



Route 1 Assessments:
Executive Summary

Rt. 1 Corridor



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

The Route 1 Corridor serves the easternmost part of Howard County, which runs parallel to I-95 (Map, page 2). Before the Interstate system was constructed, Route 1 served as the main north/south highway serving the eastern U.S. from Maine to Florida. As such, segments of the land use pattern along this historic highway retain legacy uses characterized by vintage motels and hotels, roadside restaurants, trucking terminals, warehouses and various other uses. The roadway was originally designed to support the movement of goods and people.

Over many decades, Route 1, in Howard County as elsewhere, has become a secondary corridor to the interstate highway system and it now serves local and regional transportation needs in most states.



II. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENTS

Transition from the Corridor Plan

In 2018, a Route 1 Corridor Master Plan was initiated to develop recommendations on revitalization strategies specific for Route 1 and was anticipated to be an amendment to the current General Plan, PlanHoward 2030. RKG and Associates, Inc. were hired to develop the Route 1 Corridor Master Plan. In July 2020, the County accelerated the next General Plan update and launched HoCo by Design, a process to update *PlanHoward 2030*. With both projects occurring simultaneously, the Route 1 Corridor Master Plan was folded into the General Plan update. Through the Route 1 Corridor Master Plan process, RKG & Associates prepared reports and recommendations based on community input received and an evaluation of conditions along the corridor. The HoCo by Design consulting team will incorporate these reports and assessments into their analysis and modeling. Integrating the Route 1 Master Plan

into the General Plan Update allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of the corridor and an opportunity to evaluate Route 1 in a wider context relative to Howard County as a whole. These papers will be used as resources by the general plan consultant team. The content of these papers is based on the work of RKG and its consultant team, DPZ staff, input from citizen engagement and review by the general plan consultants led by City Explained, Incorporated (CEI).

Three Assessments

Three Route 1 assessments have been developed to provide a revitalization strategy for the corridor which includes a system of articulated investment areas where infrastructure and development can be focused. The **Market and Demographic Trends** and **Transportation and Transit Assessments** each includes an analysis of historic and existing conditions, examines opportunities and constraints, and provides considerations and a framework for policy resolution during the general plan update. These two assessments also reflect the potential impacts of COVID 19.

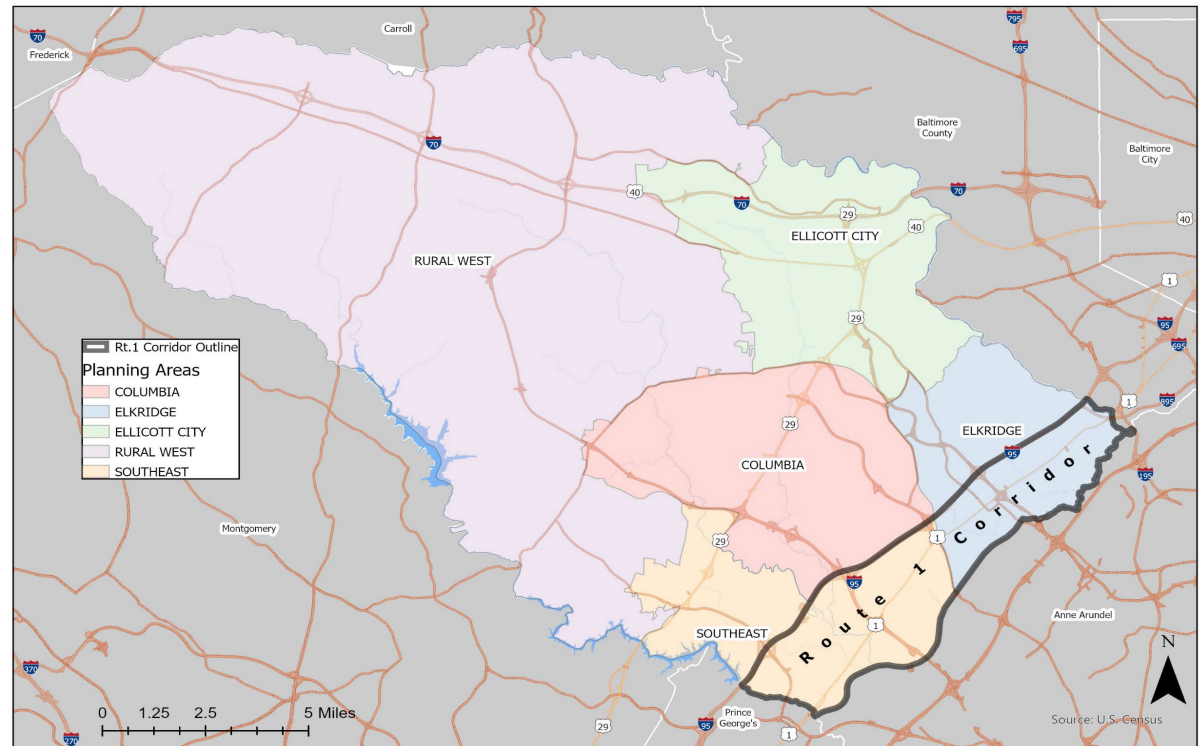
The **Land Use and Urban Design Assessment**, with its emphasis on candidate investment areas, also provides a detailed analysis of six candidate areas. This Assessment uses the three themes of **redevelop, connect, and preserve** as an organizational framework.

