

River Hill Village Center

COMMUNITY PLAN

Developed by the River Hill Village Center Master Plan Committee • Approved by the River Hill Board of Directors

December 2013



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Acknowledgements

In 2010, the River Hill Community Association Board of Directors passed a charter to create the River Hill Village Center Master Plan Committee (“MPC”). This MPC was tasked with providing an open forum for the discussion of topics and issues related to future development in the Greater River Hill Community Area. The committee then took the information learned and used it to create a Master Plan for the future of the River Hill Village Center. The MPC was composed of a group of volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, all working towards an improved future for the River Hill Community.

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Introduction

WHY DEVELOP THIS PLAN?

In 2009, Howard County established a village redevelopment process known as Council Bill-29-2009. The bill allows Columbia villages to define the boundaries of their Village Centers. Furthermore, the bill provides a methodology for each village to develop a customized Village Center Master Plan. The new regulations define a village center as a mixed-use development in the New Town District that is designed to be “a community focal point and gathering place for the surrounding village neighborhoods.”

As stated in the county’s zoning regulations, the Village Center should include:

- *An outdoor, public, village green space which has both hardscape and softscape elements. This public space shall be designed to function as an accessible, primary, pedestrian-oriented promenade connecting the various village center buildings and shall include public seating features;*
- *Stores, shops, offices or other commercial uses which provide opportunities to fulfill the day-to-day needs of the village residents such as food stores, specialty stores, service agencies, financial institutions, personal services, medical services and restaurants;*
- *Space for community and/or institutional uses; and*
- *Residential uses, to the extent appropriate to support and enhance but not overwhelm other uses in the village.*

The Village Center Master Plan is defined in the zoning regulations as “an advisory plan which has been developed

by the community and endorsed by the Village Board.” The Plan provides a community vision that is to be used to help evaluate the appropriateness of Village Center development/redevelopment petitions. In the future, at the time a developer submits a redevelopment petition to the county, the Village Board is permitted to submit a written Community Response Statement to comment on the proposal. The regulations state that the village may include a statement of whether the petition is in harmony with the Village Center Master Plan.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PLAN?

The purpose of the River Hill Village Center Master Plan is to provide an analysis of the current and future expected issues facing the River Hill Village Center, while providing a framework for solutions to these issues. In order to focus on a specific area, the plan defines boundaries for the Village Center in the next section. The plan includes a short-term and long-term vision for the future of the Village Center.

The Plan prepares the village to respond to and to comment on future development or redevelopment proposals that are submitted for the Village Center area. The plan documents issues, concerns and desires for the Village Center. The plan can be updated as the village sees fit as redevelopment proposals are submitted or circumstances change. This plan is advisory and is not part of the County’s General Plan, although it is hoped that the River Hill Village Center Master Plan will be in harmony with the General Plan.

WHAT WAS THE PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE PLAN?

The Master Plan Committee met more than 25 times over two years. At the beginning of the process, and during the Plan's creation, the MPC met with representatives from other Villages and the Columbia Association to learn about the planning methodology. Several meetings were held with representatives from most of the Villages' planning committees in order to share ideas

In order to create the plan, the MPC studied the existing Village Center and surrounding area. To effectively study the area, it was necessary to get input from all the interested stakeholders. Surveys were conducted with area residents to determine the areas of concern and highlight the community's desires. In-person interviews were also held with local small-business owners to ascertain the needs of the business community. The results were used to generate ideas that are included in the Plan. (The complete data from the surveys and interviews are included in the Appendix.) A study of the current state of the area around the Village Center was undertaken, which included cataloging all of the businesses in the area. Numerous discussions were held with property owners, including the primary property owner in the Village Center, Kimco Realty, in order to provide a two-way-dialogue on the plan. Members of the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning and the Howard County Department of Public Works were consulted during various stages of the plan's development.

The Master Plan Committee felt it vital to maintain an open dialogue with all interested members of the community. Therefore, all meetings were open to the public. Additionally, the following activities and initiatives were undertaken to make

the Plan development process as inclusive as possible with regard to community input:

- *A village walkabout was held in November, 2010 to highlight various aspects of the Village Center and elicit input from local residents and small-business owners.*
- *A "virtual" walk-a-bout was also established online at <http://riverhillmasterplan.blogspot.com>.*
- *Several articles about the progress of the MPC were written in the River Hill newsletter "The Villager."*
- *About half-way through the process of the creation of the plan, the MPC held a public forum titled "Brainstorm for River Hill's Future: Share the Journey as We Develop the Plan for the Village Center of Tomorrow."*
- *The MPC met with the Village Board of Directors to update them on the progress of the plan.*
- *Several times, representatives from the MPC testified in front of the Howard County Council on areas of concern.*

The MPC presented an initial draft of the Plan to the River Hill Village Board which was approved on February 4, 2013.

The MPC solicited comments from the community during a Public Comment period from March to May, 2013. "Public input was gathered via email, notices and comments online in the Villager Newsletter, and during the River Hill Spring Elections at a table staffed by the MPC. The final Master Plan document was approved by the River Hill Village Board on October 7, 2013 and filed with Howard County and the Columbia Association. The Master Plan is available online at villageofriverhill.org and in printed form at Claret Hall.

Village Center Boundaries and Existing Conditions

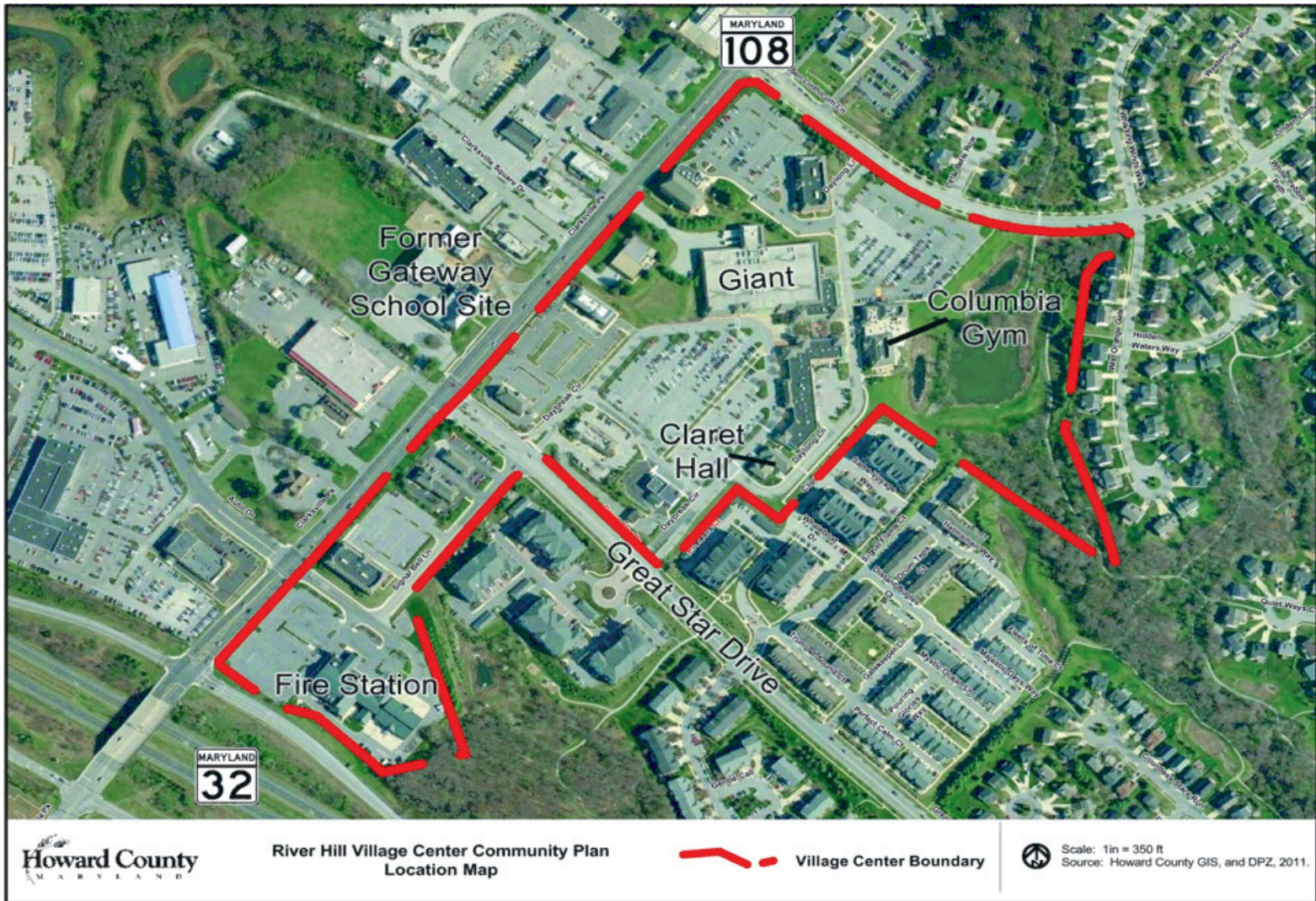
This section provides a brief overview of existing conditions and issues that relate to the River Hill Village Center. It provides the context for the Goals and Visions for the River Hill Village Center Master Plan by describing existing conditions and key issues that impact development and vitality of the village center.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ISSUES

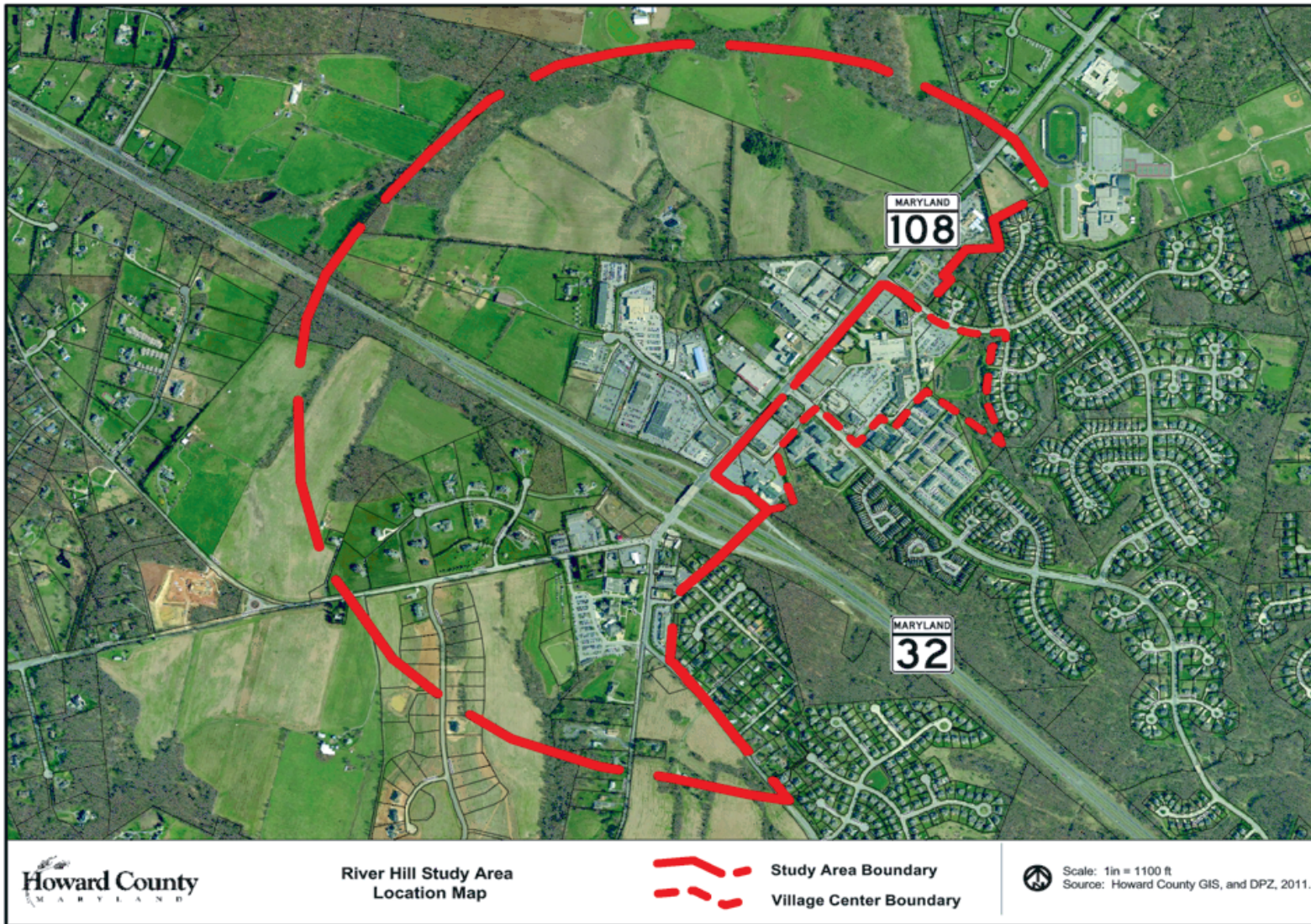
The River Hill Village Center, Columbia's ninth and final village center, is located at the western edge of the city and serves both Columbia and Howard County residents. The boundaries as defined by the Master Plan for the River Hill Village Center are shown in the map on page 6. Opened in late 1997, it is strategically located $\frac{1}{4}$ mile off Route 32 on Route 108 and Daybreak Circle. It has the county's largest Giant Food store with 63,000 square feet of space and is complemented by 17 smaller retail operations in four handsome one-level brick buildings (source: columbia villagecenters.com). The River Hill Village Center, similar to the Hickory Ridge Village Center, borders land that was not part of New Town Zoning. The western side of the Village Center borders Route 108, a major road that carried approximately 19,990 vehicles per day in 2011 (source: Maryland State Highway Administration, Howard County Traffic Volume Map 2011) all of which pass by or stop at the River Hill Village Center.

The Village Center is composed of several buildings with a variety of property owners. The southernmost portion of the Village Center is occupied by the Howard County-owned Ten Oaks Ballroom and the Clarksville Fire Department. North of that is a building that currently houses several medical tenants. That building is adjacent to a gas station that is located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Route 108 and Great Star Drive. On the other side of Great Star Drive are the bulk of the Village Center merchants. The majority of the property in this area of the Village Center is comprised of parking lots. The largest merchant in the Village Center is the Giant Supermarket. Columbia Association amenities in this area include Claret Hall, which houses the Village Center offices and contains meeting rooms, and the Columbia Gym. Behind Columbia Gym there are three drainage ponds. Across the parking lot from Columbia Gym is a two-story building housing medical tenants and another building that functions as an interfaith center and a Montessori school. The northern boundary of the Village Center is Linden Linthicum Lane.

Although the primary focus of the Master Plan is the area within the boundaries, see map on next page, the adjacent commercial properties and roads have a significant impact on the Village Center. The Master Plan Committee identified a 1 mile radius surrounding the Village Center, see map on page 7, as an area of high interest. Significant development, changes, and other issues that arise in this area of high impact will influence the Village Center and the overall Master Plan.



River Hill Village Center Boundaries



River Hill Village Center with adjacent high impact area

RIVER HILL DEMOGRAPHICS

Following the results of the 2010 US Census, an extensive snapshot of the demographics and socio-economic profile for all of the Columbia Villages including River Hill Village was compiled by the Columbia Association in a report released in December, 2012 titled Characteristics of Columbia, Maryland: a Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile. (source: columbiaassociation.org). Several of the tables most relevant to understanding the impact of the residents on Village Center and the plan are included. Some of the most unique characteristics of the community are summarized as follows:

- *River Hill's mean household income of \$182,386 is the highest among all of Columbia's Villages. Howard County overall had the highest median income of all counties in Maryland and was ranked #5 nationally.*
- *River Hill has an exceptional number of children living in the community. Over 36% the population of 6,752 consists of children younger than 18 years old. In the other Columbia Villages, children made up 20% to 25% of the population.*

River Hill Population By Age and Gender

Population	Total	Pct. Of Total	Male	Pct. Of Total	Female	Pct. Of Total
Total Population	6,752	100.0%	3,363	100.0%	3,389	100.0%
Under 5 Years	327	4.8%	155	4.6%	173	5.1%
5 to 17 Years	2,115	31.3%	1,092	32.5%	1,024	30.2%
18 to 24 Years	404	6.0%	228	6.8%	176	5.2%
25 to 34 Years	251	3.7%	121	3.6%	129	3.8%
35 to 44 Years	1,158	17.2%	490	14.6%	669	19.7%
45 to 54 Years	1,668	24.7%	835	24.8%	833	24.6%
55 to 64 Years	557	8.3%	313	9.3%	245	7.2%
65 Years and Over	270	4.0%	130	3.9%	140	4.1%
Median Age	37.4		36.8		37.9	
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2010, Summary File 1</i>						

River Hill Income Distribution

Income	Number	MOE
Households	2,688	116
Less than \$1,000	31	183
\$10,000 to \$14,999	0	220
\$15,000 to \$24,999	46	257
\$25,000 to \$34,999	107	230
\$35,000 to \$49,999	72	316
\$50,000 to \$74,999	156	194
\$75,000 to \$99,999	197	76
\$100,000 to \$149,999	523	125
\$150,000 or more	1,536	186
Mean household income	\$182,386	\$19,044
<i>Source: 2006 - 2010 American Community Survey; Maryland Department of Planning</i>		
Note: The shaded cells indicate values for which the margin of error (MOE), plus or minus, is relatively large indicating that the estimate may be unreliable given the small sample size.		

