Community Character and Urban Design

Overview

The City strives to encourage attractive and unique neighborhoods that are welcoming to residents, employers, and visitors. The sort of good community design that creates such neighborhoods is not only visually pleasing but also provides opportunities for economic development by attracting new investment. As a City, we value our older and historic neighborhoods and strive to preserve and maintain their character-defining features. However, as our City grows, we must also establish policies and standards that promote sensitive site design and high-quality architecture while eliminating the causes of sprawl.

The goals of this ~~Chapter~~chapter are aimed at encouraging a thriving built environment that maintains a sense of place and protects established communities while ensuring that new development takes into consideration the relationship and physical connection to adjacent sites and the surrounding community. In districts and sites designated for their historical, cultural, and architectural significance, a careful design review coupled with historic preservation incentives can ensure the preservation of materials and features. In established neighborhoods where historic preservation programs may not be appropriate, policies should support construction that is compatible with the existing streetscape in terms of scale, massing, character, and setback. New development should add value to the City by creating a sense of place while improving connectivity and walkability.

Although the existing regulations in the City's Land Management Code and the policies of the adopted small area plans can guide future development in individual areas, the implementation of other planning tools, such as historic districts, conservation districts and form-based overlay districts, can supplement basic standards to enhance the overall outcome of projects in terms of design and neighborhood compatibility. The type of planning tool used to encourage a coherent and consistent neighborhood design is based on that neighborhood's existing conditions and goals. In other words, no single tool can be implemented across the City's diverse collection of neighborhoods and districts with the same success. A thoughtful and context-specific approach will dictate the appropriate planning tool and review criteria to protect and enhance community character.

Evolution of Frederick's Built Environment

Frederick's identity is largely framed by its collection of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, which slowly evolved over its 275-year history. Starting as a small market town in 1745, Frederick has expanded to include a wide range of property types associated with all phases of the City's history. Much of the original plan of the colonial-era town remains intact. The classic urban grid pattern with ~~city~~City blocks made up of long~~ and~~, narrow lots can be traced back to the City's original design and helps define downtown Frederick's unique character. Today, the downtown streetscape is distinguished by its ~~closely set~~compact buildings that front the public sidewalk. Driveways are rare and vehicular access is often limited to alleyways with detached garages located at the rear of individual properties.

Starting in the third quarter of the 19th century, the eastern edge of the City expanded with new industry along the railroad lines and Carroll Creek. This type of development was set on larger lots of land and removed from the residential districts. Today, many of the former industrial sites are being adaptively reused for ~~a~~ new ~~purpose~~purposes.

Although there were small residential extensions to the original street plan, the lots on Clarke Place (platted in 1894) were the first to deviate from the long and narrow lots that typically define downtown. Instead, the generously sized parcels allowed for the construction of large homes with Victorian era detailing to be setback from the street and feature front and side yards. Over time, detached garages with access through alleyways were built as well.

During the first decade of the 20th century, as the population shifted from rural to urban areas, the creation of new subdivisions began. The North-West Addition to Frederick City, which connected to the City's street grid, consisted of modestly sized housing including single-family dwellings, duplexes, and row houses. The development differed from the historic core with buildings set back from the street and buildings featuring new architectural styles and forms including Colonial Revival, American Four Square, and bungalow designs.

New residential subdivisions on the west side of Frederick created park-like settings with curvilinear streets departing from the traditional gridiron pattern. The construction of residential garages followed the proliferation of the automobile and. These modestly-size accessory structures were detached from the primary home and were typically accessed through a rear alley, although, occasional driveways were introduced into the streetscape.

A surge of development in the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas following World War II, coupled with the construction of the Eisenhower Defense Highway (Interstate Routes 70 and 270), hadcreated significant impacts on Frederick's growth. This new level of connectivity and reliance on the automobile ushered in a new era of expansion that focused on the outer boundaries of the City, incorporating surrounding farmland.