Route 1 Assessments: Executive Summary

These assessments are the direct products of this corridor planning effort:

- **Market and Demographic Trends Assessment** includes a summary of recent demographic and economic trends that have shaped the region, the county and the Corridor over the past few decades. These trends set the context for future revitalization efforts. It summarizes the major market forces and trends influencing recent real estate development, leasing and pricing within the Corridor. By analyzing recent supply and demand factors for key market segments, the analysis identifies the future market potential for corridor land uses.
- **The Transportation and Transit Assessment** identifies transportation and transit infrastructure needs in the corridor. It's organized around three concepts: 1) safety and comfort to real and perceived exposure to risk, 2) connectivity to a seamless, interconnected, multimodal system, and 3) sense of place, or people's perception of an area and the extent to which it's considered special or unique. Transportation policy considerations are presented to support the vision for economic development, and case studies provide precedents from other areas in Maryland that are located along State Highway Administration (SHA) roads.
- **The Land Use and Urban Design Assessment** includes proposed candidate investment areas where redevelopment and targeted

Route 1 Corridor and Planning Areas



infrastructure investment can be concentrated. A diverse range of variables were considered in designating Candidate Investment Areas. Included among them were vacant and underutilized parcels, proximity to new public/private investment, opportunities for multimodal connections, significant Route 1 frontage, proximity to natural resource areas and community feedback. During the urban design analysis three overarching action “themes” emerged and were then used as an

organizational framework - redevelop, connect and preserve.

These three assessments were developed through a public engagement process. They report on the current economic, market, and transportation realities along the corridor, and provide market-based development concepts and transportation enhancements to maximize the economic and redevelopment potential of Route 1.

III. REGIONAL CONTEXT AND IMPORTANCE OF ROUTE 1

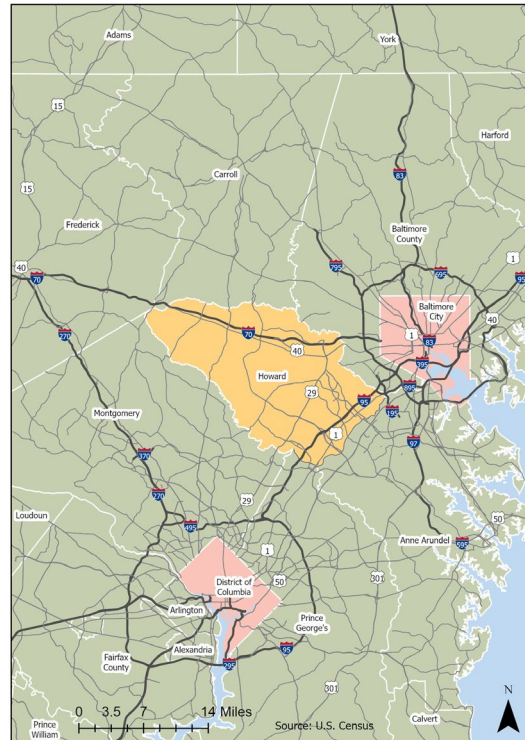
Howard County is in the central part of Maryland and is within the Greater Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Howard County is home to suburban neighborhoods, large economic hubs, industrial and warehouse/distribution zones, and areas of agricultural and scenic rural and wooded lands. The county is positioned between and benefits from the economic activities generated by the City of Baltimore and the District of Columbia, as well as other major employment cores in Montgomery County, Ft. Meade in Prince Georges County and the Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) area of Anne Arundel County.