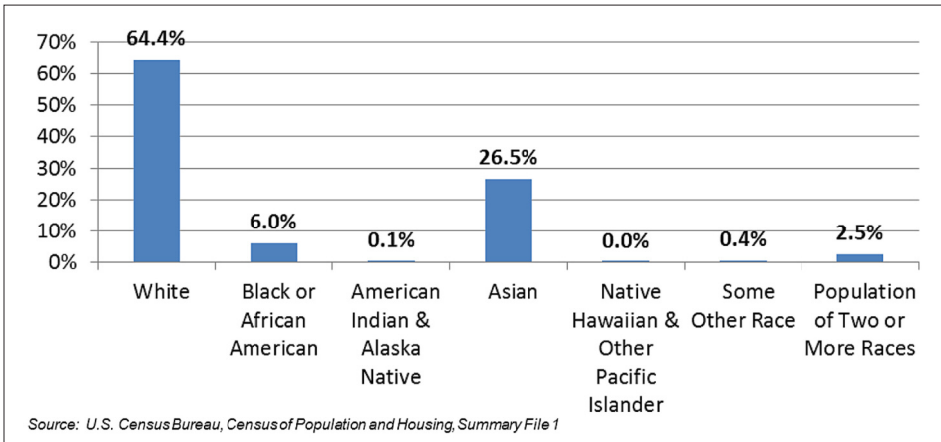
River Hill Housing Occupancy

Occupancy/Tenure Status	Number	Pct. Of Total
Total Housing Units:	1,993	100.0%
Occupied	1,974	99.1%
Vacant	19	0.9%
Total Occupied Housing Units:	1,974	100.0%
Owned with a mortgage or loan	1,688	85.5%
Owned free and clear	151	7.7%
Renter occupied	135	6.8%
Total Vacant Housing Units:	19	100.0%
For rent	6	31.9%
Rented, not occupied	0	0.0%
For sale only	5	25.8%
Sold, not occupied	3	14.0%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	3	13.6%
For migrant workers	0	0.0%
Other vacant	3	14.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census of Population and Housing, 2010, Summary File 1

- River Hill has the highest percentage of Asians among the Villages with 26.5%, more than double the average of 11% for all of Columbia.
- The population median age is 37.4 years which is very close to the median age of Columbia and Maryland residents.
- 82% of village households live in single family detached home and the mean housing value is \$672,200.
- The average number of people per household is 3.42.
- 89.3% of families are married couples and 68.4% of all families had children under the age of 18.
- Unlike the other Columbia Villages, there were few one-person households (only 1.2%) and over 90% of households had no people over the age of 65.
- River Hill has very few rental properties. Over 92% of households own their home, well above Columbia's 65% home ownership rate.
- At the time of the census < 1% of River Hill's housing units were vacant.

River Hill Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2010



Implementation Plans

This guide provides a roadmap for implementing The Plan and identifies the stakeholders involved in decisions and approvals that would be needed to accomplish the objectives. The related sections that refer to the implementation actions are also referenced. The following time frame definitions and stakeholder abbreviations are used.

Stakeholder	Abbreviations	Role
Kimco Realty	Kimco	Majority owner of Village Center retail shopping center and property
Columbia Association	CA	Owner of Claret Hall, Columbia Gym, and water retention pond open space
River Hill Community Association	RHCA	The Board of Directors that represents the River Hill Village Residents and governs the activities at Claret Hall
Maryland State Highway Administration	MDSHA	Responsible for all road work and impacts to state highways include Rt. 108 and Rt. 32
Howard County Government	HCG	Implements and enforces zoning laws and ordinances for the county. Current owner of the Gateway Property site and a section of the Park-and-Ride lot at the Ten Oaks Ballroom
Village Center Merchants	Merchants	Owners/operators of businesses leasing space at the Village Center
Giant	Giant	Owner of the Giant grocery store and undeveloped lot in the Village Center
Howard County Historical Society	HCHS	Non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historical artifacts and land in Howard County
5th District Volunteer Fire Department	VFD	Owner of the Ten Oaks Ballroom
United States Postal Service	USPS	Postal Services operated by the Federal Government

Time Frames

On-going

If activity is not already underway, it should start immediately

Short-term

Put plans in place to implement within 1 to 5 years

Long-term

Work toward developing options to resolve the issues in 5 years or more

Action	Timeframe	Stakeholders	Section of Plan
The RHCA should engage formally with the merchants and Kimco throughout the year. This could include meeting twice a year with the Village Center merchants to communicate upcoming Village Center events, potential sponsorship and advertising opportunities, and to discuss any community concerns that have been raised by residents and Village Center patrons. RHCA should formally review Village Center cleanliness, maintenance, and appearance issues on a quarterly basis with Kimco.	On-going	Merchants, RHCA, Kimco	Goals I. A.2 and II. A.
The RHCA should follow proposed changes to New Town Zoning laws that permit Village Centers to advertise their merchants on a street side directory. If laws are changed, Kimco should consult with the Merchants and the RHCA on the placement of road side signage.	Short-term	RHCA, CA, Kimco, Merchants, HCG	Goal I. B.1
As Route 32 widening efforts get underway northwest of Clarksville, the RHCA should work with MDSHA on their signage plan to propose exit signs that advertise River Hill along with Clarksville. The same effort could also propose additional signage for the section of Route 32 east of Clarksville.	Short-term	RHCA, MDSHA	Goal I. B.2
If store fronts or the vacant parcel become available, the RHCA should highlight and revisit the community surveys that were conducted by the MPC to propose the types of businesses that would serve the community's needs.	On-going	Kimco, RHCA	Goals I. A.1, I. B.3, Appendices I and II
The RHCA should continue its effort to attend county development hearings associated with properties adjacent to the Village Center, gather community input, and testify when appropriate when new development impacts the Village Center. The MPC can be used as a roadmap for the RHCA position on development issues.	On-going	RHCA, OPO	Goals I. B.4, I. C., II. A.5, III. C, III. F.
Kimco should consider an alternate water feature to replace the current fountain which tends to be cumbersome. A multi-purpose use water feature should be considered.	Short-term	Kimco, Merchants	Goal II. A.2 and II. B.1
Kimco should explore the option of having a small stage for performances with tiered seating incorporated into the landscaping.	Short-term	Kimco, Merchants	Goal II. A.3 and II. B.2-3
Using templates from existing Columbia Village Centers, Kimco should establish a business directory and community bulletin board for the Village Center. The location of the directory should be discussed with the RHCA and merchants should be able to advertise monthly specials and other events on a section of the bulletin board.	Short-term	Merchants, RHCA, Kimco	Goals II. A.4 and II. B.6

Action	Timeframe	Stakeholders	Section of Plan
RHCA should inquire if the HCHS has interest in developing a historical marker that would incorporate the Clarksville Pike Milestone on the West side of Route 108. A possible location for such as marker would be the corner of Route 108 and Great Star on the property of Capital One Bank. In the short-term, the RHCA should ensure that future development of the Gateway School site preserves the marker.	Long-term	Capital One Bank, RHCA, HCHS, MSHA	Goal II. B.4
Kimco should consider the option of creating a gathering space in front of Claret Hall on either a permanent or temporary basis.	Short-term	Kimco, Merchants	Goal II. B.5
Begin implementation of green and modern technology enhancements to the Village Center including rain gardens, WiFi, bike racks, and accessible recycling facilities.	Short-term	Kimco, Merchants, CA, RHCA	Goal III A.
Contact the US Postal Service to request a blue mail drop box be installed at the Village Center near the Giant or Columbia Bank in the courtyard area.	Short-term	Kimco, RHCA, USPS	Goal III. C.5
The RHCA should work with Giant to improve the vacant lot to accommodate pedestrian traffic with a sidewalk or asphalt path.	Short-term	RHCA, Kimco, Merchants — Giant	Goal III. F.
The Maryland State Highway Administration and Howard County should consider constructing additional designated locations for pedestrians to cross Route 108 between Route 32 and Linden Linthicum Lane.	Short-term	MSHA, HCG	Goal IV.
The Maryland State Highway Administration and Howard County should consider erecting new signs along Route 32 identifying River Hill as a primary destination.	Short-term	MSHA	Goal IV.
The Maryland State Highway Administration, Howard County and/or the Columbia Association should consider installing decorative signals, lights, signs, textured pavement treatments, trees, etc, to differentiate the River Hill/Clarksville region from the rest of the Route 108 corridor.	Short-term	MSHA, HCG, CA	Goal IV.
Howard County should study the intersection of South Daybreak Circle at Great Star Drive, including the potential construction of a roundabout or traffic signal, modifications to improve pedestrian accessibility, and potential lighting enhancements.	Long-term	HCG	Goal IV. A.
Howard County should study the intersection of North Daybreak Circle at Great Star Drive considering potential access restrictions to limit the number of allowable movements thereby simplifying traffic operations.	Long-term	HCG	Goal IV. B.

Action	Timeframe	Stakeholders	Section of Plan
Howard County and the Maryland State Highway Administration should study the intersection of Great Star Drive and Route 108 considering options to improve pedestrian accessibility and safety.	Short-term	MSHA, HCG	Goal IV. C.
The Maryland State Highway Administration and Howard County should consider constructing sidewalks along both sides of Route 108 between Route 32 and Linden Linthicum Lane.	Short-term	MSHA, HCG	Goal IV. C.-E.
The Maryland State Highway Administration and Howard County should, potentially in conjunction with the on-going study of Route 108 in Clarksville, study the section of Route 108 between the Verizon Building and Linden Linthicum Lane to improve pedestrian accommodations and possibly consolidating access points to improve traffic safety.	Short-term	MSHA, HCG	Goal IV. D.
The Maryland State Highway Administration and Howard County should study the intersection of Route 108 and Linden Linthicum Lane to determine if a signal is warranted, considering traffic that is avoiding the intersection in peak periods by cutting through the Village Center.	Short-term	MSHA, HCG	Goal IV. E.
Changes to Day Long Lane are needed immediately to improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow. Kimco and CA, the two adjacent property owners, should work with the RHCA to redevelop this access corridor so it is safe for curbside pick-up and pedestrians.	Short-term	CA, RHCA, Kimco, Merchants	Goal V. B.
Kimco/CA should stripe unused portions of the gym parking lot to add more parking spaces.	Short-term	CA, RHCA, Kimco	Goal V. C.
RHCA should keep up with any changes proposed to Ten Oaks Ballroom to incorporate improved transportation options. The RHCA could offer recommendations from the Master Plan and input from the local community to the VFD that operates Ten Oaks Ballroom and to MDSHA.	Long-term	VFD, MDSHA, RHCA	Goal V. D.
RHCA should work with Kimco Realty and local Village Center merchants on a redevelopment plan for the parking lots and traffic circulation around the Village Center. The plan should include a timeframe for implementing various solutions to problems outlined in the Master Plan.	Short-term	Kimco, Merchants, RHCA, CA	Goal V.A-C.
Implement changes to the Village Center parking lot as outlined in the parking lot and traffic circulation development plan.	Long-term	Kimco, Merchants, RHCA, CA	Goal V.A-C.

Goals and Visions for River Hill Village Center Master Plan

I. MAINTAINING VIBRANCY AND THE SUCCESS OF THE VILLAGE CENTER

The River Hill Village Center is the newest Village Center in Columbia. Anchored by the Giant Food supermarket, the center offers River Hill residents a variety of local businesses, popular chain stores, and restaurants. Over the years, the center's stores have had a high occupancy rate in large part due to the popularity of the Giant Food supermarket which serves not just the River Hill residents but also residents of Western Howard County. Unlike many of the other Columbia Village Centers which are centered within residential areas, the River Hill Village Center is located along Route 108 (Clarksville Pike) across from several other local shopping centers and a commercially zoned parcel of land that has yet to be developed. One of the primary goals of this Master Plan is to ensure that healthy and vibrant businesses continue to serve the needs of local residents while simultaneously complementing the array of retail establishments along the Route 108 corridor. The Master Planning Committee solicited input from many of the current merchants in the Village Center, the shopping center owner (Kimco Realty), and local residents on ways to continue to maintain the vibrancy of the Village Center. The following three sub-sections summarize the most frequently heard suggestions.

A. Maintain healthy businesses in the Village Center:

The Master Plan should identify several ways to improve the Village Center's connection to the community while bringing more patrons to the center to shop.

- 1. Diversity** — Encourage a solid but diverse base of merchants locally connected to the River Hill community. The merchant and community surveys included in the Appendix provide a detailed list of suggestions for new businesses.
- 2. Communications** — Assure frequent and timely communications between Claret Hall and all of the merchants with the Village Center boundaries
- 3. Events** — Sponsor more frequent social events that are coordinated with the Village Board that serve a variety of the community's interests. Suggestions include: Monthly local farmers markets, student art festivals and drama presentations, outdoor family movies, karaoke, poetry slams, skill

demonstrations (dance, karate, cooking), craft shows, flea markets and other entertainment.

- 4. Directory** — Establish a business directory, left, near the courtyard with a map and listing of all of the businesses in the Village Center similar to other villages.

- 5. Bulletin Board** — Host an outdoor community bulletin board, possibly co-located with the business directory, for posting official Village Center events and announcements.



A directory with a map and a listing of businesses similar to the one at Kings Contrivance, shown above, is proposed for the River Hill Village Center.

B. Encourage fair competition with the surrounding businesses along Route 108:

The Village Center is the only shopping center along Route 108 that does not have a directory listing or store front signs visible from Clarksville Pike, below right. The lack of visibility puts the Village Center at a disadvantage in comparison to other stores in the area. There are actions that can be taken to improve the Village Center’s “competitiveness:”

- 1. **Signage along Route 108** — Support changes to the Columbia signage ordinance to enable the Village Center to advertise along Route 108.
- 2. **Signage along Route 32** — Bring awareness to the Village Center and surrounding shopping areas in the community by installing a sign on Route 32 near the exits of Great Star and Route 108 advertising the Village Center or the Community of River Hill. Other Columbia Villages

have similar signs along Route 32, below left.

- 3. **Magnet Stores** — Encourage “magnet stores” and other unique businesses that draw patrons to the Village Center from the surrounding area not just the River Hill community.
- 4. **Future Development** — Monitor commercial development in the high impact area near the Village Center to ensure complementary business development that does not negatively impact existing Village Center businesses and provide new services or amenities to the area. For instance, the River Hill and Clarksville areas have a high density of banks. The community has expressed interest in seeing a wider diversity of businesses in and around the Village Center — other than banks — to meet the community’s growing needs. The community also expressed interest in a wider offering of restaurants and businesses that cater to families and children.



Above: Signs identify Owen Brown and Kings Contrivance Village Centers along Route 32. Right: Shopping center signs are visible along Route 108 across from the River Hill Village Center.



C. Planning future commercial growth: Residential areas in the River Hill and Clarksville area are nearly fully developed. Yet demand for housing in the area remains strong. In addition, expanding the Village Center to accommodate new businesses and patron parking is a challenge. The small parcel of land adjacent to the Giant is the last remaining lot available for commercial development within the River Hill Village Center property. Therefore, other than this parcel of land, any other new development will have to take place on land currently occupied by parking lots or within the footprint of current buildings.