Post war development produced a new era of residential neighborhoods in Frederick. Rather than a tightly defined grid of streets, these were characterized by winding disconnected roadways, homes with side yard setbacks and large private yards featuring side yard setbacks, and street-facing driveways with garages to park automobiles. It was notNot only did the neighborhood layout that changedchange during this era, but also the nature of building forms. They evolved as well. Houses began to include minimalbe constructed as traditional, ranch, and split-level homeshome types. During this time, commercial development was also segregated from the residential neighborhoods that supported it. Retail and business centers were designed with large parking lots to accommodate increasing rates of car ownership, which further disconnected individual sites from adjacent uses.

Frederick's Identity Moving Forward

The policies in this chapter encourage development that respects the historic framework of existing neighborhoods, while encouraging innovation in design by supporting other policies, such as enhancing economic development and alternative transportation options. Much of this can be accomplished through planning policies and the incorporation of conservation and design-based overlay zones in the City's *Land Management Code.* An overarching goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to continue the study of neighborhoods through small area planning and adopting Form-Based Code where appropriate to encourage infill and redevelopment, as well as new development opportunities.

Guiding design principles for consistent urban form

As the City continues to grow, both redevelopment within existing neighborhoods and new greenfield development must be constructed to meet the changing demands of the economy and

environment. To encourage development that is cohesive with the existing urban form and community vision, there are critical components of character and design that must be recognized for each distinctive neighborhood:

Street Frontage

Street Frontage refers to the approach that a development takes towards the street. It is the fundamental urban design attribute as it governs the relationship between private investment on private land and public investment in the public realm.

Streetscapes

The visual elements of a street, including the road, adjoining buildings, sidewalks, street furniture, landscaping, trees and open space, etc. that combine to form the character of the street.

Building Types

The placement and massing of buildings contribute to the streetscape. Subtle differences in building types alter the street wall and transition from one neighborhood to another.

When considering new construction and redevelopment, it is important that new buildings and additions feature massing and scale similar to the existing neighborhood.

Architecture

In contrast to urban design, which shapes the broad physical features of cities and places, architecture focuses on an individual building and its scale compared to other buildings, streets, and public spaces. It has a great impact on the feeling of a neighborhood and a city and plays an imperative role in the functionality and attractiveness of a place.

In addition, architectural design such as the type of materials, fenestrations, roofline, and horizontal and vertical sections influences the character and scale and ultimately the compatibility of new constructions and additions in established neighborhoods.

Open Space and Public Amenities

Open spaces and public amenities are generally those places that act as meeting-places outside of home or workplace. These areas foster social interaction, facilitate community events, and offer opportunities for public involvement.exercise and other healthy activities.

Parking

The amount, placement, and design of parking for various types of vehicles (including EVs and bicycles) play a crucial role in the vitality of a community. The placement of parking lots should be secondary to buildings and public amenities. The number of parking spaces should reflect the availability of alternative transportation, the walkability of a neighborhood, as well as the local economy and value of the real estate. Parking can be designed to improve pedestrian experiences through deliberate landscaping, sidewalks, and other amenities. As mentioned in the Transportation Chapter, the City must balance the availability of parking with the uncertainty of future demand.

City Block Size

City block size strongly influences the walkability of a neighborhood. Generally, smaller blocks are more convenient for people on foot. Block sizes will vary from urban to suburban

neighborhoods as the focus shifts from walkability and pedestrian access to convenient vehicular travel.

Transition Areas

A transition area is the place between different land uses. When referring to conventional Euclidean zoning, this area would be the area between different zoning districts where extensive landscaping or other buffers are required. When designing a vibrant place, transitions play an important role in how one area such as a dense urban downtown may transition to a suburban neighborhood.

High-quality transition areas can also provide effective connections between neighborhoods. The ability to walk, bike, ride transit, or efficiently drive between neighborhoods creates a cohesive environment and provides many benefits to the community.

Neighborhood Gateways

Neighborhood gateways are welcoming points of interest between neighborhoods, destinations, or transition areas. They can be important intersections, parks, or plazas and are uniquely influenced by their immediate surroundings.

Skyline Views and Scenic Vistas

It is important to preserve scenic views and vistas as they provide identity to the heritage of a community, economic development through tourism, community charm, and civic pride. The City is fortunate to have an iconic downtown skyline defined by Clustered Spires of historic places of worship as well as the view of the Catoctin Mountains to the west. Views of the City's spires from gateway corridors, significant open spaces, and high vantage points within the City will be preserved and protected. New developments are encouraged to take advantage of viewsheds and vistas, which will retain and enhance the City's unique skyline. Infill projects within the historic district should be scaled sensitively to enhance rather than compete with the Clustered Spires. The future US15 small area plan will also be drafted to account for the scenic views of the Catoctin Mountains and the adjacent construction should be sensitive to the viewshed.

