



## Ashton Village Center Sector Plan—Work Session Number 2

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### Staff Recommendation

To receive guidance from the Planning Board on the transportation and circulation recommendations, community design and design guidelines, and implementation 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 was attached to the memorandum for the first work session. This is the second of at least two work sessions to address the comments received on the Sector Plan draft. The work session topics are as follows:

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

Following the work sessions, Staff intends to present to the Planning Board in early December a summary of all the changes that were requested and to request that the Planning Board vote to approve the Planning Board draft. Transmittal of the Planning Board draft to the County Council is anticipated in January 2021.

## Connectivity

Based on feedback received during the development of the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan, the two most pressing connectivity issues are traffic and pedestrian and bicyclist safety. Several of the Plan's recommendations are illustrated in Figure 1 below.



*Figure 1. The image on the right shows a revised intersection at MD 108 and MD 650 with marked crosswalks, new sidepaths and sidewalks, an increased turning radius in the northeast corner, and fewer driveways at the filling station in the southeast corner.*

## Roadways

The heart of the Ashton village center is the intersection of two state roads: MD 108 (Olney Sandy Spring Road to the west, Ashton Road to the east) and MD 650 (New Hampshire Avenue). Residents in the Ashton area frequently speak of “three rush hours” they experience during the school year. In the morning there is a combination of commuters passing through Ashton on their way to job centers to the east, west, and south along with student drop-offs at the high school. When school lets out in the afternoon, there’s another brief but severe round of congestion. Finally, there is the evening rush of commuters heading back home from the employment centers.

To further the goals of Vision Zero and to build on the successes of previous plans to keep roadway widths to a minimum, the Sector Plan emphasizes improvements that increase pedestrian and bicycle mobility, including continuing the two-lane road policy for both MD 650 and MD 108 and recommending against pavement widening along or at the intersection of MD 650 and MD 108, including turn lanes or acceleration/deceleration lanes. Capacity issues should be dealt with first by adjusting signal timing and reconfiguring lane movements to determine if efficiencies can be found within the existing pavement.

*Comments:* Residents already feel overburdened by traffic in Ashton and long wait times at the MD 108/650 intersection. Staff received numerous comments to the effect that the Plan’s proposed allowable density, especially in the southeast quadrant of the Village Core neighborhood, will make the traffic situation much worse. Some stated that the only way forward will likely be to add more lanes to

the state roads and that this will lead to further erosion of rural village character. Several pointed to the improvements that were required as part of a previously approved development plan as what may be necessary to fix the traffic problems at the intersection. (For more details on the required improvements, see attachment “Ashton Meeting Place Required State Highway Improvements.”)

#### *Plan Recommendations*

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #1]: Reconfirm the two-lane road policy for MD 108 and MD 650 from the 1998 Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #2]: Maintain the pavement width at the approaches to the MD 108/650 intersection except for necessary geometric improvements that serve to increase safety.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #3]: Prioritize signal retiming, lane movement reconfiguration and new bicycle and pedestrian facilities before considering any road widening to address roadway capacity issues.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #4]: Discourage the creation of new acceleration/deceleration lanes along the state highways unless a safety need is demonstrated.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan’s recommendations. Many of these concerns raise awareness of existing capacity and operational issues, and others support reducing the Plan’s recommended density further in Ashton. This Plan supports Vision Zero and limited improvements to the MD 108/650 intersection to improve pedestrian safety and to potentially improve signage and lane configurations within the existing pavement. Any new application for the development of the southeast quadrant would be required to conduct a transportation study, and this may require the developer to implement some improvements if required based on the results of the study.

This Plan recommends a reduction of commercial densities in the Plan area in favor of a slight increase in residential densities. Our transportation analysis shows that this Plan's recommendations would lead to less future traffic than would be possible if developed according to current zoning.

#### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Network**

The pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure in Ashton consists of an incomplete system of missing or substandard sidewalks, sidepaths, and crosswalks. The Plan’s recommendations include sidewalks or sidepaths along all main roadways and an improved crossing experience with crosswalks and signals.

*Comments:* Staff received widespread support for the sidewalks, sidepaths, and crosswalks included in the Plan. The Historic Preservation Commission was also very supportive of the Plan, finding that it balances the need for expanded housing and community amenities, including increased bikeability and walkability, with the preservation of Ashton’s rural and historic character. We received one comment that the Plan does not do enough to create a safe, walkable, bikeable, community-friendly town center with greenspace and services. Another commenter was skeptical that students would use a new crosswalk to get across MD 108, stating that they will continue to cross wherever they desire.

#### *Plan Recommendations*

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #5]: Implement Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant signalized crossings at all approaches to the MD 108/650 intersection.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #6]: Continue to support reconstruction of the signalized entrance to Sherwood High School to improve pedestrian crossings.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #7]: Support future capital funding to construct the *Bicycle Master Plan* recommended sidepaths along the north side of MD 108 from the western Plan boundary to MD 650 and on the west side of MD 650 from MD 108 to the southern Plan boundary.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #11]: Install decorative pedestrian scale lighting along all public and private roadways within the Village Core neighborhood for safety and aesthetics.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendations. The Plan's recommendations will lead to improved walkability and bikeability. The Plan supports Vision Zero to eliminate traffic fatalities. Widening roads to increase vehicle throughput would make crossings less safe and less convenient and would run counter to creating safe walkways. The state is currently studying improvements to the MD 108/650 intersection, including shared-use paths, and this Plan supports their implementation. Staff believes that students would utilize a crosswalk if it were conveniently located and connected to a pedestrian-friendly side path.

## **Public Transportation**

*Comments:* Several residents were very skeptical that the Plan's recommendations to provide expanded bus service in the Plan area are realistic, especially given the current state of ridership on Ride On and WMATA buses and the associated operating costs necessary to implement expanded service. They point to the fact that WMATA recently came close to canceling the one limited-service bus route through Ashton and state that new residents will be primarily dependent on cars for transportation, leading to increased traffic congestion in Ashton.

### *Plan Recommendations*

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #12]: Provide expanded bus service during off-peak hours including adding weekend service.

[Recommendation 3.4.4 #13]: Encourage one or more new Ride On routes that provide more regular local service to Olney and/or Glenmont.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendations. Staff believes that it is essential for bus service to continue and that it be expanded to reduce dependence on cars for transportation. While bus ridership may be experiencing changes due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, this Plan is a vision for decades into the future.

## **All Areawide Connectivity Recommendations (Section 3.4.4)**

### *Roadway recommendations:*

1. Reconfirm the two-lane road policy for MD 108 and MD 650 from the 1998 *Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan*.
2. Maintain the pavement width at the approaches to the MD 108/650 intersection except for necessary geometric improvements that serve to increase safety.

3. Prioritize signal retiming, lane movement reconfiguration and new bicycle and pedestrian facilities before considering any road widening to address roadway capacity issues.
4. Discourage the creation of new acceleration/deceleration lanes along the state highways unless a safety need is demonstrated.

*Pedestrian and bicycle recommendations:*

5. Implement Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant signalized crossings at all approaches to the MD 108/650 intersection.
6. Continue to support reconstruction of the signalized entrance to Sherwood High School to improve pedestrian crossings.
7. Support future capital funding to construct the *Bicycle Master Plan* recommended sidepaths along the north side of MD 108 from the western Plan boundary to MD 650 and on the west side of MD 650 from MD 108 to the southern Plan boundary.
8. Construct a new sidewalk on the west side of MD 650 from MD 108 to Orion Club Drive.
9. Eliminate two of the four driveways for the filling station in the southwest quadrant.
10. Construct minimum five-foot wide sidewalks with any future development along the existing frontages of MD 108 and MD 650 in the southeast quadrant.
11. Install decorative pedestrian scale lighting along all public and private roadways within the Village Core neighborhood for safety and aesthetics.

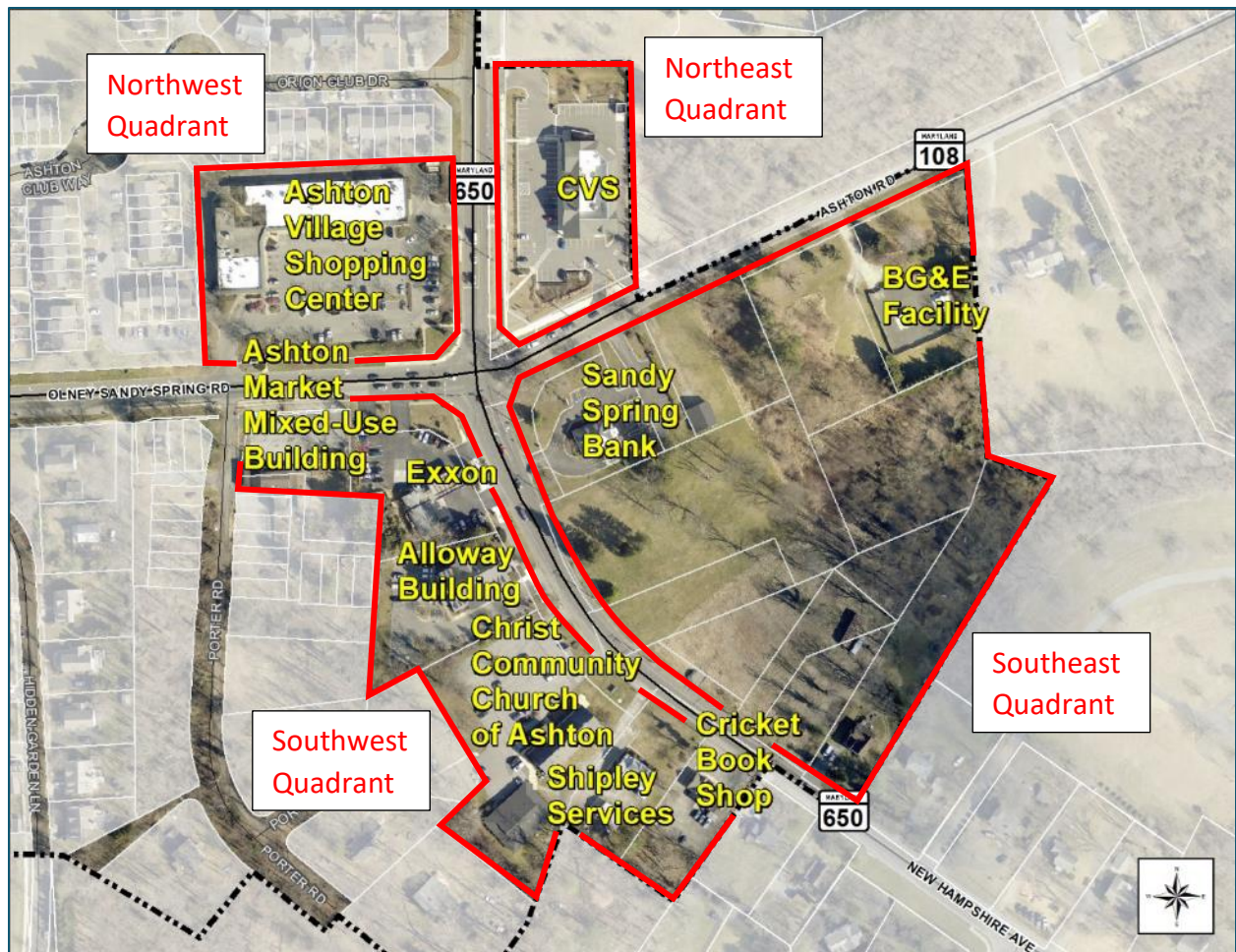
*Public transportation recommendations:*

12. Provide expanded bus service during off-peak hours including adding weekend service.
13. Encourage one or more new Ride On routes that provide more regular local service to Olney and/or Glenmont.
14. Provide a bus shelter at the bus stop on the northwest quadrant of the MD 108/650 intersection.

**Plan Neighborhood Connectivity Recommendations**

In addition to the areawide connectivity recommendations discussed above, there are a few neighborhood-specific connectivity recommendations in the Plan.

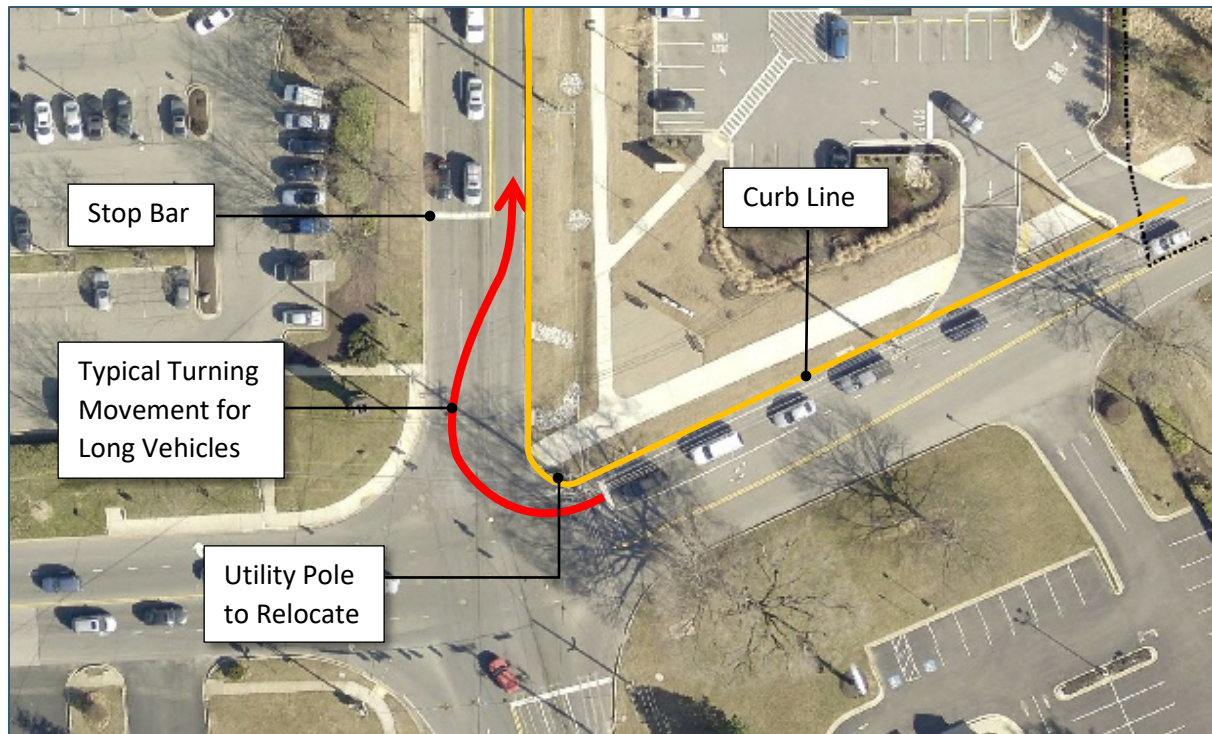




*Figure 2. Aerial image of Village Core neighborhood showing the four quadrants and existing businesses and other institutions.*

#### Northeast Quadrant

The Sector Plan recommends relocating a utility pole in the northeast corner of the MD 108/650 intersection to improve traffic flow. Figure 3 below illustrates the problem longer vehicles, especially those with trailers, have when turning from eastbound 108 onto northbound 650. The revised corner of the intersection is included with the other proposed changes shown in Figure 1 above.



