

Oakland Mills Village Center

COMMUNITY PLAN

MAY 2015

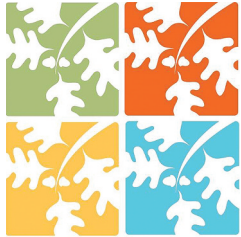


Table of Contents

- 2 Acknowledgements
- 3 Introduction
- 5 Village Center Boundary
- 6 Accomplishments Since 2007
- 11 Main Objectives
- 16 Design Concepts
- 17 Implementation Plan
- 18 Appendices

Acknowledgements

Over a span of 14 months, the Task Force created by the Oakland Mills Community Association (OMCA) engaged in an arduous process to update and expand the 2007 Oakland Mills Master Plan. All meetings and work sessions were open to the public and well attended. We want to thank all of the many residents who participated in and supported this effort, including the following:

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Introduction

In 2007, Oakland Mills became the first of Columbia’s ten villages to publish a Master Plan. The process for this groundbreaking document was lengthy, but the result became a model for other villages, especially the older villages that were looking ahead to redevelopment. At the time, Oakland Mills was especially optimistic about a planned mixed-use development project by Metroventures that could bring new life to the former Exxon site at the Village Center. Although the Metroventures project became a casualty of the Great Recession, the village began working on some of the Master Plan’s short- and mid-term goals.

COUNCIL BILL 29-2009

When Columbia’s first village, Wilde Lake, began reviewing plans to revive its retail center, the Howard County Council passed Council Bill 29-2009. The bill set standards and a process for creating a Village Center Community Plan (VCCP). Once finalized, a VCCP is submitted to the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, where it is kept on record. All plans for future development within the boundaries of the VCCP are reviewed for compatibility with the VCCP.

WHY UPDATE THE 2007 MASTER PLAN?

Although the 2007 Master Plan contained the essential elements of a VCCP, it did not spell out several items, such as “Historical or Signature Aspects.”

Moreover, the 2007 Plan confined itself to the area bounded by Whiteacre, Santiago, and Stevens Forest Roads. The VCCPs filed by other villages encompass a wider area, including adjacent schools, recreational facilities and multi-family housing.

The wisdom of defining a broader area became evident when the Columbia Market Study of 2014 noted that it would be “prudent” for older villages to find a focus other than a grocery store to anchor the commercial portion of their village centers. The Howard County Housing Commission’s purchase of the 251-unit Verona apartment complex in 2013 added urgency since one of the four “Significant Improvements” of the 2007 plan had been to “Upgrade Housing in the Village Center Area.”

To address these issues, the Oakland Mills Community Association (OMCA) established a Task Force “to broaden and update” the 2007 Master Plan. During its first meeting, on December 12, 2013, the Master Plan 2 Task Force, chaired by Bill Gray, began a year-long effort to find new opportunities to revitalize the center of Oakland Mills.

After the village election of April 2014, Village Board Co-Chairs Bill McCormack and Ginny Thomas assumed leadership of the Task Force under a new name: Reinventing Oakland Mills.

WHAT WAS THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE VCCP?

Beginning in May 2014, the Task Force began meeting twice a month. Education and Housing Subcommittees were also formed and met at least once a month to develop detailed recommendations to the Task Force. Other activities included the following:

- Bimonthly meetings, including lessons-learned presentations from former Wilde Lake Village Board Chair and Kimco Vice President Geoff Glazer.
- Survey on ideas for Village Center features (part of April 26, 2014 election).
- Public meeting with Howard County chiefs of Economic Development; Planning & Zoning; Transportation; Inspections, Licenses and Permitting; and Housing & Community Development.
- Talks with stakeholders and property owners, including the COO of Cedar Properties; Regional Director, Grady Management (Autumn Crest); Regional Manager, Aimco (Grand Pointe); Oakland Mills Interfaith Center Board of Directors; Shadow Oaks Board of Directors; Columbia Association President; Howard Hockey Board of Directors; Columbia Figure Skating; Columbia Clippers Swim Club; Wehland Properties; Vice-President for Development of Bozzuto Homes; Howard County General Hospital and Johns Hopkins System; President of Howard Community College; Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks.
- Public work sessions on draft VCCP (November-December 2014).

- Distribution of draft VCCP to the community on the OMCA website, and OMCA eNews, The Grist (in The Columbia Flier) and other means.
- January 20, 2015 Residents Meeting — including the opportunity to submit written comments — in The Other Barn.
- Opportunity for all residents to submit comments by email (deadline January 23, 2015).
- Presentation of revised draft on January 27, 2015 to Village Board, which voted to approve.

Vision Statement

Oakland Mills Village Center will become a true destination with a clear identity that is cohesive and well planned, supports thriving businesses, and serves as a real center of community life.

Accomplishments since 2007

The 2007 Master Plan divided the steps toward revitalization into three categories:

- Relatively simple improvements (3-24 months)
- Moderate improvements (2-5 years)
- Significant improvements (5-20 years)

As of January 2015 –8 years after publication of the plan—many of the improvements listed in the first two categories have become reality.