Considerations for Infill Development

This plan prioritizes infill development, which is the improvement of vacant and/or underutilized parcels within the existing municipal boundary. Infill promotes the use of existing infrastructure, concentrating ~~city~~City services and reducing vehicle miles traveled. ~~The~~As the demand for housing and commercial real estate near the downtown core increases, it is important that infill development is consistent with the character of existing neighborhoods. The improvement of these properties has the potential to stimulate neighborhoods, increase property values and tax revenue, conserve environmental resources, and further the City's sustainability initiatives. However, there are three design considerations for infill development that should be evaluated to foster successful integration with existing neighborhoods:

Compatible

Infill development can be ~~distinguishable~~distinct from the surrounding community, but it must also become an integral component of an established streetscape. Compatible infill development should contribute to a visually cohesive streetscape and should reflect the scale, setback, and lot patterning that characterizes a neighborhood. The goal is to encourage reinvestment in the City

that complements and blends well with surrounding development. It should help neighborhoods achieve greater vitality in terms of both social cohesion and economic health.

Connected

Redevelopment that occurs in existing neighborhoods that currently lack adequate connections to larger corridors should focus on providing greater pedestrian and vehicular connections. In order to distinguish individual neighborhoods and districts within the City, where possible, development should take the opportunity to create or improve upon gateways.

Community Core

Community spaces such as schools; parks and playgrounds; and institutional uses (places of worship/community centers) are crucial to supporting the public life that binds a community together. Infill development and redevelopment should complement the places that serve as the hub of the neighborhood.

Threats to Community character

Community character is often described by many residents of the City as an important value that is being threatened by new development. Preserving and promoting community character is important to the overall perception of neighborhood quality and desirability.

Stock Architecture
Modern suburban architecture often lacks a distinct style evoking a local sense of place. Often, the architecture of shopping centers, strip malls, or other auto-oriented development does not reflect the unique sense of the community in which it is found. This architecture, meant to be seen by passing drivers on the road, offers little interaction and visual interest to the pedestrian and therefore contributes little to the streetscape. Large groupings of buildings that utilize this style of stark architecture can lead to a feeling of placeless-ness within a community.

Visual Clutter and Lack of Identity Along Corridors
Indistinct or corporate architecture often does not incorporate design elements that reflect the character or history of the community. Instead, this type of development often includes abundant surface parking lots and a mass of uncoordinated signage, which competes for visual dominance along roadways. Visual clutter can lead to distraction on roadways and detract from local character.

Large Parking Lots
Large surface parking lots represent a challenge ~~and~~as well as an opportunity for redevelopment. Often, large surface parking lots are remnants of older style development and contribute to urban heat island effects, stormwater runoff, and the perception of blight. One of the largest ~~threats~~impacts to the surrounding neighborhood is the voids they place within the community and the lack of inactivity that created by the expansive surfaces. New construction should take advantage of large open surface parking lots for appropriate mixed-use infill development.

Teardown and Incompatible Replacement
With the demand for land increasing in the urban core and the demand for high-value homes in those neighborhoods, the teardown has become an evolutionary stage for single-family neighborhoods. This is a process whereby older middle-class homes are demolished to make way for larger modern homes. This occurs when the land beneath a decades-old dwelling built for working-class residents becomes more valuable than the house, and zoning has not been changed

to allow for more dense investment. Rather than construct additions for more living space, additional dwelling units, or other modern improvements, traditional homes are bulldozed and rebuilt to maximize the land value and the zoning. The result is a larger home with architecture that clashes with rather than accents or complements that of the neighborhood.

Incompatible Additions and Accessory Structures

New construction in the form of additions and accessory structures can allow a property to evolve to meet new needs. However, an incompatible design in an ~~establish~~established community can have a negative impact on the neighborhood. The two most important design aspects to consider are location and scale. Additions and accessory structures built in a highly visible portion of the property can have a significant impact on the character of the primary structure and disrupt the established ~~patterning~~pattern and rhythm of a streetscape. New construction that is noticeably larger in scale can overwhelm a site and be incompatible to the setting.