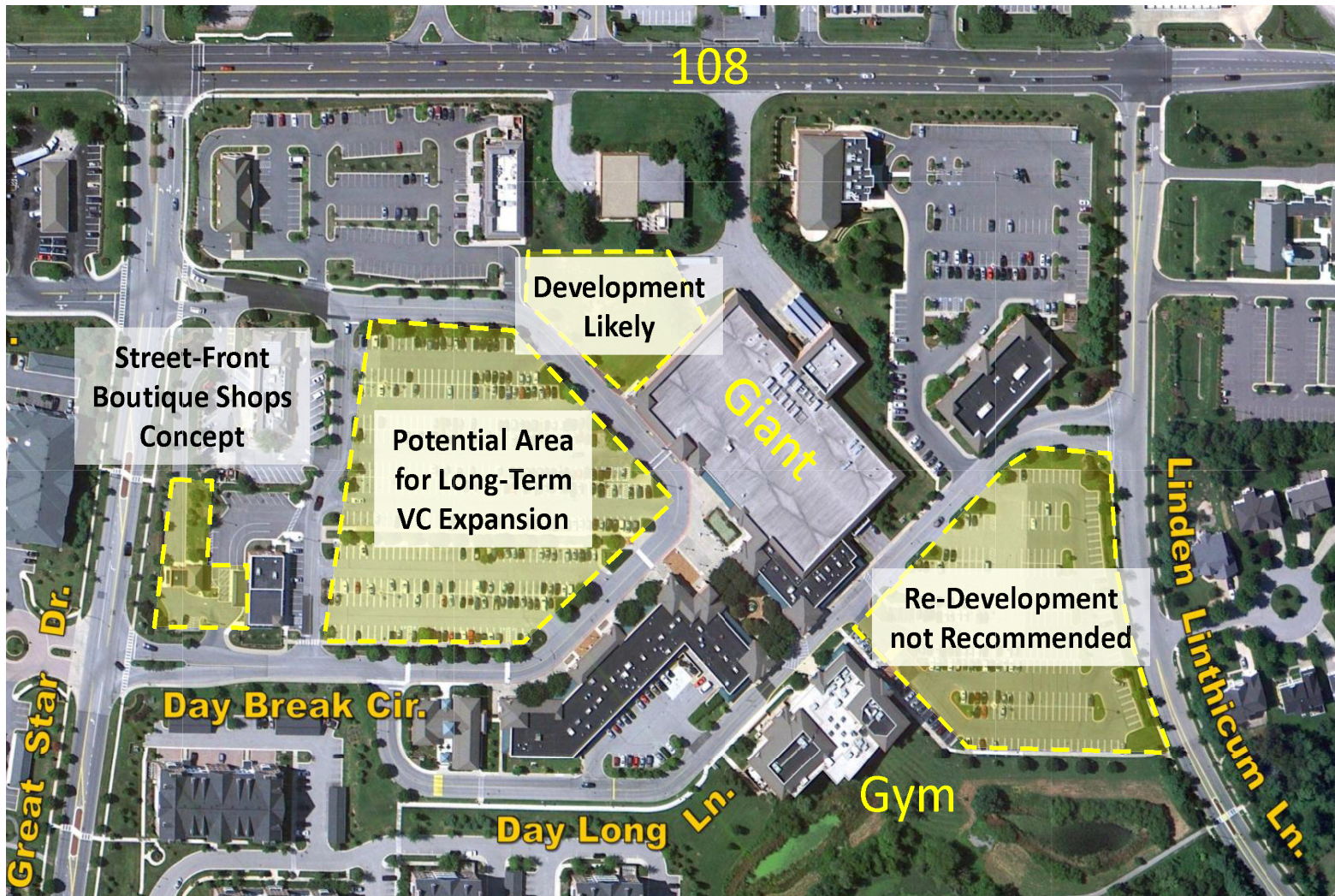
The residents have expressed concerns about permitting significant growth to the Village Center and along Route 108 without first addressing major community developmental issues currently present such as traffic congestion along Route 108 and Great Star, cut-through traffic in the Village Center, lack of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations along Route 108, unsafe turn lanes and driveways along Route 108, and the impact development would have on community aesthetics and open space. The community has also expressed concerns about new types of residential properties that could be included in future “mixed-use” development. Many residents wish to retain River Hill’s current make-up of owner-occupied housing and oppose the growth of rental properties and apartments in the area. Any growth in residential capacity should be offset by investing in the expansion of River Hill community amenities such as the Columbia Association fitness facility, pool, local parks, tot lots, pathways, and open space.

The Master Plan recommends early community engagement and government-supported impact studies if there are significant changes to the Village Center, make-up of the businesses, or construction of new residential properties that alter the character

of River Hill or the adjacent Clarksville properties in the high impact area so these concerns can be addressed. The Master Plan identifies the following areas that could be used to support new and significant growth within the Village Center boundaries:

1. New Commercial Development and Mixed Use Within the Village Center

— The community has expressed concern about any re-development efforts within the Village Center boundary in the short-term. However, in the long-term (beyond 5 years from publication of The Master Plan) there may be a need to update the buildings or address future needs of the community with new commercial or residential capacity. Since there are few places to add-on to existing commercial spaces, redevelopment of parking lots with enclosed parking structures would have to be considered. The Giant parking lot could be a future location for a multi-story development. However, the height of such development should not exceed that of the adjacent condominium buildings and the parking structure should be attractively hidden or enclosed by a surrounding facade to preserve the aesthetics of the community. New construction should avoid areas immediately adjacent to or across from residential areas such as the gym parking lot. Small boutique shops that are pedestrian accessible could be added to the Great Star frontage properties where the drive-up banks are currently located. The map on page 17 identifies areas where future development could occur and identifies areas that should be avoided. This development, however, is only recommended in the long-term (beyond 5 years) and will require extensive community engagement and planning beforehand.



Development of the vacant lot next to Giant is likely in the short-term (within 5 years). However, major redevelopment within the Village Center boundaries should only occur in the long-term (5 years and beyond). Certain areas have been identified by the MPC as potential locations for redevelopment. Areas adjacent to or across from residences are not recommended for redevelopment.



Ten Oaks Ballroom

2. **Local Transportation Hub** — Transform the Park-and-Ride at the Ten Oaks Ballroom, above, into a major local transportation hub that supports daily commuters to Ft. Meade, Baltimore, and the D.C. metro area. The addition of a parking garage may be necessary to accommodate increased commuter traffic.
3. **Professional Buildings** — These buildings, right, could serve alternative purposes that meet the community’s future needs. The MPC identified the lack of a small hotel in the area as a need that might be served by including that type of business within the Village Center boundaries to provide accommodations to visitors attending events in the area such as those held at Tens Oak Ballroom.
4. **Undeveloped Lot** — Next to Giant and owned by Giant.



Professional building on Signal Bell Lane

II. CREATE A COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACE

River Hill residents would welcome a center in which they know they will see their friends socializing for local community events in a free-flowing, family-friendly, open space setting. Currently, the River Hill Village Center does not have the warm, welcoming feel of a social “destination” area for the community. However, there is tremendous potential within the center. Targeted, well-planned improvements could result in a greatly improved focal point for the community. This could draw more people into the center and encourage increased socializing, both of which would lead to greater patronage of the surrounding businesses.

A. Current Issues:

- 1. Maintenance and Appearance** — The center is relatively clean and well-maintained. Recently, more people have been using the courtyard and new table seating area. As a result, the sidewalks need more frequent power washing and trash needs to be picked up more regularly. The flower beds, below, are attractive but too abundant and not well-placed. The current flow and layout is not conducive to having community members stay and linger with friends and family.
- 2. Fountain Area** — The current fountain area, see page 20, takes up unnecessary space, is potentially dangerous for children who play in, on, or around it, and the benches are not



The flower beds near Giant are attractive but too abundant and not well-placed.

positioned in a manner that fosters communication, as the benches go around in a circle.

- 3. Outdoor Events** — As the courtyard is currently configured, it is difficult to hold outdoor entertainment activities. For example, it is challenging for the current Friday night bands and performers to find an appropriate place to set up.
- 4. Community Bulletin Board** — There is no outdoor community board to let people know what businesses are within the center, or what community events might be happening in the future. Current advertising of events is not reaching its targeted audience.
- 5. Undeveloped Lot Development** — It would be helpful to

explore options for the undeveloped lot next to Giant, below left, should it ever become available.

- 6. Lack of Community Events between River Hill and Clarksville Businesses along Route 108** — There are no coordinated events with merchants along Route 108 and the Village Center.

B. Possible Solutions

- 1. Courtyard fountain** — Instead of the large and cumbersome existing fountain, consider a built-into-the-ground water feature for the children, shown below, that could be turned on during warm weather. Consider a different water feature that would be more conducive to multi-purpose use. For example, when the water feature is turned off, it is open for pedestrian usage or a feature in which



Undeveloped lot next to Giant



The existing courtyard fountain could be replaced by a built-in water feature for children.

a temporary “stage in the round” could be placed over it for concerts.

2. Performance venue — Explore the option of having a small stage, preferably a permanent one, set up for performances (e.g. bands, open mic nights, theater, etc.) The stage could be over a reconfigured water feature or take the place of a current flowerbed near Giant, below. River Hill students have expressed an interest in utilizing this feature to encourage more performance events.

3. Better seating options — Tiered seating could be incorporated into the landscaping for better visibility of entertainment. The two large flowerbeds could be reduced in size or taken out altogether in favor of more walking and seating areas. It will be necessary to focus on better-planned seating arrangements to encourage increased social interaction.

4. Historical feature focusing on Clarksville — Add a historical feature/marker that describes the history of Clarksville. The marker could explain the history of the Clark family farm in the area, feature an old map or graphic that shows the early route of Clarksville Pike from Clarksville to Ellicott City and show early pictures of buildings and settlements in the area such as the Gateway School —which has been torn down — and the Clark family residence — which has been moved. The milestone, carved from native Maryland rock on the Gateway School site, is one of the only historic artifacts left in Clarksville and could be incorporated into the feature. A possible location might be the corner of the Capital One Bank at Route 108 and Great Star Drive, see page 22. The marker could face the former Gateway school site and the milestone moved to the River Hill Village Center property.



Proposed location for seating and a performance venue

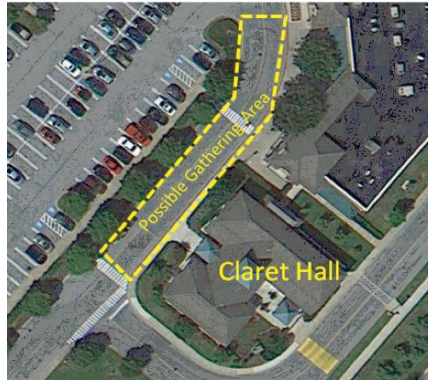


Above: A possible location for an enhanced historical marker might be at the corner of Route 108 and Great Star Drive near Capital One Bank. Right: A historic milestone marks the site of the former Gateway School and the number of miles to Ellicott City.



5. Create a new temporary gathering space in front of Claret Hall

Hall — As the idea of reconfiguring the Village Center community space takes shape, one suggestion is to either temporarily or permanently block Daybreak Circle from the intersection with Day Long Lane to in front of Ledo’s. Rename this area “White Wine Way,” a play off the name of the original land grant of River Hill,



“White Wine and Claret.” White Wine Way could be used as a community gathering place with a stage, seating area, and area for other events such as yard sales, farmers markets, book fairs, police and fire safety demonstrations, or marketing opportunities

for VC merchants. The creation of White Wine Way would address numerous safety concerns that have been raised about pedestrians trying to cross the road to get to the bank and cars refusing to stop for them, even with the presence of marked crosswalks. Also community event options could be increased. Traffic headed toward the Giant from Great Star would turn left at the intersection at M&T bank. Other traffic destined for Columbia Gym would turn right at the intersection with Day Long Lane.

6. Encourage Integration of Village Center Events with Adjacent Commercial Properties Along Route 108

— Currently Village Center events only involve the participation of businesses located in the Village Center. As pedestrian accessibility improves along Route 108 with the development the Gateway Property, it may be possible to hold simultaneous events for the community. For instance, Haunted Hallows Eve which allows children to trick-or-treat at the Village Center merchants could include the

participation of merchants along Route 108. A trolley or small bus could circulate among the different venues during the event to bring patrons to all participating businesses safely. An event coordinator appointed by the River Hill Board of Directors would pre-coordinate the details with participating merchants through letters and meetings. These types of joint activities would bring the community together and improve the integration of Clarksville with River Hill.

7. Large community board feature

— It would be helpful to have a large, glass-encased, possibly free-standing community board feature that highlights all the businesses within the Village Center. There may be other, more modern displays that include an electronic means to display and post messages that could be investigated. Funding for the board could be supported by advertisement space that could be leased by Claret Hall. This board could also advertise upcoming community events in a vibrant manner, for example: Friday night bands, open mic nights, poetry readings etc. The RHCA and CA can use the board to better advertise their events, thus bringing more shoppers into the Village Center.



A community bulletin board would be helpful at the Village Center. A modern, dynamic electronic display could enable Internet postings, free community messages, merchant advertising, and River Hill news postings. (Concept figure adapted from King’s Contrivance Village Center Directory).

III. CONTINUOUSLY ADAPT AND CHANGE TO MEET A MODERN COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

The Village Center of today looks very different from the Village Center of 30 years ago. Likewise, the Village Center in 30 years will have very different needs than today's Village Center. This cycle of change continues as the needs of the community change. The River Hill Village Center, though relatively new, still needs several updates to make it a better fit for today's community.

A. Utilization of green and modern technologies: Since the creation of Columbia, one consistent value that has persisted is the value that the residents place on a clean environment, a connection to nature, and connection to each other. New technologies have been created and greatly improved in recent years. To meet the needs of future generations, the Village Center should utilize green and modern technologies in future growth or redevelopment such as:

1. Electric car charging station

— Electric car charging stations are being installed across Howard County. Electric car charging stations in the Village Center not only would provide a service to the community, but also shoppers would be encouraged to



come to the Village Center for an extended period of time and shop. Locations that could benefit from a charging station include: the Ten Oaks Ballroom Park-and-Ride, the main parking lot of the Village Center near the Giant, and in the back parking lot adjacent to Columbia Gym.

2. Accessible recycling facilities — The Village Center merchants requested easier access to recycling facilities.

3. Green parking lot

— Eventually the parking lots in the Village Center will need to be repaved.

Considering how much water-runoff is generated in the Village Center parking lots, it would be advantageous to use permeable pavement that permits water to pass through it into the soil below, thus creating a green parking lot. Certain



Detail of a porous concrete parking lot at the Robinson Nature Center that absorbs run-off.

sections of the parking lot where there is considerable grocery cart traffic would have to be paved with a smooth material but other sections, such as parking spaces and the Columbia Gym lot, could use a more permeable surface.

4. Village Center WiFi — This could be provided by CA through antennas on Claret Hall and Columbia Gym. The home page could advertise community events and provide advertising space for the shops at the Village Center.

5. Rain gardens — The Columbia Association has provided many opportunities for residents to learn about and utilize rain gardens. Accordingly, the Village Center could not only lead by example, but also improve the local environment by installing rain gardens to reduce storm water runoff from the roofs of current and future buildings within the Center — both commercial and Columbia Association owned property — could install rain gardens, see below.

6. Bike racks — Add additional bike racks at locations around the Village Center in locations such as next to Tower Federal Credit Union near Claret Hall, McDonald’s, and near other businesses such as the professional buildings.

B. Water retention ponds

There are three water retention ponds located within the boundaries of the Village Center, see page 26. These ponds are located next to the Columbia Gym on Columbia Association owned property. The ponds could provide a visually aesthetic location for community members to gather. However, to achieve this goal, improvements are needed:

1. Highlight already existing September 11, 2001 memorial

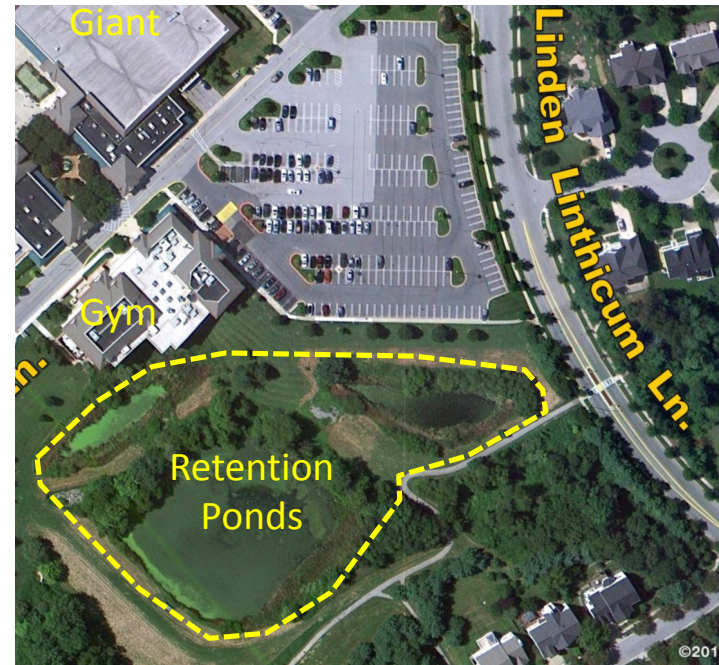
In 2002, the community came together and created a memorial to commemorate the victims of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. With a little effort, the memorial could be improved with a walkway and natural features like stones and plantings. A memorial plaque could be added to the feature.



River Hill Village Center could improve the local environment by installing rain gardens to reduce storm water runoff from the roofs of current and future buildings within the center.

2. **Pedestrian connectivity** — There is a paved path on one side of the water retention ponds. In order to make the ponds more accessible, aesthetically pleasing, and increase the pedestrian activity around them, it would be advantageous to build a wood or mulch walkway around or even (in the case of the wood boardwalk) across a portion of the ponds. This boardwalk and the paved paths could be connected to the Village Center next to Columbia Gym with a meandering pathway or stairs and included in Columbia’s Active Transportation improvement projects. The design would have to balance pedestrian accessibility and safety during storm conditions and high water events.
3. **Gazebo** — There are few gathering places around the Village Center where families and friends can gather to spend some quality time together. A gazebo near the retention ponds could serve as such a gathering point. The facility could be utilized in the warmer months for concerts, gatherings or other outdoor events.
4. **Picnic tables** — If well maintained picnic tables could be set up around the retention ponds, local restaurants and food vendors would experience improved patronage, as community members would have additional places to sit outdoors.
5. **Fishing pier** — Children are fishing in the pond by standing on or near the overflow drain. This unsafe situation could be remedied by building an aesthetically pleasing fishing pier as another focal point and amenity for the community.
6. **Benches** — To provide a meeting place, several benches could be placed around the boardwalk/pathway.
7. **Improve retention pond maintenance** — The purpose of the water retention ponds is to retain water from the

adjacent Village Center parking lots and enable the breakdown of run-off in an environmentally safe way before it enters streams. As a result scum, algae, odors, and mosquitoes frequently occur in the pond. A floating fountain to break up algae, for instance, may help circulate the water and prevent scum build-up. Utilization of green parking lot technology might also reduce the need for the retention ponds as run-off would be absorbed within the parking lot footprint. An environmental landscape study should be performed to determine if the ponds could be aesthetically maintained to support the above features while still meeting their intended purpose.



