

Columbia Downtown Focus Group

Meeting Date: February 15, 2006

Issued: February 9, 2006

This first draft of the Columbia Downtown Design Guidelines, Part 2, was prepared by Design Collective, Inc. and the Department of Planning and Zoning. It is expected to be revised several times as it goes through the public review process. Certain issues and questions that need additional analysis and discussion are *highlighted in italics* in the text.

THE COLUMBIA DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

Chapter 3

Design Guidelines, Part 2

SECTION 5: STREETS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Roads
2. Sidewalks
3. Crosswalks
4. Street Trees
5. Landscaping

STREET HIERARCHY DIAGRAM

STREET TYPE DIAGRAM

STREET SECTIONS AND PLANS

1. Four Lane Boulevard With Center Median
2. Two Lane Avenue With Center Median
3. Two Lane Street
4. Private Access Driveways And Service Roads
5. Special Street

SECTION 6: OPEN SPACE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Location And Configuration
2. Design And Maintenance
3. Seating
4. Public Art
5. Hardscape Materials

OPEN SPACE & SPECIAL SITES PLAN

PARK

1. Symphony Woods

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

PROMENADE
NATURAL AREAS
SMALL URBAN SPACES: GREENS AND PLAZAS
PATHS
SPECIAL SITES

SECTION 7: ARCHITECTURE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Building Orientation
2. Building Massing And Articulation
3. Exterior Walls
4. Roofs
5. Doors & Windows
6. Storefronts
7. Building Signage

SECTION 5: STREETS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Vision Plan for the Downtown calls for a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use community design that requires a different approach to street design. To create a unique urban environment, it is anticipated that streets within Downtown will vary from the current standards in the Howard County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and the Design Manual, Volume III.

Streets within an urban or downtown environment are an important part of the open space system. They should be designed for both people and cars. While not as green or landscaped as most open spaces are, the streets provide visual openness and spatial definition, and they are vital to the vibrancy of the Downtown. Although all streets should be pedestrian-oriented, certain streets, designated as ‘A’ Streets, will contain areas with significant amounts of pedestrian activity: shopping, walking, strolling, outdoor dining, seating, and conversing. The design and character of the streets (including sidewalks, street trees, light poles, furniture, etc.) requires careful consideration. To provide a pedestrian-friendly environment, the network should incorporate traffic calming measures such as frequent intersections, crosswalks, on street parking or similar treatments.

The Street Design Guidelines describe the hierarchy and types of streets for Downtown Columbia. The Street Framework, part of the Urban Design Plan, shows the existing and potential street network for Downtown and identifies primary and secondary streets envisioned within that network.

1. **General Provisions** provide overall guidelines for all streets.
2. The **Street Hierarchy Diagram** identifies ‘A’ Streets – those streets that are expected to have areas of retail concentrated along their frontage. The retail concentrations along the ‘A’ Streets often extend from or create strong links to the Mall or to the existing restaurant and entertainment area at the Lakefront.
3. The **Street Types Diagram** depicts suggested street types based on their distinctive character, which may be defined by number of potential lanes and the presence of medians or other special treatment.
4. The **Street Plans and Sections**, which are keyed to the Street Types Diagram, provide illustrative sections and plan details, including recommended dimensions for each street type.

The guidelines documented in this chapter are important in order to achieve the distinctive pedestrian-friendly network of streets vital to a walkable new community. The diagrams, plans, and sections are conceptual in nature and are intended to provide guidance for the preparation of the Comprehensive Sketch Plan (CSP). The CSP will show the preliminary street layout and will include Development Criteria for public and private roads and for their related pedestrian areas. Final design of individual streets and streetscape treatments will be shown on the Site Development Plan.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. ROADS

- a. All roads shall be public roads except for driveways and service roads within blocks or within individual parcels.
- b. Transitions from one street type to another shall be designed to ensure smooth changes between paving, parking, sidewalks, planting strips, and other streetscape elements.
- c. If site conditions warrant modification to the Street Plans and Sections, consistency in the lane widths and sidewalk widths is more important than consistency in planting strip width or on-street parking layout. At an intersection where two different street types meet or where an existing street meets a new street, appropriate transitions should be designed to ensure vehicular and pedestrian flow consistent with the urban setting intended by these Guidelines. Modifications will require County approval.
- d. Curb radii at street intersections will vary. The County will determine the appropriate curb radius based on type and volume of vehicular traffic and the need to provide for suitable and adequate pedestrian crossings at intersections.