Euclidean Zoning

Traditional Euclidean zoning, which emphasizes the segregation of land uses, has contributed to conventional suburban-style development. This separates nonresidential uses from residents (their customers), thereby requiring access primarily by automobile, rendering transit or pedestrian infrastructure infeasible. Thus, zoning regulations should encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, and transit-friendly development.

Inadequate and Disconnected Transportation Options

A lack of complete streets that accommodate non-driving modes of transportation (sidewalks, bike lanes, and bus stops) leads to the increased usage of automobiles, heavier traffic at peak hours, and increased infrastructure expenditure.

Tools

An effective planning tool to enact special protective provisions in designated areas are overlay zones that are form-based. Overlay zones can be applied in addition to those regulations established by the underlying base zones to address specific and community-based challenges. The City has several areas in which overlays have been applied to address specific goals and objectives in a geographic area. For example, the purpose of the Carroll Creek Overlay District (CCO) is to reinforce the planned high-quality, pedestrian-friendly environment and control signage and visual clutter along the Carroll Creek Corridor, an important focal point and economic development area of downtown Frederick. The Highway Noise Impact Overlay District (HNO) is used to conserve the habitability and value of residential properties in the vicinity of high-volume highways and mitigate the noise. The use of overlay zones, including historic designations and conservation districts, can be implemented to protect and promote existing community character.

Historic Districts

Some communities possess unique qualities that embody important aspects of our history and physical development. One of the most important tools currently available to safeguard the historical and cultural heritage of the City is the creation of the Historic Preservation Overlays (HPO). An HPO zone is applied to a definable geographic area to preserve sites, structures, and districts that reflect elements of cultural, social, economic, political, archeological, and architectural history. With input from residents and stakeholders, design guidelines are drafted and implemented by planning staff and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). Exterior alterations and infill projects are carefully reviewed to ensure compatibility of design, scale, and materials and to ensure historic resources and features are preserved. An HPO is the most

effective tool to preserve historic neighborhood character. It is also used to stabilize and improve property values and foster civic beauty.

Conservation Districts

A Neighborhood Conservation District, or NCD, is a zoning overlay that offers residential communities the ability to tailor the management of community character to the needs of specific areas. An NCD is intended to protect the character of a neighborhood without invoking a high level of regulatory review, which is generally associated with traditional local historic districts.

The City's Land Management Code currently does not allow for the creation of NCDs and ~~the~~there are no policies for their implementation. ~~Implementation policies and~~ Code amendments and implementation policies will be required should the City choose to move forward with the creation of NCDs. As part of this process, the Planning Department would work with communities interested in applying an NCD to develop guidelines that are tailored to the character of the neighborhood and address issues that threaten to diminish the physical qualities that make it a desirable place to live.

One important aspect of community character that can be addressed by an NCD is addressing teardowns in existing neighborhoods for the construction of new buildings that are out of scale and out of character in their context. Teardowns often occur in communities where the housing stock is sound but older, and where the character of the neighborhood is generally considered desirable. An NCD can discourage teardowns by creating design standards to ensure new construction is compatible with the streetscape.

Under an NCD, additional consideration must be given to the construction of new accessory structures to ensure they are both compatible with the existing principal structure and the adjacent neighborhood. Accessory structures should be considered as additional space for parking vehicles and living area for the homeowner as well as additional dwelling units to promote increased density and affordable housing options for existing neighborhoods. ~~Similarly~~Correspondingly, the building height, massing, and siting would also be reviewed to ensure compatibility with the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts are not a good alternative to a Historic Preservation District if the goal is to preserve aspects of cultural, social, economic, political, archeological, and architectural history. Instead, an NCD is a planning tool that can help maintain neighborhood character by developing area-specific design standards to ensure that new development is sympathetic to the existing built environment.

Organizing Principles

NCDs are typically established in residential neighborhoods with distinctive physical characteristics that can be clearly defined. Boundaries can be delineated after considering neighborhood character and historic context. Older, established neighborhoods that have experienced few significant alterations but may be threatened with teardowns and ~~unsympathetic~~insensitive replacements (in terms of size and general character) are likely proper candidates for an NCD.