*Figure 3. 2019 aerial view of the MD 108/650 intersection. The turning radius in the northeast corner is very tight, especially for longer vehicles and those with trailers, which led SHA to move the stop bar for southbound MD 650 well back from the intersection.*

*Comments:* Several of the comments support the Plan’s MD 108/650 intersection improvements, including moving the pole at the corner of New Hampshire Avenue and Route 108 without expanding the overall size of the intersection.

*Plan Recommendation 4.1.4 #2:* Relocate the utility pole at the corner and modify the curve to enable easier vehicle turning without negatively impacting pedestrian safety.

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

#### Southeast Quadrant

*Comments:* One commenter stated that adding at least three more entrances and exits, without lights, on MD 108 and MD 650 is unacceptable without the MDOT/SHA recommended improvements to that intersection. The potential developer of the southeast quadrant requested a text change from “shall” to “should” regarding designing circulation to discourage cut-through traffic.

*Plan Recommendation 4.1.5 #5:* Interconnected vehicle access to both MD 108 and MD 650 should be provided through streets built to a public standard, including sidewalks, street trees and street parking were feasible. The circulation shall be designed to discourage cut-through traffic.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan’s recommendation. Any development built in Montgomery County must provide adequate public facilities to support that development. The state’s previous recommendations for improvements to the intersection were based on a traffic study done for a primarily commercial

development over 10 years ago. Any new development would need to provide a new study based on the projected trip generation and existing traffic conditions that reflect current conditions.

Staff doesn't support changing "shall" to "should" because the proposed roadway connections should allow for the movement of vehicles at low speeds and should not cause speeding in the neighborhood.

### **All Neighborhood-Specific Connectivity Recommendations**

#### *Village Core: Southwest Quadrant (Section 4.1.2)*

2. Extend the sidepath on the west side of MD 650 both to the north and south of the currently built segment in front of the Alloway building.
3. Eliminate the two driveways closest to the intersection at the filling station and replace with the sidepath and a vegetated buffer between the path and MD 650. There may be room for parking in the parts of the driveways outside the rights-of-way.
4. Pursue pedestrian and/or vehicular interconnectivity between the Ashton Market development and any redevelopment of the gas station property.

#### *Village Core: Northwest Quadrant (Section 4.1.3)*

2. Provide a bus shelter to provide shade and seating in front of the Ashton Village Shopping Center on the north side of MD 108.
3. Construct a shared-use sidepath along the north side of MD 108.
4. Construct a sidewalk along the west side of MD 650 along the frontage of the Ashton Village Shopping Center.
5. Coordinate with SHA and the Ashton Village Shopping Center owners to enhance landscaping and to incorporate structural elements such as screening, a seating wall or shade trees or structures along portions of the MD 108 and MD 650 frontages.
7. Maintain adequate pedestrian lead walks from MD 108 through to the townhouse development behind [the Ashton Village shopping center].

#### *Village Core: Northeast Quadrant (Section 4.1.4)*

2. Relocate the utility pole at the corner to and modify the curve to enable easier vehicle turning without negatively impacting pedestrian safety.

#### *Village Core: Southeast Quadrant (Section 4.1.5)*

4. Provide sidewalks along MD 108 and MD 650.
5. Interconnected vehicle access to both MD 108 and MD 650 should be provided through streets built to a public standard, including sidewalks, street trees and street parking were feasible. The circulation shall be designed to discourage cut-through traffic.

#### *Residential Edge (Section 4.2):*

4. Extend the sidewalk on the west side of MD 650 from the Ashton Village Shopping Center to Orion Club Drive.
5. Provide a sidepath along the north side of MD 108 from the existing path at the Sandy Spring Museum to the MD 650 intersection.



*Rural Buffer (Section 4.4 [Note: should be 4.3]):*

1. Provide a sidepath along the north side of MD 108 through the Rural Buffer neighborhood connecting to the existing path at the Sandy Spring Museum.
2. Upgrade the sidewalk along the south side of MD 108 to a five-foot wide sidewalk with a lawn or tree panel where missing.

## **Community Design**

The Ashton Village Center Sector Plan creates a vibrant and viable rural village center through a combination of zoning recommendations, design recommendations, and implementation mechanisms. These three Plan elements work hand-in-hand to provide a framework upon which the village center can be developed, and any change to one may require changes to the other two elements to balance out that change and retain the Plan's vision.

Plan section 3.3 describes the areawide community design recommendations, which apply broadly to the Plan area and place more emphasis on site layout, while Chapter 5 contains the Plan's design guidelines, which add specificity to the overall design recommendations and add terminology, architectural context, and best practices. The community design recommendations work jointly with zoning recommendations, which were discussed in the first work session, to help create the rural village center the Plan foresees in Ashton, so there will be some overlap between comments regarding design recommendations and those that relate to zoning. The community design recommendations further refine the uses, forms, and placement of structures with greater specificity than can be achieved through the zoning designation by itself.

At a very broad level, the Plan envisions that at the village edges, buildings are typically spaced farther apart with varying setbacks from the street. As one gets closer to the center of the Village Core neighborhood, buildings are pulled closer to the street and each other to form a continuous street wall, creating a sense of place and defining the arrival at the village center. At critical junctures, buildings are sometimes set back to signify an important community gathering or civic space.

Many basic design elements, such as building placement, orientation, and height are already specified within the recommended CRN zone. This Plan builds upon the zoning requirements with additional recommendations that will provide visual interest, engage the public realm, and ensure that new developments enhance rather than detract from the village.

### **Building Height Transition**

*Comments:* Several area residents submitted comments indicating that a uniform allowed height of 40 feet in the southeast quadrant would not provide an adequate transition from the single-family detached homes and farm fields just outside the Plan boundary to denser buildings in the village center. The proposed zoning includes a height of 40 feet in the southeast quadrant. Some residents also commented that the Plan needs to prevent Ashton from being "overrun with multi-story apartment buildings and towering townhomes ill-suited for our small village." Several described the compatibility issues they see with the Thomas Village townhouses in Sandy Spring, where they say the townhouses "tower over" the surrounding neighborhood. Some suggested only allowing single-family homes at the edges of the Plan area. One commenter defended the Thomas Village development, saying that the

development brought diversity to the community by providing alternatives to single-family detached homes.

*Plan Recommendation 3.3.2 #1:* Building height, massing and placement should create a transition between the single-family detached dwelling units outside the Village Core neighborhood, and potential commercial, mixed-use, or multifamily buildings clustered around the intersection of MD 108/650.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation, which specifically calls for a transition from areas outside the Village Core to buildings at the MD 108/650 intersection. The 40-foot height limit is intended to only be used in some buildings closer to the main intersection.

#### Building Form Along State Roads

*Comments:* The property owner of the southeast quadrant considers the Plan's requirements to design residential buildings along the main roads so that they resemble a single-family detached house or duplex building form to be a very significant restriction. The owner states that the recommendation undercuts the ability to create a community with a variety of building types, rooflines, and architectural details and would lead to buildings with their side façades facing the main roads rather than their front façades. He further states that the recommendation would significantly depress achievable density and would make it extremely difficult to locate a multi-family building along MD 108 or MD 650 or to create the desirable transition described in recommendation 3.3.2 #1 above.

*Plan Recommendation 3.3.2 #2:* Entirely residential buildings with front or side elevations along MD 108 or MD 650 should be designed so that the building width, building massing, and façade treatment fronting to these roads suggests a single-family detached or duplex building form, regardless of actual housing type. The depth of these buildings should be flexible to accommodate various building types and building densities.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. The Plan leaves open the idea that mixed-use buildings can be placed along the state roads without following this design recommendation, which is only for entirely residential buildings. This recommendation blends what Staff heard from the community with recommendations from previous master plans to protect the rural character with detached housing. This recommendation, when taken in context with others, is important in providing a transition from the single-family detached homes outside the Plan area to the highest density in the village center.

The goal of this Plan is to modestly increase what is possible under current zoning while building a development fitting the character of a rural village. Other than using stacked flats, an apartment building type wouldn't be in character with a rural village. A transition would only be difficult if one were attempting to develop using a single building type and not following the recommendation for a transition from Plan edge to center.

#### Varied Building Heights

*Comments:* Closely related to recommendation #1 above for a transition from the Plan boundary to the village center is a recommendation to vary building heights between adjacent buildings. As with recommendation #1, some were concerned that the proposed zone's 40-foot height limit would allow for all buildings in the southeast quadrant to be 40 feet high.

Conversely, the property owner of the southeast quadrant stated that it would be difficult to reach a viable level of density in a vibrant development using a variety of rooflines if the overall maximum building height in the zone is not increased to 45 feet.

*Plan Recommendation 3.3.2 #7:* Building heights should vary between adjacent buildings, with lower heights closer to the edge of the Village Core neighborhood and higher heights closer to the MD 108/650 intersection.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. The heart of this recommendation concerns varying building heights between adjacent buildings to prevent a monolithic look in the village center. A height limit of 45 feet is not consistent with a rural village center.

### Pitched Roofs

*Comments:* The property owner of the land in the southeast quadrant requested a change to the Plan's recommendation below to specify that a majority of *residential* buildings should contain pitched roofs, and if flat roofs are used *in residential, mixed-use, or commercial buildings*, then a cornice should be used.

*Plan Recommendation 3.3.2 #9:* A majority of buildings should contain pitched roofs. If flat roofs are used, the façade should introduce a cornice along the roof edge.

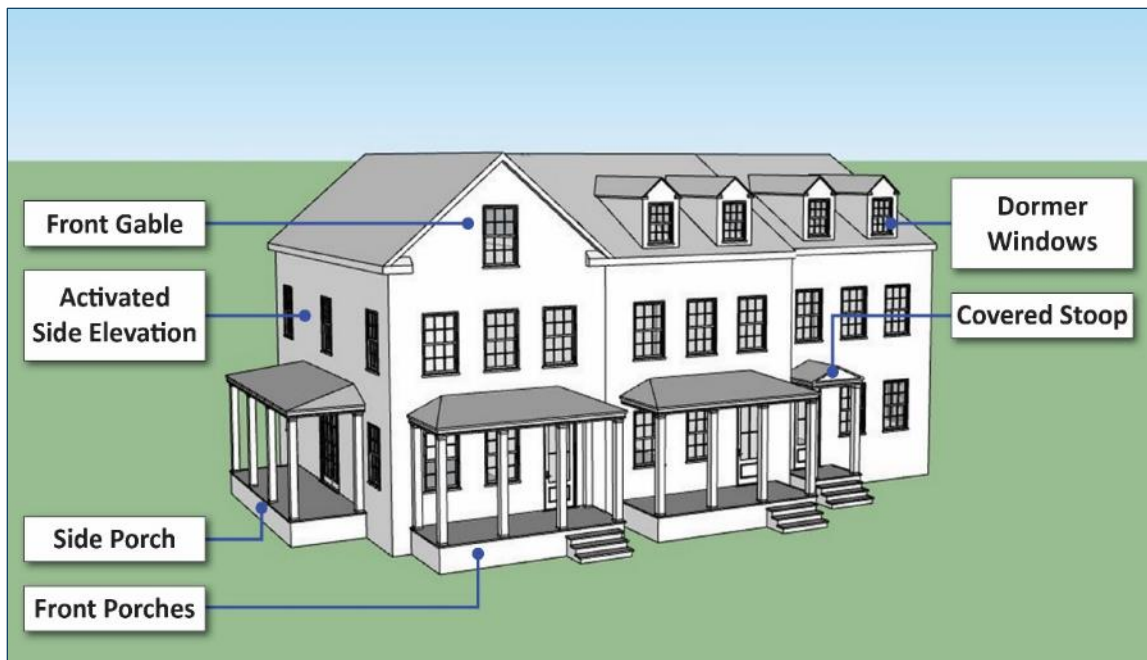
*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. A majority of the existing buildings in Ashton have pitched roofs. To achieve the rural village look, it's preferable to have some pitched roofs in commercial buildings as well as residential. The current language allows any building type to have a flat roof with a cornice.

### Architectural Embellishments

*Comments:* Several area residents support requirements for architectural details that blend in with the surrounding area, including porches, dormers, and traditional materials/siding. One commenter, as with recommendation 3.3.2 #7 above, was concerned with the ability for the requirements to be enforced.

*Plan Recommendation 3.3.2 #11:* Incorporate architectural elements in the façades, such as front and side-turned gables, front and side porches, covered stoops, recess entries, bay windows, dormer windows and cupolas.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. Figure 4 below shows several of the architectural embellishments recommended in the Plan designed to retain rural character in Ashton. The design guidelines as written attempt to require the architectural elements being requested. Enforcement would be through site plan review and possible comments from an implementation advisory committee.



