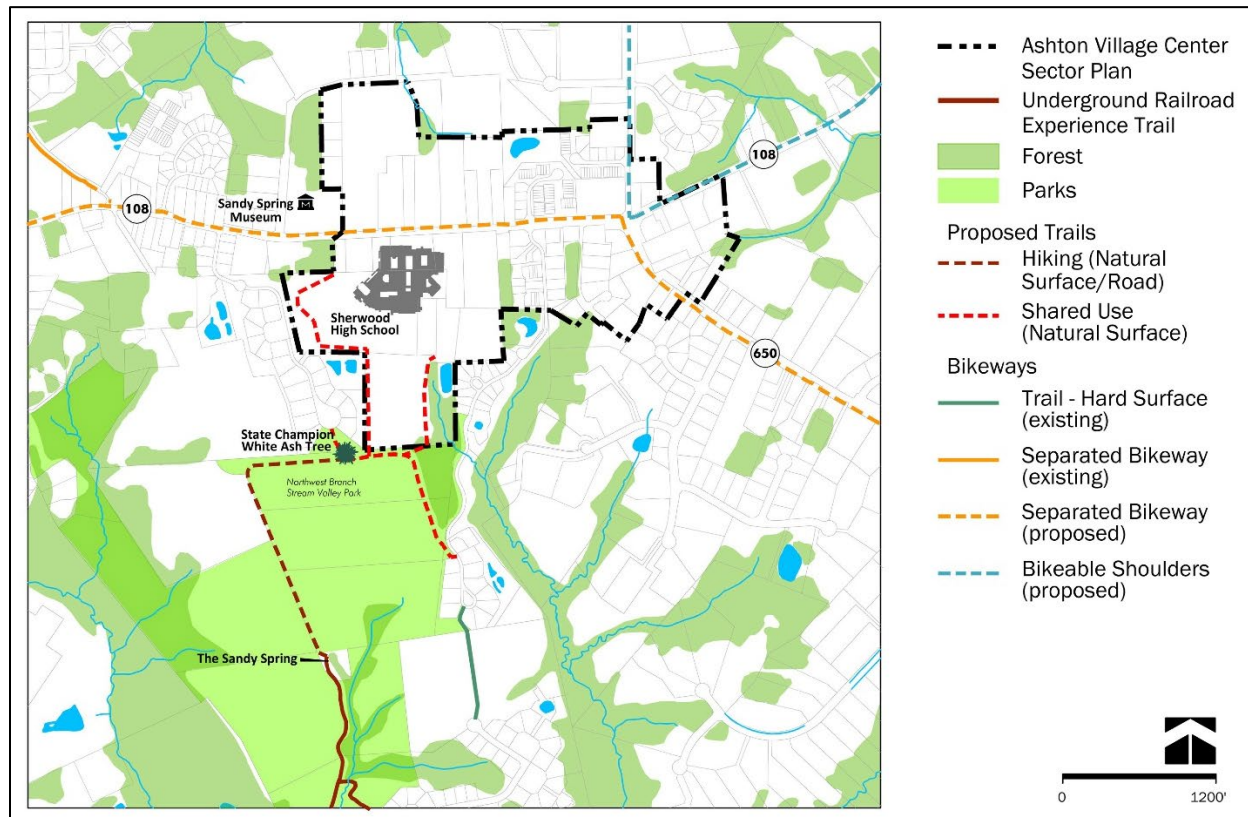
[Recommendation 3.5.3 #8]: Do not enclose open spaces with fencing unless it is for safety, such as for a tot lot or dog park, in which case context-sensitive fencing should be provided.

*Staff Response:* Staff recommends retaining the recommendations, which provide for a safer location and maximize the perceived size of the green area. The proposed linear open space will provide the public link between the main road and the gathering space.

Staff supports amending the Plan text to state that new development may include some private amenity areas reserved for residents that are above and beyond the required public amenities outlined in the Zoning Ordinance.

## Trails

While not directly in the Sector Plan area, there are a lot of multi-use trails in the greater Ashton area which the Plan supports providing connections to, including an important missing connection through the Sherwood High School site to reach these trails (see Figure 7).



*Figure 7. Existing and proposed trails*

*Comments:* The comments received requested that text be added to emphasize that multi-use trails in the area are equestrian-friendly to promote the agricultural history of the community.