These areas may merit designation as a local historic district but lack resident support for strict design review. Over time, these older neighborhoods that are eligible for historic designation may transition into a historic district to take advantage of the additional benefits and incentives associated with an HPO. Alternatively, older neighborhoods that have changed over time and

may not be a proper candidate for an HPO may benefit from the moderate level of protection offered by an NCD by ensuring that future changes are compatible with the neighborhood's character. Communities that lack a definable development and design pattern will have the least potential for success with a conservation overlay.

To create and implement successful NCD, the following principles should be followed:

1. Guidelines should be developed with neighborhood participation.
2. Design review requirements should offer a clear alternative to stricter forms of historic preservation regulation.
3. The review process should be streamlined and user-friendly.
4. The review standards and process should allow predictability about outcomes through consistent application and enforcement.

Form-Based Code

Form-Based Code (FBC) is a zoning regulation that guides how developments and buildings relate to the public realm first and only secondarily to what uses occur inside them. Its purpose is to design a particular type of place or built environment based on the community's vision.

FBCs are written to regulate development so that it deliberately generates a specific urban form, including the public realm. The purpose is to integrate subdivision and zoning regulations and right--of--way standards (roads, sidewalks, landscaping) and rules for parks and other open spaces such as plazas and squares. Intentionally defining the relationship between private development and the streetscape in order to create an inviting and comfortable public space, including streets, sidewalks, plazas, squares, and anywhere else the public gathers outdoors.

Regulating Plan
The foundation of an FBC is the organizing principle to guide the regulatory elements and design. This principle, typically called the Regulating Plan, ~~define~~defines groups of areas that are not based on uses (e.g., residential, commercial and industrial) but rather on the desired character of the community, the intensity of land uses, and the building form. These areas are often modeled after the "transect," which is a tool to organize the character, intensity, and form of communities along a gradient from the urban to rural environments. FBCs can also be organized using street types or physical characteristics of a specific neighborhood. Regardless of the organizing principle, the goal is to implement a vision for the community without dividing the code into land use categories.

[Insert Transect Image]

A regulating plan is a detailed zoning map that includes streets and open space as the basis of the development standards. Each street, block, or parcel must comply with the standards that are often illustrated in the FBC rather than described as text. Cities may implement an FBC by either developing Regulating Plans for the entire ~~city~~City at once or for its neighborhoods over a period of time. This plan recommends that the City implement FBC for its neighborhoods to correspond with the Small Area Plans starting with the *East Street Corridor* and the *Golden Mile*.

The East Street Corridor may be regulated by a transect model with the densest areas concentrated around the MARC station and adjacent to East Street and the Carroll Creek Linear Park. The Golden Mile may be regulated by the corridor plan model where the building form is designed around the existing and future street network.

[Insert Urban Form Map and descriptions - two page layout]

Development Standards
The guiding principles for consistent urban form described above play an integral part in forming the strategies to regulate development through a Form-Based Code. Those regulating standards are:

Frontage Types
The most important standard to shape the public realm is how buildings on private property relate to the streetscape. Examples of frontage types include the size of the required yard to include maximum setbacks, minimum lengths of buildings adjacent to the street, and maximum parking and driveway areas as well as landscaping. The types of porches and fences, stoops and shopfronts as well as arcades and galleries may also be regulated along with the amount and proportion of window and door openings. Blank walls may also be prohibited.

Frontages should be scaled appropriately to their location in more urban or suburban-style settings. In more dense, urban parts of Frederick, frontages should focus on pedestrian and transit accommodations, attractive streetwalls, and concealed parking options. In less-dense areas of the City, a more suburban scale design can be more appropriate while still accommodating anticipated pedestrian and transit needs.

[Insert Frontage type diagram]

Building Types
The code may also prescribe the types of buildings that are appropriate for certain areas of the neighborhood. By identifying typical and appropriate building types, bulk and dimensional standards can be determined including lot coverage, height, and massing.

