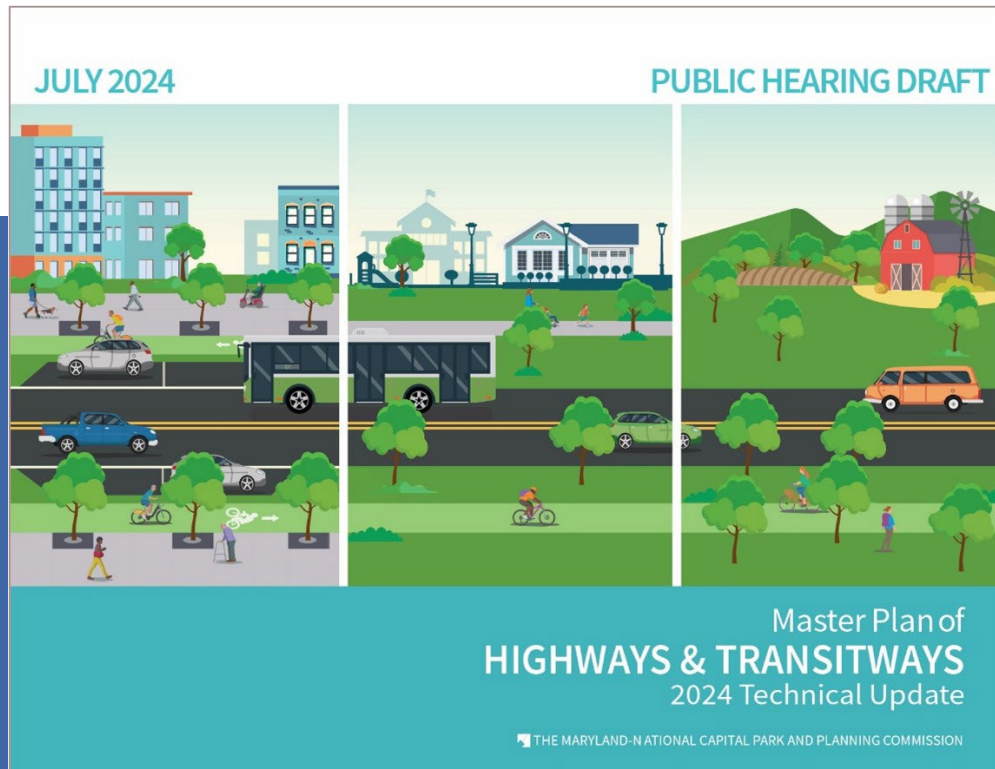


MASTER PLAN OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSITWAYS – 2025 TECHNICAL UPDATE WORK SESSION #4



DESCRIPTION

The Planning Board will review changes to the Public Hearing Draft of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways - 2025 Technical Update and consider approving and authorizing Planning Staff to publish and transmit the revised draft as the Planning Board Draft to the County Executive and County Council.

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SUMMARY

- Consider additional technical edits to the master plan to resolve remaining inconsistencies between street classifications and area types.
- Review the Racial Equity and Social Justice statement and Climate Assessment.
- Consider approving and authorizing Planning Staff to publish and transmit the revised draft as the Planning Board Draft of the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2025 Technical Update* to the County Executive and County Council.

INFORMATION

Draft

Planning Board

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Date Submitted

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Planning Division

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Planning Board Information

MCPB

Item No. #6

April 10, 2025

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INTRODUCTION

A technical update to the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways* (MPOHT) is necessitated by the County Council's approval of two bills in 2022 (Bill 24-22 and 34-22) that revised the street types identified in Chapter 49 of the County Code, also known as the "Road Code," to conform to the county's Complete Streets Design Guide. While the updated county code provides an interim translation from the previous "functional" classification system to the new "complete streets" classification system, adjustments to these default translations are needed for various road segments in the county. Master plan recommendations are presented in the Public Hearing Draft of the MPOHT to modify street classifications, master planned target speeds, number of planned travel lanes, transitway removals and additions, transit station removals and additions, and the identification of a new Growth Corridor Street type. A total of four work sessions are planned for this master plan as follows:

- Work Session #1 – conducted on February 13, 2025 – This meeting focused on Topic 1 – Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83).
- Work Session #2 – conducted on March 6, 2025 – Update on Topic 1 and review of Topics 2 through 8.
- Work Session #3 – conducted on March 20, 2025 – Topic 1 – Clarksburg to Germantown Comprehensive Transportation Study, status of southern section of Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83), and additional public comments received.
- Work Session #4 – scheduled for April 10, 2025 – Planning Staff will share the final revisions to the Public Hearing Draft of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2025 Technical Update and request authorization to publish and transmit the revised draft as the Planning Board Draft of the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2025 Technical Update* to the County Executive and the County Council.

SECTION 1 – RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following:

- 1. Retitle the Planning Board Draft to Master Plan of Highways and Transitways - 2025 Technical Update**
- 2. Consider changes to 10 street classifications**

After further review of the MPOHT recommendations, Planning Staff determined that some of the roadway classifications needed slight revisions. This was typically because the classification does not reflect the surrounding land use context as specified in the master plan-designated area type. For example, except in limited circumstances, all streets in Town Centers should be identified as Town Center Boulevards, Town Center Streets, and Shared Streets, as shown in Figure 1.