2. SIDEWALKS

- a. The intent of the Vision Plan is to build a system of pedestrian connections that will provide continuity through the Downtown. This network will be constructed in phase with new development. Streets shall have sidewalks along both sides throughout the Downtown unless unusual conditions (for example, connections to regional highway) cause the County to waive sidewalk requirements or to approve design solutions that otherwise meet the intent of the regulations or provide a better solution for pedestrian access. Sidewalks shall be designed consistently along both sides of the entire length of a street.
- b. Where retail, storefronts, and building frontages with building entrances and multiple doors align a street, the sidewalk width shall be not less than 10 feet from curb to face of building. In areas where retail uses are concentrated and heavy pedestrian use is expected, the sidewalk width shall be increased to 15 feet from the curb to the building. In both such conditions, trees should be planted in tree pits. If a wider pedestrian passage is desired or needed to accommodate outdoor dining, landscaped areas or other uses, the setback to the building should be increased to up to 25 feet from the face of the curb. This setback area can include the sidewalk, landscaping and special areas, as appropriate. As provided for in the Urban Design Guidelines, deeper setbacks may be approved by the Planning Board if public open spaces are provided between the curb and the building. *The 10-foot sidewalk zone can include trees in pits, as specified above, but not landscaping. DPZ and DPW desire that retail areas minimum 8' clear zone is preferred plus a 4-foot zone along the curb for trees, signs, doors opening for parked cars, etc., plus space against the building, thus the new language about 15-foot sidewalks. This may require a change in the Urban Design Standards for setbacks.*
- c. In instances where only office or residential windows face the street, the sidewalk shall not be less than 5 feet wide. In such conditions, the sidewalk should be

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

located so that there is a planting area suitable for trees and/or landscaping adjacent to the building and / or adjacent to the curb.

3. CROSSWALKS

- a. Crosswalks of a different paving material, texture, or color from the street paving material are encouraged where sidewalks traverse vehicular travel lanes. Paving materials shall be approved by the County.

4. STREET TREES

- a. Except where inconsistent with these Guidelines, street tree requirements shall comply with Section 16.136 of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, Chapter V of the Landscape Manual, and AASHTO standards for street tree setbacks, clear zones, and sight lines per Chapter 2 of the Design Manual, Volume III.
- b. Street trees shall be planted along all new public streets and on existing public streets where new development is located adjacent to the right-of-way.
- c. Where existing wooded areas are adjacent to the right-of-way, the County may approve the existing trees as sufficient to meet the intent of the street tree requirements.
- d. Trees and other plantings within State rights-of-way shall meet SHA standards.
- e. Street trees are recommended on private streets unless those streets serve as alleys or service driveways.
- f. Street trees should be consistent along an entire street (the length of the street), but may vary from one street to the next. For example, one street may have maples, while the next street over may have oaks. Refer to the Howard County Landscape Manual for approved tree species.
- g. Street trees located between the curb and the sidewalk should be centered in planting pits that are a minimum 4 feet wide by 6 feet long. Planting pits may have tree grates or may be planted with a groundcover. Howard County may approve or require variations in the dimensions of tree pits and grates from those shown in the Street Plans and Sections, depending on the size or species of street tree, planting methods used, and engineering design of the curb and sidewalk.
- h. Trees shall be planted at regular intervals along streets appropriate to the particular location and species.
- i. To create comfortable pedestrian passage, street trees shall have their limbs over sidewalks pruned to approximately 7 feet above grade when reasonably mature.
- j. Street Tree Selection Criteria:
 - i. Street trees shall have a minimum 3-1/2 inch caliper at installation.
 - ii. Trees shall fit the space limitations when mature. The species, ultimate size of the tree and the canopy shall be appropriate to the street type.
 - iii. Trees must be able to survive the environmental stresses of the proposed location.
 - iv. Street trees shall be straight and true, have healthy trunks, and a full, balanced crown and branching habit.
 - v. Medium, large or canopy trees should be used for street trees while small ornamental trees should be used to provide variety in medians, at entries and/or within open space areas.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- vi. Small trees are not permitted in situations where they inhibit sight distances, conflict with pedestrian circulation or create maintenance problems.
 - vii. No needle evergreen trees shall be planted in a public right-of-way. No thorn bearing trees or trees with rigid, sharply pointed leaves (such as some evergreen holly trees) shall be planted directly adjacent to sidewalks or pathways.
5. LANDSCAPING
- a. If approved by the County, landscaping within the right-of-way that exceeds the required street trees shall be planted and maintained by the property owner(s), developers, homeowner’s associations and/or other private entities. *Need to discuss with DPW, and CA, GGP, and others. This may be an issue for downtown management.*