To ensure compatibility, new construction should be of similar scale, massing, and placement as buildings in the immediate vicinity or neighborhood. The design should harmonize with surrounding proportions of bulk and density as well as physical building placement to reinforce streetwalls and building patterns. Large-scale and smaller-scale development should consider gradual transition zones, which can help reinforce existing neighborhood cohesiveness and present creative design options for transition areas.

[Insert Building Type diagram]

Streetscape
Equally as important as regulating frontage, the streetscape must complement the built environment. FBCs contain cross-sections that identify the portion of the right-of-way that will be allocated to drivers, transit, bicycle lanes, parking, medians, landscaping sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.

The purpose of the cross-sections is to prioritize multiple modes of travel while providing consistent and comfortable pedestrian amenities. Where commercial uses such as restaurants and retailers anticipate using public sidewalks for expanded operations, sidewalks must be designed to be wide enough to meet or exceed the minimum width for ADA accessibility and efficiently handle pedestrians.

As important as the streetscape standard are the block standards, the most ~~important~~crucial factor in determining walkability. Larger blocks tend to inhibit walkability unless a pedestrian pass-through is included. A general standard would be to have a total perimeter length of fewer than 1,800 feet. New streets/street extensions should build on the traditional street pattern of interconnected streets and distinct blocks adapted to natural topography and preservation of distinct viewsheds.

As with all ~~city~~City infrastructure improvements, there must be a balance between initial costs, maintenance and utilities that ~~must~~are necessary to serve the neighborhoods.

[Insert cross section diagram

Parking
FBCs usually require parking to be located within structures, on-street, interior to blocks, or behind buildings. Parking lots that front streets do not provide the active environment that the code promotes. Where rare circumstance requires parking adjacent to the primary street frontage, screening and landscaping must be planted to maintain the street wall.

Many FBCs have no minimum parking requirements and may limit the maximum number of spaces permitted or allow for shared parking between individual property owners. The code must carefully consider how to balance the tendency to require too much parking with market demand. Excess free or inexpensive parking induces traffic congestion and creates an uncomfortable walking environment. A well-designed neighborhood should entice residents and visitors to consolidate vehicular trips, to walk or bicycle, or to use public transportation to get around. Too much parking, especially surface lots, is a significant deterrent to a walkable environment.

Public Space and Gateway Standards
The community vision for each neighborhood sets the expectation for public spaces. Public spaces can range from pocket parks to large regional parks, with public squares, plazas, and even shared-use paths and natural corridors lying between. Most of the time these spaces are on public property and maintained by the City; however, private developers can play a role in providing public amenities. FBCs tend to plan for open spaces as amenities for future developers, as these areas often attract foot traffic and increase demand for commercial buildings.

Development should incorporate open spaces for recreational use (active and passive) per the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Any new character-defining features of a neighborhood or district development should also work to preserve existing open spaces and features, which provide scenic vistas and viewsheds. Public spaces should include amenities for public use, including benches, picnic tables, fountains or other landscape features, public artwork, appropriate lighting, wayfinding signage, and historical markers where appropriate.

Gateways into neighborhoods, districts, or corridors should provide a distinctive entryway, which sets the tone for the area it serves. Design elements should focus on distinctive elements of that locality in its use of materials, style, and scale. Gateways should provide a sense of arrival into a unique neighborhood or district that is memorable, positive, and visually impactful. Gateways should utilize public art, landscaping, signage and other decorative elements. Please refer to the gateway table (~~table~~Table 2-1) found in the Land Use Chapter.

Landscape Standards
These standards provide environmental benefits, comfortable places, and decorated public spaces. Landscaping frames public spaces by aligning street trees, planters and hedges to line sidewalks

and streets. FBCs use landscape to highlight and integrate public spaces with private buildings rather than buffer and separate land uses and buildings from another, typical of Euclidean zoning.

Landscaping, including street trees, also provides shade from heat and relief from humidity, making streets more walkable and bikeable. Mature landscaping also reduces average driving speed and makes roadways more pleasant and safer. Additional benefits include energy conservation and a boost to property values in the area. The preservation of native trees and shrubbery is encouraged in all developments. It should be a priority for the City to protect, enhance, and preserve existing significant stands of trees, street trees, wetlands, streams, and sensitive natural habitats.