RELATIVELY SIMPLE IMPROVEMENTS

1. Enhance the connection to Town Center and Blandair Park.

This project is now close to fruition at both ends. In fact, it exceeds the goals of the Master Plan. The Multi-Use Path will link Downtown Columbia with the Oakland Mills Village Center, using an existing right-of-way, much of which is owned by Columbia Association. The Howard Hughes Corporation must complete the path in order to satisfy the Community Enhancement Program and Public Amenities requirement of the Downtown Columbia Plan, so there is a strong incentive to finish it quickly.

When completed, the path will start at Blandair Park, pass through the Village Center, and then cross Route 29 to west Columbia via the pedestrian/bike bridge.

But it doesn't stop there. After walkers and riders reach Town Center, they can continue on the path all the way to Howard Community College and Howard County General Hospital.

The site development plan for Phases I-IV of the Multi-Use Path is well along in the approval process of the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning. It incorporates many features suggested in our 2007 Master Plan, including signage, additional lighting, widening and grading for handicapped accessibility, tree trimming, and security measures. However, there are notable deficiencies, such as light poles spaced too far apart. The Board must vigorously pursue development of the path in a way that will optimize use of the existing bridge and be compatible with the new one.

For a full discussion of the transformation of the bridge (Bridge Columbia) and the addition of public transit, see page 10.

2. Raise awareness/profile of the OMVC through improved signage.

Howard County added directional signs alongside Broken Land Parkway and Thunder Hill Road. Cedar Properties erected signs at both ends of the retail center listing the shops and restaurants. None of these signs approach what the 2007 Plan envisioned in terms of spotlighting the Village Center. In general, Howard County needs a more coherent, distinctive signage program. Wooden pillars display the village logo at Robert Oliver Place and Stevens Forest Road, but these predate the 2007 Plan and are not eye-catching.

Columbia Association continues to maintain signs and plantings at the entry to Oakland Mills at three junctions: Route 175 and Thunder Hill Road; Stevens Forest Road and Broken Land Parkway; and Thunder Hill Road and Route 108. However, these simply announce the entry to the village and do not point the way to the Village Center.

3. Maximize potential of current configuration.

The Village Board advocated on behalf of the Second Chance bar/restaurant when it almost lost its lease in 2014. The village encourages residents to patronize local merchants by including coupons in the Welcome Packet for new residents.

Nevertheless, the Food Lion is struggling, and vacant spaces remain in the retail space between Food Lion and the Ice Rink. The retail center's current configuration and secluded location do not align with market trends, according to the Columbia Market Study of 2014. (For a full discussion of this issue, see Part III, Cohesive Mixed-Use Development.)

4. Create an International Arts and Entrepreneurs identify for the OMVC.

Every October, the OMCA runs a successful Fall Festival that includes performances by the Oakland Mills High School Band.



The Oakland Mills Village Center's Little Free Library is stocked with a variety of good quality books. Stop by and take a book you would like to read and return or bring a book that you would like to contribute.

It also gives local artisans, nonprofit organizations, and arts boosters in the village an opportunity to connect with residents of all ages.

Lively Arts for Little Ones is a beloved tradition in Oakland Mills; some of the attendees are grandparents who confide that this is the third generation in their family to attend the series. Jazz in the Mill draws top jazz artists from the Baltimore-Washington area and frequently sells out. Both are considered among the best cultural series in Columbia.

The Interfaith Center on Robert Oliver Place features a gallery in which local artists can display their works throughout the year. The village continues to have a range of ethnic restaurants: Thai, Chinese, and Italian.

5. Increase activity and vibrancy at the OMVC with outdoor activities.

The Sunday Farmers Market, which operates from 9am to 1pm from May through November, has grown into one of the most successful such markets in the region. In addition to produce and baked goods, it offers coffee beans, free-range eggs and meat, local wines, and gourmet sauces.

The Little Free Library program, launched in April 2014, is a sterling example of bringing culture outdoors, making books available and inviting to residents of all ages.

Weather permitting, the Fall Festival is held outdoors, and summer concerts take place in the Courtyard between the barns.

6. Make OMVC more pedestrian — and bike-friendly and inviting.

The pedestrian connection from the Barns to the Interfaith Center was vastly improved by a Howard County Public Right-of-Way grant. The county also added a traffic island in the median of Lightning View Road near the intersection with Thunder Hill Road.

In fall 2012, two pedestrian islands were built on Kilimanjaro Road opposite the entrances to Oakland Mills Middle School and Oakland Mills High School. Pedestrian islands were also installed outside Thunder Hill Elementary. Traffic-calming street humps were added to Thunder Hill Road at several points both north and south of Route 175, thanks to a major petition effort by residents.

In summer 2014, a new pedestrian island was created between the Stevens Forest Neighborhood Center and the point where Owen Brown Road dead ends. This also gives pedestrians from the lower end of Stevens Forest a safer way to cross to the elementary school.

In fall 2014, the intersection of Route 175 and Thunder Hill Road was improved with the installation of traffic islands with better pedestrian refuges.

Howard County added bike lanes along Stevens Forest Road in 2012 and extensive sidewalk and curbing improvements in front of Stevens Forest Elementary School in fall 2013.