STREET HIERARCHY DIAGRAM

See the Street Hierarchy Diagram issued separately.

More work is needed on the remaining portions of this chapter. The Department of Public Works and Development Engineering Division will review final dimension recommendations. The nomenclature used in the three different street plans (Urban Design Plan-Street Framework, Street Hierarchy Diagram, and Street Type Diagram) is still open to discussion. Reducing the number of street classifications and the number of plans/diagrams may help make the document easier to understand. This will be discussed with the Focus Group.

The Street Hierarchy Plan identifies those segments of the Downtown Street Framework that are expected to be the focus of pedestrian activity. ‘A’ Streets will have a concentration of retail, restaurants, shops, and services on the first floor of adjacent buildings. They often will have wide sidewalks and may have public spaces or other pedestrian amenities such as benches, special plantings, and public art.

Other streets are likely to have less activity than ‘A’ Streets, although they may have some retail, restaurant or service activities in the ground floor of adjacent buildings. These streets may have garage entrances and/or provide access to service areas.

STREET TYPE DIAGRAM

See the Street Type Diagram issued separately.

The Street Type Plan identifies several potential categories of Downtown streets. Street Sections and Plans illustrate the distinctive character proposed for each of the various Street Types within Downtown. The street character is created by establishing criteria for the width and number of potential lanes, the presence of medians, special roadway paving and sidewalk treatment.

STREET SECTIONS AND PLANS

See the illustrations issued separately.

1. FOUR LANE BOULEVARD WITH CENTER MEDIAN

(Illustration) Buildings on both sides of the road.

Example: Little Patuxent Parkway at Mall.

(Illustration) Buildings on one side; open space on the other side.

Example: Little Patuxent Parkway at Symphony Woods.

2. TWO LANE AVENUE WITH CENTER MEDIAN

(Illustration) Buildings on both sides of the road.

Example: Twin Rivers Road extended.

3. TWO LANE STREET

(Illustration) Buildings on both sides of the road.

Example: Corporate Boulevard.

(Illustration) Buildings on one side; plaza, green, or square on the other side.

Example: South Entrance Road.

4. SPECIAL STREET

(Illustration) Buildings on both sides of the road.

Example: Wincopin Street.

(Illustration) Buildings on one side; plaza, green, or square on the other side.

Example: Wincopin Street at the Lakefront.

5. PRIVATE ACCESS DRIVEWAYS AND SERVICE ROADS

(Illustration) Buildings on both sides of the road.

SECTION 6: OPEN SPACE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The public open spaces within the Downtown are an integral component of the overall Vision Plan. From Columbia's inception, the Downtown has been envisioned as a setting of natural beauty, with Lake Kittamaqundi and Symphony Woods as major attractions within an extensive open space network that serves and connects to all of Columbia. New components of the open space system will create public gathering spaces; provide ideal locations for public art, seating, fountains, and landscaping; preserve additional streams, wetlands, and woodlands; offer locations for passive and active recreation; and contribute to the overall character and success of the Downtown. The new open spaces should continue to be designed as a system of connected places. Variations in open space type, size and design should occur from district to district.

Open spaces will include parks (including Symphony Woods), greens and plazas, as well as paths and promenades, and preserved natural areas. The greens and plazas are placed in the more urbanized areas, where spontaneous activity is generated by people entering and exiting buildings and shops, and where restaurants are encouraged to have outdoor dining. These spaces may also host planned activities. Paths and promenades are designed primarily to allow movement from one destination to another, although in some instances the promenades may be designed to accommodate public gatherings. Symphony Woods is to be designed as Columbia's central park. This important Downtown destination should continue to offer a variety of passive recreation opportunities and remain suitable as a setting for major events. However, Symphony Woods should also invite more frequent use and offer appropriate active recreational uses as well.