*Figure 4. Architectural embellishments provide visual interest to building massing.*

#### Building Materials

*Comments:* The property owner of the land in the southeast quadrant requested that cement fiber siding imitating wood cladding be added to the list of allowed exterior building materials.

*Plan Recommendation 3.3.2 #13:* Buildings should be cladded in materials and patterns authentic to rural village character, such as brick, stone, wood shingles, and wood cladding.

*Staff Response:* Revise the Plan language to include cement fiber siding imitating wood cladding. This is consistent with design guideline 5.2.2.5 Building Materials recommendation #1 (“Building Elevations – Façades should be composed of durable materials that are indicative of a rural village such as brick, stone, wood or cement fiber, and should be clad in a way that clearly convey a particular architectural style. All facades should be composed of the same building materials.”).

#### **Other Community Design Concerns**

In addition to the comments we received that could be tied to specific Plan recommendations, several people submitted testimony that was more general in nature but tied to issues of community design and rural character.

*Comments:* Many comments indicated a desire to keep Ashton rural. As one commenter mentioned, “rural character” is a subjective term, and someone coming from the Ag Reserve may have a different perspective on this than someone coming from a more urban or suburban setting. Regardless, many of those who submitted testimony rate rural character and the history of the area as being very important to them. Some wanted it to be clear that they were not anti-development but simply wanted to prevent what they see as *overdevelopment*. They do not want Ashton to turn into “another Olney” or even like Clarksville just up MD 108 in Howard County. Some elements of rural character specified in the

comments: openness, fields of corn and wheat, sheep farms, organic farms, pick-your-own farms, horses, chickens, goats, open fields, and farming activity. Many wrote that the Plan needs to contain a clear statement that Ashton should retain the rural character that has defined it since the founding of the county and that embraces the heritage and uniqueness of Ashton. They requested that the Planning Board put strong design regulations in place for Ashton. Many wrote of their concerns based on past experiences, most recently with Thomas Village in Sandy Spring and now with new renderings for Ashton Market, that design criteria should be enforceable. They voiced support for the overlay zone and an advisory committee to secure the Plan's vision of a rural village center.

The property owner of the land in the southeast quadrant commented that it is important to remember that the "rural village" element of rural character (as described in the Plan) is the only one of the five elements described in the Plan that is relevant to the development of the Village Core. The developer stated that the village center needs to be regulated in a way that will promote the viable, vibrant development that will help Ashton thrive, whereas past master plans have not created conditions that led to the desired development.

*Staff Response:* This Plan only recommends zoning changes for about 18 acres out of approximately 6,000 acres in the greater Sandy Spring/Ashton area. The Plan retains Sandy Spring/Ashton's character and is intended to allow modest development on a smaller scale than Olney or nearby in Howard County.

According to the 1998 Plan and reiterated in this Plan, rural character is made up of five elements: rural open space, rural traditions, rural neighborhoods, rural roads, and rural villages. The first four elements listed here pertain mostly to areas outside Ashton's Village Core neighborhood, while our Plan addresses the fifth element at the corners of the existing crossroads. A rural village is described as a place where residents can meet informally while attending to the business of daily life. There are very few opportunities to conduct any of the business of daily life in Ashton. This Plan's recommendations create a framework to allow for the creation of a place where people can come together either by appointment or serendipitously.

Regarding enforcement mechanisms, the combination of the overlay zone's site plan review requirement, the recommended Implementation Advisory Committee, the design guidelines, and the requirement for master plan compliance should lead to better conformance with the Plan's vision.

### **All Community Design Recommendations (Section 3.3.2)**

1. Building height, massing and placement should create a transition between the single-family detached dwelling units outside the Village Core neighborhood, and potential commercial, mixed-use, or multifamily buildings clustered around the intersection of MD 108/650.
2. Entirely residential buildings with front or side elevations along MD 108 or MD 650 should be designed so that the building width, building massing and façade treatment fronting to these roads suggests a single-family detached or duplex building form, regardless of actual housing type. The depth of these buildings should be flexible to accommodate various building types and building densities.



3. New commercial and mixed-use buildings containing neighborhood-serving retail should be located closer to the corner of MD 108 and MD 650 to establish a clear village center or should be placed adjacent to planned open spaces to establish community gathering spaces.
4. Use front and side building façades to establish street walls along MD 108 and MD 650 to frame the streets, creating a distinction from areas outside the Village Core.
5. Parking should be located behind or to the side of buildings to avoid visibility from the street. Parking potentially visible from the street shall be screened with walls and/or landscaping to maintain the street wall. Parking shall not be located at a street corner.
6. Orient primary building façades, including entrances, toward streets or publicly accessible open spaces. Additional entrances may be located to the side and rear of buildings for public or private access.
7. Building heights should vary between adjacent buildings, with lower heights closer to the edge of the Village Core neighborhood and higher heights closer to the MD 108/650 intersection.
8. Vary rooflines and setbacks in the front façade plane to break down the massing and to provide visual interest for new buildings.
9. A majority of buildings should contain pitched roofs. If flat roofs are used, the façade should introduce a cornice along the roof edge.
10. Provide pedestrian accessible pass-throughs between commercial or mixed-use buildings to break up the scale of structures on larger development sites and to provide access to the street from parking areas.
11. Incorporate architectural elements in the façades, such as front and side-turned gables, front and side porches, covered stoops, recess entries, bay windows, dormer windows and cupolas.
12. All sides of building should be designed and built with the same exterior architecture and building materials in mind.
13. Buildings should be clad in materials and patterns authentic to rural village character, such as brick, stone, wood shingles, and wood cladding.

### **All Neighborhood-Specific Community Design Recommendations**

#### *Village Core: Northwest Quadrant (Section 4.1.3)*

6. If the Ashton Village Center redevelops, encourage a mix of uses with ground floor commercial activity activating the street and with parking behind.

#### *Village Core: Northeast Quadrant (Section 4.1.4)*

3. Plant understory street trees in the right-of-way of MD 108 and MD 650 to increase greenery and shade and to provide a buffer to the open space.
4. If the property on the northeast quadrant redevelops, move the building to be adjacent to the street and improve the open space with shading and buffering.

#### *Village Core: Southeast Quadrant (Section 4.1.5)*

3. Ensure a variety of building widths, building heights and the number of building floors to achieve compatibility with existing surrounding development and maintenance of the rural village character.

## Design Guidelines

Intended to strengthen the zoning recommendations and areawide design recommendations, the design guidelines take a deeper approach to community design, with specific language defining desired outcomes and providing context for why they are important. Area residents submitted many comments regarding the Plan's recommendations for the design of the Ashton village center, which broadly crossed between the overall design recommendations and the design guidelines; these comments were discussed above in this report. Several comments, however, relate specifically to the design guidelines in Chapter 5 of the Plan. Some of the comments touch on specific guidelines while others relate to the guidelines as a whole.

### Building Types (Section 5.2.2.1)

*Comments:* Some commenters stated that there should be no apartment buildings in Ashton because they are not compatible with Ashton's rural character. Still others stated that they were not opposed to apartments—they voiced support of accessory apartments, stacked flats, and units above commercial spaces—but are opposed to “massive” apartment building structures.

*Plan Recommendation 5.2.2.1 #5:* Multiplex – A multiplex is a small apartment building type with multifamily dwellings of between four and 12 dwelling units. Units can be either stacked and/or side-by-side and are connected by a common hallway and main entrance.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. Staff agrees that this is not the location for a massive apartment building, and with the Plan's limits on building massing, a large apartment building could not be constructed. The most that would be allowed would be a small structure that may contain up to 12 units and would resemble a large single-family house or duplex.

*Comments:* For the commercial spaces near the MD 108/650 intersection, some voiced support of residential units above the commercial space as long as they contained certain design elements that they believe help reinforce rural village character, which include:

- All signs lit by gooseneck overhead lights;
- Some hanging signs projecting from storefronts;
- Varying building heights, exterior colors and styles; and
- Varying design elements: canopies, pediments on top of façades, and size and number of street-facing windows.

*Plan Recommendation 5.2.2.1 #6:* Multi Use and General Buildings – A multi use building contains retail/service uses on the ground floor with residential or nonresidential uses above. A general building contains nonresidential uses. Multi use buildings with varying storefronts should be designed to let each storefront have unique architecture, ideally carrying that uniqueness up the façade, giving the impression of multiple attached buildings rather than one large building.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. As this recommendation is concerned with specific building types, most of these elements are called out within other design guidelines and will be mentioned there where appropriate. But generally, these details would be more appropriate for discussion with the implementation advisory group during a regulatory review process.

The following comments are not directly responding to recommendations in the Plan, but generally relate to issues otherwise discussed in Section 5.2.2.1 of the Plan (Building Types).

#### Building Lengths

*Comments:* The property owner of the land in the southeast quadrant requests that the recommended maximum length for buildings be increased. Along the main roads, the Plan recommends a maximum width of 80 feet for residential building types and only “slightly longer” than 80 feet for multi-use and general buildings. The developer requests 90 feet for residential buildings and 120 feet for multi-use and general buildings. The Plan recommends widths up to 120 feet on non-state road street frontages; the developer requests that it be increased to 150 feet. The developer states that the increase would permit viable mixed-use buildings that have an appropriate presence on the main travel routes, while the current recommendations are quite constraining.

Several people commented that they disagreed with the developer’s proposal for increasing building lengths, with some stating that long buildings are not in the style of a village. One commenter pointed out that the developer’s proposals are a 12.5-50% increase over the Plan’s recommendations, depending on building type.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan’s recommendations. For residential building types, the 80-foot length allows for a 4-unit building with 20-foot-wide units or 3 units with larger façades. 80 feet is sufficiently long for the types of residential buildings envisioned along the main road.

For multi-use and general building types, if a building needs to be 120 feet long to be viable, the building can be 120 feet deep instead. One of the major concerns of this Plan is to retain the existing character of Ashton as much as is practical and buildings longer than 120 feet are not typical of the area. No buildings exist of such size except the suburban-designed Ashton Village Center shopping center, which this Plan would like to see redeveloped in the future, and the recently approved Ashton Market mixed-use building, which is planned at just under 110 feet.

#### Exceptional Design for Longer Buildings

*Comment:* The property owner of the southeast quadrant requests a new recommendation in the Plan to authorize the Planning Board to approve buildings that exceed the recommended lengths if the Board finds that an alternative design offers a superior way of serving master plan objectives and the public interest.

*Staff Response:* Staff does not support the addition. The Plan has specific guidelines to ensure the development of a vibrant but well-designed rural village. Any sort of alternatives that may be considered should be built into the design guidelines to provide assurance to all parties during the development process.

#### Precedent Images

*Comments:* The property owner of the southeast quadrant states that some of the images in the Plan would not be allowed following the Plan’s guidelines and recommendations. The developer presented several precedent images of buildings he would like to include in his project that are in keeping with the character of a rural village center but would not be allowed under the Plan.

*Staff Response:* The precedent images in the Plan were selected to show real-world examples of the guideline being discussed in that section of the Plan. Some of the images provided by the property owner of the southeast quadrant are not consistent with the Plan's recommendations for a rural village center.

### **Building Massing and Composition (Section 5.2.2.3)**

*Comments:* The property owner in the southeast quadrant requests text changes to the Plan's recommendation for rooflines. He would like the Plan to specify that only residential rooflines be similar to the architecture in the surrounding area. He further requests slight changes to the Plan's language regarding pitched or flat roofs for attached units, multi-use and general buildings to insert *may have pitched roofs or flat roofs, and if flat roofs are used*.

*Plan Recommendation 5.2.2.3 #3:* Rooflines – Buildings should have simple rooflines that reflect traditional architectural styles. Rooflines should be similar to the architecture in the surrounding area, which features primarily pitched roofs. Attached units, multi use buildings and general buildings should also have pitched roofs or provide a strong cornice element.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. The traditional rooflines in Ashton tend to be simple and are pitched. For compatibility, most new construction should follow these traditional architectural styles. Some flat roofs are still allowed with the recommendation.

The property owner's request to insert additional language into this section is redundant and appears to simply be an attempt to refine the language without changing the intent. Staff concludes the intent of the change can be met with the existing language.

### **Building Materials (Section 5.2.2.5)**

*Comments:* The property owner of the southeast quadrant requests that we add the text "of each individual building" after "all façades" in the Plan's recommendation for building elevations.

*Plan Recommendation 5.2.2.5 #1:* Building Elevations – Façades should be composed of durable materials that are indicative of a rural village such as brick, stone, wood or cement fiber, and should be clad in a way that clearly convey a particular architectural style. All façades should be composed of the same building materials.

*Staff Response:* Staff supports this change, which clarifies that all façades of any individual building should be composed of the same building materials while allowing different materials for different buildings.

### **Open Space (Section 5.3) and Open Space Guidelines (Section 5.3.1)**

*Comment:* The property owner of the southeast quadrant requested a couple of text changes to the Plan to make it clear that some private open spaces could also be possible with any redevelopment, and that these private spaces could also be fenced off. The Plan's open space recommendations were discussed in the first work session, but this section details the Plan's design guidelines for open spaces. The property owner also requested adding "where practical" to the fourth sentence of section 5.3 to read:

“New open spaces shall be well designed, appropriately scaled and, where practical, publicly accessible to all.”

*Plan Recommendation:* Plan text from the fourth sentence from section 5.3, page 67: “New open spaces shall be well-designed, appropriately scaled and publicly accessible to all.”

*Staff Response:* Staff supports these requests. Staff did not intend to preclude an applicant from providing smaller private open spaces in a development but wants to make sure that spaces that really should be public remain so, including smaller connecting spaces integral to providing public access.

During the discussion of open spaces in the first work session, concerns about keeping sites open, inviting, and permeable were raised regarding the property owner’s request that fences be allowed around some private open spaces.

Based on the Planning Board’s direction, Staff proposes the following revised text:

“New open spaces shall be well-designed, appropriately scaled, and, where practical, publicly accessible to all. Small private open spaces are allowed, but may not be fenced if doing so would prevent access to or make access to public open spaces more difficult.”