7. Improve appearance and consistency of roads and streetscapes.

Phase I of the county's Oakland Mills Streetscape Enhancement is nearing the end of the approval process. It will redesign and build the public right-of-way along White Acre Road from Stevens Forest Road to Basket Ring Road as well as from Stevens Forest to Santiago Drive. Enhancements include storm water management facilities, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, shared bike lanes, lighting, preservation and planting of trees, roadway medians, on-street parking and relocated bus shelters.

MODERATE IMPROVEMENTS

1. Upgrade/remodel The Other Barn to serve as the center of the community.

As the only original buildings in the village center, The Other Barn and The Barn are now designated as having "Signature Aspects," in accordance with Council Bill 29-2009. Major remodeling of The Other Barn took place in 2008; the restrooms were remodeled to achieve full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2014.

The 2007 Plan suggested repurposing The Barn, currently used as The Youth and Teen Center, if teens and after-school programs could be housed in nearby schools. So far, this effort has not succeeded although CA frequently schedules meetings and other programs there during the day. Nevertheless, the dream of using The Barn for artists' studios and lofts remains unfulfilled.



The Other Barn and The Barn are the only original buildings in the Oakland Mills Village Center. Major remodeling of The Other Barn took place in 2008. It is designated to serve as the center of the community.

2. Maintain a grocery store/food market as the retail anchor.

Food Lion has been struggling, doing about one-third of the business of the average Food Lion. The Columbia Market Study, published in 2014, found that national supermarket chains generally prefer to locate near a major highway and where the competition is not excessive. According to the Study, “It would be both reasonable and prudent to begin to discuss alternative uses for grocery store space in other village centers so that there

is a pro-active rather than reactive approach in place...” While the study concluded that Food Lion may choose to remain as “a convenience-based grocery anchor,” the Task Force opted for the prudent approach of seeking alternatives (see page 10 for full discussion).

3. Create enhanced public and civic spaces in the OMVC.

The Second Chance Restaurant, which is alongside The Barn, provides outdoor dining spaces during the summer and fall. The suggestions to create a dog park and a skateboard park in the pathway between the Village Center and Town Center were not accepted as part of the Multi-Use Path Project. The labyrinth for the Interfaith Center and the open-air ice rink remain unrealized. Blandair Park may ultimately accommodate some of these concepts.

4. Improve traffic flow into and through the Village Center.

Traffic into the village from Route 175 ends abruptly at the Interfaith Center. Traffic patterns are confusing, and Robert Oliver Place is indistinguishable from parking space. To address this, the 2007 Master Plan suggested continuing Thunder Hill Road directly into the Village Center. Action on this appears unlikely until major redevelopment occurs.

Main Objectives

ENCOURAGE WELL-PLANNED, COHESIVE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

The 2007 Master Plan called for a mix of housing, commercial, and retail space that would increase foot traffic and provide the essential mass needed to support businesses and amenities in the center. Moreover, mixed-use development allows people to live, work, shop, and socialize around a lively and walkable village center.

Mixed-use development remains a highly desirable objective. What has changed, however, is the need to find an alternative focal point. The 2014 Columbia Market Study indicated that Food Lion might choose to remain as “a convenience-based grocery anchor,” depending on “when/if it responds to the impact of nearby grocery competition.” Over 5,000 square feet of retail space in the center is vacant.