Howard County boasts low unemployment, access to high quality academic institutions, and a highly-educated workforce. It is home to the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab, which employs about 5,600 people and is planning for added growth. Howard County is the third most affluent county in the United States and is frequently cited for its high-quality public-school system.

Economic Context

Howard County's employment base largely clusters around the urban centers of Columbia and Ellicott City, as well as along the Route 1 Corridor, east of I-95.

Howard County Regional Location



Howard County employment growth between 2009-2016 (20 percent) has greatly exceeded the growth in the overall Baltimore Metro area (10 percent). During this period, county employment increased from 222,000 to over 244,000 jobs. This increase is more than twice the rate of the county's population gain (9.4 percent), which speaks to the county's highly desirable regional business location.

The Route 1 Corridor is located a few miles from BWI, Fort George G. Meade, the National Security

Administration, the Port of Baltimore and many of the nation's most important federal institutions.

The Route 1 Corridor's total employment was 44,192 in 2018, accounting for 18 percent of all the jobs in Howard County. The wholesale trade industry is the biggest employer in the corridor, contributing 7,901 jobs, which is 17.9 percent of all jobs in the Route 1 Corridor in 2018. Other significant employment sectors include professional, scientific and technical services, manufacturing, construction, retail, transportation and warehousing, public administration, and accommodation and food services.

The Baltimore-Washington corridor is one of the most concentrated in the US in terms of cybersecurity firms and is comparable with regions such as San Francisco, Seattle, and Boston. As Fort Meade, the nation's epicenter of cybersecurity and information systems, continues to grow, the county could capitalize on its expansion. Fort Meade houses approximately 55,000 jobs on-site, another 110,000 jobs off the base. Over 13,000 county residents currently work at the Fort Meade campus. Over the coming years, extensive growth is projected to continue at Fort Meade in support of the National Security Agency, Defense Cyber Command, and Service Cyber Headquarters. The combination of these factors has added 10,000 jobs in the last decade. Many cybersecurity jobs in the county are currently located within the Route 1 corridor, or nearby.

Legacy Land Uses and Context

While an important employment corridor for the county, Route 1 has pockets of legacy corridor land uses, including blighted commercial and industrial buildings and properties that have been lacking reinvestment for decades.

Transportation Context

Route 1 in Howard County is approximately a 12-mile corridor that serves as a primary connection between Washington D.C. and the City of Baltimore.

Washington-Baltimore Boulevard was built in 1908 and was referred to as State Road No. 1. It was designated as US Route 1 in 1926 with the inception of the US Highway System, and in 1928 it was reconstructed to a four-lane road with shoulders. From its start as a dirt road through Maryland's countryside, Route 1 has undergone periods of transition as the national economy has grown, as transportation needs have changed, as the surrounding neighborhoods have developed and as motor vehicle and truck volumes have increased.

IV. INFORMING THE VISION

Foundational Plans, Studies, and Reports

Route 1 serves as an important, eastern transportation corridor connecting major employment centers in Baltimore, MD and Washington D.C. The nearly 12-mile stretch of US Route 1 is an essential part of the vibrant neighborhoods and economy that helps define

Howard County. Since 2001, a series of county and state initiatives and studies have provided proposed policies, designs and improvements that would stimulate revitalization, provide for enhanced multi-modal transportation and address safety concerns.