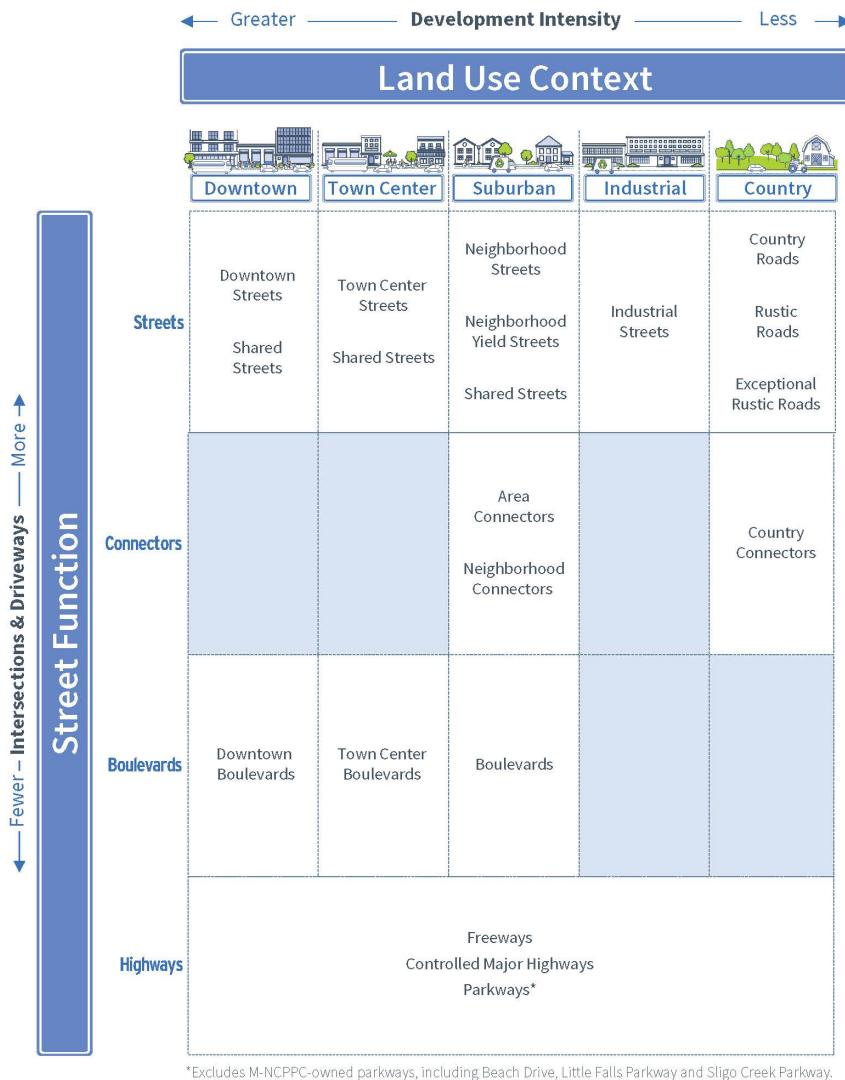


Figure 1: Street Classification

A table of these roads, with the previous recommended classification and the new recommended classification, can be found in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Classification Revisions

Street	From	To	Previous Recommendation	Issue	New Recommendation
Comus Rd	MD 355	I-270	Town Center Street	Not in a Town Center	Country Connector
Crabbs Branch Way	Indianola Dr	E Gude Dr	Boulevard	In an Industrial Area	Industrial Street
E Gude Dr	Frederick Ave (MD 355)	Eastern Plan Boundary (Shady Grove)	Boulevard	In an Industrial Area	Industrial Street
Frederick Rd (MD 355)	Old Hundred Rd	Frederick County Line	Country Connector	In a Town Center	Town Center Street
Grand Elm St	Snowden Farm Pkwy	Piedmont Rd	Country Road	In a Suburban Area	Area Connector
Observation Dr Connector (Planned)	Goldenrod Ln	Observation Dr	Town Center Street (planned)	Not in a Town Center	Area Connector
Rothbury Dr	700' west of Goshen Rd	Goshen Rd	Town Center Street	Not in a Town Center	Neighborhood Connector
Snowden Farm Pkwy	Clarksburg Rd	Clarksburg Town Center Boundary	Downtown Street (Planned)	Not in a Downtown	Town Center Street
South Glen Rd	Deep Glen Dr	Falls Rd	Country Road	In a Suburban Area	Neighborhood Connector
Woodland Dr Ext	Medical Park Dr	Dennis Ave	Town Center Street (Planned)	Not in a Town Center	Neighborhood Street

Below are maps of the previous classification recommendation (left) and the revised classification recommendation (right) for the ten (10) roadways with recommended changes.

Comus Rd from I-270 to MD 355

**Previous Recommendation:
Town Center Street**

**Revised Recommendation:
Country Connector**

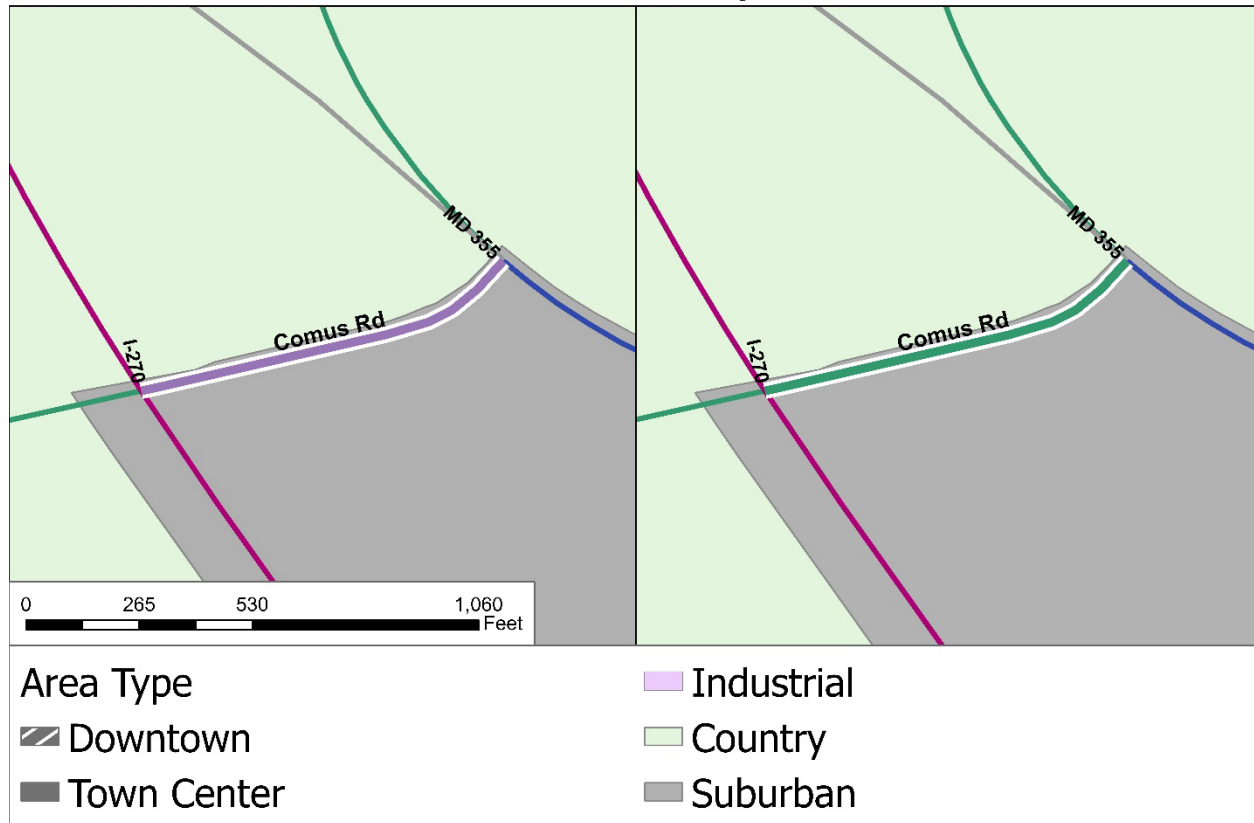


Figure 2: Comus Road

Comus Road between Frederick Road (MD 355) and I-270 currently has and will likely continue to have a land use character more similar to Comus Road west of I-270, so in this case, the change in classification from Town Center Street to Country Connector is recommended to have consistent roadway classifications.