#### Private versus Public Open Spaces

*Comment:* The developer requests that the word “public” be added to the beginning of the second sentence under section 5.3.1 to clarify that it only applies to public open spaces and not to private open space.

*Plan Recommendation:* Plan text from the second sentence from section 5.3.1, page 67: “Open spaces need to have an appropriate location and adequate size so that they are perceived as public, inviting and visually accessible to the immediate residents and the surrounding community.”

*Staff Response:* Staff supports the proposed change, which clarifies that private open spaces would not be treated the same way as public open spaces.

#### **Connection Elements (Section 5.4.1.1)**

*Comment:* The property owner of the southeast quadrant requests that we include “driveways” in the last sentence of recommendation #2 as another place where parking can be accommodated off-street.

*Plan Recommendation 5.4.1.1 #2:* Alleys – On sites with smaller lots, alleys help maintain the streetscape fabric of the community by separating cars from pedestrians and bicyclists. Alleys provide vehicular and parking access to the rear of properties, service access and easy deliveries while enhancing streetscapes in front of properties with no curb cuts or driveways. Alleys are smaller in width than streets. Any parking not in garages or parking pads off alleys should be accommodated on-street, unless excess space in the alley allows for a small separate parking area with shade trees.

*Staff response:* Staff supports this request. It meets the intent of ensuring adequate on-site parking can be accessed from alleys.



### Use of Alleys for Parking

*Comment:* The property owner in the southeast quadrant requests that we change the first sentence of recommendation #2.a to indicate that parking is also a use for alleys.

*Plan Recommendation 5.4.1.1 #2.a:* Alleys are used for service purposes, such as access to garages, parking pads and trash pickup. Alleys do not need to be oversized and compete with streets, which are a primary organizing element in neighborhoods. The width of alleys should be narrow enough to be safe for service vehicles. Additional residential parking should occur on streets in the form of parallel parking.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan's recommendation. Alleys are not intended for on-street parallel parking, which could interfere with fire access or cause alley widening. Additional residential parking should occur on streets in the form of parallel parking or in parking lots if necessary.

### **Other Design Guideline Comments**

*Comments:* The Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC) voiced support for many of the elements in the Plan's design guidelines. They voiced support for townhouses with small front yards, varying and limited heights in a variety of architectures, staggered façades, and a variety of colors; stacked flats should look like duplexes or single-family homes, with ample porches, small front yards, and broad stairways. We also received two comments recommending that light fixtures be full cutoff to help preserve dark skies in the area.

*Staff Response:* Staff agrees with SSARPC; the proposed design guidelines would require development going forward to provide these design elements. But Staff is not supportive of adding a requirement for full cutoff light fixtures. The Zoning Ordinance specifies either partial or full cutoff fixtures.

### Design Guidelines: Plan Chapter or Standalone Document

*Comments:* The property owner in the southeast quadrant requests that the design guidelines be extracted from the Sector Plan to create a separate document. The property owner argues that this would allow the Planning Board to review and approve the guidelines and any necessary changes without having to amend the Sector Plan itself. The developer further commented that this would avoid elevating extremely specific provisions to master plan recommendations and would allow some flexibility in their implementation when making the finding of substantial conformance with the master plan during development review.

*Staff Response:* Any development project needs to be in substantial conformance to the master plan and Staff recommends conformance to the design guidelines with this Plan. The guidelines chapter was deliberately written to be short, to the point, and flexible. Standalone design guidelines would be substantially more verbose if broken out into their own document.

*Planning Board's Response:* The subject of the design guidelines was briefly raised by the Board during the first work session. While Staff assured the Board that this would be the subject of the second work session, the Board raised the question of why the Master Plan is a better place for the guidelines than a standalone document.



*Figure 5. Thomas Village townhouses in Sandy Spring. Front-loaded interior units are shown on the left, where you can also see the shorter neighboring townhouses in the background; the rear-loaded units along MD 108 are shown on the right.*

For the Thomas Village townhouses in Sandy Spring, Staff received concerns that the units are too tall along MD 108 and that the units interior to the site “tower over” the two-level townhouses next door. Concerns were also raised about architecture, especially of the interior units, which have front-loaded garages visible from the main road. They believe that the developer and Planning Staff misinterpreted the master plan with Thomas Village and do not want to repeat the experience.

## Implementation

### Implementation Advisory Committee (Section 6.5)

Second only to the number of comments received regarding the zoning of the Village Core’s southeast quadrant were comments in support of the creation of an advisory group to address the Plan's implementation. These commenters believe that without an advisory committee that provides input into any final designs, they may end up with something very different than what people envisioned when reading the Plan and imagining a rural village center.

*Comments:* Numerous reasons were provided for supporting an implementation advisory committee and what it should have purview over, including:

- It would provide a formal channel of communication that could help alleviate problems with confusion about the developer's plans.
- It would provide citizen oversight to avoid issues of past development plans that they do not believe followed master plan guidelines.
- It would counter the feeling that over time what is envisioned in the Plan is no longer what gets built, it would help preserve a rural character and it would ensure that plans comply with the Sector Plan.
- It would ensure that the committee’s role pertains to all the properties covered by the Plan.
- It should address other development issues such as parking.
- It would evaluate and provide comments on capital improvements in the Plan area, such as intersection improvements, pedestrian infrastructure, green space, recreation, and trails.

- It should have veto power over plans that propose overdevelopment in Ashton if the development threatens rural character.

Conversely, the property owner in the southeast quadrant requests that we eliminate the recommendation for an Implementation Advisory Committee (IAC), arguing that in a small town like Ashton, with only one main developer, there is no need for a formal committee to provide community dialogue and feedback since the site plan process already provides ample opportunities for community input on development plans. The property owner believes that an advisory committee would only serve to increase delays and procedural hurdles and therefore increase the cost of development. He states that hope for a viable village center is already difficult to achieve profitably and cannot afford extra layers of cost.

Assuming an IAC is formed, the property owner requested that the Planning Board appoint a well-rounded cross-section of the community, including representatives of the southeastern quadrant property developer. He suggested that the committee can be a forum for Planning staff to keep residents informed and get their feedback, and the committee should provide advisory recommendations to Planning staff at the time of the DRC (Development Review Committee) review for any proposed development in the plan area. He requested that any presentations to the Implementation Advisory Committee be made at the same time as a project's pre-submission community meeting.

*Plan Recommendation:* This Plan supports the creation of an advisory group to address its implementation. The new group should be structured to include representatives from the various constituencies interested in successful implementation of the Plan.

*Staff Response:* Retain the Plan recommendation. The IAC is recommended to give the residents of Ashton a better means to stay informed on the implementation of the Sector Plan, including the ability to review developments or capital projects proposed for the community. The exact details of an IAC would be determined with Planning Board guidance after the Sector Plan is adopted, but presumably any new development or redevelopment would be required to go before the committee and the committee would be able to comment on all development review aspects of a project. The committee may also be expected to address non-development concerns, such as transportation and other infrastructure projects within the Plan area. It should not cause unreasonable costs or delays if a reasonable development is proposed that fits within the community design recommendations and design guidelines in this Plan. While there is one major property with development potential, the opportunity for modification or redevelopment exists throughout the Village Core and would apply equally to those sites as well.

Staff does not agree that the committee should have veto power as suggested in the public comments. Similar committees in other areas of the County do not have such veto power, which would remove authority from the Planning Board, County Council, or other governmental body that would consider the group's advice when making decisions.

Regarding the developer's suggestions for the make-up and workings of the advisory group, Staff does not believe that the nature of the committee is dictated by the Plan, but a discussion could be had to include some of his suggestions when the group is formally created after the Plan's approval.

## Regional Services Center

The Plan specifically proposes that the Ashton Area Community Association Alliance be part of the advisory group and specifies it should work with the Mid-County Regional Services Center. Staff is now aware that the eastern half of the Plan area is within the East County Regional Services Center area while the other half is in the Mid-County area (see Figure 6), and it is the eastern part of the Plan area that is most likely to undergo major redevelopment.

Staff recommends changing the Plan to recommend that the advisory group work with the Regional Services Center that covers the area for a given project. Staff also recommends the implementation section of the plan include studying the process for changing the boundaries of the services center so that all of Sandy Spring and Ashton fall within the territory of a single services center; however, the process for updating the service areas is beyond the scope of a master plan.

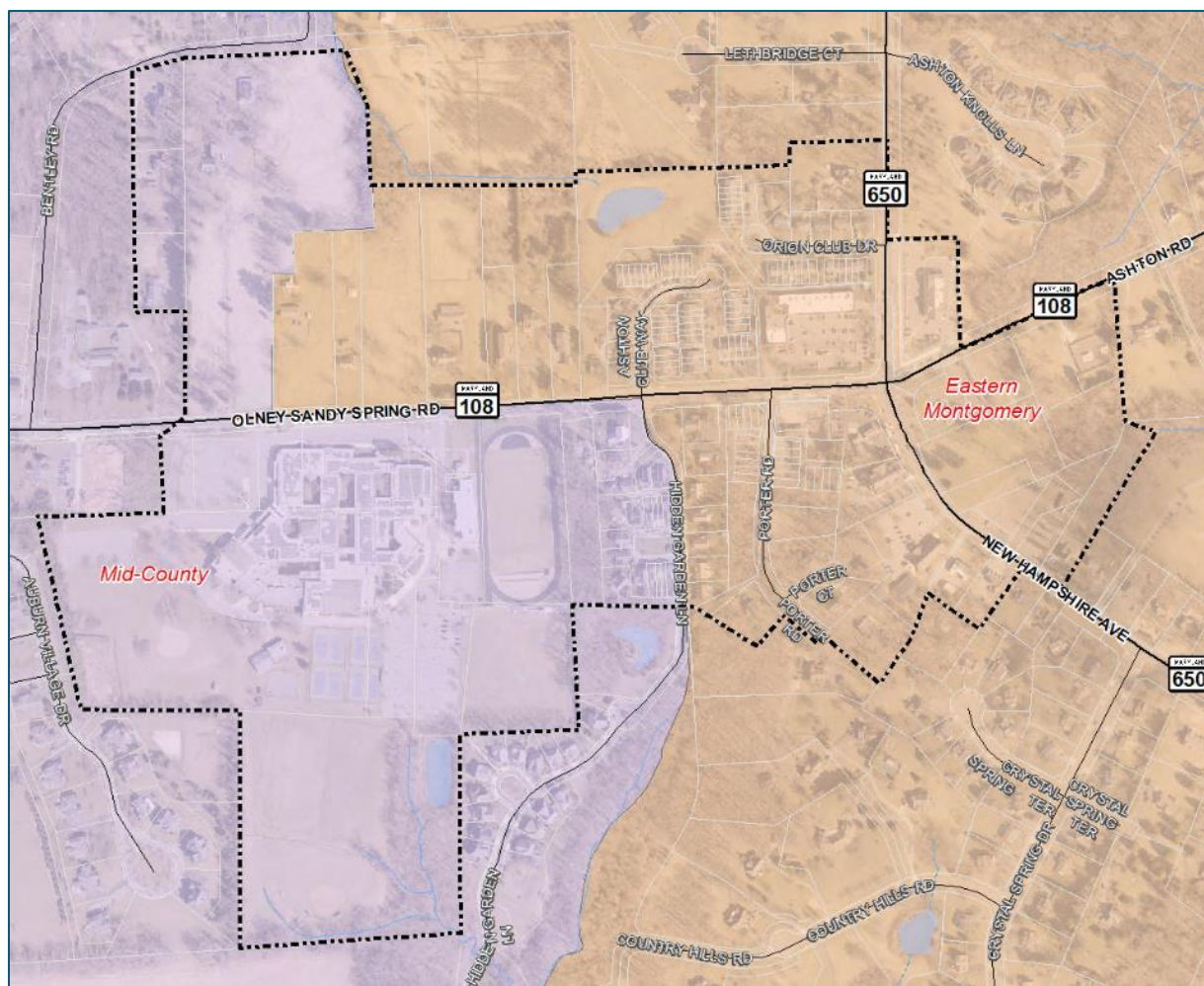
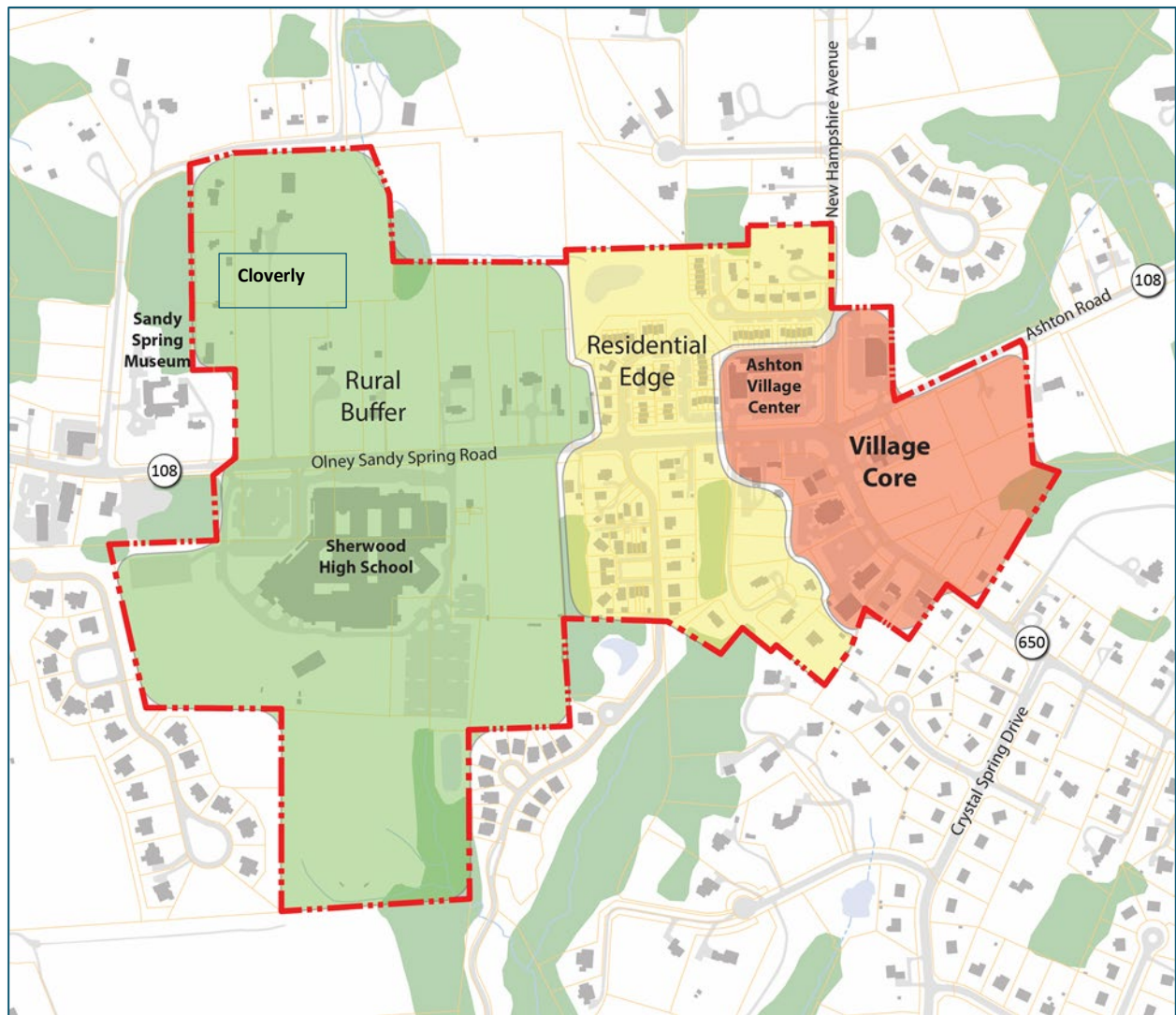


Figure 6. Plan boundary and Regional Services Center areas, with Mid-County on the left and Eastern Montgomery on the right.