### *Plan Recommendation*

[Recommendation 3.5.3 #9]: Coordinate with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Sherwood High School to construct a multiuse natural surface trail on either the east or west side of the school (or both) connecting the sidewalk along MD 108 with Park property to the south.

*Staff Response:* Staff supports amended Plan language to support equestrian use when describing the surrounding trail network and the necessary remaining connections.

## Other Community Facilities

Except for Sherwood High School, the Sector Plan area contains no other community facilities, but Ashton is served by nearby facilities, including the Volunteer Fire Station and the Ross Boddy Recreation Center in Sandy Spring.

*Comments:* No comments were received.

## All Community Facilities and Open Space Recommendations (Section 3.5.3)

### *Open Space Recommendations*

1. Encourage new open spaces to provide amenities that accommodate social interaction, such as picnic areas, playgrounds, community gardens, and dog parks.
2. Explore opportunities for active amenities such as a skate park near Sherwood High School if public land becomes available.
3. Consider options to make the Ashton Village HOA's common area more accessible and usable to the public.
4. New development in the southeast quadrant of the MD 108/650 intersection should provide a publicly accessible public green space large enough to act as a civic gathering space. This space is encouraged to be adjacent to the environmental features to help space feel larger. Any green space in this area should have direct frontage to a public or private road.
5. Consider using a linear neighborhood green or other similar open space that would connect a new public green in the southeast quadrant to MD 650.
6. Designate a small open space area adjacent to the southeast corner of the intersection of MD 650 and MD 108 to protect the existing large shade.
7. Frame open spaces with building façades and uses that activate those spaces wherever practical.
8. Do not enclose open spaces with fencing unless it is for safety, such as for a tot lot or dog park, in which case context-sensitive fencing should be provided.

### *Trail Recommendations*

9. Coordinate with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and Sherwood High School to construct a multiuse natural surface trail on either the east or west side of the school (or both) connecting the sidewalk along MD 108 with Park property to the south.
10. Remove the prior plan recommendation to continue the Northwest Branch Trail/Underground Railroad Experience Trail north of MD 108. This connection was removed by the 2016 Countywide Parks Trails Master Plan but is in the 1998 Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan.

## Environment

Approximately 75% of the Sector Plan area is located either in the direct Lower Patuxent River watershed or in the Hawlings River watershed. The Hawlings River is a tributary to the Patuxent River and these two watersheds comprise the Patuxent Primary Management Area (PMA), which aims to reduce imperviousness and increase forest cover to protect drinking water quality. The guidelines recommend limits on impervious levels to land under development in low-density zones within a certain

distance of water bodies, specifically within 1,320 feet of the mainstem of the Patuxent River and within 660 feet of any of its tributaries. The new development will follow current stormwater standards which will protect soils, water quality, and groundwater recharge levels and will minimize downstream hazards.

This Plan advances carbon emission reductions through smart growth principles; a mix of building types and land uses, multiple transportation options, open space protection, the promotion of walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, and zoning change recommendations. The impact of this Sector Plan on population and the transportation system in the area will be very limited and the proposed zoning would likely result in fewer vehicle trips at buildout. This results in an impact on the overall carbon footprint that is not detectable using current analysis methods required by Montgomery County Code Section 33A-14. Generally, Staff received little correspondence about the environmental section of the Sector Plan.

### **Environmental Protections**

*Comments:* A few comments raised general concerns regarding the environmental recommendations as they relate to density, open space, and the location of housing in a rural area, including a concern that substantial new development in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of MD 108 and New Hampshire Avenue would remove a significant number of old-growth trees and not provide enough open space. A separate concern was raised that more flexibility was needed when specifically referencing protecting existing trees at the entry points to the village by modifying Recommendation 3.6.4 #3 by adding “to the extent feasible” to the text.

#### *Plan Recommendations*

[Recommendation 3.6.4 #3]: Maintain existing and plant new shade trees in strategic locations that will eventually overarch MD 108 and MD 650, including at the entry points to the Village.

[Recommendation 3.6.4 #4]: Promote existing tree programs such as Reforest Montgomery to increase shade and canopy coverage on private properties.