Crabbs Branch Way from Indianola Dr to E Gude Dr

**Previous Recommendation:
Boulevard**

**Revised Recommendation:
Industrial Street**

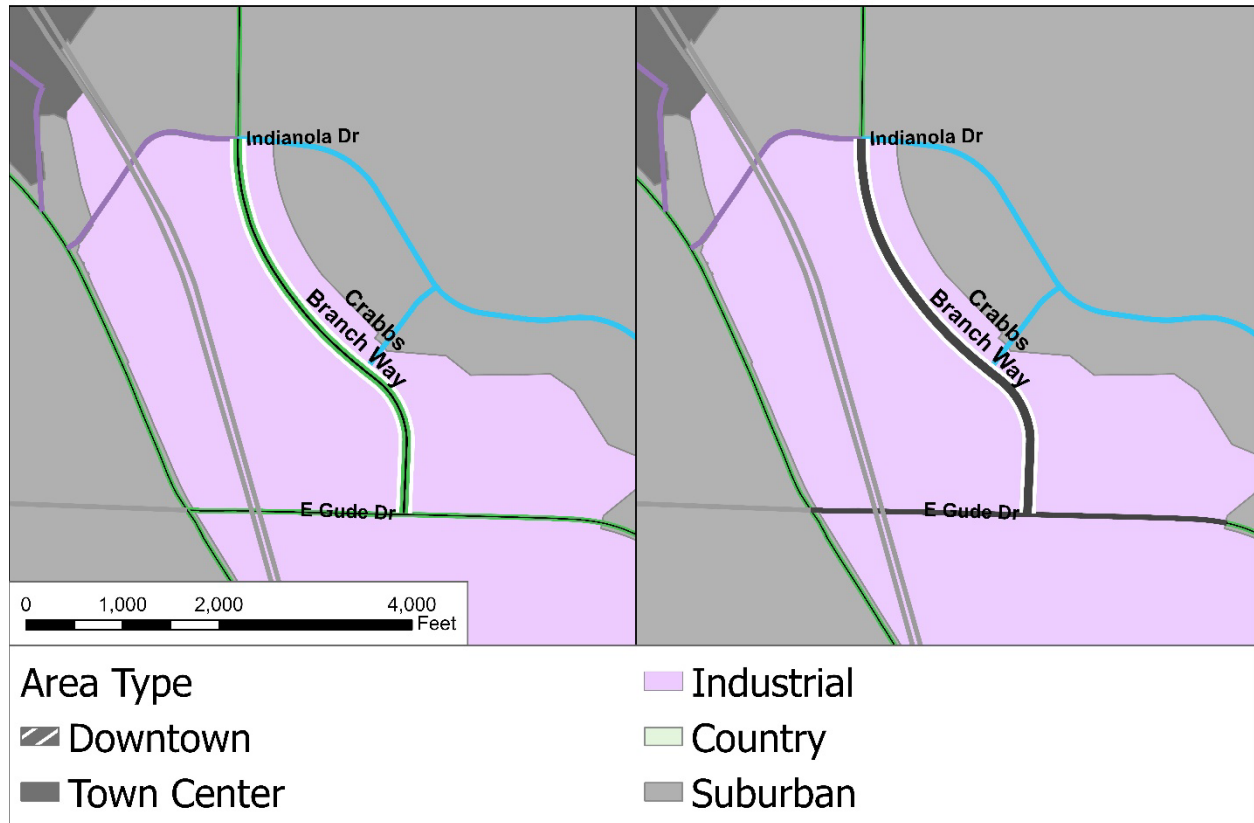


Figure 3: Crabbs Branch Way

Crabbs Branch Way between Indianola Drive and East Gude Drive is located within an Industrial area type which is a new area type added with the Pedestrian Master Plan. Based on current and projected uses, Planning Staff is recommending that this street be re-classified from a Boulevard to an Industrial Street.