These assessment reports build upon prior Route 1 studies, plans and initiatives including the following:

- *Corridor Revitalization Study Phase 1* (2001)
- *Corridor Revitalization Study Phase 2* (2002)
- Route 1 new zoning districts adopted (2004)
- *SHA Corridor Improvement Strategy* (2008)
- *Route 1 Manual* (2009)
- *Market Analysis & Strategic Implementation Analysis: US Route 1* (2011)
- *PlanHoward 2030* (2012)
- North-Laurel Savage Sustainable Community Application/Action Plan (2013)
- Route 1 Tax Credit Program (2014)
- *Bike Howard* (2016)
- *Walk Howard* (2017)
- *Howard County Development Regulations Assessment* (2018)
- *US 1 Safety Evaluation on Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety* (2019)

In 2001 and 2002, Howard County completed Phases 1 and 2 of the Howard County *Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Reports*. The Phase 1 Report studied existing conditions and proposed recommendations to set the stage for revitalization that would improve transportation conditions and enhance the roadway appearance. The Phase 2

Report focused on longer-term topics such as community well-being, environmental quality, and envisioning the future; it concentrated on tools and incentives for development.

In 2004, following both reports, the County adopted new zoning districts for Route 1 and began developing the *Route 1 Design Manual* to establish standards that would support land use patterns with a more urban character. The Manual follows the Zoning Regulations and Corridor Districts recommended by Phase II of the Revitalization Study. The corridor-specific zoning districts are: Corridor Employment (CE) District, Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) District, and Corridor Activity Center (CAC) District.

Between 2006 and 2008, the *US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy* was prepared for the Maryland State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA). The report builds upon the Corridor Revitalization Reports, recognizing the need for pedestrian improvements, enhanced aesthetics, and responsive changes in land use patterns.

In 2009, Howard County completed the *Route 1 Manual* to provide cohesive and corridor-level technical guidance for zoning regulations, subdivisions and site development plans and streetscape/urban design guidelines. The manual includes specific recommendations to increase safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and to enhance pedestrian and bicycle accessibility and connectivity in the corridor. Since 2009, various properties along

Route 1 Assessments: Executive Summary

the corridor and in the area have been redeveloped and have provided right-of-way for frontage improvements such as new sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, and shared use paths.

PlanHoward 2030, the county's general plan adopted in 2012, targets Route 1 as major growth corridor and a key part of its economic base. Following comprehensive zoning changes in 2013, new residential development has occurred along the corridor, largely scattered amongst a variety of automobile-related businesses, industrial uses, truck terminals, motels, junkyards and underutilized properties.

While many corridor businesses serve a variety of local and regional service needs, there are gaps in terms of meeting the service needs of the current and growing residential population. Route 1 has not yet been able to attract significant private investment beyond industrial, warehouse and multi-family development. Despite population gains over the past several decades, the Route 1 area in Howard County lacks the full variety of retail and service options that other parts of Howard and surrounding Counties enjoy.

In 2016, Howard County adopted *Bike Howard*, the Howard County Bicycle Master Plan. The plan makes long-term and short-term recommendations for a bike network throughout the County. The County has also developed *Bike Howard Express*, which is a comprehensive strategy to significantly improve bicycle infrastructure during the next three

years with approximately \$8 million budgeted for improvements.

In 2017 the County developed the draft plan for *Walk Howard*, the Howard County Pedestrian Master Plan which is an update of the *2007 Pedestrian Master Plan*. The plan highlights Route 1 as an area of special focus based on the high number of recent fatal crashes. The Plan identifies East Laurel, Savage, and Elkridge as areas of high pedestrian demand. Recommendations include sidewalk projects along major sections of the Corridor, intersection projects, and bus stop improvements.

Recent crash trends show a clear increase in pedestrian-related crashes and fatalities along Route 1. In response, the Howard County Office of Transportation undertook an evaluation of bicyclists and pedestrian safety, focusing on traffic hazard conflicts for pedestrians and bicyclists. The report, *US 1 Safety Evaluation on Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety*, started in Spring 2018 and was published in February 2019.

Corridor safety issues were identified through field evaluation, and a toolbox of strategies was developed to address safety concerns. This information was supported by a review of industry best practices and comparable projects.