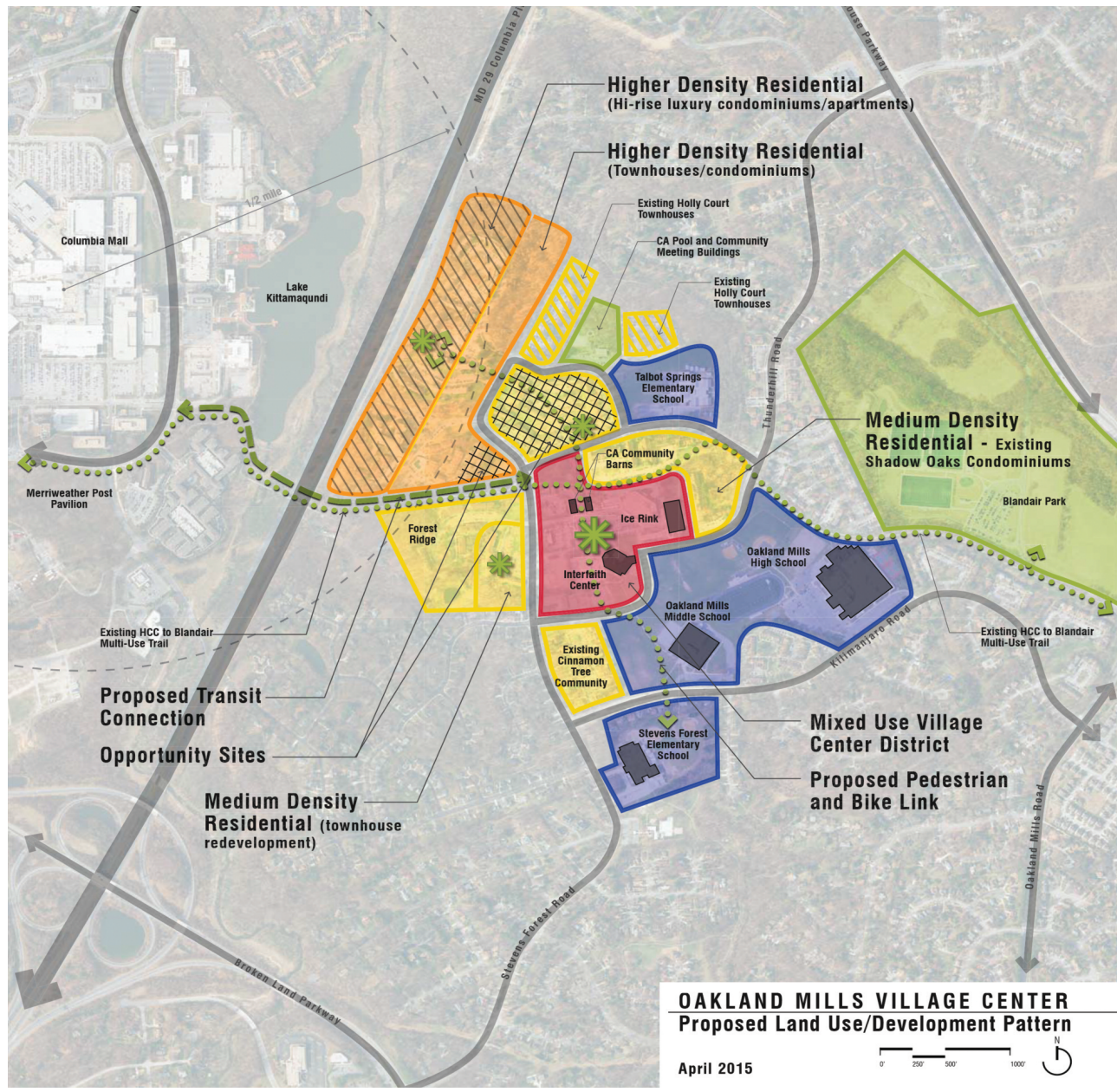
Thus it appears prudent to find an additional focus, like a state-of-the-art ice hockey facility, a sports medicine/rehab center, or a 50-meter pool with water park. The most important attribute is something that attracts people from outside Oakland Mills on a regular basis to achieve the critical mass needed to support amenities like a coffee shop and café. Ideally, the anchor should also be something that attracts young people to rent and ultimately, as they form families, settle in our village. It should also create job opportunities, during and after construction.

Technology

Technology is key to the Millennial generation, so the Village Center redevelopment should seize every opportunity to insist that apartments, commercial properties, and public spaces offer access to the best and fastest available internet access. One way to do this is to work with the county (as Local Franchising Authority) to require that broadband providers give full coverage to our entire village. In view of the rapid evolution of internet access technologies, OMCA needs a mechanism to alert the board to new opportunities, including access for low-income residents, as they arise.

CREATE A STRONG GATEWAY TO TOWN CENTER

As stated in 2007, improved connectivity would capitalize on the Village Center’s close proximity to Downtown Columbia. The only direct connection, however, is a pedestrian/bike bridge over Route 29, caged by chain-link fencing, which connects some paths in the Columbia Association right-of-way on either side of the bridge. The bridge is sadly in need of improvements to make it safe, accessible, and attractive to residents and visitors. What seemed like a pipe dream in 2007 is now close to reality, thanks to the perseverance of an independent group of citizen advocates called Friends of Bridge Columbia. Their success is a remarkable example of what can be achieved by well-informed, highly persistent citizens.



Mixed-use development allows people to live, work, shop, and socialize around a lively and walkable village center and remains a highly desirable objective.

The group includes architects, engineers, urban planners, landscape architects, cycling enthusiasts, and individuals with a vision: an east-west link that would allow walkers, cyclists, and bus riders to travel from Howard County General Hospital to Blandair Park — a distance of 10 kilometers. The route offers direct access to a myriad of cultural, recreational, retail, dining and other activities along the way.

Properly developed, the bridge will become the lynchpin connecting existing transit rights of way to form a bus system that will benefit the whole community.

Bridge Columbia got a boost when the Downtown Columbia Plan required the developer, Howard Hughes Corporation, to complete a Multi-Use Path that crosses the bridge, ultimately linking Howard County General Hospital at one end to Blandair Park in east Columbia. Stops along the way include Howard Community College, Downtown Columbia, and the Oakland Mills Village Center. The path should include lighting, landscaping, and grading improvements that would make the bridge safer and more appealing.

When the county's first feasibility study concluded that the desired makeover would be too costly, Bridge Columbia insisted on a new study by an independent consulting firm. The final report from the consultants (URS Corporation) contains five structural options, four of which include public transit.

Adding Public Transit

The cost estimate for a one-lane transit bridge running alongside the pedestrian-bike bridge is \$9.5 million; a cable-stayed version (see sketch) of a one-lane transit bridge is estimated to cost \$20.4 million. Including public transit would make the project eligible for federal and state grants that could, in some cases, defray 80% of the total cost.

In October 2014, the OMCA passed a resolution advocating an option that includes public transit. Both candidates for County Executive endorsed the resolution in writing. In December 2014,

the Village Board voted to join Friends of Bridge Columbia in advocating for a bridge with two-lane public transit.