E Gude Dr from Frederick Ave (MD 355) to Eastern Plan Boundary

**Previous Recommendation:
Boulevard**

**Revised Recommendation:
Industrial Street**

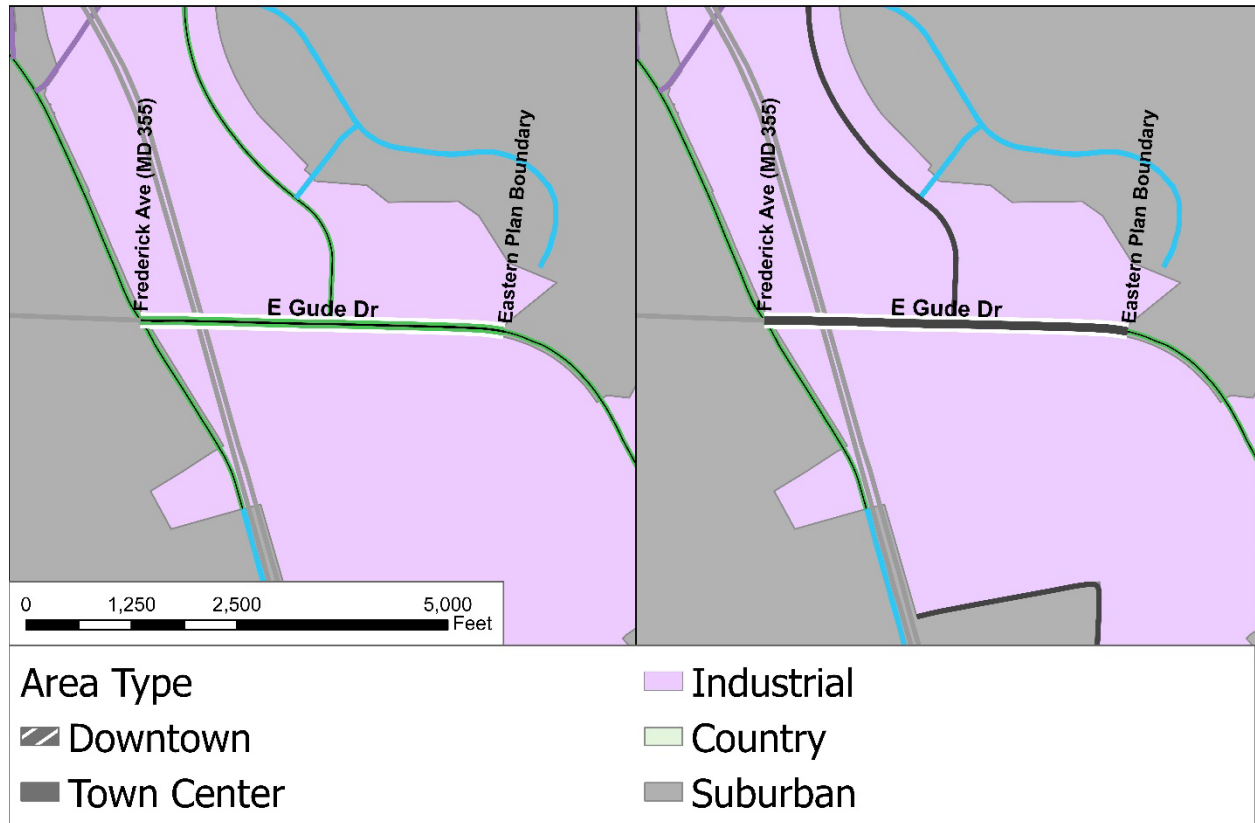


Figure 4: East Gude Drive

Similarly, East Gude Drive between Frederick Avenue (MD 355) and the Industrial Park area is located within an Industrial area type which is a new area type added with the Pedestrian Master Plan. Based on current and projected uses, Planning Staff is recommending that this street be re-classified from a Boulevard to an Industrial Street.

Frederick Rd (MD 355) from Old Hundred Rd to Frederick County Line

Previous Recommendation:
Country Connector

Revised Recommendation:
Town Center Street

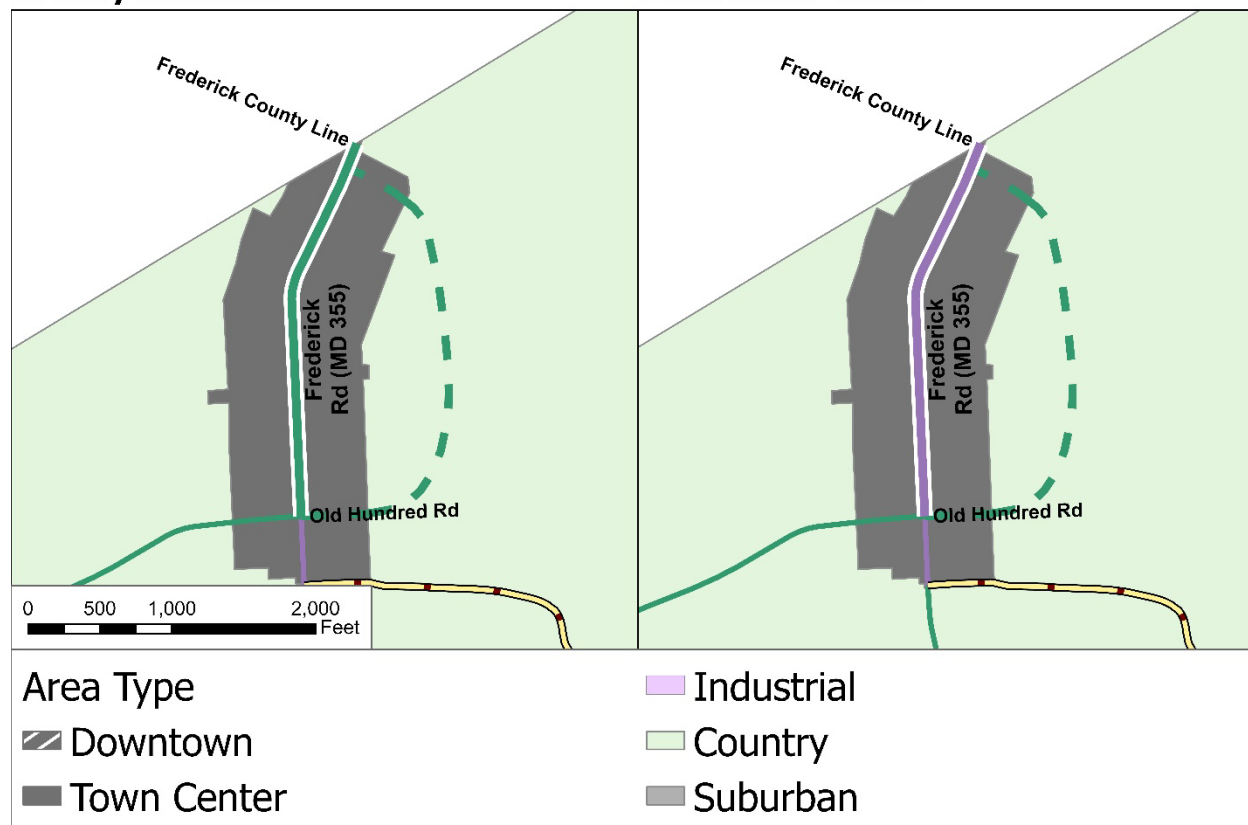


Figure 5: Frederick Road (MD 355)

Frederick Road (MD 355) between Old Hundred Road and the Frederick County line is currently classified as a Country Connector, and this section of street is definitely the main street serving the Hyattstown Town Center. Thus, Planning Staff recommends that this segment be re-classified as a Town Center Street.

