



The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) includes information regarding a feasibility study to identify the financial feasibility of alternative village center anchors and redevelopment opportunities for Oakland Mills Village Center area. This basic information is provided by the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) to assist residents, business owners and other stakeholders with terminology and general information. This FAQ is NOT intended to provide you with an exhaustive resource for all things pertaining to the Study. This FAQ is subject to change without notice. To the extent you have further questions, need further explanation for any of the questions below, feel free to contact DPZ at 410-313-2350.



# Oakland Mills Village Center Area Redevelopment Feasibility Study

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: What is a “feasibility study” and what does “feasibility” mean?**

**A:** A feasibility study is an analysis to determine if a prospective investment is technically and financially possible.

### **Q: How will this study test “feasibility” of uses for the Oakland Mills Village Center area?**

**A:** For the purposes of this study, “feasibility” considers the physical impacts, economic probabilities and financial implications of potential redevelopment scenarios contemplated primarily for the next five to 10 years. Analysis factors include:

- Market support – is there market demand for the use?
- Physical conditions – how could the use physically fit in the Oakland Mills Village Center area?
- Spin-off potential – could the use synergize or “spin-off” other private reinvestment? Is the use an opportunity that could drive other reinvestment?
- Development costs – in general terms, would project revenues support construction costs?
- Financing and implementation – is a specific use financeable and if so, by whom? While the emphasis is on possible private sector investment, conditions that may involve public or non-profit financial participation will also be addressed.

### **Q: What if more than one use is feasible?**

**A:** The feasibility study will look at multiple possible uses, including retail, office, residential and recreational. In order to better understand how uses compare, the consultant team will evaluate different scenarios. These scenarios will test different redevelopment options and describe them in terms of the above identified factors.

### **Q: What scenarios will be studied?**

**A:** The consultant team is working on identifying the scenarios. These will include the uses identified in the 2015 Oakland Mills Village Center Community Plan (VCCP) and also other market-based opportunities.

### **Q: Why is the study happening now?**

**A:** In 2014, Columbia Association, in partnership with Howard the County, published the Columbia Market Analysis and Economic Development Services Study (the “Columbia Market Study”) after a year-long study

and public process. The study, conducted by outside consultants, identified current market conditions and future potential opportunities for Columbia's village centers and examined the relationship of the centers with other areas in Columbia.

Columbia's village centers are retail and service centers, which were designed to be community focal points and gathering places for the surrounding neighborhoods. However, the face of retailing has changed dramatically in the nearly 50 years since the first village center was developed.

The report acknowledges modern-day retail dynamics and includes recommended overall strategies to strengthen, revitalize or reposition Columbia's village centers. The report also offers specific recommendations for each village center. Among other findings, the Columbia Market Study advises proactive investigation of alternatives to the traditional grocery store for the older village centers.

After the Columbia Market Study was published, the Oakland Mills Community Association prepared their Village Center Community Plan (VCCP) in 2015. The VCCP is an element of the Village Center Redevelopment process created by the Howard County Council (CB29-2009) and is an advisory document created by the village association. CB29 created a zoning process to facilitate village center redevelopment. The process allows any owner of village center property to propose land use changes, and defines a role for village associations including the development of a VCCP.

The 2015 VCCP updated OMCA's 2007 master plan, which was prepared prior to the County Council's passage of CB29. Both of these plans made clear the OMCA's aspirations for the revitalization of their community at the time of respective publication.

**Q: *Who is conducting the feasibility study?***

**A:** Howard County Government, in partnership with Columbia Association (CA), has engaged a consulting team led by Bolan Smart Associates to evaluate economic and market opportunities for the Oakland Mills Village Center area. The consultant team also includes Retail & Development Strategies (RDS) and Urban Design Associates (UDA).

**Q: *How long will the feasibility study take?***

**A:** The study began at the community kick-off meeting on June 6, 2016, and will continue through the summer with stakeholder meetings, targeted research and development feasibility analysis. An overview of the findings and land use planning implications will be presented by the consultant at a community meeting in the fall, with final recommendations to follow. A concluding community meeting is anticipated for late 2016.

**Q: *What happens after the feasibility study is presented?***

**A:** The study will inform the County and CA on what uses could reposition the Oakland Mills Village Center area relative to Downtown Columbia, Blandair Park and other villages. The County will review, in collaboration with Columbia Association and other stakeholders, the potential next steps depending on report conclusions. The County looks forward to understanding opportunities for revitalization.

**Q: *How can I stay informed of this process?***

**A:** The County is communicating with the public throughout this process with updates on the project website ([www.howardcountymd.gov/Oakland-Mills-Village-Center](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/Oakland-Mills-Village-Center)). Public meetings will also be announced via e-mail notifications and press releases. Residents, business owners and property owners are encouraged to attend.

**Q: *How do I get involved?***

**A:** Community input is vital to this process and the County is eager to hear perspectives from all stakeholders. To submit comments, click the "Comment Form" link, near the bottom right on the Oakland Mills project page ([www.howardcountymd.gov/Oakland-Mills-Village-Center](http://www.howardcountymd.gov/Oakland-Mills-Village-Center)).