In 2018, through a consultant led process, the county evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the county's regulatory documents including the

Zoning Regulations, Subdivision and Land Development Regulations and design manuals including the Route 1 Manual. Part 1 of the *Howard County Development Regulations Assessment* includes a section-by-section review of the current regulations to identify strengths, weaknesses, and alternative approaches used by other complex counties containing a mix of urban, suburban, and rural areas. Part 2 contains recommendations for how Howard County might improve and integrate those regulations.

The assessment found that the Route 1 Manual had significant overlap and inconsistencies with the requirements of the Zoning Regulations and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Part I recommendations called for significant changes to the CE, CAC, CLI, and TOD districts.

Accordingly, the consultant suggested that substantial changes should be made to the Manual. The recommendations from the 2018 Assessment will be considered in a future unified development ordinance. This effort will follow the adoption of the county's new general plan.

Route 1 Assessments: Executive Summary

Community Engagement

The public engagement process for the Route 1 Corridor Master Plan was designed to obtain meaningful community and stakeholder input at key points in the process, particularly during the examination of existing conditions (to provide a ground-truthing of what the consultant team learned) and during the development of concepts.

The process utilized in-person engagement (open houses, meetings, and roundtables) paired with online elements on the project website, including surveys and interactive ESRI StoryMaps, to gather input. The county's project website was developed to share and gather information, including all meeting materials and summaries of community input from the following 2018-2019 engagement events:

- 2018 Business Roundtable: October 25, 2018
- 2018 Stakeholder Interviews: Fall-Winter 2018
- 2018 Community Open Houses: 11/14 & 12/4
- 2019 Virtual Open House: Winter 2019
- 2019 Public Workshops: June 25 & 27, 2019



- 2019 Virtual Workshop: Summer 2019

In the Fall of 2018, Howard County Economic Development Authority (HCEDA) hosted a Route 1 Roundtable Discussion at the Savage Firehouse in Savage, Maryland. RKG provided initial observations about the corridor and facilitated a brief discussion with business leaders about their future aspiration for the Route 1 Corridor. Twenty-five business representatives were in attendance and offered a wide variety of considerations related to transportation, zoning, economic conditions.

Over the course of several months, RKG Associates interviewed key county key agencies including the Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP), the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Office of Transportation (OT), the Office of Community Sustainability (OCS), Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and local environmental groups. Early in the project, the team interviewed industry and government stakeholders, including: Office of Transportation, Economic Development Authority, Housing & Community Development, Howard County School District Manager, and Real Estate Brokers and Developers.

RKG, along with county staff, conducted other topical issue meetings with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) to review potential highway improvements and flexible design standards envisioned for the future Route 1 Corridor. RKG and county staff also met with

members of Howard County's State Delegation to review the master plan analysis and to discuss potential policy issues that might require the delegation's attention.

Two in-person open houses were held in the Fall 2018, to solicit community input on existing land use, transportation and economic conditions and gauge personal preferences for each. A North Laurel



Open House was held on November 14, 2018,

Route 1 Assessments: Executive Summary

followed by an Elkridge Open House on December 4, 2018. Citizens attending the open houses could review the displays and information boards and participate in exercises. Participants could write-in comment questions, complete mapping exercises and hand in preference surveys.

A virtual open house reproduced meeting exhibits and engagement activities online for those who could not attend the in-person workshops. Online input was accessible to the public in January and February 2019 and resulted in more than 1,300 comments by over 200 people. One exercise provided participants the opportunity to use one word to describe Route 1 today and one word to describe Route 1 tomorrow (see results on the bottom right).