The Open Space Design Guidelines identify the types of open spaces suitable for the Downtown, show recommended locations on the Open Space and Special Sites Plan, and provide illustrative examples of how these spaces may be designed. The Guidelines primarily focus on public outdoor spaces. These spaces, however, are not the only Downtown opportunities for recreation and community gathering. The pedestrian-oriented streets create a network of sidewalks that are part of the public realm and offer social and recreational opportunities, as well as functional connections among Downtown destinations. Criteria for pedestrian sidewalks are included in the Street Design Guidelines. Potential civic and cultural sites are shown on the Open Space and Special Sites Plan as important locations for public activity. These Special Sites, whether civic, cultural or signature buildings because of their special location or use, will often provide prime opportunities for public spaces or public art.

The primary purpose of the Open Space Guidelines is to address the character of open spaces that will be used by the public. Some Downtown residential developments may offer private recreation facilities, both indoor and outdoor, for their residents. These facilities will supplement the public spaces in serving the needs of those who live Downtown. Criteria for these uses (pools, community buildings, exercise rooms, etc.) are not included in these Guidelines as their design and location will be market-driven and, if indoor uses, will be integral to architectural plans.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. LOCATION AND CONFIGURATION

- a. Potential open space locations are depicted in the illustrative Open Space and Special Sites Plan. The Comprehensive Sketch Plan (CSP) for each district will show the proposed open space elements and will incorporate relevant portions of the Open Space Design Guidelines into the Development Criteria required under NT District Zoning Regulations. Each subsequent Site Development Plan (SDP) must comply with the approved Comprehensive Sketch Plan and Development Criteria for that district.
- b. Each district is required to provide at least 5% of the developable area, as defined by new blocks in the Districts Plan and subsequent CSP, for open space. Open space shall be distributed throughout the district and not combined in a single area. Some blocks may have open space while others may not. Open space shall be provided in phase with development and shall not be the last feature provided in a district.
- c. The following areas cannot be used to fulfill the minimum 5% open space requirements:
 - i. Existing credited or noncredited open space.
 - ii. Sidewalks and related pedestrian areas within the right-of way or within building setback areas.
 - iii. Natural areas set aside to meet Howard County sensitive areas requirements.

2. DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE

- a. Open spaces should be physically and visually accessible, and designed to invite people of various ages and mobility.
- b. Open spaces should be designed for their intended function; for example, plazas should be designed with adequate amounts of hardscape to accommodate public gatherings; large greens or parks should minimize hardscape areas that will detract from their intended appearance as a green oasis dominated by turf and trees.
- c. Open spaces should not be overly designed with structures and planting that will block visibility to storefronts, public art, or important vistas.
- d. Open spaces should be designed with consideration for local climate and sun exposure during different seasons of the year.
- e. Where appropriate, take advantage of views from open spaces to visually link these spaces with the public realm and special sites within the rest of the Downtown.
- f. Open space design should give careful consideration to maintenance, so that even in severe conditions and with limited maintenance, the open spaces always look attractive.

3. SEATING

- a. Open spaces should provide for a variety of seating locations, orientations, and arrangements, including primary seating (benches and chairs) and secondary seating in the form of steps, planters, and walls.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- b. Seating should be oriented so that sitters can watch passersby.
 - c. Optimal seating wall heights should be approximately 16 to 18 inches, although heights from 9 to 30 inches may provide seating opportunities.
4. PUBLIC ART
- a. Public art and fountains should be incorporated in the open space design of each district. Special sites for civic, cultural or signature buildings offer potential focal point locations for sculpture, fountains, and special landscape features.
5. HARDSCAPE MATERIALS
- a. Seat walls and retaining walls should be constructed of brick, stone, decorative or architectural block, or similar materials. Caps should be stone, brick, precast stone, precast concrete or similar materials.
 - b. Interlocking, precast wall units are not recommended.
 - c. Hardscape materials and walks for plazas and greens should be brick, stone, concrete pavers, concrete (if colored and/or scored in a decorative pattern) or other similar materials. Large expanses of concrete paving without details, scoring patterns, or brick/stone banding are not recommended.
 - d. Walks and paths in parks and natural areas may also be asphalt or stone dust. Boardwalks should be used where paths cross wet areas. Pervious materials are encouraged; however, in high volume pedestrian areas, mulch paths are not recommended.
 - e. Rails and fences should be metal with a natural brushed finish or painted black or a similar neutral or dark color.
 - f. Trellises, arbors, and other open-air structures should be built of wood, stone, brick, steel or other suitable materials. Visible structural members such as columns, posts, joists, beams, etc. shall be significant in size and appear sturdy; delicate and insubstantial-looking members (even if structurally sound) are not preferred.