Grand Elm St from Snowden Farm Pkwy to Piedmont Rd

**Previous Recommendation:
Country Road**

**Revised Recommendation:
Neighborhood Connector**

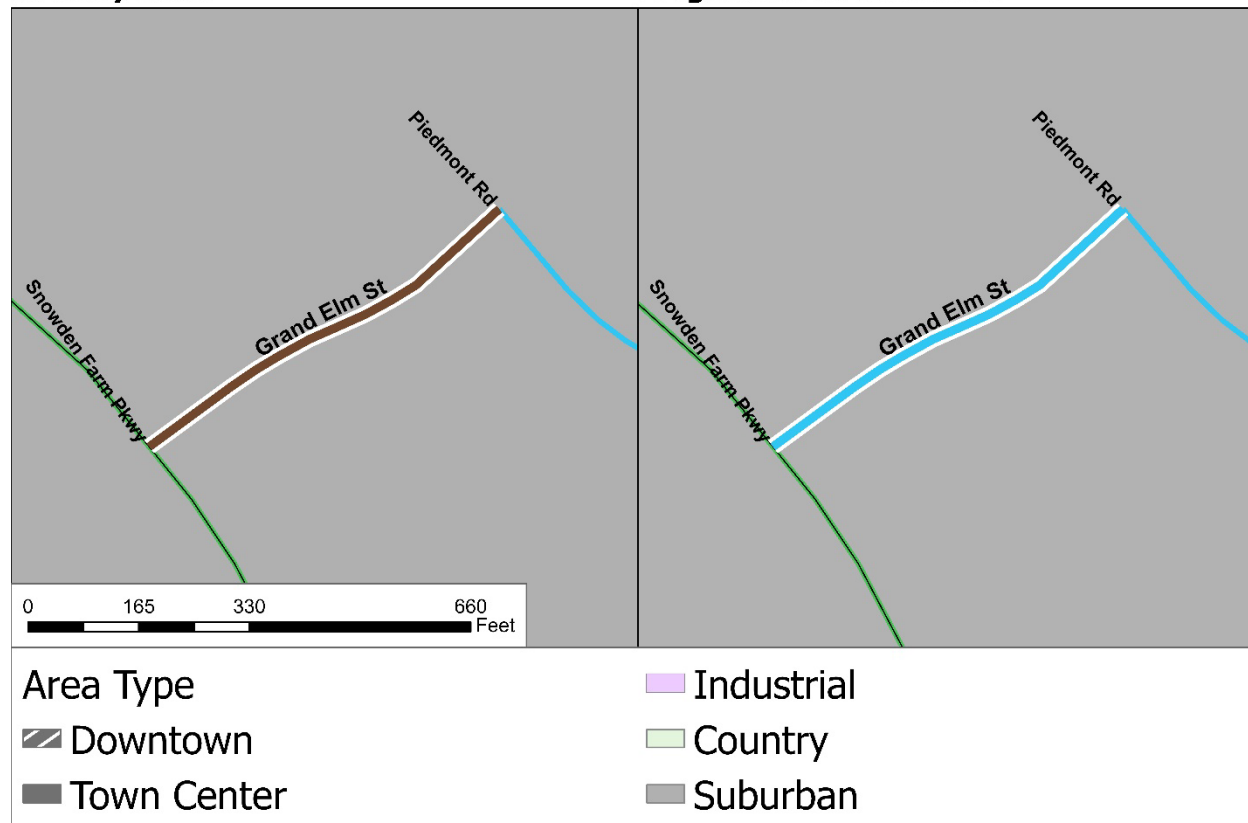


Figure 6: Grand Elm Street

Grand Elm Street between Snowden Farm Parkway and Piedmont Road is currently classified as a Country Road; however, Planning Staff recommend that this block be re-classified as a neighborhood connector street to be consistent with the classification of Piedmont Road.

Observation Dr Connector (Planned) from Goldenrod Ln to Observation Dr

Previous Recommendation: Town Center Street (Planned)	Revised Recommendation: Area Connector
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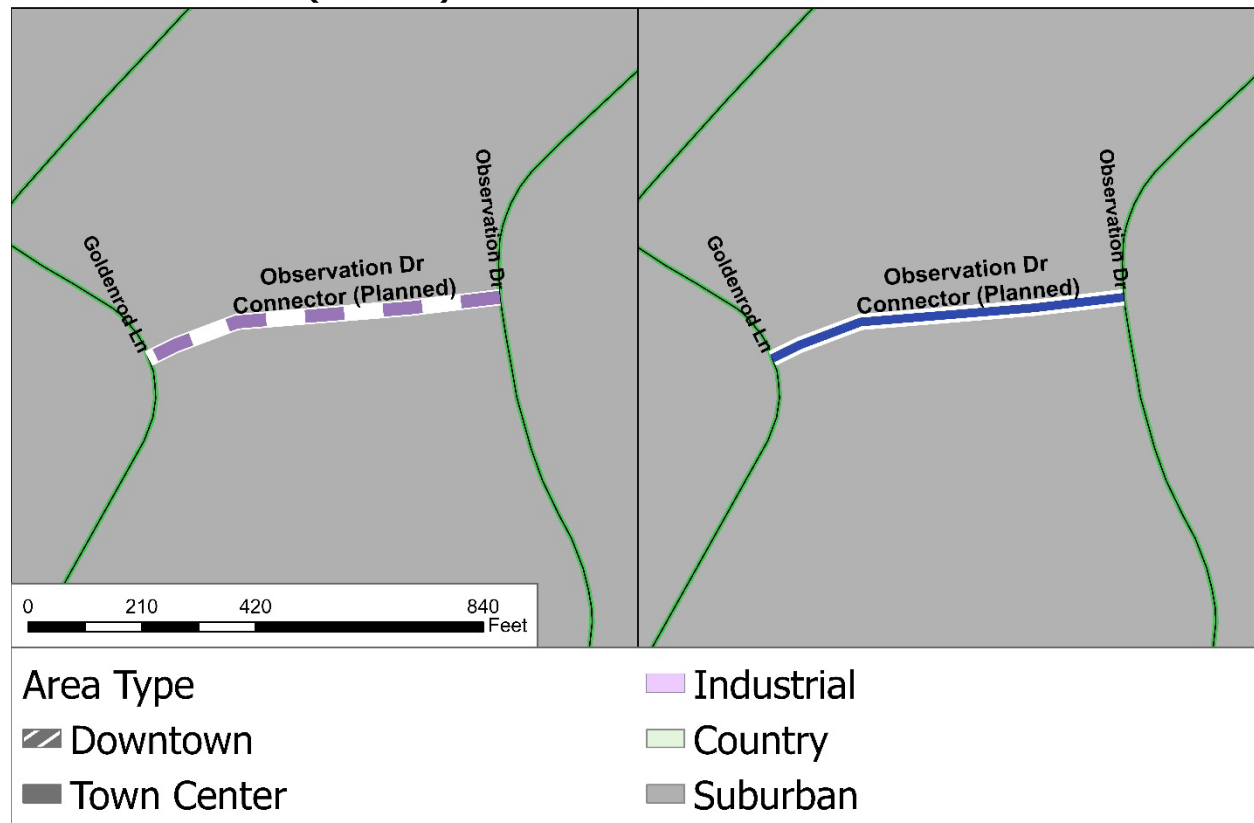


Figure 7: Observation Drive Connector

The Observation Drive Connector is a two-lane planned road that would connect Goldenrod Lane with Observation Drive. There is currently a parking lot along this alignment. Since this area is not located within a Town Center, Planning Staff recommend that this street segment be re-classified from Town Center Street (Planned) to Area Connector (Planned).