Development should be designed around existing natural and historical elements, which pose no real constraint to the development plan (stands of trees, hedgerows, etc.).

Architectural Standards
Architectural standards are optional and rarely used as a regulating standard of an FBC. It is important to balance the architectural creativity of the property owner and their representatives while ensuring that building placement and massing are situated to encourage an active environment. Most FBCs include basic standards regarding building articulation; window, door, and opening placement and proportions; and signage.

Under an FBC, it is important that new construction respects the positive qualities of the existing built environment and reinforces a sense of place within the street, neighborhood, or district. New construction should incorporate, but not replicate, architectural patterns of existing or historic buildings in the same area with regards to window and entryway placement, decorative elements, style, materials, massing, and scale.

Administration
Form-Based Codes allow for the implementation of a public plan for quality placemaking with by-right development codes rather than the development review process required under conventional Euclidean zoning codes. Through the intense public involvement and background study that is required to develop a sound FBC, by the time the graphical standards and prescribing building form is adopted, the intent of the community's strategy is captured. As such, most FBCs include streamlined administration provisions that enable landowners and developers to obtain approvals of most projects through staff level review.

Although by-right administrative approval is the preferred method by many communities, it may not be the best option for the City. There are several ways to streamline or create systems of hybrid review for various types of development proposals; these methods would be determined during the adoption process of an FBC. It is important to note that implementing an FBC is not just a matter of regulating and approving the desired urban form and function but is also about codifying the communities' expectations of the role of the government officials, the public's involvement in the process, and the necessary site plan review and/or architectural design review.

The methods of implementing and administering a hybrid by-right development proposal may be accomplished through one or a combination of:

- The City Development Review and Urban Design staff
- An interdepartmental team composed of members from the Planning, Engineering, Public Works, and other applicable departments.

- Design Review Committee consisting of appointed members of the community. This also can involve public input prior to approval.
- Planning Commission and/or Design Review Committee consideration if the applicant requests deviations from prescribed code.

An FBC is not a one-size-fits-all document. The entire community must invest in the process to ensure it captures community priorities, is predictable, and is adapted to the local conditions. As a major theme of many chapters of this plan, it is recommended that the City begin the process to adopt FBCs to correspond with the Small Area Plans.

Community Character and Urban Design Policies and Implementation

CCUD Policy 1

Define area planning sectors in order to identify, preserve and promote existing neighborhood physical characteristics.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Establish Small Area Plans to provide specific development guidance for the adoption of Form-Based Codes.

2. Establish objectives for each sector to focus on placemaking through the built environment and flexibility to accommodate many land uses. This includes:

   a. Identify the physical (built and natural) characteristics and qualities that define the existing sections of the City that should be retained and used to enhance new development.

   b. Encourage compatible design standards and uses in neighborhoods to establish visual diversity and a community that complements the neighborhood's character and needs.

   c. Design public roadways and rights-of-way for an efficient and comfortable experience for all users and modes while balancing operational and maintenance expenses.

CCUD Policy 2

Support creative site planning and high-quality architecture in order to establish a built environment that is compatible and enhances neighborhood character, aesthetics, and offers various levels of interaction and mobility to all members of the community while allowing for innovative design.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Encourage a mix of uses that integrate work and living space with a combination of diverse housing and commercial styles and densities within neighborhood contexts.

2. Encourage infill of vacant and/or underutilized property. Review proposals for infill development to ensure compatible architecture and site planning.

3. Encourage construction to meet basic levels of sustainability and wellness certification.

4. Encourage the location of new commercial and/or residential buildings adjacent to the right-of-way to give definition to the street, where appropriate.

5. Encourage new development to incorporate elements where people can gather and interact to help foster a sense of community.

6. Ensure that the placement of residential development, commercial buildings, parking, access, and landscaping is complementary to neighborhood characteristics in the immediate vicinity.

7. Ensure that the design of buildings and their features protect the viewsheds of the Clustered Spires, Catoctin Mountains, historic resources and existing neighborhoods.

CCUD Policy 3

Apply Complete Streets objectives and improve the overall streetscape in all areas of the City.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Require interconnected streets to provide for safe travel for all users of all modes.