Water retention ponds near Columbia Gym

C. Repurpose buildings

As the business environment for current tenants and landowners within the Village Center changes, buildings could be repurposed into:

- 1. Retirement communities** — It is well understood that a large number of baby-boomers are approaching retirement age. In the years to come, there will be an increased demand for retirement communities and assisted living. With numerous retail and medical facilities within walking distance, this could be a viable land use in/near the River Hill Village Center.
- 2. Hotel** — The placement of a small boutique-style hotel would increase the Village Center’s vibrancy at night and would help the Village Center economy by providing additional demand for the types of businesses that hotel and motel patrons often frequent such as food, beverage, athletic and apparel. Currently, there are no hotels on the western side of Howard County.
- 3. Children/teen oriented facilities** — The demographics of River Hill show that our community has a relatively young population. During the community survey process, the community members stated repeatedly that they would like facilities oriented towards their children.
- 4. Mixed-use development** — In order to provide a modern, viable facility it may be advantageous to build a mixed-use facility with retail on the ground floor, and office or residential condominiums above, perhaps with an internal or elevated parking garage.
- 5. Post office** — In 2011, with little advance notice, the Clarksville Post Office permanently closed its doors. As a result, the residents of River Hill must now travel to Highland or other post offices in Columbia. The community would benefit if space could be found within the Village

Center for a new post office. In the short term, a USPS mailbox should be placed in the Village Center.

- 6. Experiential library** — As digital technology becomes more prevalent, the library of tomorrow will not be a storehouse for books; rather it will be a meeting-place, a place of learning, and a facility to provide technology and educational materials to the community. This library will be a place of experiences. As a result of these changes, the facility may not need to be as large as other, “traditional” libraries. To provide a great service to the community, the county should consider finding space in the River Hill Village Center to open a smaller “experiential library.”

D. Ten Oaks Ballroom parking

A portion of the Ten Oaks Ballroom parking lot is owned by the Howard County Government. The parking lot currently serves a park-and-ride with MTA bus service to Washington, DC. Due to its proximity to the intersection of Route 108 and Route 32, it is at a prime location to serve as a transit hub for Howard County citizens.

- 1. Make Ten Oaks a transportation hub** — expand mass transit connections to Baltimore, Downtown Columbia, BWI Airport, Fort Meade, NSA, and Washington, DC.
- 2. Better utilize park-and-ride** — The Ten Oaks Park & Ride is relatively small for our area’s projected future growth, see page 28. If the Ten Oaks Ballroom parking lot is to serve as a major park-and-ride location, it may need to be reconstructed into a multi-story parking garage. This parking garage could feature electric car charging stations and other facilities to promote more environmentally friendly practices. Overflow parking opportunities could be pursued by developing the undeveloped lot on the Southwest quadrant of Route 32 and Route 108 across from Bank of America.

3. Bike lockers — Great Star Drive and Route 108 are popular cycling routes. If safe bike lockers were placed at the park-and-ride lot, more commuters may choose to use their bicycle to reach the transit hub/park-and-ride lot, thus creating less road-traffic and less pollution.



E. Undeveloped lot next to Giant

Giant owns the undeveloped parcel of land to the southwest of the supermarket, see page 29. This is the only undeveloped and usable piece of land in the Village Center. There are a myriad of potential uses for this land.

1. Install sidewalk — There are ruts next to the street where

pedestrians cross over this parcel of land. It would improve aesthetics of the property, and public safety if a sidewalk was installed.

2. Concert and outdoor movie area — The layout of the grassy area is very conducive to entertainment. There is room for a stage or a large screen and ample room for a large audience to sit on the grass or any seating that could be developed. This would attract people from all over the area.

3. Merry-go-round/outdoor playground — At this time, the only other merry-go-round in the area is at the Mall in Columbia. The installation of a merry-go-round would make the Village Center a desirable place for families to come. Even with a merry-go-round in this area, there would still be much space for other activities.



Ten Oaks Park & Ride is small for the area's projected growth. If the Ten Oaks Ballroom parking lot, left, is to serve as a major park-and-ride location, a multi-story parking garage may need to be built.

4. Playground/ play feature — Another draw for families would be a unique area for children to play. Climbing structures or water features would be a great touch.

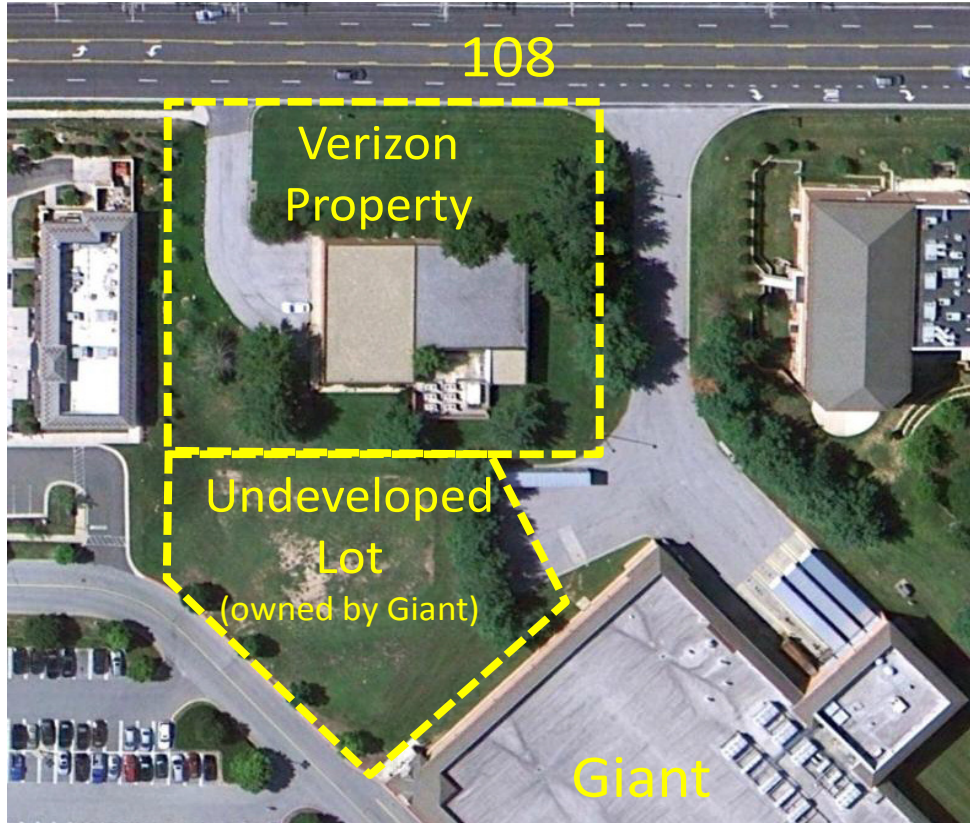
5. Ice skating rink — There is a large indoor ice skating rink on the east side of Columbia, but a smaller rink on the west side would be an attraction for many families.

6. Two story building with family entertainment — An arcade type building that could possibly have laser tag, games, virtual rides, mini golf, etc., would be a great

spot for children and teens.

7. Urban gardens — This would add to the aesthetics of the Village Center.

8. Magnet restaurant — Resident surveys suggested that one or more of the following desired restaurants be incorporated into the Village Center: Thai, Chick-Fil-A, Chipotle, Panera, Mad City Coffee, Bistro Blanc, upscale chains, Outback, el Azteca (relocated), diner, food truck staging area, bakery/Touché Touchet, farmers market, Taco Bell or Barbecue.



An undeveloped lot owned by Giant sits adjacent to Verizon's property.

F. Verizon building

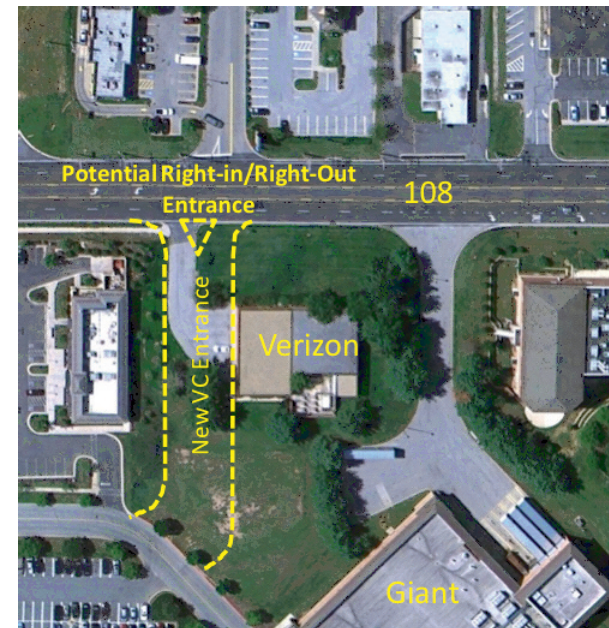
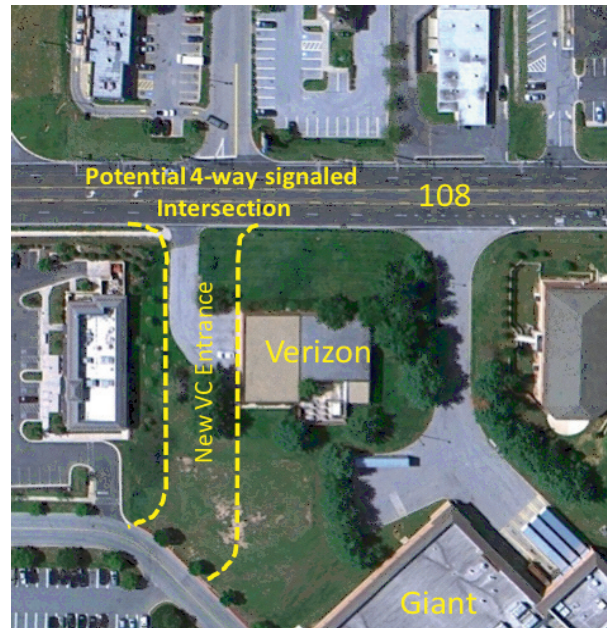
The Verizon building located along Route 108 adjacent to Giant is a land use that is significantly out of context with the surrounding retail establishments, see page 29. Furthermore, the unsignalized driveway entrance along Route 108 creates operational challenges for vehicles making turns into and out of the retail shopping plaza on the north side of Route 108. To address these concerns, two potential changes are envisioned:

- 1. New entrance on Route 108 into Village Center** — If the Verizon property could be repurposed, a new access driveway could be created that would use this property (and possibly some of the open lot adjacent to Giant) to create a new access road between Route 108 and Daybreak Circle, see below. Such an access driveway, which would reduce congestion at the existing two intersections of Daybreak

Circle along Great Star Drive, could be designed as a four-way signaled intersection with the existing entrance at the Clarksville Square shopping center or as a non-signalized “Right-in/Right-out” only entrance, see below.

- 2. Combine the property with grassy area next to Giant into larger development** — Alternately, in conjunction with the preceding option, the Verizon property could be redeveloped, along with the open lot adjacent to Giant, to create a larger parcel of land that may be suitable for a variety of potential development. Possible ideas include an outdoor park area with benches, tables and performance areas; or additional retail development, primarily of the type that would attract pedestrian traffic with outdoor seating accommodations, such as a coffee shop, a cafe or ice cream parlor, etc.

Potential Village Center entrance proposals from Route 108 at the Clarksville Square entrance using Verizon’s property.



IV. SUPPORT IMPROVED TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

Some of the most visible issues facing the Village Center are traffic congestion, particularly during peak travel hours, and traffic safety for both motorists and pedestrians. While the Village Center is fortunate to have a history of vibrant activity, this success has also exposed a number of specific challenges with the local transportation infrastructure. However, these challenges can also be viewed as opportunities, in conjunction with many of the other improvements described in this master plan. Accordingly, the goal of the potential improvement concepts discussed below is not only to address issues of safety and traffic flow, but also to improve pedestrian connectivity and enhance the overall aesthetic appeal and vibrancy of the Village Center.

In the context of these global transportation issues, five sites were identified that had specific issues. For each, a number of improvement concepts were developed. For the majority of these issues, it is anticipated that additional study would need to be undertaken by the State, County and/or a qualified engineering firm. The discussion of items three through five are also suggested for consideration and incorporation into the County's ongoing access study for Route 108 in Clarksville:

A. Great Star and South Daybreak Circle Issues

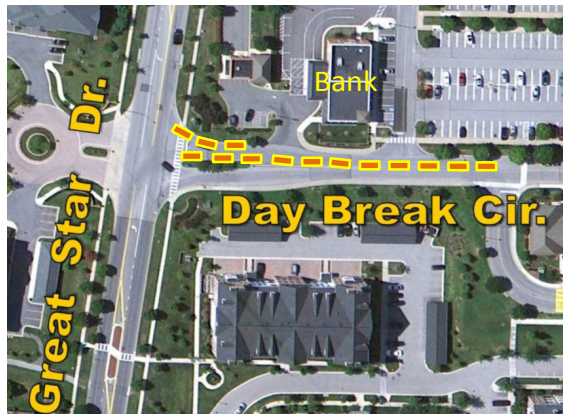
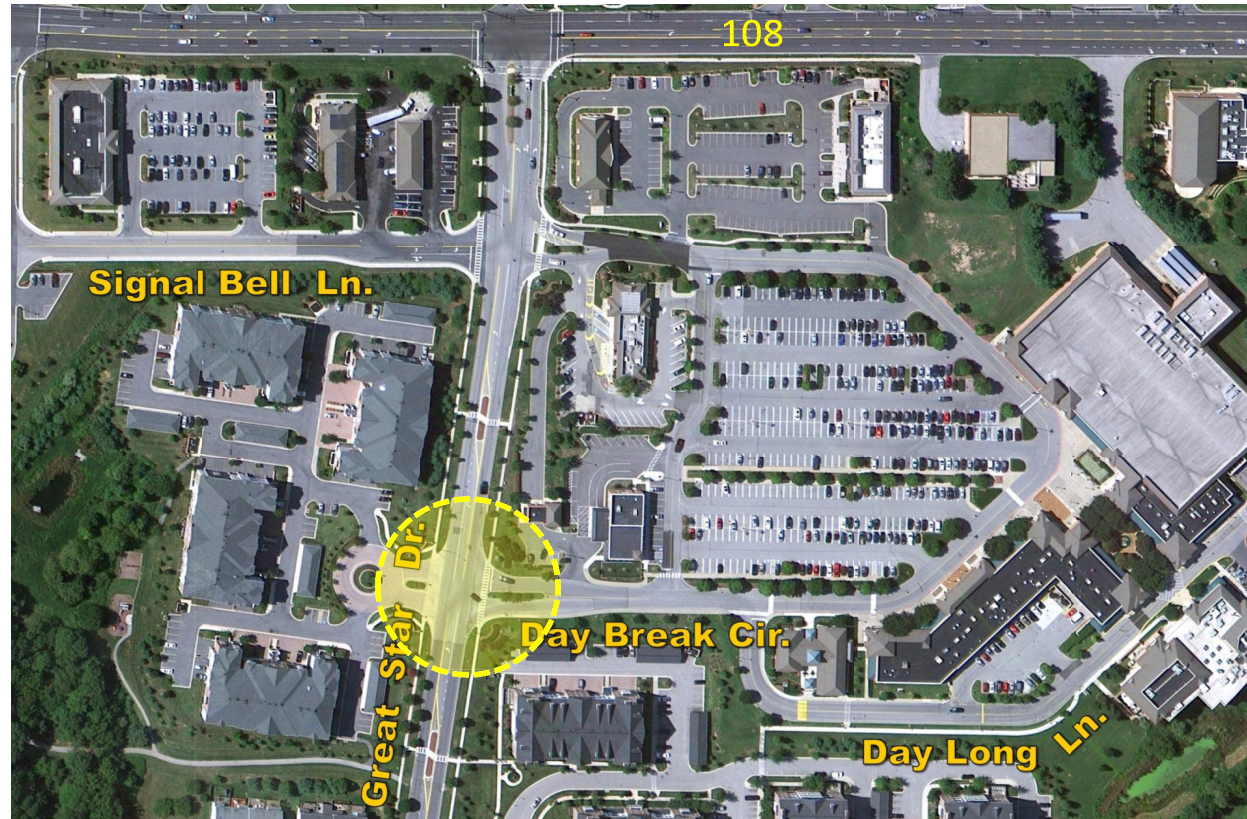
The volume of traffic using this intersection has recently increased as a result of improvements made to the adjacent intersection on Great Star Drive at North Daybreak Circle, where westbound left turns and through trips were physically restricted by means of a new right-turn channelization island. Additionally, some village residents have commented that due to the increasing difficulty making left turns from Linden

Linthicum Lane onto Route 108 in the peak periods, see Issue 5, vehicles use Day Long Lane to cut through the Village Center, adding to the volume of traffic at this intersection. The result has been longer delays and queues for vehicles exiting the Village Center at this intersection, especially for vehicles trying to turn left onto Great Star Drive. At this location, the exit from the Village Center is wide enough for two lanes of travel, and is typically used that way by most motorists. However there are currently no pavement markings defining the left and right turn lanes. Additionally, the fourth leg of this intersection is the entrance to a condominium complex. Especially during peak periods, it can be difficult to determine who has the right-of-way as motorists seek a limited number of available gaps in traffic along Great Star Drive from opposite sides of the intersection, see page 32.