Once the county selects a particular option, it will be crucial for the community to ask county officials to designate the project as “high priority” and to gain support from the Columbia Association Board of Directors and the delegation to the Maryland General Assembly in order to take advantage of all funding options.

Implementation of Bridge Columbia with public transit is a critical to the success of the Oakland Mills Village Center Community Plan.

Additional Possibilities

The 2007 Plan also suggested the following, which should remain under consideration:

- Study the feasibility of extending Robert Oliver Place from the village center to the pedestrian bridge.
- Study the feasibility and desirability of vehicular connection to Town Center via an overpass over Route 29.
- Create mixed-use development along the gateway; include attractions along the gateway to encourage activity: ice cream shop, bike rental, etc.
- Consider including a non-profit, shared-facility office complex.

PROMOTE HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS FOR REDEVELOPMENT

When Columbia was founded it was intended to be a model of ecological planning. Mixed commercial and residential zoning would encourage people to live and work in the same town. Houses would be built on high ground, leaving the stream valleys for parks and pathways. Abundant playgrounds on the bike paths would help children grow up with a sense of belonging to their natural environment, and an instinct to rely on their own two legs for transportation. These features continue to make Oakland Mills a great place for families who



One of the main objectives for Oakland Mills is to encourage mixed-use development that would create enhanced public and civic spaces in the village center.

like to get fresh air and exercise, watch birds and pick berries. We can build on this foundation to make Oakland Mills a national model for sustainable development.

Sustainability.

Today, we know far more about how to foster sustainability. We know that dense development encourages walking and transit usage. We know that while the houses in our village are efficient in their use of space, the standards of the 1960's and 1970's didn't do enough to conserve energy. Our housing stock needs to be retrofitted to achieve lower energy use, and we must insist that new housing be built to much higher standards. Net-zero energy usage is an attainable goal if passive solar construction and solar electricity and hot water are incorporated into home designs.

Encouraging green development will interact synergistically with all our priorities. Efficient design makes homes more affordable,

and leaves more family resources for attractive upkeep. Increased density in the Village Center will help to support retail there; it will also build the constituency for transit that will justify an ambitious design for the new bridge across Route 29. A beautiful village center with lush rain gardens, innovative new green buildings, and green renovations of single-family homes will attract young families, bringing renewed energy to our schools.

In addition, landscaping decisions can make a huge difference in the health of our streams and of the Chesapeake to which they flow.

To make Oakland Mills a model for green development and sustainability, redevelopment should be designed to respect the land, protect the environment, and save energy. Factors to be considered include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Encourage projects to include performance standards adopted by the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star. Standards evaluated by these systems include:

- Energy efficiency
- Water conservation
- Materials beneficial to the environment
- Waste management
- Community linkages—compact and connected development
- Environmental protection
- Green building

- In order to protect stream quality, development should follow Low-Impact Development (LID) strategies, taking a systematic approach to water management that uses such technologies as green roofs, rain gardens, bio-retention facilities, and pervious paving materials to manage storm water.

UPGRADE HOUSING IN THE VILLAGE CENTER AREA

The 2007 Plan called for “creating upscale housing” to achieve a full spectrum of housing in the area around the Village Center. It also suggested adding senior housing and incentives to help teachers, police, and firefighters buy homes in the village. While lamenting the declining condition of the apartment complexes adjacent to the Center, it concluded that redevelopment, including increased density, “could once again make this area a highly desirable location.”

Due in part to the recession, the goal of a full spectrum of housing remains elusive, as most of the 984 apartments in the Village Center rent at or near the bottom of the rent range for Howard County. However, that should change if Oakland Mills is formally designated as a revitalization area, eligible for loans and other incentives. In addition, the impetus to proceed with Bridge Columbia — a direct link to downtown — will help Oakland Mills capitalize on its prime location in the heart of Columbia, making this area more attractive for upscale housing.

Adding a major sports facility or medical complex would bring in young professionals to rent, and ultimately buy, creating a new market for upscale townhouses, condos, and suites at the heart of the village. A reinvented center will also attract empty nesters and seniors looking for low-maintenance housing with public transit to downtown and the community college.

The Columbia Market Study emphasizes the need to increase the residential density to achieve a population near the Village Center that is large enough to support new facilities. Oakland Mills’ biggest asset is its proximity to downtown, with the potential for direct bus and even, at some point, vehicular access. The bluffs along Route 29 that overlook Town Center and Lake

Kittamaquindi offer the best location for high-end condominiums in Columbia. Increased density also allows for the addition of more and better restaurants.

Comprehensive Housing Plan

Given the amount of affordable housing currently surrounding the center, it is crucial for the county to implement a Comprehensive Housing Plan to provide ample opportunities for tenants at all income levels throughout the county. The plan should not require builders in the Oakland Mills Village Center to provide additional subsidized units, since the amount of affordable housing in the Village Center already far exceeds the legal requirement for such housing placed on developers elsewhere in the county.