## Land Uses and Zoning

During the first work session, Planning Staff discussed the Plan's recommendations on land uses and zoning with the Planning Board. The Planning Board asked Staff to provide additional information regarding two zoning recommendations in the Plan's Village Core neighborhood, namely the recommendations for the mixed-use portion of the Ashton Market development in the southwest quadrant and for the entire southeast quadrant.



*Figure 7. Plan neighborhoods*

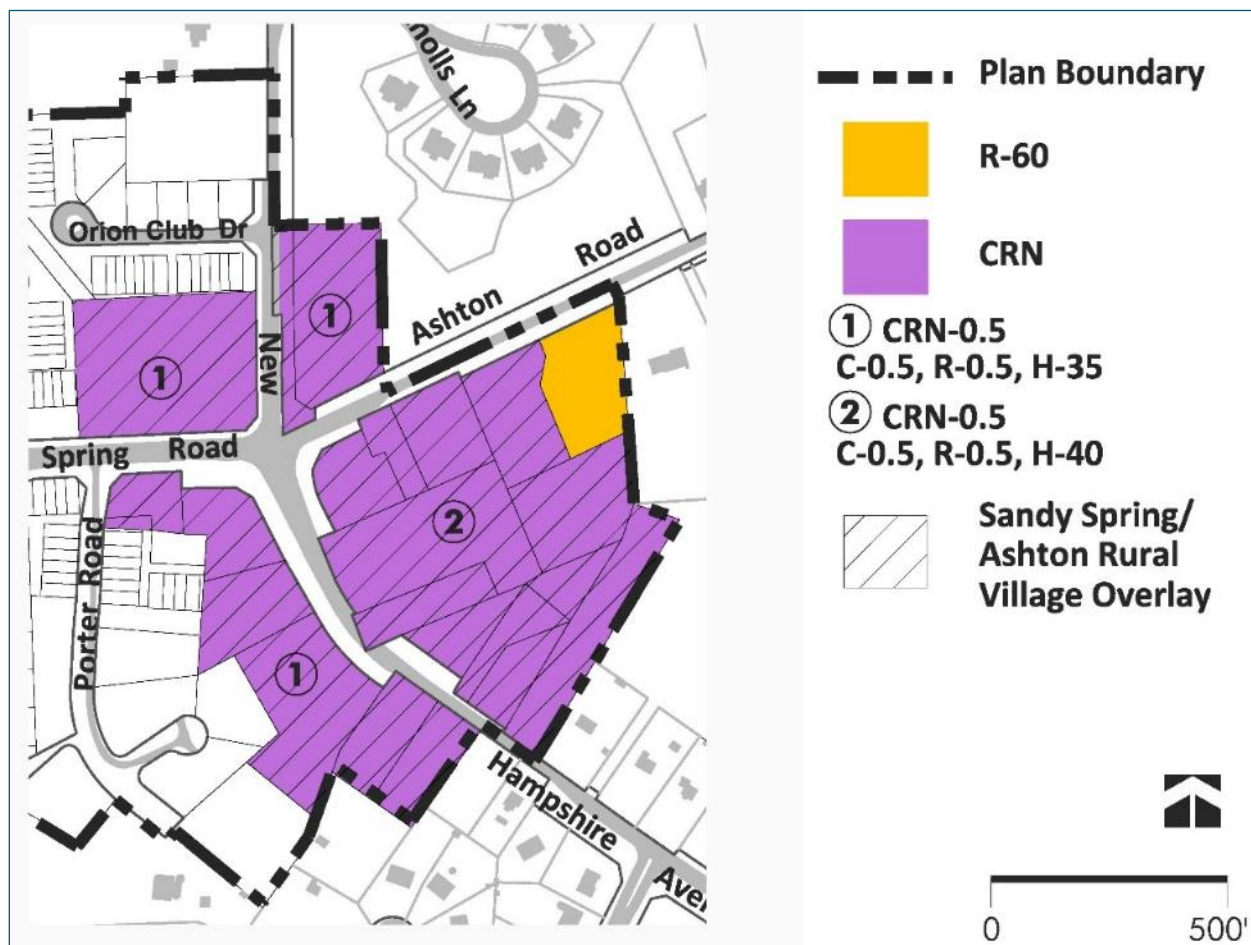
### Village Core

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. Other than the property owned by Baltimore Gas



& Electric used for an electric substation, the Plan proposes the CRN zone for the entire Village Core with an overall, commercial and residential components of the density all capped at 0.5 FAR. The only difference is that the Plan recommends a 40-foot height limit in the southeast quadrant and a 35-foot limit in the other three quadrants.

Even without the recommended zoning, all properties in the Core have room for development above what exists today. The development yield tables from the Plan's Technical Appendix is attached to this report.



*Figure 8. Proposed zoning for the Village Core neighborhood.*

The four quadrants of the Village Core neighborhood are shown in Figure 2; the proposed zoning for the Village Core neighborhood is shown in Figure 8.

The Planning Board did not have any concerns about Staff's recommendations for the northeast and northwest quadrants.

## Southwest Quadrant



*Figure 9. The location of the mixed-use portion of the Ashton Market development is shown in the southwest quadrant.*

In the southwest quadrant (Figure 9), 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 10), but found it acceptable to change the main zone from CRT to CRN. The developer proposes CRN-0.75 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35 (written testimony) or CRN-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35 (public hearing testimony) 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 10. Sketch of Ashton Market mixed-use building (site plan 820180160) along the south side of MD 108*

*Planning Board's Response:* Some members of the Board were not convinced that 0.50 FAR is the right number for overall density here and questioned why the developer wants 0.75 FAR instead of 0.5 FAR since they already have an approved plan at just over 0.3 FAR. It was noted that retaining the existing zoning here does not presume it may not be appropriate to change on other properties.

*Staff Response:* Providing 0.75 FAR on a small site like this would require structured or off-site parking or additional building heights to make the density fit, which gets away from what would be consistent with a rural village.

Staff believes an overall density of 0.5 FAR is more appropriate for a village center like Ashton. Even the Ashton Market property, at 0.34 FAR, relies on a neighboring property to accommodate 12 parking spaces and stormwater management and includes 19 parking spaces beneath the building. Achieving a density of 0.5 or 0.75 FAR would further increase the required parking and necessitate a taller building on a site with no additional room for horizontal expansion.

#### Southeast Quadrant

As mentioned during the first work session, 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. The Plan's community design recommendations and design guidelines 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:* As discussed in the first work session, numerous correspondents stated that 0.5 residential FAR is too dense and that the 40-foot height is too great and requested reductions to one or both elements of the proposed zone. The owner of the properties in the southeast corner, on the other hand, proposed that the 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.

*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 and would become incompatible with the vision of keeping Ashton a rural village. As has been pointed out by the community comments, 150 units could be placed on the southeast quadrant if every unit was an apartment and no commercial space was provided. While the Plan's recommendations specifically require most of the units to not be multi-family and encourage some commercial uses, the recommended zoning provides opportunities for new housing types not existent in Ashton today.

*Planning Board's Response:* During the first work session, some Board members supported the developer's request, noting that, there is a need for housing in this area and the property owner's request is not a dramatic increase above the Plan's recommendation. The premise is that density in the C/R zones is designated in 0.25 FAR increments, so to achieve a density even 0.05 more than 0.5 FAR would require a zoning bump to 0.75 FAR. The Board also raised the point that first-floor commercial space often needs higher ceilings, so allowing for a little more height might be helpful and that creative architecture can disguise height and size.

The Board agreed to table the discussion until it was clearer from the property owner how they intended to use the additional density and height. Staff agreed to provide the Board with additional information supporting the Plan's recommendations, including some hypothetical development scenarios and yield analyses done during the Plan's development.

Staff's development scenarios can be found in the attachments. The two scenarios were developed to show the community hypothetical options for what could be developed and were intended to spur a discussion on both the total density for the southeast quadrant and to spur a conversation about building types and more broadly design guidelines.

Many things have changed in the Plan since these scenarios were presented based on feedback received from the community after the presentation, most notably the final location of the recommended large community gathering space shifting from along New Hampshire Avenue to now being adjacent to the environmental features.

However, the fundamental vision for a mix of housing types and commercial space has not changed. Staff took care to ensure space was set aside for adequate parking, that the roads, alleys, and open spaces met the dimensional requirements in the various County codes, that the environmental buffers were respected, that the required public open space was provided, and that reasonable areas for

stormwater management were included. The zoning as presented in the current Plan draft strikes the best balance of maintaining rural character, redevelopment in the Village Core, and the provision of new housing.

## **Attachments**

- A. Correspondence received after the close of the public record
- B. Ashton Meeting Place's required state highway improvements
- C. Development yield tables/density calculations
- D. Development scenarios and examples

**From:** [Sandy Boyd](#)  
**To:** [Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Subject:** Equestrian trails in Ashton, MD  
**Date:** Thursday, October 15, 2020 5:22:13 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Mr. Pratt,

I am a property owner (and an equestrian) in the proposed western Rural Buffer Neighborhood of the proposed Ashton Village Center Sector Plan. We have the horse pastures pictured in section 4.4 of the plan.

I am writing to request that the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan continue Sandy Spring's long legacy of supporting the rural character of our community by supporting the creation and maintenance of equestrian trails in our community. As you know, the Master Plan calls for maintaining and expanding the equestrian trail system in our area and it also includes a map of existing and proposed equestrian trails.

Sandy Spring is well known in the equestrian community for its extensive network of horse trails. The trails are used by residents of the area and by other equestrians who come here to ride the trails. Based on the reactions I receive, I believe that non-riders also enjoy and benefit from just seeing horses and riders out and about. I think the planning committee should endeavor to continue to support this!

When developing the Sandy Spring/Ashton area, it's important to not forget about the equestrian trails in the planning process. The Master Plan provides for the many people who ride horses through this area by protecting existing regional and local routes, and by creating new local connections. The Master Plan explains:

*As might be expected in a rural area, many residents own horses. As a result, equestrian trails contribute to the rural character of the community. Therefore, this Plan recommends the following: Ensure an equestrian trail system through easements to equestrians at the time of subdivision review or through the dedication of parkland. Accommodate equestrian use of the Rural Legacy Trail and Northwest Branch Trail.*

To ensure that the Master Plan's vision of building connections among the community and contributing to the rural character of the community through equestrian trails, I suggest incorporation of the following language into the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan:

- The Sector Plan incorporates and reiterates the Master Plan's recommendations of ensuring

an equestrian trail system through easements to equestrians at the time of subdivision review or through the dedication of parkland.

- To the extent that the trails in the Master Plan's "Plan of Existing and Proposed Equestrian Trails" (depicted in Exhibit 28 of the Master Plan) are within the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan, the Sector Plan incorporates the Master Plan's intention and desire to maintain existing and establish those new trails in the Rural Buffer Neighborhood.
- Ensure that multiuse trails are appropriately designed for equestrian use (including natural surface components).

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to reach out, via email or via phone at [301-257-5177](tel:301-257-5177), if you have any questions.

Regards,

Sandy Boyd

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Sandy Boyd



**From:** Amy Medd <amymedd@gmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, October 22, 2020 3:09 PM

**To:** Anderson, Casey <Casey.Anderson@mncppc-mc.org>

**Subject:** Ashton Village Center Sector Plan and Implementation Advisory Committee

**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson and Members of the Board,

I am writing on behalf of the Sandy Spring Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC), formed in 2006 to defend the Sandy Spring Ashton Master Plan ("the Plan") in reviews of development proposals. We are Pro-Master Plan, not Anti-Development. We are fully supportive of the Public Hearing Draft's recommendations to institute an Implementation Advisory Committee ("the Committee") and to make the proposed Design Guidelines part of the Council's Master Plan document. We also recommend additional language to the Overlay Zone referencing the guidance in the Plan and Design Guidelines.

We understand that the Committee would serve the purpose of reviewing and offering comments on any development proposed in the Plan Area to promote compliance with the Plan. It would also advocate with other agencies such as the State Highway Administration and Montgomery County Department of Transportation for the Plan's recommendations to make improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.