*Staff Response:* The existing recommendation is for the protection of trees at entry points to the village, and separately the open space section of the Sector Plan has language to protect the trees at the main intersection of the village. The Plan also recognizes the need for private trees and includes recommendation #4 for the Reforest Montgomery program. Any trees subject to the variance law, such as some of the larger trees in the southeast quadrant, would be protected or require mitigation during development. Staff supports the addition of the phrase “to the extent feasible” for protection of trees at village entry points to be consistent with the recommendation to protect trees at the intersection of MD 108 and MD 650 in a different chapter which includes such language.

### **Greenhouse Gases**

*Comments:* Dense residential development in a rural area contradicts the county’s policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

*Plan Recommendation:* There is not an applicable recommendation.

*Staff Response:* The geography and recommended changes are very minor in size and are difficult to process through the county’s climate model due to the small-scale nature of the changes. Traffic modeling suggests the changes to zoning would reduce total trips generated within the village at buildout compared to what is possible under current zoning. Recommendations to improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure would also help reduce some local car trips. This Plan attempts to direct growth pressures to a centralized area utilizing existing infrastructure, an approach that is more sensitive to the environment than the continued dependence on large-lot development in this area.

**All Environmental Plan Recommendations (Section 3.6.4):**

1. Retain the existing RC zoning in the Rural Buffer neighborhood for continued water quality protection in the PMA.
2. Incorporate shade-creating elements into the building and site design with any new development or redevelopment, including but not limited to:
  - a. Including large canopy tree species in its landscaping,
  - b. Using awnings and canopies over doors and windows, and
  - c. Orienting buildings to try to provide shade to any public or outdoor gathering space.
3. Maintain existing and plant new shade trees in strategic locations that will eventually overarch MD 108 and MD 650, including at the entry points to the Village.
4. Promote existing tree programs such as Reforest Montgomery to increase shade and canopy coverage on private properties.

**Historic Preservation**

The Ashton area has a long history and is within Heritage Montgomery’s “Crossroads & Cultures” thematic area, which celebrates the broader community’s deep Quaker and African American heritage. Despite the village’s long history, many of Ashton’s 19th and early-20th century buildings have been demolished, leaving few remaining historic structures within the Plan boundary. A few homes eligible for the National Historic Register include the circa 1896 Queen Anne-style Sweetbriar property at 17920 New Hampshire Avenue; circa 1925 bungalow at 122 Olney-Sandy Spring Road; and circa 1914 Colonial Revival style house and circa 1940 guest house at 17838 and 17836 Hidden Garden Lane. Just outside the Plan area, numerous properties have been designated in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. In addition, the county’s Burial Sites Inventory contains several known or presumed burial site locations near the Sector Plan area. Historic resources in the area are shown in Figure 8.