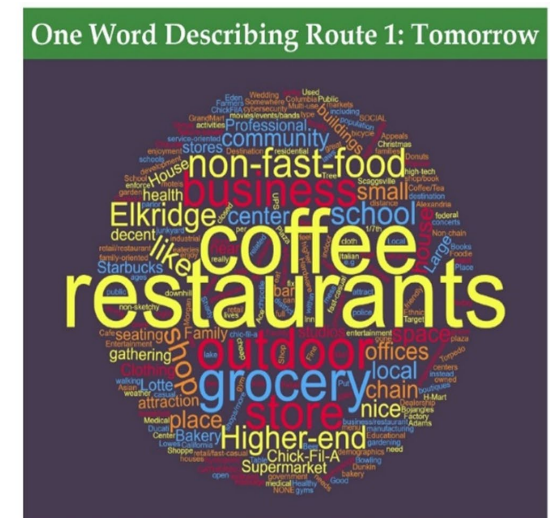
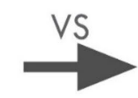
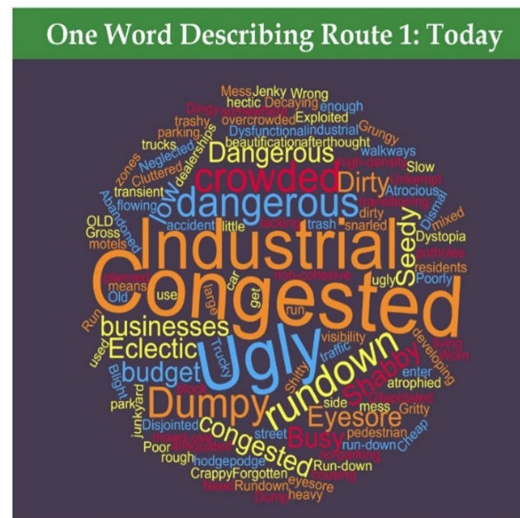
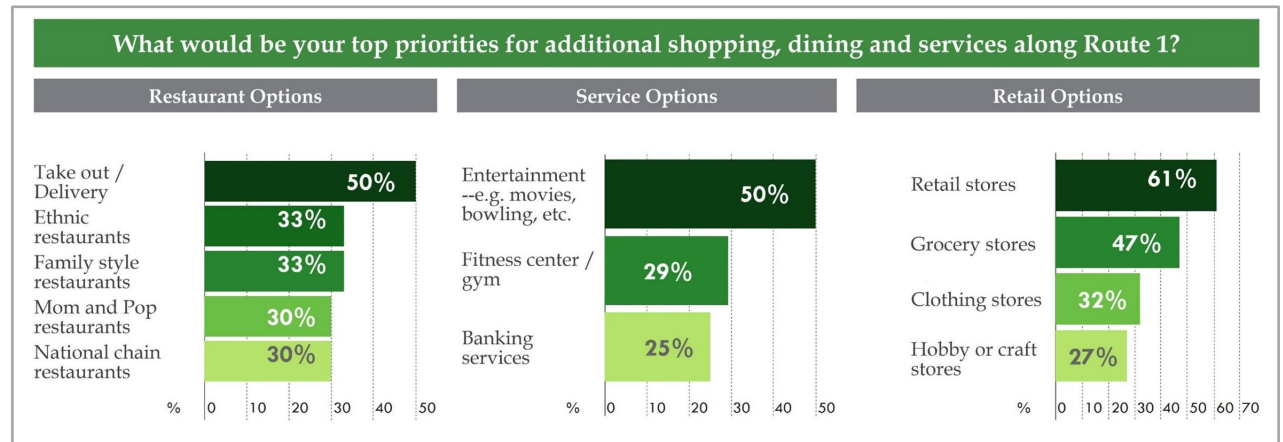
The following summer, two public workshops were held on June 25 and June 27, 2019, to review and provide feedback on the Plan's economic, land use, and transportation strategies being recommended for the corridor. An online virtual workshop option replicated the in-person presentation, stations, and a survey and was available through August 2019.

Citizens who attended the open houses and responded to the online survey were asked a variety of questions related to the presentations and

Who responded to the questions?

- 70% have lived in the area for 6 or more years
- 48% live in Elkridge; 21% Laurel; 10% Jessup; others below 10%
- 75% over 40 years old
- 10% own/rent a business within the Route 1 corridor area
- 98.5% own their residences

displays. Surveys included multiple-choice and open-ended questions dealing with desired changes in the corridor, things to be retained, and how the public envisions the future of Route 1.