OPEN SPACE AND SPECIAL SITES PLAN

See the Open Space Framework issued separately as part of the Urban Design Plan.

The Open Space and Special Sites Plan suggests a network of open spaces, including greens and plazas, promenades, paths, parks and natural areas, that form a Downtown open space system connecting to the larger Columbia-wide open space network. Greens and plazas should be located at sites such as the terminus of important vistas, at key intersections, along major pedestrian routes to the Lakefront and to Symphony Woods, and, where appropriate, at central locations within each district. Pedestrian promenades should link the Mall to the Lakefront and to Symphony Woods, and the existing promenade at the Lake should be extended. A promenade should be created to link the south entrance of the Mall to Symphony Woods. Where appropriate, paths should be provided along natural areas and through parks to connect open spaces and to enhance the enjoyment and visibility of these areas. Symphony Woods should retain its pastoral character yet be improved with paths, gathering areas and recreational opportunities that invite greater use. The Open Space Plan also considers locations for cultural, civic and signature buildings and public art as potential focal points within the open space network.

PARK

A park is a public space available for active and passive recreation, typically located at the edge of the district, with access from a public thoroughfare and sometimes includes or is connected to Natural Areas. The landscape generally consists of, but is not limited to, lawn, trees, gardens and walks. Although parks may be designed or remain in a somewhat natural state, they require maintenance. Parks may accommodate active structured recreation such as urban playgrounds, tot lots, picnic areas, and related parking. Parks in the Downtown are anticipated to be flexible green spaces used for a variety of functions, including active recreation, at times, as well as festivals and other events.

SYMPHONY WOODS

Symphony Woods is an existing park in the Downtown and the only major park recognized in the Vision Plan. As a park, Symphony Woods should remain mostly natural in character, with informal and naturalistic plantings, largely lawn and trees. Limited areas may be more intensely landscaped as appropriate to the intended function of the specific area. The Vision Plan suggests several improvements and activities for Symphony Woods:

1. A promenade connection from the Mall to Symphony Woods that terminates at an entrance plaza to the park. A wide sidewalk along Little Patuxent Parkway to accommodate pedestrian movement.
2. Possible activities such as a tot lot or children's playground, a covered ice skating rink that can be used for other special events, arts festivals, Wine in the Woods, etc. Plans for such activities may also include the potential for a small building or structure, an adjacent plaza or gathering area, and electrical, lighting and similar infrastructure.
3. A sculpture garden.
4. Paths, open lawns (potentially requiring removal of select trees), and woodland.

PROMENADE

A promenade is an extended walkway, more prominent and frequently wider than a sidewalk, that accommodates significant pedestrian movements and provides a formal connection between important destinations. A promenade may be used as a setting for planned events such as festivals. It is typically composed mostly of hardscape (walkways, steps, ramps, and walls), often lined with trees and other landscaping, lighting and benches, and may include public art.

Promenades reinforce key pedestrian corridors. A pedestrian promenade should link the east entrance of the Mall to the Lakefront, and the existing promenade at the Lake should be enhanced and extended to the north and south. A promenade should be created to link the south entrance of the Mall to Symphony Woods.

NATURAL AREAS

Natural Areas are open space areas reserved for the protection and enhancement of environmental resources including lakes, streams, wetlands, buffers, woodlands, steep slopes, floodplain and similar environmentally sensitive land that often connects to other open space. Although the landscape is naturalistic, some management and maintenance is typically required. Certain areas may be conducive to informal recreation such as hiking and biking trails that link

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

the natural areas to other portions of the Columbia open space network. Edges of the natural areas may be suitable for limited active recreation and parks. The largest and most significant natural area in Downtown includes the Little Patuxent River and Lake Kittamaquindi.