Detailed Recommendations

In line with the objective of upgrading housing, the Housing Committee of the Oakland Mills Task Force recommended specific measures to restore economic diversity to the area in and around the Village Center and to rescue abandoned or foreclosed homes throughout the village. (See Appendix B on page 19 for a complete list of the committee’s recommendations.) These will help carry out the following goals from the 2007 Master Plan:

- To achieve a full spectrum of housing within the village center boundaries, add upscale and mid-range housing.
- Upgrade and renovate rundown housing in the village center area.
- Consider increasing density in exchange for redevelopment.
- Improve the percentage of owner-occupied housing.
- Encourage senior housing to provide seniors with easy access to village center amenities.
- Create incentives for Howard County teachers, police, firefighters, and civil servants to purchase in Oakland Mills.

ADVOCATE FOR SCHOOLS IN THE OAKLAND MILLS CLUSTER

The relationship between the current and future Village Center and the schools serving Oakland Mills is substantial as the Village Center is the economic hub of Oakland Mills and the most densely populated residential portion of the community. The schools in Oakland Mills are very much community schools. Physically, they draw a large proportion of their student populations from within the Village Center boundaries and the surrounding areas. More importantly, however, the schools are very community-oriented and play an important role in linking families from very diverse backgrounds and experiences.

In fact, Oakland Mills schools are among the most economically, socially, and culturally diverse in Howard County. As a result, our schools and their supporting organizations like PTAs, PTSAs, and booster clubs, offer services and opportunities to the broader community not found in other areas. For example, beyond their core educational missions, our schools and their supporting organizations sponsor food drives, cultural festivals, international nights, community dinners. Our village works with our schools to support and advocate for them. Each year, OMCA donates funds to each school or its PTA. OMCA also promotes school events and news through its social media and through free use of its facilities.

Nevertheless, we must ensure that our schools afford Oakland Mills students the same opportunities as students elsewhere in the county. Because our schools have higher proportions of children coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as measured by the percentage receiving Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs), the PTA and other support organizations do not have the same capability to do in-house fundraising. This

can translate to a less equitable provision of support and materials beyond what the school system officially provides. A stronger economic hub for Oakland Mills, via a reinvented Village Center, could help mitigate the disparity.

OMCA's Education Committee continues to advocate for our schools under the following mission and objectives:

- Discuss and highlight the positive events and accomplishments at each school in the Oakland Mills Cluster.
- Engage the PTA at each school in the Oakland Mills Cluster through their communication officials.
- Discuss with PTAs and school administrators whether schools need OMCA advocacy for additional funding or special project assistance.
- Develop and foster strategies that will help retain families throughout the community from elementary to middle to high school in Oakland Mills.
- Advocate for a county policy to prohibit any redistricting that would create a Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs) rate outside a range of 67% to 150% of the county-wide average for the level of school (elementary, middle, or high) considered for redistricting.
- Advocate for a countywide plan to de-concentrate below-market housing and FARM rates that features coordination among the County Council, county departments (and commissions) and the Howard County Public School System/Board of Education.

Design Concepts

SIGNATURE ASPECTS: THE OTHER BARN AND COURTYARD

The history of what is now the Village of Oakland Mills dates back to the 1700s. The village was named for a historic Howard County mill. The Other Barn, which has served as Oakland Mills Community Center since 1969, was once part of the Owings Dorsey Dairy Farm. The Other Barn is iconic in the true sense of the word. It is treasured as one of Columbia's few visible remnants of the county's agrarian past.

Renovated to preserve its rustic charm, The Other Barn can accommodate up to 220 people in its Loft, which is fully booked for wedding receptions, parties, and community meetings. When the Oakland Mills High School Band or jazz groups perform in The Loft, the rafters literally ring. At Christmas, the Loft is transformed into the interior of a railway car for annual sold-out performances of The Polar Express.

Smaller ground-floor rooms, like The Smithy, host village meetings, including the Oakland Mills Board of Directors and the Oakland Mills Resident Architecture committee (RAC). Everything from plant sales to village elections takes place in The Other Barn, which is truly the hub of the Oakland Mills community.



Sculptures dance across the courtyard outside the Other Barn at Oakland Mills Village Center.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES TO BE FOLLOWED DURING REDEVELOPMENT

- Development should center on a clearly defined, pedestrian-friendly civic plaza or town square and should retain the feel of a village center.
- New buildings should frame streets and define areas.
- Design guidelines should create consistent streetscapes and lighting.
- Materials and construction should be high quality and appropriate in color and scale.
- Parking should be coordinated and shared, located discreetly behind buildings.
- Assemblage of property (there are eight separate owners in the retail area) should be considered for more integrated and cohesive redevelopment.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

As established by the OMCA Covenants, the Village Board has architectural review for residential property. In May 2014, the OMCA also adopted design guidelines for commercial development within the village.