2. Install pedestrian amenities in all neighborhoods that provide mobility options for all residents and contribute to the "sense of place".

    a. Pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks, traditional and raised crosswalks, median crossing islands, ADA compliant facilities will be accommodated and designed into new developments as well as retrofitted in existing neighborhoods.

    b. Traffic calming measures to lower speeds of automobiles and define edges of automobile lanes, including road diets, center medians, shorter curb corner radii, elimination of free flow right-turn lanes, angled parking, street trees and planter strips will be accommodated and designed into new developments as well as retrofitted in existing neighborhoods.

    c. Bicycle accommodations such as protected or dedicated bicycle lanes, neighborhood greenways, wide paged shoulders and bicycle parking will be accommodated and designed into new developments as well as retrofitted in existing neighborhoods.

    d. Public transportation accommodations, such as Bus Rapid Transit, buss pullouts, transit signal priority, bus shelters and dedicated bus lanes will be accommodated in new developments as well as retrofitted in existing neighborhoods.

3. Improve the streetscape by requiring developers and the City to contribute by the following:

    a. Appropriately sited buildings adjacent to the public right-of-way.

    b. Sidewalks designed to comfortably accommodate all types of pedestrians with suitable street furniture and other amenities.

c. Landscaping and open space that adds aesthetics and contributes to the comfort and safety of all types of pedestrians.

CCUD Policy 4

Design employment and industrial areas to complement the community's image and the visual aesthetics of adjacent neighborhoods.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Encourage the integration of compatible employment and industrial uses that have experienced technological advancements to locate in areas that complement the neighboring uses.

2. Require the use of building materials that minimize visual contrast between the structure and surrounding neighborhoods.

3. Promote four-sided architecture with appropriate landscape buffering in industrial areas.

4. Promote the use of energy-efficient construction materials in industrial areas.

CCUD Policy 5

The City's capital improvement projects shall be designed to make a positive contribution to the City's built environment.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ensure that public buildings, community facilities and infrastructure improvements contribute to the built environment of neighborhoods with appropriate site design, amenities and compatible architecture.

2. When making improvements in the right-of-way ensure that complete street and street scape initiatives are considered during the planning phase of the design.

3. Incorporate the Comprehensive Bicycle Plan into the design and construction phase of applicable capital improvement projects.

CCUD Policy 6

Promote the redevelopment of underutilized parcels and the rehabilitation of blighted and vacant structures to reinforce the unique character of existing structures where appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Encourage rehabilitation rather than demolition of existing structures.

2. Expand grant and tax credit, as well as other incentives for redevelopment efforts throughout the ~~city~~City, including but not limited to façade improvements, life and safety

improvements, increase dwelling units, brownfield redevelopment, and surface parking redevelopment.

3. Identify areas of the Land Management Code (LMC) or other ~~city~~City policies that may prevent rehabilitation or reuse of buildings.

4. Promote architectural salvage and/or deconstruction in place of outright demolition, and where appropriate, ensure that buildings of particular importance are salvaged and/or deconstructed.

5. Implement the findings and recommendations of the Vacant and Blighted Properties Task Force.

6. Continue to improve the LMC and other ~~city~~City codes to promote the development and redevelopment of vacant and underutilized lots.

CCUD Policy 7

Explore the creation of Neighborhood Conservation District Overlay Zones to protect and enhance existing residential neighborhood characteristics.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Determine where conservation district overlay zones may be appropriate in the City.

2. Survey and assess areas of the City that may be eligible for conservation district overlay zones.

3. Gather public input through public meetings, workshops, charrettes to educate the public about conservation districts and gather valuable feedback about potential overlay zones.

4. Form the creation of one or more task force or committees to generate neighborhood conservation overlay design guidelines.

CCUD Policy 8

Actively ~~incorporate the considerations of~~engage underrepresented communities and low-income residents into community character decision-making processes.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Coordinate with community groups active among minority communities and with low-income residents for public outreach to elevate and include those voices in public discourse and decision-making.

2. Build community character through public engagement to determine preferences of art, architecture, landscaping, and history.

3. Actively recruit underrepresented populations to advisory boards, committees, and other volunteer positions.

4. Commission a comprehensive anti-racism plan with recommendations for community character and urban design policy.