Ashton is a fragile area -- it is small and in danger of losing its rural character. The vision put forth in the Plan is strong, but the Committee would provide needed coordination and added "eyes" on the process of review, promote community commitment, and potentially produce better results in harmony with the Plan's intent.

The Design Guidelines should be included in the Council-approved Plan to help achieve Plan compliance during any reviews of development proposals. To be as clear as possible to anyone proposing development in the Plan area, we recommend the Board add language to the text of the Overlay Zone that references the Master Plan and the Design Guidelines.

We propose the following, or similar, additional language (in *italics*):

A. Purpose

The purpose of the SSA Overlay zone is to preserve and enhance the rural village character of the Sandy Spring and Ashton village centers, using detailed site review and the continuation of community serving businesses within the village centers *and promoting conformance with applicable Master Plans and Design Guidelines.*

We believe these recommendations in the Plan are of utmost importance in achieving the Plan's vision to create "a viable and vibrant rural village that protects and enhances the character of the greater Ashton community," and we urge you to reiterate, if not strengthen them in the Planning Board Draft.

Ashton is at a crossroads, both literally and figuratively. An implementation advisory committee, that includes all stakeholders and fosters collaboration, can achieve development that will make

Ashton both a destination as well as a wonderful place to call home.

Sincerely,

Amy Medd

President, SSARPC

President SSARPC

**From:** [Bruce Clarke](#)  
**To:** [Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Subject:** Ashton village sector plan  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 28, 2020 12:04:36 PM

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[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Mr. Platt,

I had hoped to attend the AVSP planning sessions, but it wasn't possible. I did want to mention that because I live on Tucker Lane, which has become a favorite short-cut for car and truck drivers seeking to avoid the crowded intersection of Rte 108 and NH Avenue in rush hours, I'm hoping that planners will take the effect of that traffic congestion, which will likely increase as a result of the Ashton Village Sector Plan, in their decision-making. As time goes on, an increasing number of drivers are taking to roads like Tucker (a so-called "Rustic road" which we now call Tucker Highway) to avoid the 108 and NH intersection.

I have written the country police and the country transportation department about this safety issue in the past, and to make a long story short, the MPD was quite responsive, but the response was that they do not have the resources to provide any kind of police presence on Tucker, for speed regulation purposes. And the transportation department did a "test" on traffic speed on Tucker which was intentionally designed NOT to measure traffic speeds on Tucker during am and pm rush hours. This decision was hard to understand, and the explanations even harder to understand, but the result was that they measured traffic speed during non-rush hours, where traffic overall is much lighter and people are less likely to speed to get to work on time. Much of the current traffic speeding down Tucker is from Howard County — if you can drive up or down Tucker at 50+ mph, you don't get stuck at the light at 108 and NH, and save a lot of time. Unfortunately, as a "rustic road" with curves and hills, but little street lighting, no curbs, and no sidewalks, the resulting situation is dangerous. No pedestrian in his or her right mind should walk on Tucker Road. And driving calls for extreme care — I have almost been hit three times in the past two years, by commuter traffic speeding toward Howard County on Tucker — as I eased out of my driveway to take Tucker to NH.

A long story, but the bottom line is that I, and many other Tucker Lane residents, feel the development resulting from the Ashton Village Sector Plan will result in even greater traffic spillover as drivers take cut-throughs to avoid long waits at 108 and NH Ave. So we would appreciate it if you would somehow factor that into your plans. As long as there are traffic delays at 108 and NH, vehicles will take to side roads and rustic roads during a.m. and p.m. rush hours, and it will be a matter of time until the first serious accident occurs.

Given the limited interest the County has shown on this issue, another option might be to simply end Tucker's status as a "rustic road," thus qualifying it for increased street lighting, and the addition of curbs, and sidewalks — and maybe even a speed trap or other form of police presence related to traffic control — something 100% lacking at this point. I — and others on Tucker — will also try to make our case to the county's elected officials.

Sorry to go on so long about this, but in my view it is a significant safety issue.

Best regards,

Bruce Clarke  
901 Tucker Lane  
Ashton, MD 20861

Email




Thomas Village and Sandy ...

Email

From

 [kathy virkus](#)

To

 <[MCP-Chair MCP-Chair](#)>;  [MCP-Chair #](#);  [MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org](#)

Cc

Subject

Thomas Village and Sandy Spring Village

Date Sent

Date Received

11/3/2020 8:50 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Chairman Anderson and members of the Planning Board,

I am writing regarding the discussion at the Planning Board and Staff work session on Oct 29th for the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan. In that work session the board showed interest in looking at the Thomas Village (TV) development in Sandy Spring. As a resident of Sandy Spring Village (adjacent to Thomas Village), this new development has had a direct impact on me and my neighbors.

If you are able to visit Thomas Village, please stop in the Sandy Spring Village as well. Take note of a few items while you are in the area:

- Thomas Village is much taller than SSV - where we once had a view of trees, we now have towering townhouses
- The backyards of TV are non existent, which brings them that much closer to our homes
- The grading of TV has contributed to soil erosion on our properties (homes 1047-1035)
- The lighting in TV was supposed to be "dark sky" compliant and down lit, but it lights up my bedroom and living room every night, causing me to have to keep my drapes closed
- There is no greenspace on the TV site to soften the aesthetic and contribute to the TV community. While this is not a problem for me directly, it causes me to distrust any "greenspace" proposals in any plan.
- The trend towards tiny lots with no yards or common greenspace appears to be a trend - starting with Thomas Village followed by the Porter Road project (Ashton Market). I believe the same will be true for any development on the southeast corner of 108/NH Ave if we don't put requirements in now that ensure some greenspace is secured for the residents of that community.

Thank you,  
Kathy Virkus  
1047 Windrush Lane  
Sandy Spring, Maryland 20860  
Sandy Spring Village  
301-580-0916 cell

Attachments

File Name	File Size (Bytes)	
0 - 0 of 0 (0 selected)		
		Page 1

**From:** [Kathleen Wheeler](#)  
**To:** [MCP-Chair](#)  
**Cc:** [Pratt, Jamey](#); [Duke, Roberto](#); [Walt Fennell](#); [Steve Faehner](#); [Doug Popham](#); [Kevin Kris Gannon](#); [Eric Lynch](#)  
**Subject:** Ashton Village Plan  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 10, 2020 3:16:36 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.**

I am writing in response to discussion at the October 29, 2020, Montgomery County Planning Board work session on the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan. The discussion centered around potential future redevelopment of the properties located on Porter Road in Ashton.

During the discussion, it was noted that comments had been received by the Board in opposition to additional townhouse development along Porter Road. I oppose the expansion of townhouse development on Porter Road for two main reasons.

First, according to accepted design principles, denser development should be centered around the village core and then transition to a larger lot pattern outside the village center. The houses along the rest of Porter Road are adjacent to larger lots that are along Country Hills Road in the Spring Lawn Farm neighborhood. Keeping the same pattern of existing development would be consistent with these design principles.

This does not necessarily mean that single family homes are the only housing type that could maintain the same pattern of development that currently exists along the rest of Porter Road. At the community planning workshop held in October 2019, there was a suggestion that duplexes could replace the current single family homes. Another option could be the inclusion of accessory dwelling units. It seems that there are alternatives to townhouses that could still accomplish some of the County's efforts towards providing additional housing units.

The second reason for maintaining a similar pattern of development is the protection to the extent possible of the significant tree canopy in this area. According to Montgomery County's tree program, tree canopies "provide a great deal more benefits than an individual tree. The tree canopy across Montgomery County is essential to our well-being and quality of life."

Both the Thomas Village development in Sandy Spring and the Ashton Market development in Ashton have resulted in significant loss of tree canopy. In both cases, all or nearly all of the existing trees were removed and are being replaced by significantly smaller single trees. Already the loss of the trees on Porter Road has resulted in an increase in traffic noise from Route 108 that can be heard in the adjacent neighborhoods, including Spring Lawn Farm.

Attached is a picture from Google Earth that was taken prior to the clearing of trees for the construction of Ashton Market on Porter Road. The top portion of the outlined area is the approximate location of the Ashton Market development, while the remainder is the portion that contains the area of potential redevelopment. The extent of the tree canopy along the remainder of Porter Road is apparent in the photograph.

This is where the Implementation Advisory Committee could be helpful in working collaboratively with a developer to find ways to redevelop this area in a way that makes sense from a design perspective and protects the existing tree canopy to the extent possible.

I urge the Board to include provisions in the Plan that will encourage housing alternatives that will be consistent with good design principles and protect existing tree canopy.





Kathleen Wheeler  
17609 Country View Way  
Ashton, MD. 20861

**From:** [Deborah Boggs](#)  
**To:** [Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Subject:** Ashton Village Planning  
**Date:** Tuesday, November 10, 2020 1:13:46 PM

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**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

I just watched the October 29 Planning board meeting recording.

I have lived in Ashton for 22 years on Rt 108 one half miles from the village center and have participated in planning sessions and meetings on this topic.

I do hope that the Planning Board visits the area as they seem less than fully informed. I was distressed by one member's suggestion that we just do whatever the builder wants, with no regard for the wishes of the community. We are a small community with one active builder and we really believe that one builder should not be allowed to determine what our community looks like. Please do incorporate the design guidelines in the final documents. If there are no design guidelines indicated I do believe that most of our work has been in vain. And I strongly encourage you to keep to the forty foot or less for building height to minimize the massing of one concentrated area not in conformity with anything else around. As I know you have heard, the community was dismayed to see the Thomas Village built, looking nothing like the plans that we initially saw.

Why did we all sit around in meetings drafting up design guidelines?

Thank you

Deborah Boggs

The following email was inadvertently omitted from the batch of letters attached to the staff report for the Preliminary Recommendations.

**From:** [Deborah Boggs](#)  
**To:** [Pratt, Jamey](#)  
**Subject:** Ashton Village Center Plan  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 19, 2020 1:13:33 PM

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I have attended several meetings and work sessions involving the zoning plan changes in Ashton. I have lived in Ashton for 22 years on Ashton Road ( rt 108) a half mile from the intersection of Rts 108 and 650).

I generally really do support density of housing and retail, to preserve our open space. However, the infrastructure has to support it. I urge you not to go to the density extremes that you proposed at the recent meeting at the Sandy Spring Firehouse. I do not think that this intersection can support that level of additional traffic at all, as it is failing currently already. Nor do I trust the State Highway Administration to view it fairly, frankly, based on past experience.

As I understand it, the more immediate proposals all are based on the developer picking up the costs, which is several years away anyway. The lack of appropriate road traffic flow and walkability needs to be addressed now. How do we do that?

I am also concerned about other infrastructure to accommodate this level of density, especially schools.

Neither Ashton nor Sandy Spring have any kind of public playground and park type of area, and we need this to be included in this development. A cafe opening on to greenspace would also be welcome.

My last comment is about the height of townhouses and other types of dwellings. Please do not allow the towering level as has already been built recently in Sandy Spring. It dwarfs everything around it.

Thank you for listening

Deborah Boggs  
237 Ashton Road, Ashton, MD.



## Email

## Ashton Village Center Plan...

## Email

From

 Amy Medd

To

 <MCP-Chair MCP-Chair>;  MCP-Chair #;  MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

Cc

Subject

Ashton Village Center Plan and Worksession 2

Date Sent

Date Received

11/11/2020 9:46 PM

**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson and Commissioners,

We are writing to request a fair process for the Ashton community to react to a concept plan by the owner/developer of the Southeast quadrant of MD 108 and MD 650. We understand that concept will not be available until the November 19 worksession. Thus far our requests to see that plan have been unanswered by the developer. The community should be given at least a week's time to comment on the concept, especially since the Board is evaluating whether to grant the developer's requests for higher density and building height limits. We therefore request time at the November 19 session to testify, if the concept is made available a week ahead, or, to testify at a third future work session if the concept is not available until November 19.

We agree with Planning Department Staff that neither the FAR nor the building heights should be increased from 0.5 and 40 feet respectively. We applaud the Commissioners for holding off on a decision about this until you have the chance to visit the Thomas Village development in Sandy Spring which towers over the adjacent existing townhouse development. It was approved for a maximum FAR of 0.75 and height of 45 feet. The approved plans lists a proposed FAR of 0.63 and heights of 36-40 feet (see Table 1 on pg 16 and "specific property recommendations" on pg 31

here: <http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2016/documents/SandySpringTownhomes120160030820160010.pdf>)

While some of the materials and plantings are well-done and could be thought of as fitting in a village center, Thomas Village has several features that in combination create buildings that are too monolithic, out of sync with the historic and rural character of the area, and lacking an appropriate transition to lower-density nearby development. The developer, who happens to be the same as the Ashton Southeast corner developer, was issued a citation for failing to build some of the approved site and building features, including the failure to install fiber cement siding on high visibility units 3, 8, & 9 (Citation No. SP010 – December 23, 2019). The Board approved the as-built vinyl siding on January 30, 2020, a material which contributes to the development's lack of rural character. The entrances to some of the street-fronting units are 13 steps above the sidewalk, hardly a pedestrian-friendly design. The site's meager open space is largely a paved surface and appears to passersby to be walled off from the public realm by an iron fence and gate. The negative impacts of this overbuilt site are profound for the neighbors in the adjacent townhouse development and for those who walk or drive by on MD Route 108. We have often heard from residents of the area that it seems Sandy Spring and Ashton are turning into just another suburban sprawl with little historic identity.

We are encouraged by the detailed and descriptive Design Guidelines proposed in the Ashton Village Center Plan, as well as the proposed Implementation Advisory Committee. We continue to strongly believe the Guidelines are best kept within the Plan that Council will approve. We hope that these features, that go beyond those of the Sandy Spring Village Center Plan, combined with the sensible height limits and FAR's proposed by your staff, will result in better design than that of Thomas Village.

If you are able to tour Sandy Spring, be sure to visit the Meeting House, the Museum, Wyndcrest and the farms and historic homes along MD108 and MD 650 beyond Ashton's crossroads so you can see for yourselves the character we hope this Plan will promote and preserve.