Implementation Plan

Action	Timeframe	Lead	Agencies&Partners
Continue to advocate at county, state and federal levels for implementation of Bridge Columbia with two-lane public transit.	Ongoing	OMCA	Howard County Exec & Council; Maryland State Delegation
Advocate for development of Multi-Use Path consistent with implementation of Bridge Columbia so that short-term path improvements do not have to be undone or redone when new Bridge is completed. Short-term improvements should focus on safety, e.g., lights and clearing the undergrowth	Short-term	OMCA	Howard County Department of Planning & Zoning, Howard Hughes Corporation, CA
Advocate for completion by the county of improvements to the Stevens Forest — Whiteacre Road — Thunder Hill Road streetscapes.	Short-term	OMCA	Howard County Department of Planning & Zoning
Explore and promote new uses, such as a major recreational facility, that will revitalize the Village Center area.	Ongoing	OMCA	Community groups, developers, CA
Advocate adoption and implementation of a Howard County Comprehensive Housing Policy/Plan to restore economic diversity in the Oakland Mills Village Center area and establish it throughout the county.	Short-term	OMCA	Howard County Executive
As a major OMCA priority, promote equitable and appropriate allocation of resources to Oakland Mills' public schools and supporting organizations to ensure equitable opportunities for achievement and advancement throughout the county.	Ongoing	OMCA	Howard County Board of Education, Howard County Council
Create a Technology Liaison/Committee to inform the OMCA of technology-related opportunities and developments that will make Oakland Mills a place where everyone can access the internet at high speed.	Short-term	OMCA	
Obtain professional help to develop a Marketing Plan to inform realtors, media, and other outlets of the unique benefits of living in Oakland Mills.	Short-term	OMCA, CA Rep	CA

Appendices

A. RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE OAKLAND MILLS TASK FORCE

Approved unanimously by the Oakland Mills Village Board on August 12, 2014

- Discuss and highlight the positive events and accomplishments at each school in the Oakland Mills Cluster.
- Engage the PTA at each school in the Oakland Mills Cluster through their communication officials.
- Discuss with PTAs and school administrators whether schools need OMCA advocacy for additional funding or special project assistance.
- Develop and foster strategies that will help retain families throughout the community from elementary to middle to high school in Oakland Mills.
- Advocate for a county policy to prohibit any redistricting that would create a Free and Reduced-Price Meal (FARM) rate above 30% at any Howard County school or would increase the FARM rate at any school already above 30%.
- Advocate for a countywide plan to deconcentrate below-market housing and FARM rates that features coordination among the Howard County Council, county departments (and commissions) and the Howard County Public School System/Board of Education.

Education Committee Members

John DiTomasso, Co-Chair
Jonathan Edelson, Co-Chair
Reg Avery
Sandy Cederbaum
Joanne Dolphin
Jervis Dorton
Jill Edelson
Fred Eiland
Lynn Engelke
Werner Gruhl
Patrick Harrington
Lisa Kehle
Margaret Mauro
Sarah Pomerantz
Jennifor Sartor
Peggy Skaggs
Liz Smull
Adona Wimberly

B. RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE HOUSING COMMITTEE OF THE OMCA TASK FORCE

Finalized by the committee on August 13, 2014
Approved by the Task Force on September 16, 2014,
Approved unanimously by the Oakland Mills Village Board on September 23, 2014.

General Recommendation:

Amend the Housing Section of the 2007 Oakland Mills Village Center Master Plan as appropriate or entirely with recommendations noted below and adopt as the Housing Section of the new Oakland Mills Village Center Community Plan.

Rental Housing Summary and Recommendation

1. Based on December 2013, actual count of Howard County property records for Talbott Springs and Stevens Forest, the neighborhoods near the village center, there are approximately:

Single-Family Detached Homes1,130, including 81 rentals
Town Homes and Condos715, including 221 rentals
Apartment Units984, all rental

2. About 45% of all housing in Talbott Springs and Stevens Forest is rental; 1,286 of 2,829 units are rented.

3. Decrease the amount of rental housing.

Verona

1. Ask the Housing Commission to post an improvement projects schedule with status updates.

2. Comply with all village covenants and county codes including occupancy limits.

3. Offer incentives to Howard County employees such as teachers, fire and rescue, police officers, etc.

4. Limit subsidized units to 20% of the total of current total units, i.e., 50 subsidized out of 251 total for any redevelopment. Therefore a maximum of 50 subsidized units on the total of 16.7 acres on two sites.

5. Redevelopment Alternatives (consistent with Plan Howard 2030, p. 129, policy 9.2)

- Sooner than 10 years
- Alternative Financing to Low-Income Housing Tax Credits
- Explore using Chatham Square in Arlington, Va. as a model with only 50 subsidized units.
- Maximize upscale owner occupied units on the two site 16.7 acres to provide revenue to Housing Commission
- Housing Commission to partner with developer to build all upscale housing on the two site 16.7 acres to recoup original investment and use the revenue to create new mixed-income complexes in communities with no subsidized housing

Howard County

1. Deconcentrate subsidized housing so that no Census Tract Block Group (CTBG) has more than 5% poverty rate, and no county school has more than 20% Free and Reduced Meal (FARM) students. Accomplish this in 5 years.