Rothbury Dr from 700' west of Goshen Rd to Goshen Rd

**Previous Recommendation:
Town Center Street**

**Revised Recommendation:
Neighborhood Connector**

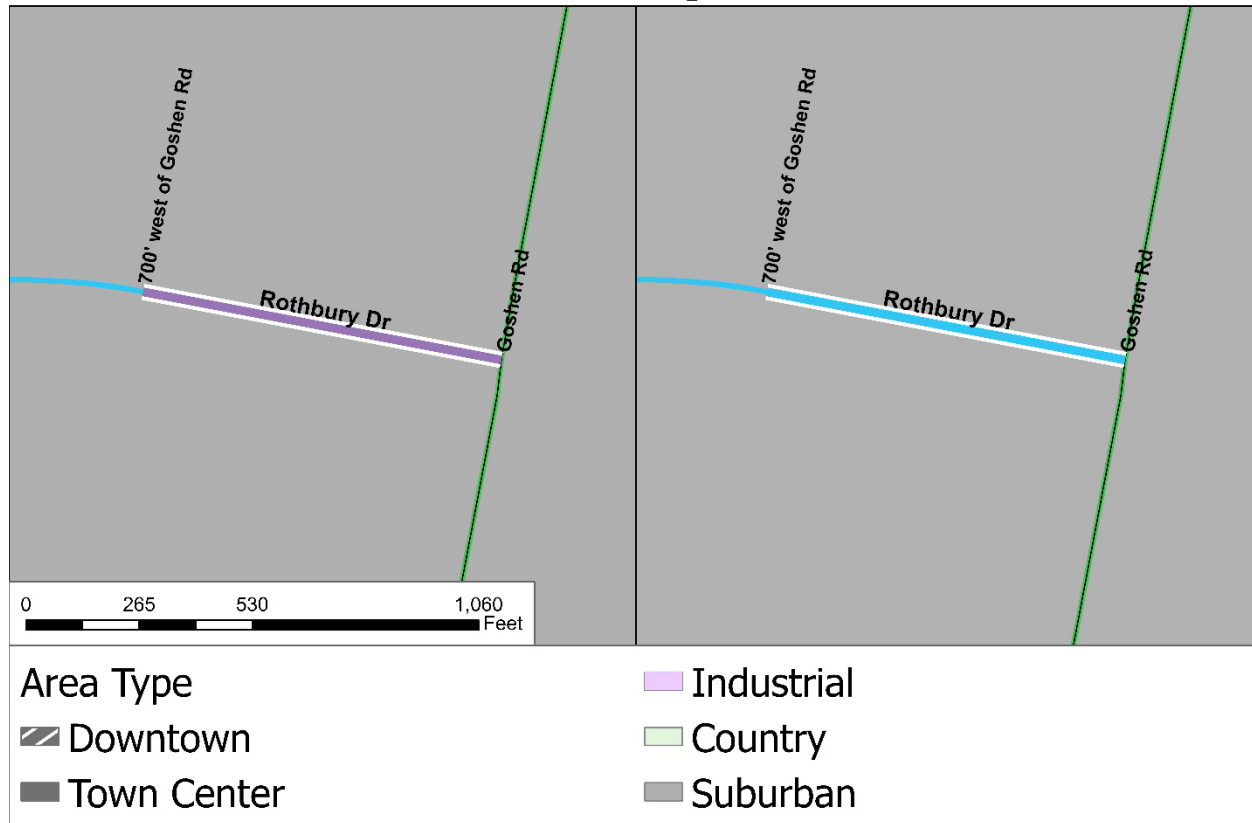


Figure 8: Rothbury Drive

Rothbury Drive is a primarily residential street that serves as a primary access for the Goshen Crossing shopping center. This area is not located within a designated Town Center, and therefore, Planning Staff recommend re-classifying this street from a Town Center Street to a Neighborhood Connector.

Snowden Farm Pkwy from Clarksburg Town Center Boundary to Clarksburg Rd

Previous Recommendation:	Revised Recommendation:
Downtown Street (Planned)	Town Center Street