Potential Solutions

- 1. Reconsider a traffic signal or a modern roundabout** — A signal at this location would need to satisfy one or more of the warrants for signalization contained in Maryland State Highway Administration's *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, and the queue of vehicles that would extend back from this intersection toward Signal Bell Lane should be carefully considered. As an alternative to a traffic signal, a modern roundabout could be considered. A roundabout would be consistent with the other traffic calming features present along Great Star Drive to the east/south, but again, careful consideration would need to be given to queue lengths, emergency vehicle response times and the proximity of the existing traffic circle within the condominium property on the south side of the intersection.
- 2. Extend the pedestrian island on Daybreak Circle to provide pedestrian refuge** — With the volume of traffic now using this intersection, it can be challenging for

Right: Intersection of South Daybreak Circle and Great Star Drive
Below: A long queue of traffic turning left at the Village Center exit during peak traffic times, blocks access near M&T Bank.



pedestrians to cross both directions of Daybreak Circle in a single movement. Many pedestrians cross halfway, to the end of the median island, and then wait for gaps in the opposite direction of traffic. To more safely accommodate these pedestrians, the crosswalk and median island should be redesigned to provide a more defined refuge area for pedestrians within the median island.

- 3. Improve lighting at crosswalks** — Additional lighting at this intersection and/or at the marked mid-block crosswalks to the east/south and west/north would improve pedestrian safety at night.

B. Great Star Drive and North Daybreak Circle Issues

The challenges present at this intersection stem partly from its proximity to the adjacent signalized intersection at Route 108, partly from the number of turns that are currently permitted at this intersection, and generally from the relatively high volume of traffic making turns at the intersection. As a result, the intersection is not very pedestrian friendly, is often blocked by queues extending back from Route 108, see page 35, and it can be challenging to make left turns (or through movements) from Signal Bell Lane. Additionally, despite the recent improvements to this intersection where westbound left turns and through movements from Daybreak Circle were physically restricted by means of a new right-turn channelization island, motorists occasionally still make these movements illegally.

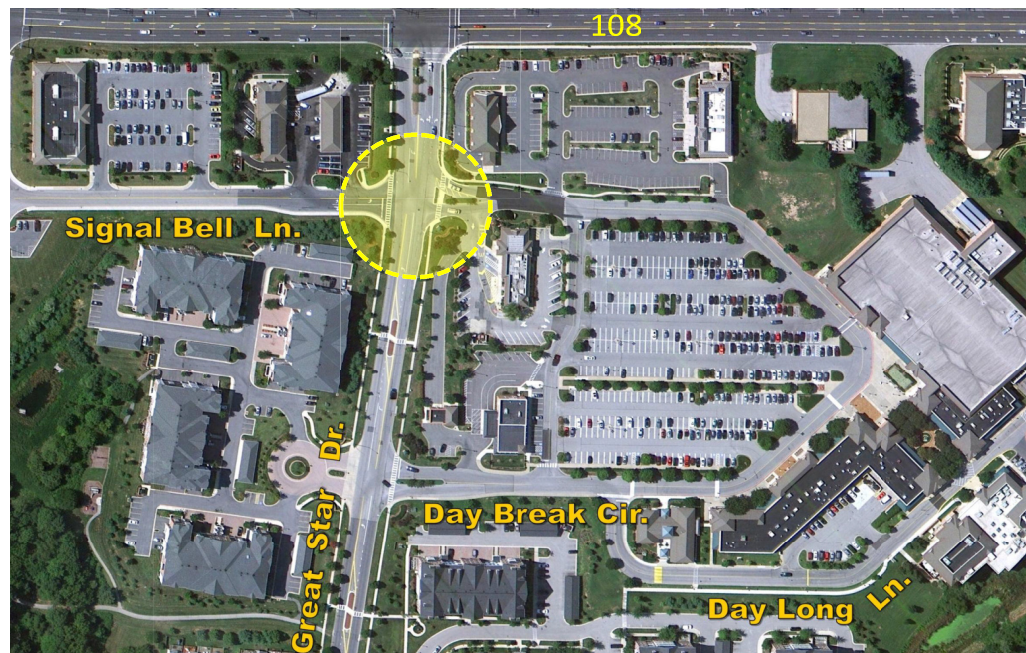
Potential Solutions

1. Left-in + Right-in, Right-out (RIRO) on both approaches — To simplify the operation of the intersection, the county could consider making the same modification to the eastbound Signal Bell Lane approach that was recently constructed on the westbound Daybreak Circle approach, namely to restrict left turns

The intersection of North Daybreak Circle and Great Star Drive is not pedestrian friendly and is often blocked by traffic extending back from Route 108.

and through movements from Signal Bell Lane by means of a physical right-turn channelization island. The vehicles currently making those movements could instead be accommodated at the signalized intersection of Route 108 and Auto Drive.

2. Restrict northern Daybreak Circle access to outbound only — While it would represent a significant change to current operations, this change would simplify the flow of traffic at this intersection by eliminating the left turn into the Village Center from Great Start Drive which currently experiences queue spillback issues during certain peak periods that extend back through this intersection. Careful study would need to be undertaken to understand the impacts of this change on the adjacent intersection of Great Star Drive and Southern Daybreak Circle.



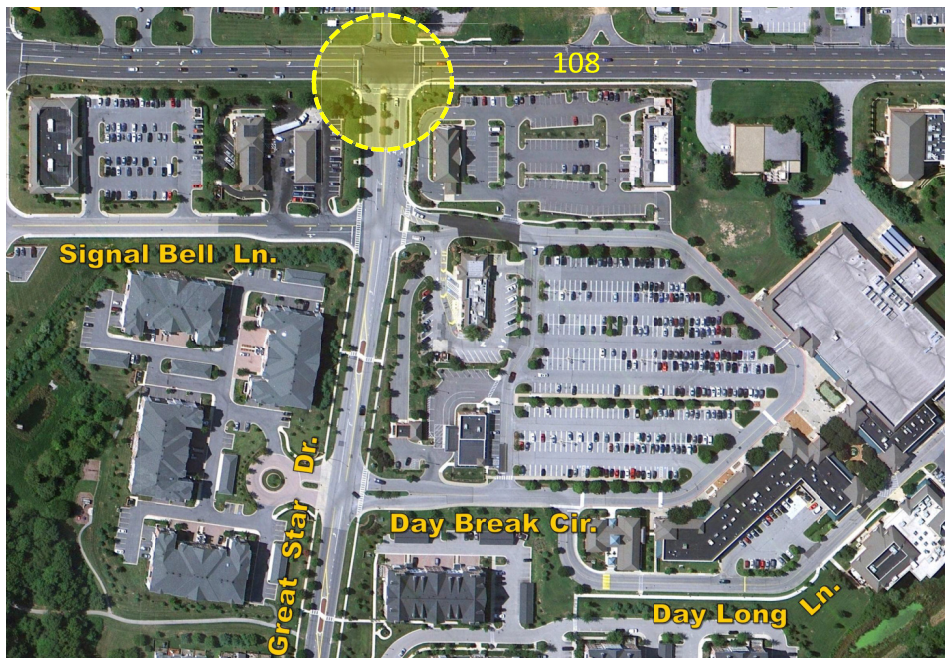
C. Great Star Drive and Route 108 intersection Issues

This intersection is easily the busiest of all intersections in River Hill, serving as the primary point of entry/exit for residents of the community and patrons of the Village Center. Issues at this intersection include a lack of pedestrian amenities on Route 108 (sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian refuge areas); motorists making right turns from Great Star Drive that frequently fail to yield to pedestrians using the crosswalk causing many residents to complain that this is an unsafe crossing; and existing/future accessibility issues for Kendall Hardware/Pizza Hut and the “Gateway” site, a large open lot — and whatever development eventually occurs there — adjacent to Wendy’s that are collectively the subject of an ongoing study by Howard County.

Additionally, there is a historic mile marker near the Gateway site that is in precarious position and condition.

Potential Solutions

- 1. Push button activated pedestrian lead time** — To address the issue of poor motorist yield compliance at the existing crosswalk, the traffic signal timing could be modified to provide pedestrians with a short lead time to enter the crosswalk and establish their right-of-way before the signal on Great Star Drive turned green. This feature should only be pedestrian push-button activated.
- 2. “Boulevard Concept” with streetscape or planted median** — Primarily suggested as a means of providing improved pedestrian accommodation, Route 108 could be redesigned in the vicinity of the Village Center to create a Boulevard Concept, eliminating the existing two-way left-turn lane, defining specific left turn lanes, and enhancing the corridor with streetscape elements such as trees, sidewalks, and possibly a median - which could also serve as pedestrian refuge areas if constructed with crosswalks.
- 3. Pedestrian refuge to cross Route 108** — While likely only possible if a Boulevard Concept were selected, it would be desirable to provide a median refuge area adjacent to the westbound left turn lane from Route 108 toward Great Star Drive so pedestrians would not have such a long crossing from one side of Route 108 to the other.
- 4. Incorporate historic marker into historic focal feature**, see page 22.

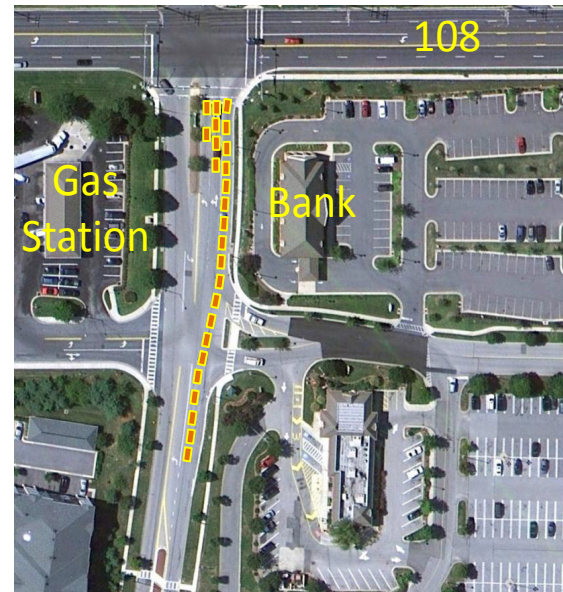


Intersection of Route 108 and Great Star Drive

D. Route 108 Corridor – Auto Drive to Linden Linthicum Lane Issues

Along this section of Route 108, traffic flow is disrupted by numerous driveways and intersections. As a result, it can be difficult to make turns, especially left turns, during peak periods of travel. Additionally, there are currently no pedestrian amenities to provide access between the residential and commercial areas of River Hill and all of the retail establishments on the west side of Route 108.

- 1. Too many entrances and exits** — In the vicinity of the Village Center along Great Star Drive and Route 108, traffic flow is disrupted by numerous driveways and intersections. As a result it can be difficult to make turns, especially left turns, during peak periods of travel, see below right. Additionally, at some locations it can be challenging for pedestrians to cross the road as a result of vehicles making turns from several different directions.



The shaded area at left shows the heavily congested Route 108 corridor. Congestion during peak times, above, at Great Star Drive and Route 108 blocks the Village Center entrance.

2. Lack of sidewalks — Currently, there are few sidewalks along Route 108. Nonetheless, pedestrians often travel by foot along Route 108, see below. As the land along Route 108 continues to develop, particularly the Gateway Site, which a recent press-release announced would be a pedestrian-friendly development and the recently proposed redevelopment of the River Hill Garden Center, the volume of foot traffic is likely to increase. Ideally, sidewalks will be provided along both sides of Route 108 between Route 32 and Linden Linthicum Lane. It is likely that with an improved sidewalk network and associated crosswalks, pedestrian activity would increase and pedestrians could travel more safely and with a much higher degree of comfort.

3. Unmarked east/west crosswalks — Similarly, there are few designated locations for pedestrians to travel between the various retail establishments of the River Hill Village Center and those on the west side of Route 108. Currently there are only two east/west crosswalks between Route 32 and the River Hill Garden Center. One is located at Great Star Drive and the other at Auto Drive. There are no east-west crosswalks present north of Great Star Drive. As a result, pedestrians are frequently observed crossing Route 108 at unmarked locations across five lanes of traffic, see right. While this problem is most prevalent north/east

of Great Star Drive, it also occurs between Great Start Drive and Route 32 due mainly to the location of current marked crosswalks and lack of a sidewalk network along Route 108.

4. Lack of Village Center identity along Route 108 — While not a traffic problem, per se, when traveling along Route 108, it is not evident that you are entering the River Hill Village. The location of our village at the western limits of Columbia has created a situation where there are retail areas directly adjacent to and to the west of, and some would argue within the River Hill Village Center. To better define the River Hill Village Center, modifications to the transportation infrastructure, such as decorative signals, lights, signs, textured pavement treatments, trees, etc, could be made to differentiate the River Hill region from the rest of the Route 108 corridor.



Above: A pedestrian crosses mid-block along Route 108. Left: An example of an architecturally styled traffic signal. Far left: Currently, there are few sidewalks along Route 108.

Potential Solutions

1. Consolidate entrances — Almost any improvement to this section of Route 108 will need to consider consolidation of access to the businesses located on the west side of Route 108. There are currently 12 access points between (and including) Great Star Drive and Linden Linthicum Lane. The sheer number of turns permitted among all of these access points results in operational inefficiencies and safety concerns for both motorists and pedestrians. By consolidating access points, it may be possible to eliminate the two-way left turn lane (TWLTL), and potentially provide a safer pedestrian crossing. A potentially desirable location to consolidate access is near the Dogtopia and Dunkin Donuts, which are approximately midway along the stretch of retail shops and has good sight distance in both directions along Route 108.

2. Add a pedestrian-activated beacon (“Hawk”) across Route 108 — As noted previously, there are currently no marked east-west crosswalks across Route 108 north of Great Star Drive. Without the aid of a traffic signal, it can be quite challenging to cross the 5 lanes of traffic on Route 108 between Great Star Drive and Linden Linthicum Lane. One potential solution is the installation of a pedestrian-activated beacon, sometimes referred to as a “Hawk” at a mid-block location. Such a signal would only be activated by a pedestrian pushing a button, at which time traffic on Route 108 would be stopped for a short duration to allow the pedestrian to initiate their crossing. A desirable location for this type of signal would be between Wendy’s and El Azteca.

3. Add sidewalks on both sides of 108 — The addition of sidewalks or a multi-use path on one or both sides of Route 108 between Linden Linthicum Lane and Great Star Drive (and desirably all the way from Route 32 to the River Hill High School) would significantly enhance the attractiveness of



A pedestrian activated beacon could be installed along Route 108 east of Great Star Drive.

the entire corridor to pedestrians. This enhancement would significantly complement the Gateway property redevelopment, which will be designed as a pedestrian-friendly property, by linking the retail establishments on the west/north side of Route 108 with the residents living in the River Hill community.