All natural areas in the Warfield Triangle and Lakefront / Little Patuxent Parkway districts have already been incorporated into the Columbia open space system. While no natural areas exist in the Corporate Boulevard District, The Crescent / Symphony Woods district has several tributary streams, wetlands, floodplain areas and associated woodlands that must be protected from development. These natural areas shall be incorporated into the Columbia open space system.

SMALL URBAN SPACES: GREENS AND PLAZAS

A green is a small, urban space available for public use and enjoyment. Greens are typically, but not required to be, defined by building frontages and /or streets. Greens are predominantly planted spaces that also include walks and other paved surfaces. Greens, whether formal or informal in their designs, help create a distinctive identity for each district.

A plaza is an urban space, typically at the intersection of important streets, between buildings along a street or sidewalk and / or at the junction of important commercial and civic buildings. It is typically, but not required to be, circumscribed by building frontages.

Within the districts, the greens and plazas should expand the public realm and create focal points for public gathering. Opportunities to locate greens and / or plazas may include the following:

1. Where retail areas are concentrated along sidewalks and promenades that connect to the Mall, as at LL Bean Plaza.
2. Along Corporate Boulevard as a gathering place for lunchtime and perhaps evening use.
3. Bordering Wincopin Street to expand the public realm and accommodate outdoor activities.
4. Along the Lakefront plaza and promenade, when new buildings are added or when existing plazas need enhancement or renovation.
5. To mark the entrance to office buildings on Corporate Boulevard or to residential buildings in other districts.
6. At civic, cultural, and signature buildings that are focal points or major public attractions.

PATHS

Pathways for pedestrians, cyclists and skaters provide connections among important destinations and should be an integral part of open spaces. Paths are typically fitted to the natural character of the site or to the urban context, and are often constructed with such materials as concrete, asphalt, mulch, and boardwalks (for spanning waterways and environmental areas). Paths should be designed for their intended use and intensity of use, including consideration for safety. If appropriate, they may include lighting, benches, and drinking fountains.

The Open Space Plan depicts paths throughout Symphony Woods that provide better access to the Merriweather Post Pavilion and connect the park to The Crescent, Lake Kittamaquindi and adjacent neighborhoods. The plan recommends completing the path around Lake Kittamaquindi or bridging the Lake at No Man is an Island, if appropriate. Other paths are proposed connecting

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

Downtown to adjacent neighborhoods, to Wilde Lake and its Village Center, to Howard Community College, and to Oakland Mills. Both enhancing the bridge over US 29 and improving the pathway approaches to the bridge are important to creating an attractive and inviting connection to the nearby Oakland Mills community and its Village Center.

SPECIAL SITES

Special sites are designated locations for cultural, civic, and signature buildings. Many of these sites terminate a street or important vista or are located at key intersections. Their location and significance makes them appropriate locations for small urban spaces with, perhaps, public art. Where civic or cultural uses occupy these buildings, outdoor spaces for public gatherings should be provided. The outdoor spaces, as well as the buildings, should be designed as focal points within the Downtown.

SECTION 7: ARCHITECTURE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Architectural Design Guidelines offer general principles to consider in the design of buildings. They are not intended to prescribe any style, but to allow progressive, forward-looking design. As in other American downtowns that have evolved over time, buildings are expected to have a richness and diversity of architectural expression. Although the Vision Plan embraces New Urbanism in its planning vocabulary and many of its architectural images, designers are encouraged to also recognize the modernist spirit that pervaded the initial development of Columbia and its evolution to the County's urban center.

Buildings should be designed to reinforce the distinctly urban character established in the Vision Plan for Downtown. Special focus should be placed on the design of buildings along pedestrian-oriented streets and their contribution to the evolving urban environment of Downtown. Building design may vary significantly among the four districts so that these principles should be adapted to the particular Comprehensive Sketch Plan Development Criteria for each district. For example, architectural design for a district with a substantial residential component, such as The Crescent / Symphony Woods, will be different from a district seeking to create a major office address for the Downtown, such as Corporate Boulevard.