Please allow us and other citizens of the Ashton area to review and comment on the concept by the Ashton developer before you make your recommendation to the County Council in the form of the Planning Board Draft. We request that you schedule at least a week for that review, even if it requires a third worksession, so that we and others might express our opinions to you during or before that worksession.


We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Amy Medd, President

SSARPC

## Attachments

File Name	File Size (Bytes)	
		
There are no Attachments to show in this view. To get started, create one or more Attachments.		
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### **Ashton Meeting Place Required State Highway Improvements**

The previously approved plan for the southeast quadrant, Ashton Meeting Place (site plan no. 820080040), was approved in 2008 with the condition that the applicant build or contribute a pro rata share towards the following improvements:

- Eastbound MD 108: Widen approach from existing 1 left turn lane and 1 through/right lane to 1 left turn lane, 1 through lane and 1 right turn lane.
- Westbound MD 108: Widen approach from existing 1 left turn lane and 1 through/right lane to 1 left turn lane, 1 through lane and 1 right turn lane.
- Northbound MD 650: Lengthen existing left and right turn lanes.
- The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) was to develop the expected percentage of costs that the developer must pay. At the time, SHA was planning to construct both the auxiliary lane tie-ins of the MD 650/Site Access Drive and the MD 108/Site Access Drive intersections and the improvements at the MD 108/650 intersection as part of their overall Congestion Relief Study project. However, if the SHA project did not move forward, the developer would be responsible for all site access and intersection improvements. Other area developments in process at the time were also expected to contribute a pro rata share.
- Construction of sidewalks along the south side of MD 108 (between MD 650 and 150 feet west of Porter Road) and along the east side of MD 650 (along entire site frontage and along what is now the CVS property).
- Construction of an 8-foot wide shared-use path along the north side of MD 108 (along what is now CVS property to just west of Ashton Club Way) and along the west side of MD 650 between MD 108 and Crystal Spring Drive.

## Appendix K: Density Calculations

The following tables were used to analyze the potential development yields of properties in the Sector Plan's Village Core neighborhood. First, we used the existing zones and on-the-ground development to see how much development could be added to a site if the existing development were to remain, and then calculated the full potential development that could theoretically be possible under FARs of 0.25, 0.5 and 0.75. Where possible, previous land dedication was included in the tract area. This analysis did not consider site layout, parking, circulation, open space, environmental buffers, building heights, frontage requirements, lot widths, etc., all of which would reduce the amount of development that could happen on a property.

Table K-1. Existing Development

Property Description	Existing Zone	Land Area			Existing Zone FAR			Existing Development			
		Property Size	Prior Dedication	Total Tract Area	Total FAR	Commercial	Residential	Commercial	Residential	Inst.	FAR
NE Corner											
CVS	CRT-1.25 C-0.75 R-0.50 H-35	66,417	16,807	83,224	1.25	0.75	0.50	12,775			0.15
NW Corner											
Redevelopment of Ashton Village Center	PD-5	110,397	29,398	139,795				20,000			0.14
SW Corner											
Porter Road (CRT Portion) <sup>1</sup>	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	20,500	8,617	29,117	0.75	0.75	0.25	6,800	3,100		0.34
Gas Station		28,234	14,081	42,315	0.75	0.75	0.25	1,710			0.04
Alloway Building		36,400	6,966	43,366	0.75	0.75	0.25	16,000			0.37
Shipley Services Building		26,728		26,728	0.75	0.75	0.25	3,842			0.14
Cricket Book Shop <sup>2</sup>		22,683		22,683	0.75	0.75	0.25	3,850	2,130		0.26
Ashton Baptist Church	R-90	70,567	7,426	77,993			4.84/acre			6,138	0.08
SE Corner <sup>3</sup>											
Sandy Spring Bank and other undeveloped land	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	192,904	14,246	207,150	0.75	0.75	0.25	2,850			0.01
Undeveloped land <sup>4</sup>	R-60	133,565	13,055	146,620			7.26/acre				
Single-family detached house	RC	53,325		53,325			1/5 acres		1,592		0.03
Grand Totals		761,720	110,596	872,316				67,827	6,822	6,138	

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Existing development as approved under site plan 820180160.

<sup>2</sup> Property records indicate 6,320 total SF, but this is a two-story building with a bottom floor footprint of about 2,200 SF. According to the owner, the basement takes up about 3/4 of the footprint, so we used a commercial estimate of 3,850 SF. There are two apartments upstairs where the footprint is approximately 2,130 SF.

<sup>3</sup> The Ashton Meeting Place plan (820080040) showed 353,778 SF for the gross tract area of which 27,301 was prior dedication. The 53,325 SF RC-zoned parcel was included in the plans but not all of the tables showed it and it is shown as 49,694 SF. The gross tract area in C-1 was shown as 207,150 SF and in R-60 as 146,620 SF. The total shown on the plan is 403,464 SF, but staff estimates 393,280 SF. The table here uses the site plan values for the CRT and R-60 properties and the SDAT value for the RC property.

<sup>4</sup> Actual yield would be slightly lower based on future dedication for NH Ave and other streets.

Table K-2. Potential Yield—Individual Properties

			Maximum Yield			Existing Development				Potential New Development under Existing Zone		
Property Description	Existing Zone	Total Tract Area	Overall	Commercial	Residential	Commercial	Residential	Inst.	FAR	Commercial	Residential SF	Units
<b>NE Corner</b>												
CVS	CRT-1.25 C-0.75 R-0.50 H-35	83,224	104,030	62,418	41,612	12,775			0.15	49,643	41,612	33
<b>NW Corner</b>												
Ashton Village Center (shopping center only)	PD-5	139,795				20,000			0.14			
<b>SW Corner</b>												
Porter Road (CRT Portion)	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	29,117	21,838	21,838	7,279	6,800	3,100		0.34	15,038	4,179	3
Gas Station		42,315	31,736	31,736	10,579	1,710			0.04	30,026	10,579	8
Alloway Building		43,366	32,525	32,525	10,842	16,000			0.37	16,525	10,842	8
Shipley Services Building		26,728	20,046	20,046	6,682	3,842			0.14	16,204	6,682	5
Cricket Book Shop		22,683	17,012	17,012	5,671	3,850	2,130		0.26	13,162	3,541	2
Total CRT Properties	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	164,209	123,157	123,157	41,052	32,202	5,230		0.23	90,955	35,822	26
Ashton Baptist Church	R-90	77,993			7			6,138	0.08			7
Total SW Corner		242,202	123,157	123,157	41,052	32,202	5,230	6,138	0.18	90,955	35,822	33
<b>SE Corner</b>												
Sandy Spring Bank and other undeveloped land	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	207,150	155,363	155,363	51,788	2,850			0.01	152,513	51,788	41
Undeveloped land <sup>1</sup>	R-60	146,620			22							22
Single-family detached house	RC	53,325			1		1		0.03			-
Total SE Corner		407,095	155,363	155,363	51,811	2,850	1,592	-	0.01	152,513	51,788	63
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>872,316</b>	<b>382,549</b>	<b>340,937</b>	<b>134,475</b>	<b>67,827</b>	<b>6,822</b>	<b>6,138</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>293,110</b>	<b>129,222</b>	<b>129</b>

Notes:

Potential unit calculations are based on a 1,250 SF apartment. Larger unit sizes would reduce the potential number of units.

<sup>1</sup> Actual yield would be slightly lower based on future dedication for NH Ave and other streets; calculation already includes some prior dedication.

Total Existing and Potential Commercial and Residential exceeds Total FAR allowed and must each be considered separately within the allowed overall FAR.

Table K-3. Potential Yield—Combined

Property Description	Existing Zone	Total Tract Area	Maximum Overall Yield	Existing Development				Potential Additional Commercial	Potential Additional Units
				Non-Residential SF	Residential SF	Units	FAR		
NE Corner									
CVS	CRT-1.25 C-0.75 R-0.50 H-35	83,224	104,030	12,775			0.15	49,643	33
NW Corner									
Ashton Village Center (shopping center only)	PD-5	139,795		20,000			0.14		
SW Corner									
Total CRT Properties	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	164,209	123,157	32,202	5,230	2	0.23	90,955	26
Ashton Baptist Church	R-90	77,993	7 units	6,138		1	0.08		7
Total SW Corner		242,202		38,340	5,230	3	0.18		33
SE Corner									
Sandy Spring Bank and other undeveloped land	CRT-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.25 H-35	207,150	155,363 SF	2,850			0.01	152,513	41
Undeveloped land <sup>1</sup>	R-60	146,620	22 units				-		22
Single-family detached house	RC	53,325	1 unit		1,592	1	0.03		
Total SE Corner		407,095		2,850	1,592	1	0.01	152,513	63
Grand Total		872,316		73,965	6,822	4	0.09	293,110	129

Notes:

Potential unit calculations are based on a 1,250 SF apartment. Larger unit sizes would reduce the potential number of units.

<sup>1</sup> Actual yield would be slightly lower based on future dedication for NH Ave and other streets; calculation already includes some prior dedication.

Table K-4. Potential Development Yields at 0.25 FAR

Development Yields: CRN-0.25 C-0.25 R-0.25 H-35 to 45					Overall FAR = 0.25		
Property Description	Tract Area (SF)	Existing SF		Maximum SF in Zone	Potential New SF	Potential New DU (if all R)	Assumed SF per DU
		Commercial	Residential				
NE Corner							
CVS	83,224	12,775		20,806	8,031	6	1,250
NW Corner							
Redevelopment of retail portion of Ashton Village Center	139,795	20,000		34,949	14,949	11	1,250
SW Corner							
Porter Road CR Portion	29,117	6,800	3,100	7,279	(2,621)	-	1,250
Gas Station	42,315	1,710		10,579	8,869	7	1,250
Alloway Building	43,366	16,000		10,842	(5,159)	-	1,250
Ashton Baptist Church	77,993	6,138		19,498	13,360	10	1,250
Shipley Services Building	26,728	3,842		6,682	2,840	2	1,250
Cricket Book Shop	22,683	3,850	2,130	5,671	(309)	-	1,250
Total SW Corner	242,202	38,340	5,230	60,551	25,069	19	
SE Corner							
SE Corner	407,095	2,850	1,592	101,774	97,332	77	1,250
Totals:	872,316	73,965	6,822	218,079	145,381	113	
Notes:							
Cells this color exceed allowed density at FAR 0.25							



Table K-5. Potential Development Yields at 0.5 FAR

Development Yields: CRN-0.5 C-0.5 R-0.5 H-35 to 45					Overall FAR = 0.5		
Property Description	Tract Area (SF)	Existing SF		Maximum SF in Zone	Potential New SF	Potential New DU (if all R)	Assumed SF per DU
		Commercial	Residential				
NE Corner							
CVS	83,224	12,775		41,612	28,837	23	1,250
NW Corner							
Redevelopment of retail portion of Ashton Village Center	139,795	20,000		69,898	49,898	39	1,250
SW Corner							
Porter Road CR Portion	29,117	6,800	3,100	14,559	4,659	3	1,250
Gas Station	42,315	1,710		21,158	19,448	15	1,250
Alloway Building	43,366	16,000		21,683	5,683	4	1,250
Ashton Baptist Church	77,993	6,138		38,997	32,859	26	1,250
Shipley Services Building	26,728	3,842		13,364	9,522	7	1,250
Cricket Book Shop	22,683	3,850	2,130	11,342	5,362	4	1,250
Total SW Corner	242,202	38,340	5,230	121,101	77,531	59	
SE Corner							
SE Corner	407,095	2,850	1,592	203,548	199,106	159	1,250
Totals:	872,316	73,965	6,822	436,158	355,371	280	

Table K-6. Potential Development Yields at 0.75 FAR

Development Yields: CRN-0.75 C-0.75 R-0.75 H-35 to 45					Overall FAR = 0.75		
Property Description	Tract Area (SF)	Existing SF		Maximum SF in Zone	Potential New SF	Potential New DU (if all R)	Assumed SF per DU
		Commercial	Residential				
NE Corner							
CVS	83,224	12,775		62,418	49,643	39	1,250
NW Corner							
Redevelopment of retail portion of Ashton Village Center	139,795	20,000		104,846	84,846	67	1,250
SW Corner							
Porter Road CR Portion	29,117	6,800	3,100	21,838	11,938	9	1,250
Gas Station	42,315	1,710		31,736	30,026	24	1,250
Alloway Building	43,366	16,000		32,525	16,525	13	1,250
Ashton Baptist Church	77,993	6,138		58,495	52,357	41	1,250
Shipley Services Building	26,728	3,842		20,046	16,204	12	1,250
Cricket Book Shop	22,683	3,850	2,130	17,012	11,032	8	1,250
Total SW Corner	242,202	38,340	5,230	181,652	138,082	107	
SE Corner							
SE Corner	407,095	2,850	1,592	305,321	300,879	240	1,250
Totals:	872,316	73,965	6,822	654,237	573,450	453	

## Southeast Quadrant Development Scenarios

### Introduction

During the Plan's first worksession, the Planning Board and staff discussed the Plan's zoning recommendations in the Village Core neighborhood. Specifically, the Planning Board was looking for more information to inform the Plan's recommendation for an overall density of 0.5 FAR for all of the properties in the southeast and southwest quadrants of the Village Core neighborhood.

It was asked if density slightly over 0.5 FAR could be accommodated, such as 0.55 or 0.6 FAR. Because density can only be assigned to a zone in 0.25-FAR increments, an increase above 0.5 FAR would require an overall 0.75 FAR for the site.

*Table 1. Southeast Quadrant Calculations*

Southeast Quadrant (CRN-0.5 proposed)	
<b>Site Size (SF)</b>	407,095 SF
<b>Site Size (acres)</b>	9.35 acres
<b>Total Development Allowed</b>	203,548 SF
<b>Number of TH Units@2,375 SF</b>	85
<b>Environmental Buffer (SF)</b>	68,000 SF
<b>Site Size without Environmental Buffer</b>	339,095 SF
<b>FAR without Environmental Buffer</b>	0.60





Table 1 shows that if you remove an undevelopable stream buffer area from the site but still use its density, the effective density would already be at a density of about 0.60 FAR, which Staff believes to be denser than what should be built in the quadrant if rural character is to be maintained. Bonus density for providing more than 12.5% MPDUs would add even more density.

