

III. Commercial Development Within The Urban-Rural Demarcation Line

Introduction

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Baltimore County has three major business zones (BL, BM, BR) and numerous overlay districts which are used within the URDL. Two of the districts, CT and CCC, confer additional density onto the underlying zone. The majority of the commercial zones, and therefore, the majority of the commercial development, is located along the County's radial corridors.

These commercial corridors have developed dramatically over the past 40-50 years. Unfortunately, aesthetic quality has not kept pace with the quantity of development. Adoption of the commercial development design guidelines will assist the county in obtaining high quality, aesthetically pleasing and sustainable development.

The purpose of this section is to provide general guidelines that will be used by the County to evaluate project design as required by the development process. These guidelines are intended to be used by the County, builder/developer, and residents.

This section includes five major development types listed as Main Street, Freestanding (single or multiple use), Shopping Center, Office and Mixed- Use Development. Each type of development has been divided into the following elements:

- SITE PLANNING
- LANDSCAPING
- OPEN SPACE
- CIRCULATION AND PARKING
- ARCHITECTURE/BUILDING FEATURES
- SIGNAGE AND LIGHTING

Each of the elements has a series of objectives with examples of how they these objectives can be achieved. The site context issues should also be used in project evaluation. Projects are evaluated on a case by case basis studying surrounding land use and zoning, topography and environmental constraints.

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Site context of all proposed commercial projects should be analyzed comprehensively and thoroughly to create a cohesive and harmonious built environment.

Prior to the submission of a site design, the surrounding neighborhood context should be evaluated to ascertain the appropriate building form, orientation, and setbacks. The primary purpose of this evaluation is to achieve a built project that blends into the surrounding development. For example, if surrounding buildings are located close to the road, then the proposed buildings should be located in a similar manner.

As another example, where strips of formerly residential buildings are being converted to office and retail uses, the residential character and scale of the architecture should be retained to protect the integrity of the neighborhood. As existing buildings are modified or expanded, the use of varying architectural forms and detailing should reflect those found in the community.

The development context affects the site design proposal; the context must be considered to obtain a cohesive commercial development. In certain cases the site context will not dictate a consistent or cohesive building orientation. Site context should also be interpreted to express ideas of

the place or region, including its history, culture, weather, ecology or other factors.

Two urban features which have a significant impact upon the visual quality of development along the roadways of commercial corridors are curb cuts and utility poles.

However, each development is encouraged to share access and place utilities underground whenever possible. If utilities cannot be placed underground screening and beautification of infrastructure is recommended.

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Baltimore County's Enterprise Strategic Plan 2019 to 2022 outlines six goals of which one is Sustainability, and it is defined as: "Ensure the long-term sustainability of the County's public and internal government infrastructure and safeguard the County's ecology and climate."

Climate change has increased the emphasis on sustainable design principles in all types of development. Sites should be developed to consider the following: the reduction of pollution and waste; a reduction of a carbon footprint; the incorporation of green spaces; promotion of connectivity; and the use of local, environmentally friendly, and recycled materials.

To set a benchmark for design, construction, maintenance, and operation of high-performance buildings and homes, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) developed LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) requirements for LEED Certification.

LEED certification is highly encouraged for successful mixed-use projects.

"LEED certified buildings are proven to save money, improve efficiency, lower carbon emissions and create healthier places for people. They are a critical part of

addressing the climate crisis, enhancing resilience, and supporting more equitable communities."

The goal of LEED is to create better buildings that:

- Reduce contribution to global climate change
- Enhance individual human health
- Protect and restore water resources
- Protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Promote sustainable and regenerative material cycles
- Enhance community quality of life

The following sections of CMDP's Commercial Development within the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line include more detail for sustainable approaches and design guidelines.

<https://www.usgbc.org/leed>