Improved transit/mobility/connections

- Widened and connected sidewalks with street lights
- Additional trails for biking
- Safer intersections
- Additional transit opportunities
- Solve congestion during rush hours and more traffic calming



Resource-based Amenities (Green, Environmental, Historic)

- Additional/better parks and open spaces/community center
- Preservation/maintenance of corridor's natural areas
- Respect for/compatibility with historic structures



Improved Corridor Appearance

- Improved maintenance of road and properties
- Trees, landscaping and other appearance improvements
- Consolidate/control industrial uses and eliminate junk yards
- Revitalize abandoned/underutilized areas/properties



Residential Concerns

- More affordable housing
- Less new residential without improved infrastructure
- More accessible community services, businesses and offices, e.g. restaurants, retail
- More schools

Community Feedback

The results from all the community events are categorized by four recurring themes:

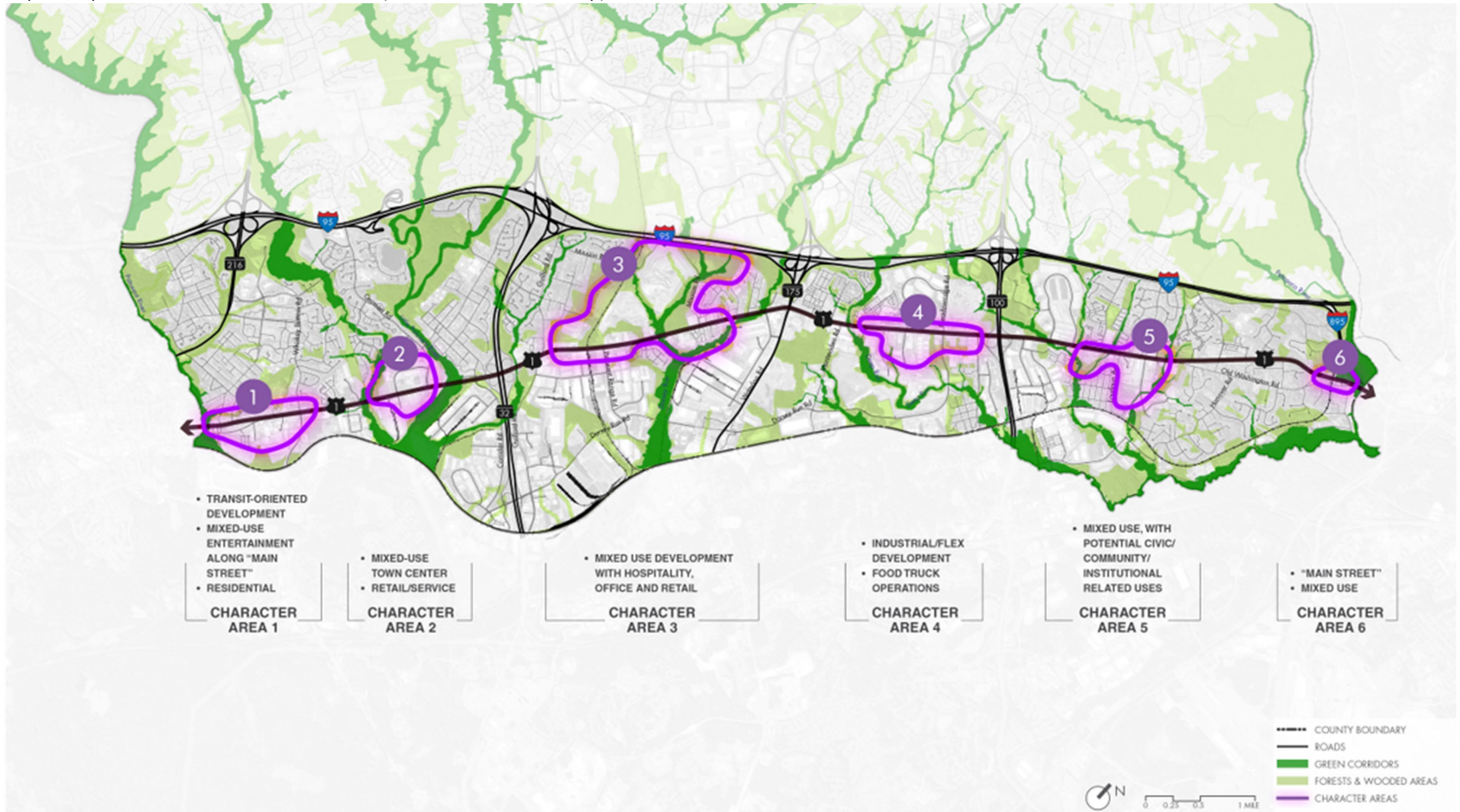
- Improved Transit/mobility/connections
- Resource-Based Amenities
- Improved Corridor Appearance
- Residential Concerns