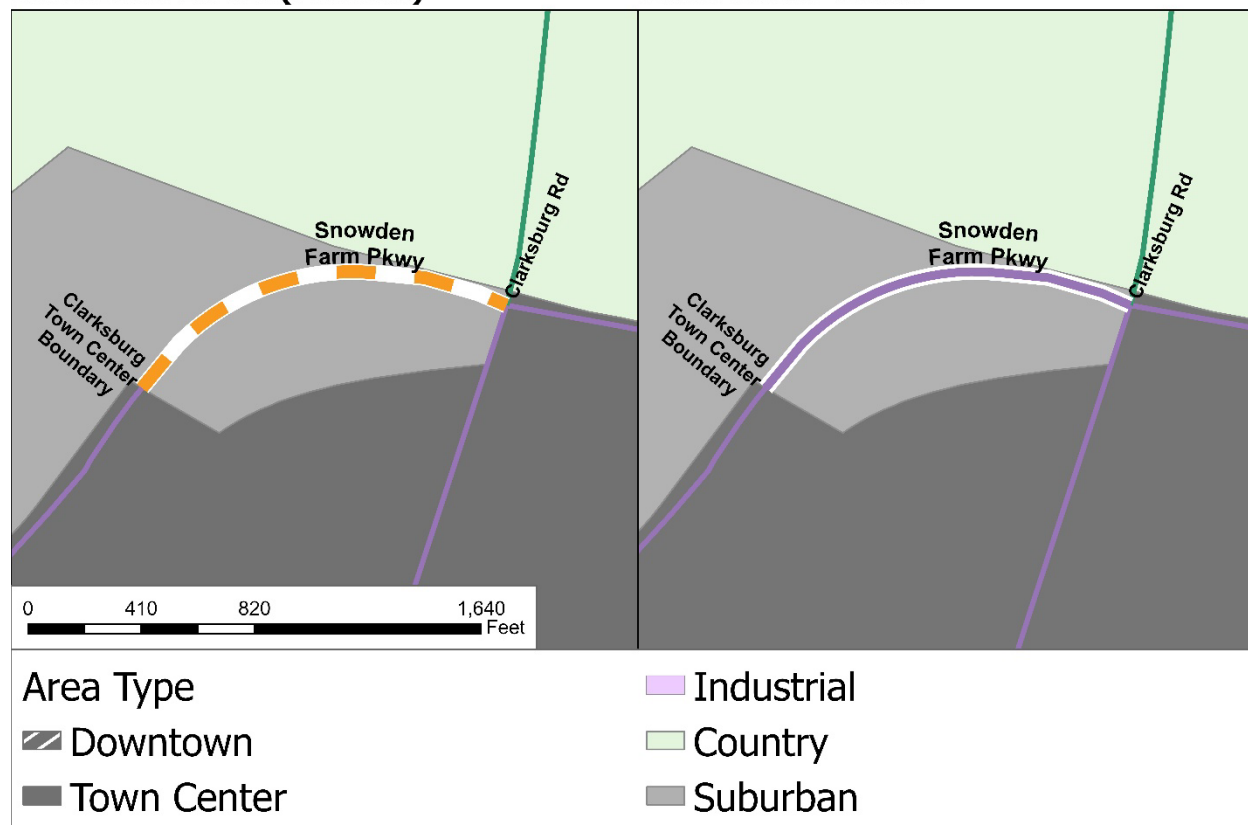


Figure 9: Snowden Farm Parkway

Snowden Farm Parkway between the Clarksburg Town Center Boundary and Clarksburg Road was erroneously classified as a Downtown Street; it is in the Suburban area. After reviewing this street as a whole, Planning Staff recommends re-classifying this street segment from Downtown Street to Town Center Street.

South Glen Rd from Deep Glen Dr to Falls Rd

**Previous Recommendation:
Country Road**

**Revised Recommendation:
Area Connector**



Figure 10: South Glen Road

South Glen Road between Deep Glen Drive and Falls Road is currently classified as a Country Road. Planning staff recommends re-classifying this street segment from Country Road to Area Connector to be consistent with adjacent roadway classifications.

Woodland Drive Extended from Dennis Ave to Medical Park Dr

Previous Recommendation: Town Center Street (Planned)	Revised Recommendation: Neighborhood Street
------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------

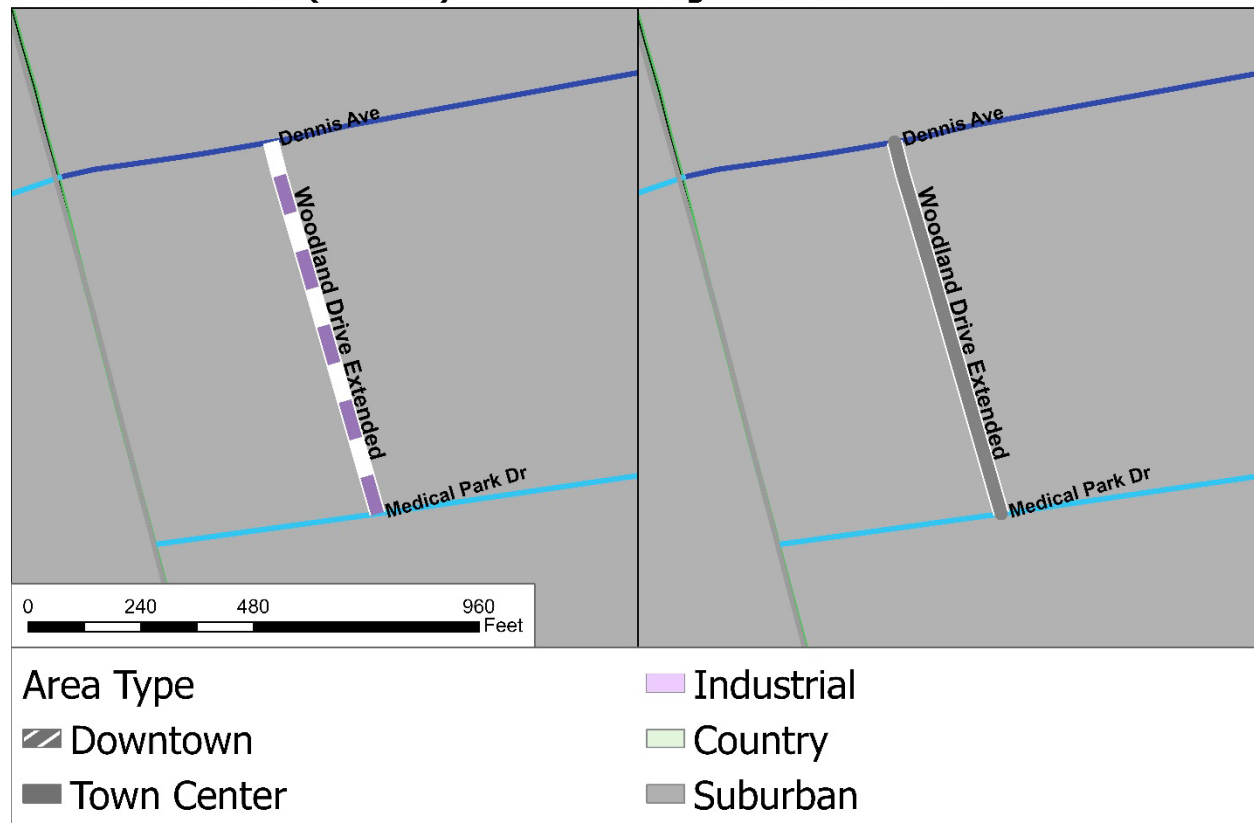


Figure 11: Woodland Drive Extended

Woodland Drive between Dennis Avenue and Medical Park Drive is currently classified as a Town Center Street; however, this street segment is located within the Suburban area. Planning Staff recommends re-classifying this street segment from a Town Center Street to a Neighborhood Street. This change would remove this street segment from the MPOHT as Neighborhood Streets are not included in the MPOHT.