The buildings of Downtown will frame and define the streets and public open spaces that comprise the public realm. Buildings will thereby contribute to the quality and character of these public spaces and will help create the activity and street life so important to the vibrancy of Downtown. Buildings cannot all be “signature” buildings and, for the most part, should be reflective of their intended function and respectful of their context. However, special sites at a key intersection or at the terminus of an important vista, for example, have been recognized in the Vision Plan as potential sites for signature, civic or cultural buildings. The design of signature, civic, and cultural buildings may vary from these Guidelines, as approved by the Planning Board.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

'A' Streets may be changed to a name or designation more descriptive of the intent of the classification.

Some of these provisions, particularly as they relate to materials, may be too prescriptive. Certain provisions are derived from design guidelines for communities that include detached residences. Are they appropriate to Downtown or mid to high rise construction? The Focus Group and other architects are invited to comment.

1. BUILDING ORIENTATION
 - a. Buildings that face more than one street should front onto the major pedestrian-oriented street.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- b. Buildings facing an ‘A’ Street shall have storefronts at the ground level in areas where retail uses are concentrated. Storefronts shall face the more important street (Primary Street or ‘A’ Street) and may turn the corner to receive pedestrian circulation from a Secondary Street, plaza, parking area or pedestrian way.

2. BUILDING MASSING AND ARTICULATION

- a. All buildings greater than 3 stories shall have a base, middle, and top. Buildings of 2 to 3 stories should have a clearly defined base and may have an articulated cornice, parapet or roof.
 - i. The floor heights of the base shall have a visual appearance of greater height than other floors.
 - ii. The top and the middle should be distinguished by changing the window rhythm, material, setback, floor height or other treatments.
 - iii. In addition to the base, middle, and top, buildings may have a distinctive cap, such as a cornice or parapet, trellis, sloped roof or penthouse.
 - iv. An expression line (such as a horizontal band, projecting material, shift in vertical plane, change in building material, or other treatment) shall delineate the division between base, middle, and top. Setbacks in the building should occur at an expression line.
 - v. Taller buildings should have a greater number of stories for their base and top and may have more expression lines. For example, a 4 to 6 story building may only have a 1 story base and ½ to 1 story top, whereas a 17 to 20 story building might have a 2 or 3 story base and a 1 or 2 story top.
- b. Building facades fronting on pedestrian-oriented streets or framing public open spaces should avoid the appearance of undifferentiated solid walls and should include glazed openings to promote visual interaction between building interiors and street activity.
- c. Variation at the storefront level of Downtown buildings is encouraged. Variation may be achieved by signage, awnings, lighting, or other treatments.
- d. To establish pedestrian-scaled design on the ground floors of larger buildings, use window groupings, material changes, columns or pilasters on the principal facade to accentuate individual storefronts and denote smaller increment building bays.
- e. Buildings that extend horizontally along the street frontage for more than 120 feet should articulate their upper floors by use of building materials, facade composition or some combination thereof to provide variety and break up the mass of the building. Buildings that are designed to reduce apparent mass and accentuate vertical proportions are encouraged.
- f. Entrances should be clearly recognizable within the facade and receive special articulation within the base or bays in which they occur. Main entrances shall be from the more important thoroughfare or more pedestrian-oriented street. Where appropriate, lobbies should extend through the building to provide direct pedestrian circulation from parking areas or open spaces to the primary thoroughfare.
- g. Corners of buildings that are oriented toward important intersections or public open spaces may use special articulation, such as a change in fenestration, a change in the height of the base or top, a change in material or other treatment to accentuate their special location.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- h. Ground floors shall have sufficient interior ceiling height to accommodate retail and service uses.
3. EXTERIOR WALLS
- a. The design of building façades should contribute to the Downtown's character with varied and articulated treatments. The facades defining or framing the public realm should create visual interest and be designed to enhance the pedestrian experience. Walls abutting greens and plazas should be designed as front facades.
 - b. Materials should be selected that are durable and appropriate for the scale and context of Downtown. They should be materials that are typically used in the construction of large urban buildings, including high-rise construction.
 - i. Walls, arcades, piers, and columns should be stone, cast stone, precast concrete, architectural concrete block, or brick. For residential buildings, the base of the building (lower floors) should be stone, cast stone, precast concrete, architectural concrete block, or brick; however, wood clapboard, wood beaded siding, or cementitious siding may be used on upper floors.
 - ii. Precast panels should include score lines to suggest units/panels of appropriate scale.
 - iii. Material changes should occur along a horizontal datum or expression line.
 - iv. Use of vinyl siding is discouraged.
4. ROOFS
- a. Roofs may be pitched or flat.
 - b. Pitched roofs should be simple and symmetrical, with gables or hips preferred. Pitched roofs may be standing seam metal, copper, slate, artificial slate, or architectural grade asphalt shingles. Roofs built of standing seam metal should be painted or galvanized.
 - c. Flat roofs shall have a parapet or cornice.
 - d. Rooftop equipment (including elevator equipment, HVAC equipment, etc.) shall be concealed in penthouse structures designed as an integral part of the building or screened with a parapet.
 - e. Roof penetrations such as vents, attic ventilators, turbines, flues, etc. shall be placed to limit their visibility from the street and painted to match the color of the roof, except those made of metal, which may be left natural.
 - f. Gutters and downspouts should be consistent with the building design and should be painted the color of the adjacent material or galvanized, except copper which shall be permitted to age naturally.
5. DOORS & WINDOWS
- a. Doors should be built of wood, embossed steel, embossed aluminum, fiberglass with a wood grain finish, glass, or glass and stainless steel.
 - b. Ground floor building openings, including entryway doors and windows, should be compatible within each structure and should reflect a pedestrian scale.
 - c. Glass shall be clear and free of color with no excessive tinting.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- d. Continuous strip or ribbon glass windows as the predominant façade treatment are not recommended. Glass curtain walls may be components of the middle, or special articulated corners and entrances.
- e. Windows should be embossed steel, extruded aluminum clad, wood, fiberglass or vinyl clad.
- f. Centerline of windows should align vertically within any given facade.