2. Terminate the fee in lieu of and alternative compliance programs that allow subsidized housing to be moved off-site.

3. Approve Moderate-Income Housing Units (MIHUs) in areas of Howard County where little or no subsidized housing exists.

4. Ask Howard County to create a subsidized housing deconcentration policy and program and measure progress over time.

5. Ask County Executive candidates for their solutions for deconcentrating subsidized housing.
6. Create our own Oakland Mills housing policy and program for Howard County that creates a full spectrum of housing throughout the county and ask the county executive candidates and council candidates seeking to represent Oakland Mills for their support.
7. Publish housing statistics annually by local community throughout the county on housing type, price (including low-income), and population of each local community.
8. Change zoning regulations to require subsidized housing in all residential zoning categories except New Town (Columbia has — 80% of all subsidized housing in the county but only — 40% of the total population of the county).
9. New Town Zoning
 - Change New Town zoning to create incentives to reduce the number of rental apartment units.
 - Maintain existing “no requirement” for subsidized housing (since Columbia has ~80% of the county’s subsidized housing without a requirement in place, no requirement for more is needed, nor is it beneficial).
10. Remodel all Housing Commission owned condos, town homes and single-family homes in Oakland Mills after current tenant leaves and sell at market rate to an owner-occupier with defined period of residency.
11. Direct Howard County Department of Housing and Community Development and the Housing Commission to:
 - Cease all new subsidized housing proposed in CTBG’s with 5% or more poverty

- Focus all new subsidized housing in CTBG’s with 0-5% poverty
 - Create a plan now to migrate half of subsidized units from CTBGs with 5% or more poverty to CTBGs with 0-5% poverty over the next five years (Columbia has — 80% of all subsidized housing and only — 40% of the county population. Migrating half the subsidized housing out of Columbia would get Columbia down to its fair share and the rest of the county up to its fair share.)
12. Create “public nuisance” legislation aimed at owners of unmaintained vacant properties to fine owners. As a last resort, use public domain law to seize property for county to rehab and sell on open market.

ReInvention

1. Investigate advantages of having Howard County declare OM a redevelopment zone with financial incentives for reinvention investment.
2. Deconcentrate subsidized housing.
3. Replace half the apartment units in OM with owner-occupied upscale (executive, luxury) housing to reduce the negative impact of apartments on the property values of all other housing in OM.

To achieve a thriving community in OM, there is a need to change the housing mix in the village. The current housing mix (Talbot Springs, Stevens Forest and Thunder Hill) per CA document and county rental housing study is:

Single-family detached homes	1,717
Town Homes	525
Condos	190
Apartment units (4 complexes)	984
Total.....	3,416

The apartments represent 29% of all units and are controlled by four owners. These 4 owners have more of an impact on the property values of the other 2,432 units than the owners of those units do. It is critical to reduce the number of apartments and replace them with owner occupied upscale housing in order to achieve a full spectrum of housing within five years.

4. Contact Enterprise Housing and HUD to discuss possibility of phasing in some market rate units at Forest Ridge apartments including senior housing (50+).

5. Create new upscale (executive, luxury) housing including senior housing.

6. Provide reduced cost financing for first-time homebuyers of neglected homes in OM with the following requirements:

- Owner occupied only
- Reside for a defined period of time

7. Provide incentives for existing home owners to renovate their homes with the following requirements:

- Owner occupied only
- Reside for a defined period of time

8. Form an alliance with the four other older villages, North Laurel and Elkridge to press for the county wide subsidized housing de-concentration policy and program. Form alliance with non-profits that have similar interests.

9. Secure new and/or upgraded CA recreational facility to make the village center and surrounding area more attractive to home buyers.

Public Spaces

1. Ask Howard County

- To be diligent in ongoing maintenance of streets, road markings, trees, signs, streetlights.
- To upgrade Stevens Forest Road and Thunder Hill Road with curbed and painted medians to calm traffic.

2. Ask CA and Howard County to keep landscaping on their property up to standards seen throughout Columbia and Howard County.

Village Wide

1. Promote Transit Oriented Development for OM with its links to Downtown Columbia.

2. Encourage links to Town Center for positive spillover effect and location efficiency (Plan Howard 2030, page 125).

3. Create list of volunteer architects to aid in design of home renovations (Plan Howard 2030, page 133).

4. Educate homeowners on how to deal with contractors and deal with general home maintenance.

5. Seek creation of low cost financing for property improvements on distressed and neglected properties.

6. Investigate group discounts with home improvement contractors and retailers.

7. Emphasize positives in OM through all media including OM typical smaller sized housing that is growing in demand (Plan Howard 2030, page 126).

8. Ask the county Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits to conduct semiannual inspections of all apartment complexes.

9. Improve Covenant Compliance

- Perform periodic Property Standards Evaluation inspections of all homes for covenant compliance.
- Have condo and town home Homeowners Associations (HOAs) research the ability to limit the number of rentals and enforce HOA covenants.
- Educate residents on covenant requirements.
- Encourage residents to comply with and enforce covenants.

10. Encourage upscale home and landscaping improvement through contests with before and after pictures (Plan Howard 2030, page 133).

11. Establish OM as a Targeted Growth and Revitalization area by amending the 2007 OM Village Center Master Plan (Plan Howard 2030, page 136).

12. Encourage the use of the Maryland State Program “Accessible Homes for Seniors” that provides zero-interest loans to those 55+.

Housing Committee Members, May 2014 to present

Bill McCormack, Chair
Don Andberg
Nancy Bellony
Tom Carbo
Mike Clark
Jervis Dorton
Eleanor Foschetti
Claudia Hollywood
Donna Koelle
CeCe McCullough
Doris Morgan
Janice Rattley
Kathryn Schatz
Chuck Thomas
Danny Singer
Lee Skaggs
Evelyn Tanner
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