As part of the public outreach process, the project team introduced the concept of investment areas, or activity nodes. The “nodes” concept was developed during previous Route 1 planning efforts to enable a more focused and deliberate planning approach. Six candidate investment areas (previously known as character areas) were shared and were widely accepted both during the public meetings and online (see map on the next page).

Meeting participants appreciated the concepts of focusing development along nodes and a pedestrian oriented town center with public gathering spaces. Key ideas supported by the survey results were: natural resource protection, transportation improvements, limited and targeted new residential development, and preserving historic character and environmentally sensitive areas.

Route 1 Assessments: Executive Summary

Map of Proposed Candidate Investment Areas (from June 2019 workshop)



THE PROPOSED CONCEPTS DEPICTED IN THE MAPS ARE FOR PLANNING AND ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSE ONLY. THE IMPLEMENTATION IS DEPENDANT ON PROPERTIES BECOMING AVAILABLE FOR REDEVELOPMENT.

EXHIBIT 7

V. VISION FOR ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR

Foundational plans, reports, studies and community engagement, informed the vision for the corridor:

The Route 1 Corridor in Howard County will be enhanced as a significant employment corridor with a series of vibrant, livable, walkable activity centers with a mix of uses characterized by improved pedestrian, bicycling, and transit mobility. The corridor will successfully blend needed community services with a sustainable industrial base.

Guiding Principles and Considerations

To achieve the vision for the Corridor, the following guiding principles and key considerations (outlined in further detail in the three assessments) include:

Market and Demographic

- Target redevelopment opportunities in activity centers to attract private investment;
- Create a critical mass of retail and service activity, in walkable areas;
- Support and retain the existing industrial and manufacturing base;
- Identify possible economic development programs for property owners;
- Expand office and flex space to accommodate cybersecurity and information systems companies;
- Improve the housing to job ratio in the corridor; and

- Reduce blight and poorly maintained properties

Transportation and Transit

- Make improvements to the linkages within each investment area, between investment areas, from the parks and trail system, and to the other resources in the regional area;
- Increase mobility throughout the corridor for pedestrians, bicyclist, transit and automobiles;
- Provide transportation enhancements to maximize the economic potential of Route 1; including a continuous network of sidewalks, bikeways and trails within each investment area;
- Phase in improvements to public transit services to better serve existing users and provide enhanced transit services as future ridership demands.;
- Continue to invest in complete streets and multimodal transportation infrastructure to enhance mobility and access to diverse transportation options; and
- Undertake traffic and pedestrian safety improvements at high-risk locations and where future development is planned.

Land Use and Urban Design

- Redevelop the Corridor with a system of well-designed corridor investment areas that target infill and protect existing neighborhoods;
- Build on the economic success of the non-residential land uses along the Route 1 Corridor,

specifically industrial, warehousing and distribution facilities;

- Protect, improve and enhance the natural environment for residents and workers in the corridor including the existing green corridors network of forested areas and stream corridors that exist in the corridor;
- Preserve landmarks and historical buildings;
- Augment open spaces and recreation opportunities by constructing new open spaces, sidewalks, trails in support of Route 1 residents and businesses;
- Emphasize green site and building design; and
- Revise zoning to conform with Route 1 Corridor land use goals.

Corridor-wide Themes

Building on the past corridor planning efforts and community input, three themes emerged during the Rt. 1 corridor planning process: what targeted areas are prime to **redevelop**, what investment areas can we **connect**, and where can we look to **preserve** historic and natural resources in the corridor.

The Market and Trends Assessment, the Transportation and Transit Assessment and the Land Use and Urban Design Assessment examine these themes and provide guidance and considerations for the next general plan, HoCo By Design.