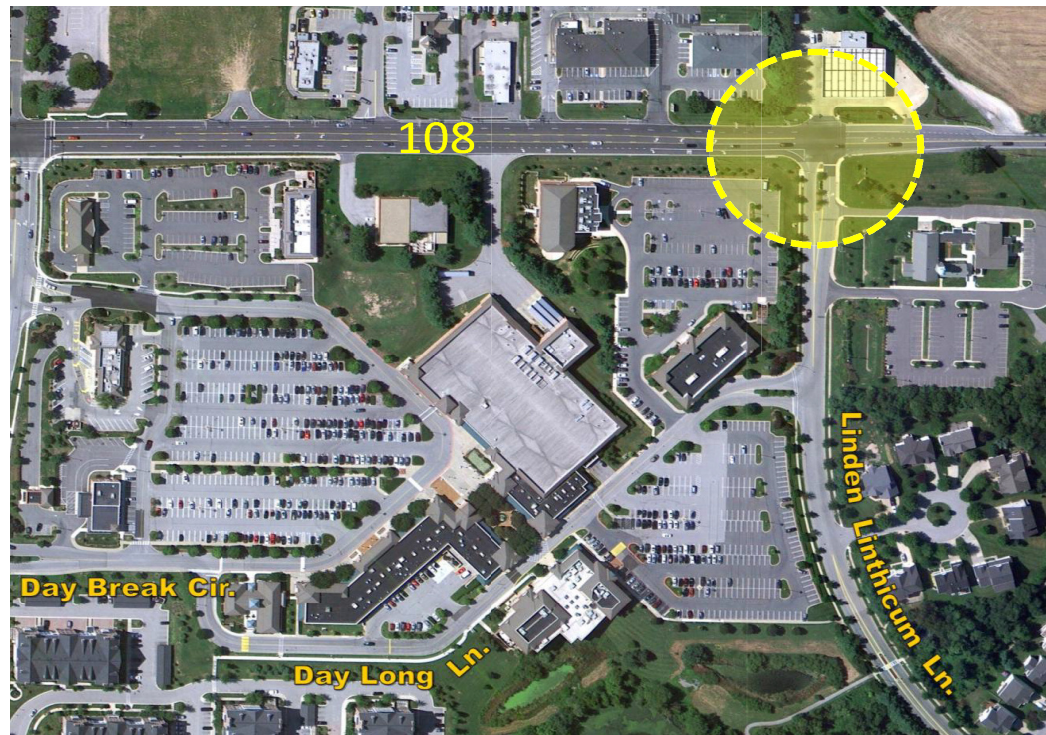
E. Route 108 and Linden Linthicum Lane Issues

The intersection of Route 108 and Linden Linthicum Lane suffers primarily from operational issues related to left turns. This unsignalized intersection serves motorists from a variety of nearby land uses on the east/south, including over 375 homes in the Pheasant Ridge community, the Columbia Gym,

Linden Linthicum United Methodist Church, several medical offices within the Village Center, a Montessori school, and the retail businesses within the River Hill Village Center. Directly across from Linden Linthicum Lane is Free State Gas, a discount gas station that attracts many customers from the surrounding region. Traffic entering and exiting the station often conflicts with traffic attempting to turn to and from Linden Linthicum Lane. Exacerbating these traffic problems, a traffic signal was recently installed at the intersection of Route 108 and Sheppard Lane. During peak travel periods, including the 15-30 minutes prior to and after school begins and ends at nearby River Hill High School, northbound traffic on Route 108 often slows to a crawl due to congestion at the Sheppard Lane intersection that

extends back through the Linden Linthicum Lane intersection. During these times, motorists often opt to cut through the village center along Day Long Lane to reach Great Star Drive and access Route 108. Additional challenges at this intersection include a lack of pedestrian accommodation and a lack of sufficient storage in the southbound left turn lane to accommodate vehicles trying to make left turns from Route 108 to Linden Linthicum Lane. This issue is most prevalent immediately after school begins and ends at nearby Clarksville Elementary School as parents return home from dropping off or picking up their children. At these times, traffic in this turn lane occasionally extends back into the through lane blocking all traffic on southbound Route 108 from proceeding.

Intersection of Linden Linthicum Lane and Route 108



Potential Solutions

- 1. Install a traffic light** — A signal at this location would need to satisfy one or more of the warrants for signalization contained in Maryland State Highway Administration’s *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, and the queue of vehicles that would extend back from this intersection in either direction along Route 108 should be carefully considered. During a study of this intersection, the volume of traffic diverting through the Village Center along Day Long Lane should be counted and considered as part of the signal warrant analysis. If a signal is installed, pedestrian accommodations should be provided and the signal should be coordinated with adjacent signals on Route 108 to minimize queues and provide adequate gaps in traffic for motorists accessing commercial driveways between the signals.
- 2. Install a roundabout** — While the construction of a roundabout may be challenging at this location due mainly to vertical grades and right-of-way restrictions, a roundabout would offer several advantages that make its consideration

worthwhile. They include the enhanced ability to make left turns, the creation of a defined gateway/transition area as motorists enter the River Hill area traveling on Route 108, improved pedestrian accommodation (at least across single lane approaches to the roundabout), the ability to slow traffic as they enter the retail portion of Route 108. However, the roundabout feasibility, like a signal warrant analysis, should carefully examine potential queue lengths that the roundabout would generate and also the potential for queues from adjacent intersections, namely the recently signalized intersection at Sheppard Lane, to extend back into the roundabout.

- 3. Longer left turn lane on Route 108 westbound** — If neither of the improvements above is found to be feasible, the county should be encouraged to study the need for a longer southbound left turn lane on Route 108 to accommodate the queue of vehicles waiting to turn left onto Linden Linthicum Lane, particularly before/after school at Clarksville Elementary School and River Hill High School.



Linden Linthicum Lane and Route 108 intersection

4. Parking spots adjacent to the M&T Bank — Cars are blocked from entering/exiting the spaces due to back-ups at the stop sign with Daybreak Circle. Most cars have to back up into both lanes of traffic to exit these spaces, making for a dangerous situation.

5. Stop signs — Cars turning left to exit Village Center near McDonald's often ignore the stop sign.

Potential Solutions

1. Change Daybreak Circle to one-way to accommodate curbside parking — Make Daybreak Circle, from Claret Hall to Ruby Tuesday's one-way (counter clockwise traffic flow when facing Giant). This will improve pedestrian safety at all crossings and open up the other lane of Daybreak Circle to other uses such as short term, parallel parking, sidewalk sales and expanded patron areas in front of stores, see page 42.

2. Add bulb-outs along Daybreak Circle next to Village Center shops — Create bulb outs at crosswalks to narrow the opening, slowing traffic while simultaneously creating parallel

spaces for short term parking. Fire codes would have to be investigated to ensure the Fire Lane remains accessible to emergency personnel, see page 42.

3. Add Raised crosswalks — Install raised humps at all crosswalks along Daybreak Circle.

4. Add angled or parallel parking at M&T Bank — Investigate the use of angled parking at M&T Bank.

5. Install state law signs — Install “state law stop for pedestrian” signs at all crosswalks.

6. One-way parking aisles — Change parking lanes to one-way and utilize angled parking to encourage orderly flow of traffic.

7. Add more sidewalks in parking lot — Create sidewalks between parking rows. This is especially important to better link the parking lot in front of the Giant with the lot adjacent to the other storefronts along Daybreak Circle.

8. Insert breaks for shopping carts — Break long parking aisles to provide shopping cart access between parking rows.



Cars are blocked from entering or exiting the parking spaces at M&T Bank because of back-ups at the stop sign on Daybreak Circle. Angled spaces could improve traffic flow and safety.



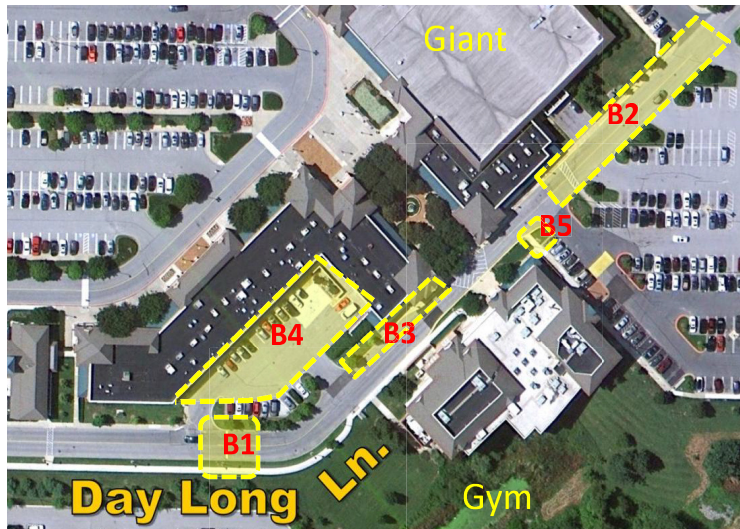
Above left: Daybreak Circle with proposed one-way traffic circulation pattern.
Above right: Daybreak Circle with proposed "Bulb Outs" at cross-walks to create short-term curbside parking.
Right: A lane could be designated for short-term curbside parking if Daybreak Circle is limited to one-way traffic.



B. Day Long Lane Corridor

Issues

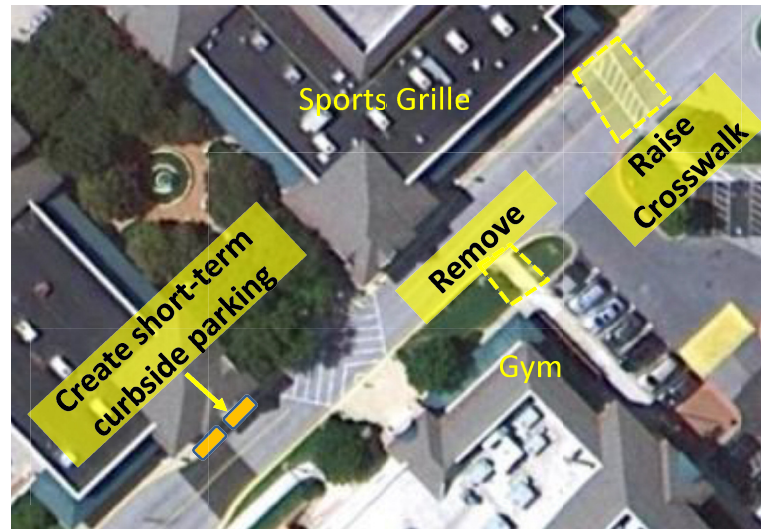
- 1. Speed bumps** — Speed bumps are in the wrong areas to promote proper traffic flow and pedestrian safety. Additionally, the speed bump at B1 is outdated. Modern Speed Hump design should be used at all locations.
- 2. No traffic calming at Linden Linthicum Lane entrance** — There are no traffic calming devices to slow cars entering the Village Center from Linden Linthicum Lane including for the crosswalk that connects the parking lot to the Sport Grille.
- 3. Illegal short-term parking** — Patrons utilize the street for short term parking to access Vintage Cellars and the Sports Grille
- 4. Merchant parking lot** — Parking area has unused space in the merchant parking area that is under-utilized.
- 5. Sidewalk stub to gym** — Encourages crossing Day Long Lane without using the nearby crosswalk.



The shaded areas correspond to issues in the text above that need improvement in the Day Long Lane Corridor.

Potential Solutions

- 1. Remove speed bumps and install raised crosswalks at all pedestrian crossings** — This includes adding some type of textured highlight at the crosswalk connecting the Columbia Gym to the courtyard area.
- 2. Add two parallel spaces for short-term parking** — Carve out some of the sidewalk near Vintage Cellars to make room for a couple of short-term parallel parking spaces.
- 3. Replace stop signs** — Vehicles currently roll through the existing stop signs. Remove the stop signs at crosswalks and install “state law: stop for pedestrians when present in crosswalks” signs at all crosswalks.
- 4. Investigate better utilization of the merchant parking area**
- 5. Remove the sidewalk stub to gym** — Encourages pedestrians to turn left to use the crosswalk.



Detail of Day Long Lane showing areas needing improvement.

C. Columbia Gym Parking Lot

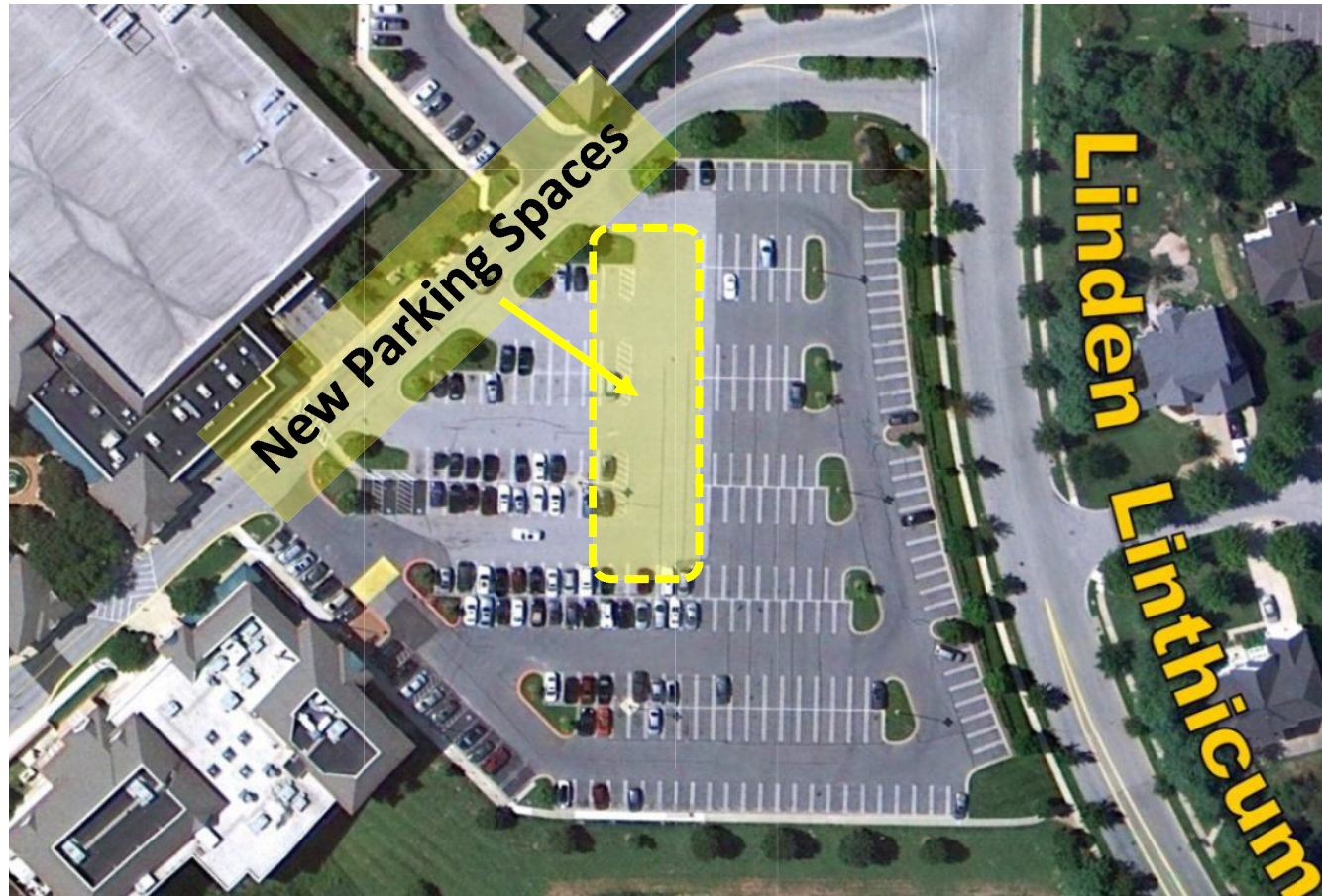
Issues

1. **Wasted space in the lot** — Wasted paved areas without parking spots.
2. **Overcrowding** — During peak times the parking lot is often full.

Potential Solutions

1. **Add new spaces** — Paint lines in area of unpainted spots.
The unmarked spaces are often used during peak times at the gym causing a dangerous and hazardous situation for drivers and pedestrians.
2. **Construct a parking garage** — Build aesthetically pleasing parking garage with condos/retail, see page 18.

The shaded area shows unpainted spaces in Columbia Gym's parking lot.



D. Ten Oaks Ballroom Parking Issues

1. **Bikes and pedestrians** — Area is not bike or pedestrian friendly.
2. **No crosswalks** — Crossing from Signal Bell Lane in front of entrance to fire station does not have a marked crosswalk. Intersection at Route 108 lacks a full-way cross-walk.
3. **Parking may become overcrowded in the future**

Potential Solutions

1. **Add crosswalks** — Link sidewalks on Signal Bell Lane to Ten Oaks Ballroom and complete a full crosswalk at Route 108 and Signal Bell Lane.
2. **Construct Ten Oaks parking garage** — Build a parking garage with brick facade that matches the aesthetics of the Village Center that also has room for a small retail store and provides a waiting area with free Wi-Fi.
3. **Create a bus loading zone** — Create a bus loading zone area on the southwest side of Signal Bell Lane.
4. **Install bike lockers** — Add bike locker on premises.
5. **Explore additional park-and-ride options** — Identify locations that could host additional park-and-ride spaces including the undeveloped parcel at Route 108 and Ten Oaks Road.




Ten Oaks Ballroom and park-and-ride lot

Appendices

I. COMMUNITY SURVEY AND RESULTS

*Survey as published
in the April 2011
issue of the Villager.*



**Brainstorm for River Hill's Future:
Share the Journey as We Develop the Plan
for the Village Center of Tomorrow**

The Association's Master Plan Committee needs your feedback! Please share your ideas by completing this questionnaire and bringing it with you to the community brainstorming session being held on Saturday, April 30 at 10 a.m. at Claret Hall.

- How important are the following issues (1 = low importance, 5 = high importance)?