6. STOREFRONTS

- a. The first floor of all buildings on ‘A’ Streets, especially in areas where retail uses are to be concentrated, should be designed to accommodate retail, even if they are not initially used for retail purposes.
- b. The design of the storefront should be appropriate to the scale and architectural design of the building.
- c. The design and construction materials of the ground level storefronts should be appropriate for a downtown retail street, to help contribute to an active pedestrian-oriented street. Factors that should be considered include:
 - i. How the storefront fits into or departs from the architecture of the buildings.
 - ii. Relationship to varying grades along the storefronts and the flexibility to adjust store entries.
 - iii. Visibility of storefronts.
 - iv. Sidewalk spaces for outdoor retail displays or dining.
 - v. Sign and logo requirements.
 - vi. The design, materials and colors of awnings or canopies to protect pedestrians and windows.
- d. Storefront, doors, awnings and signage may have some individuality; yet they should have a unified design that contributes to the overall architectural character of the base of the building.
- e. Doors should be recessed a minimum of 3 feet from the face of the building to provide a covered or sheltered entrance to the ground floor retail use. Recessed doors are not needed along arcades or where awnings are located.

7. BUILDING SIGNAGE

- a. All signs must comply with the Howard County Sign Code. Where appropriate, sign guidelines for Columbia, which exceed the limitations found in that Code and which are typically enforced by covenants, should be incorporated into the Comprehensive Sketch Plan Development Criteria.
- b. Retail window signs: A single external sign may be applied on the glass window flush with the elevation of each floor level. The sign shall be a maximum height of 24 inches.
- c. Retail awning signs: The vertical drip of an awning may be stenciled with signage that is a maximum height of 8 inches.
- d. Retail wall-mounted signs: A single external blade sign may be hung below the second floor windowsill perpendicular to the building. These signs may extend from the building a maximum of 42 inches and may be a maximum height of 24 inches. Vertical blade signs no greater than 8 feet in height shall be mounted above the storefront perpendicular to the building. These signs may extend from

PRELIMINARY DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

the building a maximum of 42 inches and may extend as high as the window lintels on the top floor.

- e. Signs should be externally lit with decorative visible light sources.
- f. Signs flush with a facade should be designed to be integral with the buildings, have a maximum height of 24 inches and be externally lit.
- g. Roof-mounted signs and signs mounted above the top of a building are prohibited.