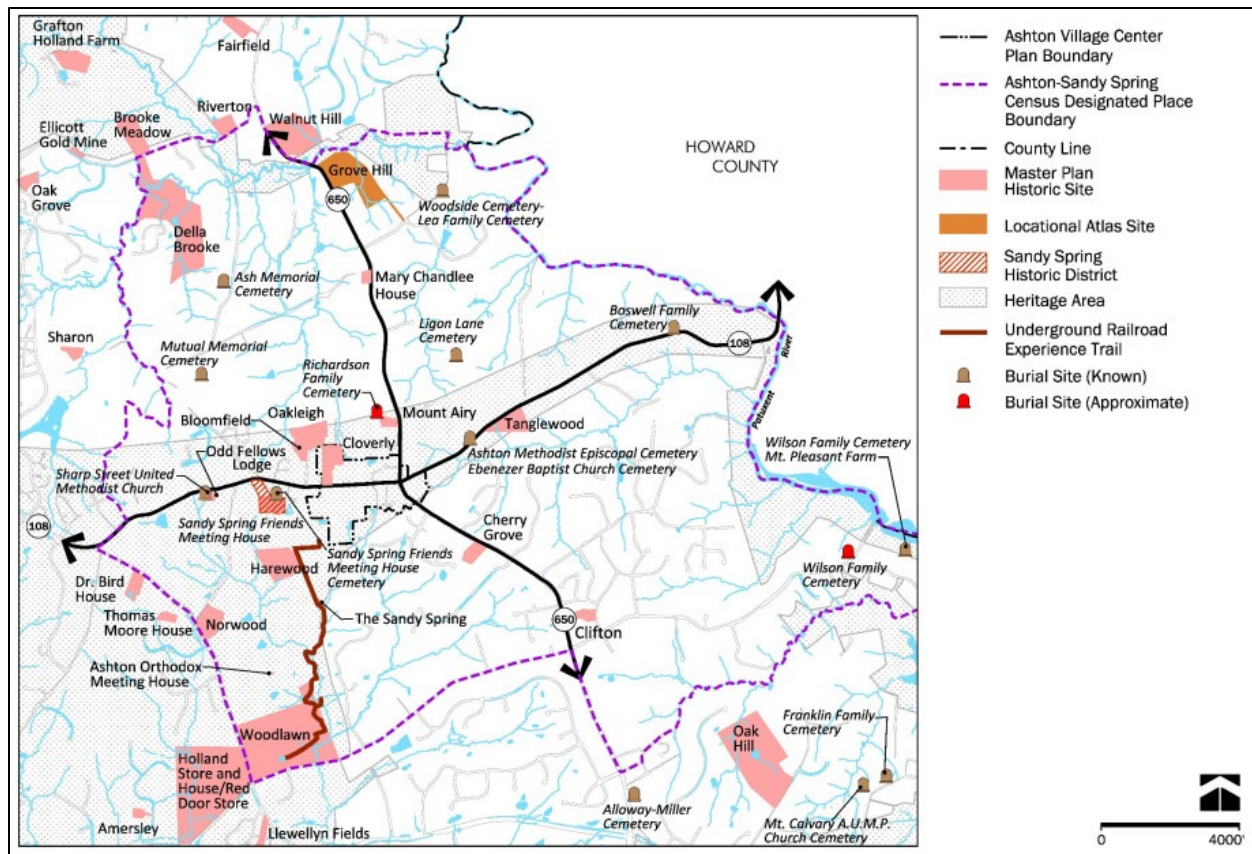


Figure 8. Historic resources

Within the Sector Plan boundary, only one resource is designated in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. Cloverly (MPHP Resource #28/65), circa 1849-1852, is located north of MD 108 across from Sherwood High School, near the Sandy Spring Museum.

While there are no known archaeological sites or cemeteries within the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan area, no formal archaeological surveys have been completed to verify this information. Little public comment was received on the Historic Preservation portion of the Sector Plan, although a few correspondents voiced support for preserving the area's cultural history.

### Historic Preservation

*Comments:* Correspondence was received from the Historic Preservation Committee and individuals supporting the historic preservation recommendations on signage that tells the story of the rich cultural history of the Sandy Spring/Ashton community and guides people toward historic resources in the area.

### Plan Recommendation

[Recommendation 3.7.2 #1]: Provide pedestrian and bicycle scale wayfinding signage that connects the village center to the abundant historic and cultural resources of the greater Sandy Spring/Ashton community.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation.

## **Viewsheds**

*Comments:* Correspondents reiterated support for protecting historic “viewsheds” in the area. Specific views or viewsheds for protection were not given, but examples of the types of views important for the protection of rural character were described, such as views of old-growth trees, an old house across a field, or a stone barn with a pasture of horses or sheep.

*Plan Recommendations:* The Plan does not specifically identify or discuss viewsheds other than the one shown on the Cloverly property in the Recommended Open Spaces map (Figure 6), but does reference protecting rural character in numerous locations.

*Staff Response:* The Plan does not change any recommendations for the surrounding area where much of the rural views and historic resources are located—these areas are still under the area covered by the 1998 Plan. The Sector Plan does support protecting trees at the entranceways to the village as a view, supports protecting the existing large trees on the corner of the southeast quadrant, and supports the low density of the Rural Buffer neighborhood which contains pastures and large green properties. The Plan recommendations support the protection of the rural and historic views of Ashton with development concentrated only in the small Village Core neighborhood.

### **Historic Preservation Plan Recommendations (Section 3.7.2):**

1. Provide pedestrian and bicycle scale wayfinding signage that connects the village center to the abundant historic and cultural resources of the greater Sandy Spring/Ashton community.
2. Continue implementation of the Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan (2002).
3. During future development or major redevelopment, consider opportunities to integrate interpretative signage, markers, or public art that commemorate Ashton’s origins as a rural commercial crossroads and home to free black settlers.

## **Attachments**

- A. Comments Matrix
- B. Email and Letter Correspondence Received
- C. Suggested Text Edits to Plan Draft from Correspondents
- D. Suggested Text Edits to Technical Appendix from Correspondents
- E. Public Hearing Transcript