Traffic Congestion & Parking	1	2	3	4	5
Public Safety	1	2	3	4	5
Pedestrian & Bike Accessibility	1	2	3	4	5
Architecture & Aesthetics	1	2	3	4	5

Community survey Results Summary

Survey Issues	Importance to community
Traffic congestion and parking	36%
Public safety	77%
Pedestrian and bike accessibility	36%
Architecture and aesthetics	30%
Changing demographics	35%
Environment sustainability	35%

Summary of Free-form Comments

1. What do you like about the current River Hill Village Center?

- *Variety of Service/Diversity of Shops/Good Mix of Retail*
- *Clean, well-maintained*
- *Range of businesses (anchor store, dry cleaner, liquor, carryout)*
- *Aesthetic quality (beautiful, clean, updated)*
- *Convenience of services/convenient location*
- *Easy access/exit*

- *Summer performers and Claret Hall community events*
- *The Fountain and concerts*
- *Good restaurants*
- *Demographics*
- *It has just about everything you need*
- *Meets our needs for food, money (banks), pharmacy*
- *Family-oriented*
- *Community-minded*
- *Lots of chairs*
- *Community involvement*
- *Businesses and activities are family-oriented*
- *Quiet after 10 PM*
- *Walkability from residences*
- *Safe*
- *Best village in Columbia, well managed*
- *Nice people*
- *Good for basic needs /serves my needs*
- *Useful stores*
- *Walkability from residences*
- *Accessibility*
- *Looks great, nice greenery, great activities for the residents*
- *Nice flowerbeds*
- *Architecture*
- *Easy to walk between stores = openness/open design*
- *Lighting*
- *Plenty of parking*
- *Neighborhood feel*

2. What Would You Change About the Current River Hill Village Center?

- *Add HC Library Branch*
- *Add a fresh gourmet bakery or French café with outdoor seating*
- *More variety than just big chain vendors*
- *Parking lot design (too many cars are funneled in front of Giant and pedestrian walkway)*
- *More sidewalks, especially up Route 108 to the Elementary and High School*
- *Add a gourmet sandwich shop*
- *Add a NY-style pizza place*
- *Add more entrances/exits into the center*
- *Lights at crosswalks*
- *More smaller, family-owned businesses*
- *Add another restaurant between Ruby Tuesdays and Giant*
- *Speed bumps at Giant*
- *A stage for performances*
- *More diverse restaurants — ethnic, bakery, coffee*
- *More restaurants and less banks*
- *More of a community feel — Kings Contrivance for example has a central area with tables and chairs*
- *Less banks and chain restaurants*
- *Better eating options*
- *More unique, gourmet restaurants — better selection*
- *More unique specialty shops*
- *More amenities to feel like a community center or place to hangout*
- *Walking pathway (over the road bridge) to cross Route 108*
- *More areas for children to play while parents gather*
- *Add a fast food Mexican restaurant like Chipotle*
- *Indoor tennis courts*
- *Small ice skating rink*
- *Nail salon*

- *Need a sports store, like a smaller Dick's Sporting Goods*
- *Teen center with a pool table and arcade/more activities for teenagers*
- *Get rid of the fountain*
- *More "evening food" restaurants*
- *It is hard to drive out of the River Hill Village Center to River Hill village during busy time — suggest a traffic light*
- *More pedestrian-friendly stuff*
- *Card/gift shop*
- *Update facades and signage —the center looks really old and tired*
- *A NY-style deli like the one at Maple Lawn*
- *"It would be cool to have a movie theater (obviously small)"*
- *Better cafes and restaurants*
- *More community events like the outdoor movie night*
- *More upscale stores and restaurants as long as they are economically viable*
- *I would like there to be more activities for teens to do in the community*
- *Do not add anything that would markedly increase traffic in the area*
- *Make it a more inviting Village Center*

3. What Features Would Make You Visit the River Hill Village Center More Frequently?

- *Improve the walkable community area or public space*
- *Make it more spacious/less cramped*
- *Make it more brightly lit at night*
- *Fountain seems to take up so much room, why not remove it and allow for more walkability?*
- *Create a better space in Village Center for "hanging out"*
- *Make it a "destination" with things like outdoor movies, interactive play areas for the kids, and a stage for performers*
- *Would love a great gourmet sandwich and bakery*

- *Bike racks and bike accessibility*
- *Places to have outdoor movies and a lot more fun stuff for kids*
- *Community board to highlight events and businesses*
- *Yummy deli/sandwich place with a neighborhood feel*
- *Amenities such as an outdoor ice rink next to Giant*
- *More entertainment in the courtyard*
- *More warm weather activities and socials*
- *Bookstore*
- *Less franchises, more small businesses*
- *Place for teens to relax, teen center, video game arcade, library*
- *Bike lane on Route 108 connecting to Centennial Park area*
- *Place for teens so they are not just loitering in the parking lot*
- *We can walk, bike or drive easily so transport is not an issue*
- *I believe we need to always examine the mix of stores to find a balance. At this point I think we have our fill of banks*
- *Family/Teen/Adult events*
- *More fun stuff like movies and an arcade*
- *An indoor play place (something like Jump Zone)*
- *Us moms would love a more elegant, upscale coffee shop to meet in*
- *An express library*
- *A post office*
- *Small park or play area for the kids*
- *European charm, out-of-the-box thinking in terms of the “usual” stuff, waterways, canals etc*
- *More diverse entertainment options – cinema, draft house?*
- *More restaurants and better activities for families*
- *Need more variety in services offered. Would love to see room for larger scale dance studio and other kids activities.... would draw more visitors to area and make restaurants attract more business.*

- *Some more commercial property needed to drive traffic*
- *Should cater more to western Howard County*
- *Electric vehicle charging stations*
- *Make it more like Kings Contrivance Village Center which is so much more open, spacious, walkable and conducive to families hanging out, talking, and wanting to stay and socialize*
- *It might be nice if the two drainage ponds were nicer — less green scum, perhaps a fountain, brush cleared out, with benches*
- *Improved sidewalks on Great Star and Route 108*
- *More entertainment options — cinema and draft house*
- *It would be great to have a nice boutique and/or gift shop*
- *More “evening food” restaurants*
- *Scrapbook store*
- *Bowling alley*
- *A monthly farmer’s market during spring and summer*
- *Traffic light at village center exit to make left during peak hours*
- *More small, family-owned businesses!*
- *A seafood place (like in Wilde Lake), maybe a gourmet shop — we are all about more food choices*
- *Transportation is very important, especially for an aging population (grandparents that may be living in the area)*
- *If there were nicer areas to stroll with a family*
- *Would love a gift shop where we could buy birthday and other kinds of gifts instead of driving all the way to Target*

II. MERCHANT STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

A. Interview Engagement Letter

RE: Request for Input to the River Hill Village Community Plan

Dear Landowner, Landlord, Store Owner/Manager, or Tenant:

The River Hill Village Board recently formed a committee to develop a Community Plan as part of a broader effort underway at all of Columbia's Village Centers. The Board has been consulting with Columbia's newly appointed Community Planner, Jane Dembner, and is developing a process that will involve gathering input from residents and business owners over the next several months to develop a 30-year vision for our community. Given the Village Center's close proximity to other businesses along the Route 108 corridor in Clarksville, our committee is seeking input from all businesses and landowners both within the Village Center and those in surrounding properties to develop a comprehensive plan that will better integrate both communities.

Tony Miceli, a River Hill board member, and Robert Runser, a local resident, have been conducting 30 minute voluntary interviews with local business owners and merchants. Some of the questions that they have been discussing during the interviews include:

- *When did you start your business in our community? What factors contributed to locating your business here? How long have you been at your current location? Do you and your family live in the area?*
- *What do you like most about doing business in our community?*
- *Within the next 3 years, what areas do you think need the most improvement?*
- *What issues do you think will present the biggest challenges over the next 10 years and beyond?*
- *What concerns does your business have about future changes to the*

Village Center and the surrounding community? What plans do you have to expand or improve your business?

- *Rank the importance (from highest to lowest) of the following issues you would like to see addressed by the Master Plan: traffic congestion, parking, pedestrian access, environment and aesthetics, architecture and landscaping, residential housing, changing demographics.*
- *Are there issues that you feel are important that we have not identified above?*
- *Would you like to be involved in the River Hill Master Planning process?*

By answering these questions, you can help us begin defining the goals and objectives of our community as we grow together in the future. We intend to gather input from as many merchants and landowners as possible and will treat all responses and input equally. If you prefer, we will be happy to include your comments anonymously. Our goal is to put the best ideas from the community forward so that our Community Plan not only reflects the interests and desires of businesses and residents of River Hill but also serves as a catalyst to propel Columbia and Clarksville into the 21st century together.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Tony Miceli or Robert Runser whose contact information is listed below. I will be contacting you soon to setup a convenient time for your interview. We look forward to an engaging discussion with you soon.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Smith
River Hill Village Manager
manager@villageofriverhill.org

B. Merchant Survey Results

Interviews: Five Village Center merchants and three Clarksville merchants

Village Center (VC) Facilities Improvements

- Enhance communal atmosphere at Village Center
- Increase options for communal, merchant-neutral “al fresco” dining and meeting space. Placement could include a new area in the courtyard or along the covered walkway near some of the stores. Sturdy and “locked-down” outdoor furniture desirable to avoid theft and vandalism. Tables, chairs, umbrellas, and picnic tables are possibilities. Enable merchants to fence off their dining areas with planters to improve appearance of the patio for dining.
- Offer free Village Center Wi-Fi available in the VC Courtyard. Several merchants have Wi-Fi for their businesses and are receptive and exploring options for offering it to the community.
- Village Center changes and improvements should take advantage of the well-educated and technology aware constituency in the area.
- Improve signage/shop visibility within Village Center
- Add a Village Center map/directory near the Giant and/or Courtyard area that includes all merchants in the Village Center. Include an enclosed poster board for posting Village Center event announcements and merchant specials/advertisements.
- Consider advertising the shops in the courtyard along the wall of the Giant facing the parking lot.
- Improved signage visibility by allowing merchants to have lighted signs facing the parking lot.
- Hedge rows in front of stores block visibility of stores (windows and doors) from parking lot.
- Pedestrian improvements
- Increase accessibility of bike racks through the Village Center

Village Center Vibrancy

- Ensure Village Center uniqueness with diversity of stores

- Ensure uniqueness of Village Center stores with respect to other shopping center developments in the area. Encourage/select businesses that make the Village Center a destination. Village Center should have a diverse set of businesses. Unique restaurants that focus on authentic ethnic cuisine, for instance, might be welcomed additions to current shops and restaurant offerings.
- Need a business that brings lots of outside traffic to Village Center (e.g. Chipolte’s). Current businesses (e.g. banks, Giant) tend to attract local regulars, but not transit traffic passing through the community.
- The types of businesses that can rent space in the Village Center may be limited by non-compete clauses the protect some of the current merchants. Village Center Board should be aware of these arrangements if possible.
- Enhance Village Center competitiveness with surrounding communities/signage along Route 108.
- Lack of visibility and signage along Route 108 a major problem for Village Center businesses. Other shopping centers can advertise along Route 108 but Village Center merchants cannot. Route 108 is a commercial, not residential road. Village Center sign should be allowed. Difficult to compete with other shopping centers in area with more visibility.
- Should advertise all of Columbia’s Village Center shops as a unit. “Columbia Village Center’s Have it All” type of campaign. Not many people realize that the combination of the shops in all the Village Center’s can compete with the centralized shopping districts of Maple Lawn.
- Village Center should reflect and maintain Columbia/Howard County’s nationally recognized reputation.

Village Center Social Activities

- Increase frequency/diversity of Village Center social events
- Increase diversity and frequency of Village Center community

events beyond the Summer Concert series. Ideas include: Poetry readings, local art shows, drama presentations, music night, family movie night, and other activities that are driven by the community and possibly by RHHS.

- May need to appoint/create a social chair position on the Village Center Board to organize events and reach out to sources for ideas and collaboration.
- Need activities and events that bring people to the Village Center for the day, not just to pick-up groceries.
- A welcomed addition to the Village Center complex would be a community learning center where classes can be offered during the day. Similar to Claret Hall, but designed more as a classroom or teaching space.

Village Center Safety and Security

- Improve security visibility and enforcement
- Improve frequency and visibility of security patrols for entire Village Center, not just areas near the courtyard. Patrols should cover entire Village Center perimeter, loading docks, and merchant parking lots in the back. Establish a schedule for the patrols that coincides with times with the most security concerns. Security fees paid by merchants should cover the needs of the local Village Center rather than other Village Centers throughout Columbia.
- Establish a “Village Center Watch” program where community volunteers “patrol” the Village Center during times with security concerns.
- Enforce stop signs at crosswalks in the back between the Village Center and Columbia Gym and Claret Hall and condos.
- Raise awareness that skateboarding and loitering are not permitted.
- Closed circuit cameras Village Center-wide would provide enhanced security for merchants and patrons. Cameras could monitor parking lots and areas in back of shopping center to protect employees.

- Lighting and pedestrian safety improvements
- Evaluate lighting and security of the merchant parking lots to ensure safety of Village Center employees after hours.
- Consider “raised speed hump” style cross walks
- Crosswalks need to be visible, painted, and enable pedestrian access completely around the Village Center.
- Lighting is in need of improvement in the back of the River Hill Sports Grille and the parking lot of Columbia Gym. Several lamp bulbs are in need of replacement.
- Cleanliness
- Professional exterminators should be involved in evaluating rodent problems observed near the dumpsters.
- At times, trash pick-up has been delayed due to turnover in trash contracts. Village Center landlord should communicate cause for delays with merchants.
- The fountain needs continuous maintenance to keep it functioning.
- Outreach and youth engagement
- Engage the youth community on outreach to improve awareness of etiquette surrounding Village Center. RHHS students are an important customer base for the merchants but also pose security and behavior challenges. A Village Center Day at RHHS where the merchants reach out to the students, discuss Village Center issues, community volunteering, and other outreach activities will help build a bond between the students and the Village Center.

Communications

- Village Center Board and manager need to ensure that all VC merchants receive schedules and updates regarding VC-wide events. Relying on landlord for these communications is not always reliable.
- A poster case included on the new Village Center Directory (referenced above) can be used to advertise Village Center events.

- Improve coordination of Columbia Gym classes with parking needs of merchants. At times, Columbia Gym’s parking lot is completely full preventing patrons to the Village Center from parking in the back.
- Improve the frequency and quality of the advertisements for the Village Center events.

Clarksville/River Hill Community Vibrancy

- Enhance River Hill Village Center/Clarksville competitiveness
- Ensure uniqueness of stores compared to other surrounding communities. Stores in Clarksville should be a destination that is entirely different and unique from the rest of Columbia. Ideas for new, local stores include: Unique restaurants (e.g. Thai), clothing stores
- Uniquely delineate area around Clarksville as you enter from Route 108—signage, median strip, tree-lined streetscape
- Competition with Maple Lawn and Turf Valley may be a challenge for Columbia in 10 to 15 years. Columbia will be viewed as an “old community.”
- Business/advertisement for restaurants, shops along Route 32 would be helpful. A “blue food” sign and River Hill/Clarksville sign along Route 32 would help bring awareness to the shopping areas around the community.
- A possible model: New city center in Rockville, a good template for ambiance, walkability, family-oriented
- Traffic and safety improvements
- Entire community should be pedestrian friendly, family-oriented, environmentally sustainable (green buildings, green parking lots, solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations, etc.)
- Unified common access to all businesses along Route 108. Current entrances present traffic safety and pedestrian issues. Required collaboration among the landowners.
- High school students cross the Route 108 bridge across Route 32 regularly during the school year. The markings and

safety of the crossings in front of the highway ramps should be evaluated.

- A contiguous sidewalk along both sides of Route 108 near Route 32 is needed.
- A pedestrian crossing at Auto Drive just west of the Walgreen’s would be helpful for pedestrian’s accessing the post office. Future improvements along Auto Drive should consider adding additional crosswalks.
- Traffic could become a major problem in the future. Rush hour backups occur routinely along Route 108 at Route 32. The intersection at Route 108 and Linden Linthicum Lane can be dangerous especially for left turns from Linden Linthicum Lane onto Route 108. Commuters use other routes such as cutting through Great Star Drive and Linden Linthicum Lane to get to Route 108. Congestion at Route 108 and Ten Oaks Road is particularly bad during peak hours.
- Some merchants are considering purchasing bike racks. Currently bikers have to lock their bikes to objects like propane tanks and signs. A program to encourage merchants/shops to add bike racks along Route 108 would be helpful.
- New development
- The development of the Gateway school property has great potential to improve the appearance of the community and bring several disjointed properties common access to Route 108. A possible extension of a frontage road between Auto Drive and the new property would link together several of these properties and the new development.
- The undeveloped property at Route 108 and Ten Oaks Road is an “eye sore” that needs action.

Master Planning Process Recommendations

- Suggestions made from the Master Planning Committee should consider funding sources and potential impact on

merchants. Changes and improvement fees often get passed onto merchants. Master Planning Committee and Village Center Board should investigate sources of funding from Columbia Association and other organizations to fund improvements, events, etc.