Scenarios 1 and 2 for the southeast quadrant, shown on the following pages, were presented to the community at a public meeting on January 29, 2020. Scenario 1 consists of townhouses and two small apartment buildings and approximately 10,000 square feet of commercial space. Scenario 2 contains a broader range of missing middle housing types and about 12,000 square feet of commercial space.

When Staff presented these scenarios at the January community meeting, the meeting attendees expressed concern about the density of the options. Many things have changed in the Plan since these scenarios were presented based on feedback received from the community after the presentation, most notably the final location of the recommended large community gathering space shifting from along New Hampshire Avenue to now being adjacent to the environmental features and community design recommendations designed to prevent overly large buildings.

## Scenario 1



	21-foot wide SFA	35 DU
	24-foot SFA (Liner Townhouse)	14 DU
	Apartments	18 DU
	Commercial	9,750 sf
FAR		0.44

*Figure 1. Staff scenario 1 contains a mix of larger townhouse units, apartments and commercial space. This scenario includes a total of 67 dwelling units. Apartment units are assumed to be 1,250 SF. Single-family attached units are assumed to be 2,650 SF/DU.*



## Scenario 2



Duplexes	4 DU
18-foot wide SFA	10 DU
21-foot wide SFA	7 DU
24-foot SFA (Liner Townhouse)	12 DU
Stacked Flats	36 DU
Apartments	32 DU
Commercial	12,000 sf
FAR	0.50

*Figure 2. Staff scenario 2 has more missing middle housing types and slightly more commercial space than scenario 1. It contains a total of 101 dwelling units. Apartment units are assumed to be 1,250 SF/DU. Single-family attached are assumed to range from 1,700 SF to 2,650 SF/DU. Stacked flats units are assumed to be 1,000 SF/DU.*

## Development Analysis

Staff also analyzed several approved developments to show a better picture of approvals at various FARs as it relates to the proposed FAR for the Village Core.

### Thomas Village

A lot of the feedback we received during the drafting of this Plan referred directly to a development in Sandy Spring, now known as Thomas Village (site plan no. 820160010), as an example that they did not want to see repeated in Ashton.



*Figure 3. Thomas Village townhouses in Sandy Spring. Front-loaded interior units are shown on the left, where you can also see the neighboring townhouses; the rear-loaded units along MD 108 are shown on the right.*

The Thomas Village development includes 19 townhouses and was built at 0.45 FAR based on gross site size and reported gross floor area, so is a good example of what can be developed with 0.5 FAR. The layout of the development is shown in Figure 4.



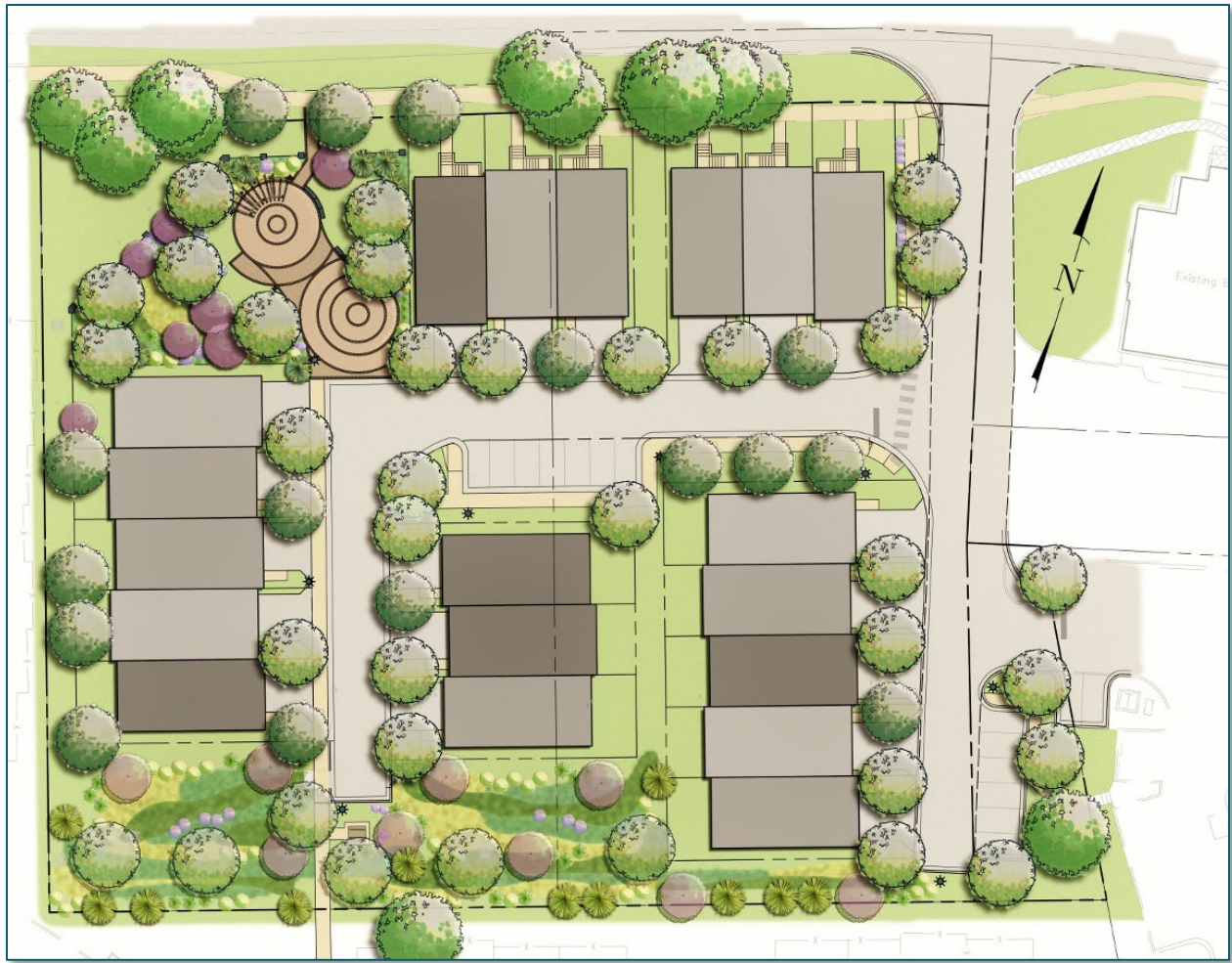


Figure 4. Thomas Village layout

Table 2. Thomas Village Development Table

Thomas Village	
Site Size	2.313 acres
Units	19
Gross Floor Area	45,120 SF
FAR	0.45
Common Open Space	22,140 SF (0.51 acres) - 25%
Building Height	45 feet (allowed) / 38 & 45 ft (approved)

## Ashton Market

The Ashton Market (site plan no. 820180160) is currently under construction along Porter Road at MD 108 in the southwest quadrant of the Village Core neighborhood and the Plan's Residential Edge neighborhood. There are two components to the Ashton Market development: a mixed-use building with commercial space on the ground floor and three apartments above in the CRT-0.75 zone and 20 townhouses in the Townhouse Floating (TF-10) zone.



Figure 5. Ashton Market layout



Figure 6. Ashton Market mixed-use building with apartments above retail

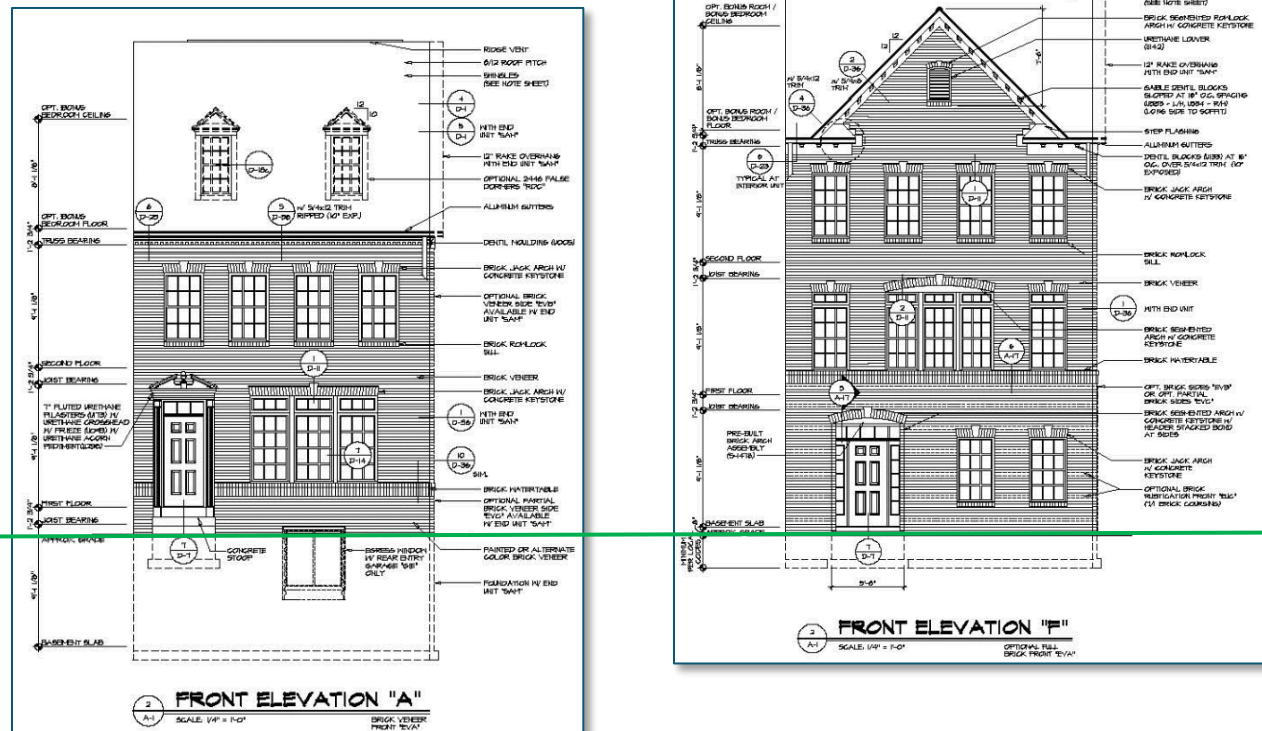


Figure 7. A sampling of Ashton Market townhouse elevations. All homes will have rear-loaded garages. The townhouses along MD 108 will be 35 feet high, while those interior to the site will be 40 feet high. The green line indicates the ground level for height measurement.

The mixed-use building along MD 108 was limited to 30 feet in height by the Sandy Spring/Ashton Overlay Zone, while the townhouses along MD 108 are limited to 35 feet. The interior units will be up to 40 feet high.

Table 3. Ashton Market Development Table

Ashton Market	
Site Size	3.241 acres
Units	20 TH & 3 MF & 6,800 SF retail
Gross Floor Area	57,395 SF
FAR	0.41 (if calculated as a C/R zone)
Common/Public Open Space	12,500 SF (3 acres) - 35%
Building Height	30 & 40 ft (allowed) / 30, 35 & 40 ft (approved)

Because the TF-10 zone measures density in units per acre and the CRT zone uses FAR, some assumptions had to be made to calculate FAR in order to make a meaningful comparison with the Village Core's recommended CRN zone. The average townhouse unit was assumed to be the same size as the average for Thomas Village (2,375 SF). New and some prior public dedication can be used towards density in the C/R zones but not in the TF zones, so the gross tract area from the entire application was



used to arrive at a density of 0.41 FAR. Note that this includes a roughly half-acre conservation easement covering a stream buffer on the site. If this conservation easement were subtracted from the site size, the calculated density would be 0.48 FAR, nearly the Plan's recommended 0.5 FAR for the Village Core.



Figure 8. Entire site layout for Ashton Market, showing 0.51-acre conservation easement.

## Armstrong Property

Another development we looked at was named Armstrong Property (site plan no. 820160110). The site is in Damascus but has not been built.



*Figure 9. Armstrong Property layout*

The Armstrong Property is similar to the Plan area's southeast quadrant because of a large undevelopable environmental buffer that limits development to just a portion of the site. The project is a mix of townhouses and single-family detached houses. The detached houses were used to meet compatibility requirements with the existing homes along Lewis Drive.



*Figure 10. Design of townhouses and detached houses on Armstrong Property.*



*Table 4. Armstrong Property Development Table*

Armstrong Property	
Site Size	8.17 acres
Units	55 (47 attached; 8 detached)
Gross Floor Area	160,200 SF
FAR	0.45
Common Open Space	130,680 SF (3 acres) - 35%
Building Height	40 feet (allowed) / 40 ft (approved)

The Armstrong Property development is another example of what is possible at just under 0.45. If you subtract the 2.33-acre conservation easement that covers much of the open space, the FAR here would be 0.63.

### **Rock Spring Park**

The Rock Spring Park development (site plan no. 819890491) was chosen to show a development that was approved at just over 0.5 FAR. The layout is shown in Figure 11.



*Figure 11. Rock Spring Park layout*





*Figure 12. Google Street View image of completed Rock Spring Park townhouses.*

*Table 5. Rock Spring Park Development Table*

Rock Spring Park	
Site Size	10.62 acres
Units	168
Gross Floor Area	268,461 SF
FAR	0.58
Open Space	28,750 SF (0.66 acres) - 6.2%
Building Height	60 feet (allowed) / ~43 ft (approved)

As can be seen in Table 5, the open space provided is less than the 10% minimum typically required; this is because the site is part of a larger project area and some of the required open space is elsewhere in that area. The sticks of townhouses contain as many as 12 units and there are very few parking spaces for visitors. Note also that the greenspace along Fernwood Road and Rock Spring Drive is reserved for the North Bethesda Transitway. The units are also approximately 43 feet high. The project is located in Rock Spring, which is a densely developed area surrounded by office buildings and does not reflect the character of a rural village such as Ashton.