3. Approve the Racial Equity and Social Justice Statement

The Montgomery County Council passed the Racial Equity and Social Justice Act in November 2019. The act requires the Planning Board to consider the impact of a plan on racial equity and social justice in the county. This is accomplished through changes in policy, practice, and allocation of county resources to ensure that all people have the same rights and opportunities regardless of race, socioeconomic status, age, sex, religion, or other characteristics.

A review of the plan's effects on racial equity and social justice is included as a part of this transmittal. It covers outreach with the public, both general public outreach efforts (March-May 2024), and outreach focused on considering the removal of Midcounty Highway (October 2024). This section also

discusses outreach methods, which for this project included providing e-letters, public meetings (virtual and in person), and an online comment map. Additionally, a public hearing was held in Germantown to provide greater opportunities to the community to testify about the proposed removal of the unbuilt sections of Midcounty Highway.

The racial equity and social justice section also discusses how technical materials have been developed with accessibility in mind. The MPOHT Technical Update webpage has provided links to public hearings and their associated materials, as well as providing updates on the project status, including engagement efforts.

The Racial and Social Justice section is included in Chapter 3: Equity. This chapter comes before the previous Chapter 3 (Master Plan Technical Elements) and 4 (Recommendations). The Racial and Social Justice appendix is also provided as Attachment A.

4. Approve the Revised Climate Assessment

The purpose of the Climate Assessment is to evaluate the anticipated impact of master plans and zoning text amendments (ZTAs) on the county's contribution to addressing climate change. The scope of the Climate Assessment is limited to addressing climate change, specifically the effect of land use recommendations in master plans and ZTAs on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and carbon sequestration, and how actions proposed by master plans and ZTAs could improve the county's adaptive capacity to climate change and increase community resilience.

It is anticipated that most of the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) – 2025 Technical Update* recommendations will have positive minor impacts and a few minor negative impacts on the county's goals of addressing greenhouse gas emissions, and insignificant negative impacts on carbon sequestration, and, for the most part, minor to moderately positive or, in some cases, no significant impacts on community resilience and adaptive capacity.

Removal of the northern extension of Midcounty Highway, however, would result in significant positive greenhouse gas and carbon sequestration impacts, and indeterminate negative impacts on accessibility to community and public spaces, access to transportation options, and community connectivity. On the other hand, removing the northern extension of Midcounty Highway would have significant positive impacts on heat-related impacts, exposure to noise, forest cover, non-forest tree canopy, other green areas, pervious cover, stormwater quality and quantity, and air quality.

The Climate Assessment will be included as an appendix to the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) – 2025 Technical Update*. The Climate Assessment section is also provided as Attachment B. Since the Climate Assessment was previously included as an attachment in staff reports for Work Sessions 1-3 and has been subsequently updated to reflect modifications, changes made since the previous report draft are identified in track changes.

5. Authorize Planning Staff to publish and transmit the revised draft as the Planning Board Draft of the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2025 Technical Update* to the County Executive and the County Council

The Planning Board is requested to review the *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2025 Technical Update*. Changes made since the previous report draft are identified in track changes in Appendix C, with additions being shown with underlines and subtractions being shown with ~~strikethroughs~~.

Changes to the report and appendices reflect changes requested by public comments that were approved by the Planning Board in the work sessions. These changes include revisions to proposed target speed, revisions to proposed classification, and the removal of the northern section of Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83).

Attachment D includes a summary of the public comments and responses as well as the direction provided by the Planning Board. It includes a summary of the comments received by the public. In total, 685 comments were submitted, with the majority (529, or 77%) related to Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83). Additionally, Attachment E is a compendium of all written comments and letters submitted by the public.

SECTION 2 – ENGAGEMENT

Included with this staff report is a summary of the engagement conducted as a part of this effort. Engagement for this plan included three components: a technical advisory group, community engagement, and three Planning Board public hearings. Engagement was also a focus of the project website with the development of GIS-based web maps and videos explaining the street types. Additionally, changes were added to the project website and the Complete Streets webpage to improve the clarity and simplicity of some of the more technical concepts.

The Engagement appendix is provided as Attachment F.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP

A Technical Advisory Group was formed with representation from the Montgomery County Planning Department and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). It focused on assessing, analyzing, and reviewing transportation recommendations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement focused outreach to citizen advisory boards and transportation-focused committees and groups and occurred from March through May 2024.

After the Planning Board voted to expand the scope of work for this master plan to include considering the removal of Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83), engagement sessions were also held that focused on this issue specifically. The first Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83) engagement session was held on October 23, 2024, at Montgomery Village Middle School. The second was held on October 29, 2024 at Clarksburg High School.

At both meetings, Planning Department staff, with assistance from MCDOT staff, presented briefly on the history of Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83), its location and master plan context, and took questions from the public regarding the proposed highway.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Three public hearings were held for this master plan, including one in the upcounty area specifically focused on the potential removal of Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83).

At the first public hearing, on September 12, 2024, speakers provided testimony on issues ranging from target speeds, street classifications, and other topics. Even though Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83) was not specifically addressed in the Public Hearing Draft, the majority of speakers provided testimony in opposition to the planned highway extension for environmental or safety reasons; several speakers were affiliated with organizations whose property would be directly impacted by the highway.

Due to concerns about Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83), the Planning Board scheduled a second public hearing focused on this issue specifically. On November 14, 2024, speakers provided testimony both in support and opposition to Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83). Those in favor cited growing traffic congestion in Clarksburg, as well as the approval of housing developments in the area without the construction of the necessary infrastructure to support it. Those against Midcounty Highway Extended (M-83) cited environmental concerns such as the destruction of wetlands and forests, danger to wildlife, and impacts to water quality.

Because the issue of Midcounty Highway (M-83) is one that affects upcounty residents most significantly, and because these residents may have difficulty getting to Wheaton shortly after the end of a typical workday, the Planning Board scheduled a third public hearing, on January 9, 2025, at the request of upcounty residents that was held in Germantown. Participants brought up similar concerns about traffic congestion, with the public identifying problems such as a lack of a quality of life (due to extreme commuting times) and slow EMS response times (due to traffic congestion).

SECTION 3 – ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Racial and Social Justice Statement

Attachment B - Climate Assessment with Track Changes

Attachment C - Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2025 Technical Update with Track Changes

Attachment D - Written Testimony

Attachment E - Summary of Testimony and Planning Staff responses

Attachment F - Engagement Appendix