III. BRAINSTORM FOR RIVER HILL VILLAGE CENTER'S FUTURE SUMMARY

Changes Anticipated Over Next 20 Years

- Increase in residents/population
- Increase in traffic affects the need for safe walking/biking routes e.g., crosswalks; affects the need for safe roadways e.g., signage, speed bumps, traffic calming, roundabouts; affects the need for public transportation
- Transitions in families — children growing up/moving out
- Need to accommodate children
- Need to accommodate multi-generational families — children-grandparents
- Need to accommodate aging population/seniors/active adults
- Increases in gasoline prices, which in turn affects shopping patterns; affects the need for public transportation; affects the need for safe walking/biking — within village/external to village; creates demand for “large stores;” affects public water/sewer boundary

Needs Identified

- Connect Village of River Hill to Columbia’s downtown
- Outdoor gathering spaces — Kings Contrivance model, central gathering area
- Seating areas

- Tables
- Children's play area
- Interactive water feature
- Change in the focus of the Village Center so gathering space does not look/affected by the traffic and parking areas
- Reasons for community to visit the Village Center other than just for shopping e.g., outdoor movies, concerts, events

Models Identified

- Kings Contrivance Village Center
- Charlotte, NC
- Boulder, CO
- Seattle, WA

Goal

The Village Center should be an attractive, safe gathering place for families, individuals, and events.

How can the community affect change?

- Develop and nurture a relationship with the property owners
- Encourage members of the community to become involved

IV. WALKABOUT SUMMARY

Date of Walkabout: November 13, 2010

Attendees

Trevor Greene, *Village Board & MPC*

Jacqueline Easley, *MPC*

Livi Vaught, *MPC*

Mohammad Saleem, *Resident*

Debbie Greene, *Resident*

Frank Hazzard, *Resident*

Kim Farrell, *Resident*

David Elsaesser, *Resident*

Howard Feintuch, *Columbia Patch Reporter*

John McCoy, *Columbia Association*

Chick Rhodehamel, *Columbia Association*

Susan Smith, *Village Manager*

Master Plan Focus

- Consensus of the group was that the Master Plan needs to include a broader area than just the Village Center and needs to be inclusive of non-Columbia property owners e.g., businesses and residents.
- Suggestion that the plan be called the Clarksville/River Hill Master Plan.

Land Use Issues

- When asked what uses residents felt were missing the following items were identified: Farmer's market, cultural amenities, teen-related uses — reduce loitering, Village Green — beyond the Village Center courtyard).
- Increased residential development in the area e.g., along Trotter Road.
- Storm water management pond and CA open space behind

Columbia Gym — modifying the usage of this area was discussed e.g., benches, mowing, “developed” vs. “undeveloped” open space.

Transportation Issues

- A major concern of the group was the ability of Route 108 to handle traffic as development increases/uses change.
- Route 108/Linden Linthicum Lane intersection — concerns about safety and the need for a light were raised.
- Pedestrian accessibility was a major priority for the group. Concept of “park once” important. The need to slow traffic to make the area more pedestrian friendly e.g., the addition of medians, improved pedestrian crossings.
- The need for improved pedestrian connections within the Village Center (Giant undeveloped parcel), across Route 108, and along Route 108 were discussed.
- Bike accessibility was identified as an important goal, both within the Village/Clarksville area and connections with the rest of Columbia.
- Improving connections to the rest of Columbia was identified as a goal. Suggestions included bikes, bike lanes, bridge over the Middle Patuxent River.

Communication Strategies

- The need to improve communication about the Master Plan process in an effort to educate and involve residents as well as non-residents was noted.
- Strategies discussed included: Facebook page, signs,
- Develop a communication plan.

V. MASTER PLAN REVISIONS FROM CA, RIVER HILL VILLAGE BOARD AND RIVER HILL COMMUNITY

A. Outreach Schedule

- Draft Master Plan presented to the River Hill Village Board (RHVB) at the board meeting held on February 4, 2013.
- RHVB authorized publication of the Draft Master Plan on the River Hill Village website, agreed to a two month public comment period, and release of the Draft Master Plan to Columbia Association at the board meeting on March 18, 2013.
- Public comment period ran from April-May 2013
- Draft Master Plan posted on River Hill Village website with online comment form
- Published two articles in the Villager describing the goals of The Master Plan and ways to provide comments
- Provided printed copies of the Master Plan and Master Plan Comment Forms that could be accessed at Claret Hall
- Master Plan Committee staffed a table at the River Hill Board Elections April 20, 2013 to display Master Plan, answer questions, and solicit comments
- Draft Master Plan sent to Columbia Association Community Planning group for comment

B. Results

- Documented several verbal comments and ideas received at the Master Plan table hosted during the April 20, 2013 board elections
- Received 5 comments through email and the Villager online form and four written comment forms.
- Columbia Association provided a marked-up pdf of the Draft Master Plan with comments and notes
- RHVB provided verbal comments on certain sections of the Master Plan at the presentation meeting held on
- Updated the Master Plan to address all comments received

VI. MERCHANTS IN THE RIVER HILL VILLAGE CENTER AND CLARKSVILLE VICINITY

River Hill Village Center — *current as of January 2013*

Dining/Food and Beverage

Ledo Pizza
Bagel Bin
Panda Kitchen
Subway
Red Mango
McDonalds
Ruby Tuesdays
River Hill Grille

Consumer Retail Services

Tower Federal Credit Union
Massage Envy
The UPS Store
The Columbia Bank
River Hill Optical
Hair Cuttery
Columbia Gym
M&T Bank
Capital One Bank

Auto Related

Sunoco

Public/Gov't/Community Services

Claret Hall
Columbia Gym
Ten Oaks Ballroom
Firehouse
The Gathering Place
Professional Bldg — across from Columbia Gym
River Hill Station — Medical Bldg.

Groceries/Food at Home

Giant Supermarket
Vintage Cellars

Specialty Stores

Everett Jewelry

River Hill Village Center — *This list was last updated 3/10/13*

Claret Hall
Tower Federal Credit Union
Massage Envy
The UPS Store
Ledo Pizza
Everett Jewelry
Bagel Bin
Panda Kitchen
Subway
The Columbia Bank
River Hill Optical
Vintage Cellars
River Hill Cleaners
Red Mango
River Hill Sports Grille
Hair Cuttery
Columbia Gym
Giant Supermarket

M&T Bank
McDonalds
Ruby Tuesdays
Capital One Bank
Ten Oaks Ballroom
Sunoco
River Hill Station (Medical Bldg)
Firehouse
The Gathering Place
Professional Bldg — Near Columbia Gym

Along Route 108 on Clarksville side

River Hill Garden Center
Lutfi's
Linden Linthicum Church
Free State Gas
Kendalls Hardware
Pizza Hut
Walgreens
Sandy Spring Bank
AutoPark Drive dealerships
Exxon
Oral/Dental/Maxillofacial Surgery
Hillmuth Certified Automotive
ABC Satellite
Bank of America
St. Louis Church and School

Freestanding House on Ten Oaks

The Loft
Ten Oaks Gallery
Chic and Unique

Freestanding Building

The Still Point Spa

Clarksville Plaza

Flitz Hair Designs
Gracie Martial Arts
Pudgies Pizza
All State Insurance
108 Deli Wine and Spirits

Clarksville Crossing

Brookfield Christian School
Jostin Cafe
Clarksville Chiropractic
Clarksville Crossing Dental Center
Dr. Lea Lazar MD Family Practice
Pro-Nails
Kitana Japanese Restaurant
Siloam Cleaners
Art Partners Framing and Art Gallery
Tropical Tan tanning salon

Plaza with Long and Foster

Long and Foster/Creig Northrop
Columbia Family Eye Care
Clarksville Barber
Mimis Kabob
Sherwin Williams paint store
BTXR Personal Training
Chyten Tutors

Clarksville Square Shopping Center

Wendy's
Anthony's
Bark
Boulder
State Farm Insurance

Salon Tusey
Computer Installations, Inc.
Cleaners
Roots
Great Sage
Nest
Kids Time Out
Charles Luck Stone Center
Dr. Benavent (dentist)
OX Orthodontix
PNC Bank
Dogtopia
Hulay's Holistic

Shopping Center Next Clarksville Square

Jiffy Lube
Clarksville Car Wash
Clarksville Auto Center
Cleaners
Fast Wok
Charm City Run (Shoes and clothing)
Pet Vet
Village Liquors
El Azteca
Tina's Nails
Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbin

East of Linden Linthicum Lane

Linden Linthicum Church
Free State Gas
Lutfi's
River Hill Garden Center
Memorial Park (cemetery)

Village Center Businesses by Category

Specialty Stores

Everett Jewelry

Dining/Food and Beverage

Ledo Pizza

Bagel Bin

Panda Kitchen

Subway

Red Mango

McDonalds

Ruby Tuesdays

River Hill Grille

Consumer Retail Services

Tower Federal Credit Union

Massage Envy

The UPS Store

The Columbia Bank

River Hill Optical

Hair Cuttery

River Hill Cleaners

Columbia Gym

M&T Bank

Capital One Bank

Auto Related

Sunoco

Public/Gov't/Community Services

Claret Hall

Columbia Gym

Ten Oaks Ballroom

Firehouse

The Gathering Place

Professional Bldg (Across from Columbia Gym)

River Hill Station (Medical Bldg)

Groceries/Food at Home

Giant Supermarket

Vintage Cellars

Categories of Facilities and Services in the High Impact Area

Specialty Stores

Art Partners Framing and Art Gallery

Ten Oaks Gallery

Bark

Computer Installations, Etc.

Nest (environment friendly items)

Boulder (clothing)

Charm City Run (Athletic shoes and clothing)

Chic and Unique

Dining/Food and Beverages

Pizza Hut

Pudgies Pizza

Jostin Café

Kitana Japanese Restaurant

Mimis Kabob

Wendy's

Anthony's

Great Sage

Fast Wok

El Azteca

Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbins

108 Deli Wine and Spirits

Groceries/Food at Home

Roots
Village Liquors

Consumer Retail Services

Kendalls Hardware
Walgreens
Sandy Spring Bank
ABC Satellite
Bank of America
Flitz Hair Designs
Gracie Martial Arts
The Still Point Spa
Pro-Nails
Siloam Cleaners
Tropical Tan Tanning Salon
The Loft
Long and Foster/Creig Northrop
Clarksville Barber
Sherwin Williams Paint Store
All State Insurance
Salon Tusey
Cleaners (2)
Kid's Time Out
Charles Luck Stone Center
PNC Bank
Dogtopia
Tina's Nails
Lutfi's
River Hill Garden Center
Hulay's Holistic
BTXR Personal Training

Auto Related

Exxon
Auto Park Drive dealerships
Hillmuth Certified Automotive
Jiffy Lube
Clarksville Car Wash
Clarksville Auto Center
Free State Gas

Public/Gov't/Community Services

Oral/Dental/Maxillofacial Surgery
Clarksville Chiropractic
Clarksville Crossing Dental Center
Dr. Lea Lazar MD Family Practice
Columbia Family Eye Care
Dr. Benavent (dentist)
OX Orthodontix
Pet Vet
Chyten Tutors

Religious

St. Louis Church and School
Brookfield Christian School
Linden Linthicum Church

VII. RIVER HILL MASTER PLAN CHARTER



River Hill Community Association Master Plan Committee

The River Hill Community Association (“RHCA”) Board of Directors, being fully authorized and empowered under Article 3 of the RHCA Articles of Incorporation and Article 3 of the RHCA Bylaws, and in order to enhance the well being of the River Hill Community by addressing issues relating future development, hereby approves and adopts this charter to establish the River Hill Village Center Master Plan Committee (“MPC”), to wit:

Article 1: Organization

The MPC shall be a special committee of the RHCA Board of Directors comprised of interested residents and one or more members of the RHCA Board of Directors and shall be generally organized as follows:

- A. Name** — The River Hill Village Center Master Plan Committee may be referred to as the “RHCA Master Plan Committee” and/or the “MPC”.
- B. Members** — The members of the MPC shall include no more than ten (10) interested residents of the communities making up the River Hill Community Association, members of communities near properties within the territorial boundaries of the Village of River Hill, residents of properties near the territorial boundaries of the

Village of River Hill, owners and tenants of business properties within and near the territorial boundaries of the Village of River Hill, and such other persons as the MPC deems appropriate and necessary. Members will be appointed by the RHCA Board of Directors.

C. Authority —

1. The MPC, under the auspices of the RHCA Board of Directors, shall have the authority to do all acts necessary, subject to the approval of the RHCA Board of Directors, to develop, implement and achieve the objectives and underlying intent of this charter.
2. Final authority for the approval and adoption of the recommendations, plans and concepts created by the MPC shall be solely vested with the RHCA Board of Directors.

Article 2: Objectives

The objectives of this charter and the establishment of the MPC shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. To define, develop and establish a River Hill Village Center Master Plan (herein “Master Plan”) that will serve the best interests of the residents of the Greater River Hill Community Area with respect to future development within and adjacent to the territorial boundaries of the Village of River Hill. The Master Plan, after approval by the Board of Directors, will be submitted to the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) in order to be made available to the public pursuant to the Maryland Public Information Act. Similarly any changes to the Master Plan must be approved by the Board of Directors prior to submittal to Howard County DPZ.
2. To define and establish the territorial boundaries of the Greater River Hill Community Area. situated within Columbia, Maryland, Clarksville, Maryland, Fulton Maryland

and Highland Maryland, for which future development, in or adjacent to said boundaries, may impact and/or influence the objectives of the Master Plan.

3. To collaborate with local government entities regarding future development within and adjacent to the Greater River Hill Community Area territorial boundaries which may influence, impact and/or affect the Master Plan.
4. To collaborate with local businesses and merchants in connection with future development that may influence, impact and/or affect the Master Plan.
5. To collaborate with local residents in connection with future development that may influence, impact and/or affect the Master Plan.
6. To collaborate with other adjacent local communities in connection with development that may influence, impact and/or affect the Master Plan.

Article 4: Legislative History and Background

Over the course of the past several years there have been several legislative initiatives related to planning and zoning that have both direct and indirect impact on the global communities known as Columbia, Maryland, Clarksville, Maryland and Fulton, Maryland. The result of these initiatives has included, in part, the enactment of Howard County Council Bills 29-2009 and 59-2009 (ZRA-102) and CB59-2009 (downtown redevelopment). In addition, there have been many new development proposals and projects in the River Hill, Clarksville and Fulton areas which will have an impact on the residents, business owners and property owners in these areas which may affect their personal interest, property interest, health, safety and well being, and their general quality of life including, but not limited to, day-to-day activities. For this reason, the RHCA

Board of Directs recognizes the need to be actively involved in the planning process for future development in, around and adjacent to the Village of River Hill.

Pursuant to CB No. 29-209 (ZRA-102), the Howard County Council amended the Howard County zoning regulations to empower and/or allow the owner of any portion of a village center in the New Town zoning district to petition to amend certain approved development plans for the owner's property; establishing public notice, information, and justification requirements for such petition; establishing standards to be used by the Zoning Board in evaluating and considering such petition; and generally relating to the New Town zoning district. This council bill, as amended and enacted, is incorporated by reference herein for guidance in connection with the planning process and future development of the River Hill Community area and the creation of the Master Plan.

Article 5: Responsibilities

Among other things, the MPC will promote collaboration, coordination, interaction and/or communication in pursuit of the establishment and development of the Master Plan, including, but not limited to, other documents and mechanisms that position the community to take an active role in shaping the future composition of property, related improvements and uses in the Greater River Hill Community Area. The MPC will have the authority and responsibility to produce position papers, correspondence, presentations, comments on documents produced by others, interviews, petitions, testimony and such other matters deemed beneficial to the MPC and the RHCA Board of Directors. Specific responsibilities include but are not limited to, the following:

1. Providing an open forum for the discussion of topics and issues related to future development in the Greater River Hill Community Area.

2. Coordinating input from key stakeholders, including residents, property owners, merchants, tenants and local/state government officials.
3. Seeking input from representatives of other local communities and/or Columbia Villages that have developed or are in the process of developing Master Plans.
4. Leveraging additional resources and expertise made available by the county, state, Columbia Association and/or other to be determined sources.
5. The development of a vision, goals and objectives for the Master Plan.
6. The creation of a framework, process and timeline to realize the successful creation of the Master Plan.
7. To collaborate with other committees and working groups that are pursuing common goals of the MPC, including but not limited to the RHCA Traffic/Safety Committee and the RHCA Architectural Committee.
8. To be a part of and influence any zoning review processes and zoning amendments to be consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and the objectives of this charter.
9. To define the local territorial properties that should be included in considerations which are a part of the establishment, development and perpetuation of the Master Plan.
10. To establish and promote concepts that will enhance and/or achieve environmental objectives relating to the Master Plan.
11. To establish and promote concepts that will enhance and/or achieve sustainable energy resources relating to the Master Plan.
12. To define historical aspects of the Greater River Hill Community Area that should be considered in the Master Plan.
13. The MPC will provide quarterly updates to the RHCA Board of Directors.

Article 6: Amendment and Perpetuation

The RHCA Board of Directors reserves unto itself the authority to amend this charter and the role, responsibilities and authority of the MPC. Further, the RHCA Board of Directors reserves unto itself the authority to perpetuate this charter and the master plan sought to be established pursuant to this charter including all aspects of the master plan.

This charter has been approved by the RHCA Board of Directors.

APPROVED: 11/1/10

REVISED: 8/20/12

River Hill Village Center

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