

October 2007 ■ Conference Paper 24

Transforming a Corridor

*A Case Study of Howard County,
Maryland's U.S. Route 1 Corridor*

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**Transforming a Corridor:
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Abstract

Howard County's 11-mile long Route 1 corridor is an area of diverse land uses, but vacant or substantially underdeveloped land provides opportunity for change. By 2000, elected officials, business interests and residents agreed that the corridor was aging and showing signs of neglect. The county undertook a community-based revitalization study with the goal of making the corridor, like all of Howard County, a good place to live and work.

Funding for implementation has come from a wide variety of partners including county, state, federal, nonprofit and private sector sources. Both the county and the state are doing minor roadway and streetscape improvements while more comprehensive transportation interventions are being planned. Land use change has begun as a result of the county's zoning and growth management policies, and because the private sector has willingly invested in the corridor.

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank Jeff Bronow, Chief of Howard County's Research Division, for providing land use projections and development project data.

Material in this report may have appeared in Howard County reports, newsletters and web pages.

For permission to use materials from the US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy, the authors are grateful to project manager Yolanda Takesian of Kittleson & Associates, Inc., Charlie Bailey of Mahan Rykiel Associates, Inc. and SHA's project manager Harriet Levine of Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc.

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Introduction to the Corridor

The Route 1 corridor is located between Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC, an attractive location because of the growth in this region and its proximity to I-95 and the BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport. Howard County's Route 1 Corridor Revitalization study area is focused on the 11-mile long US 1 roadway and the surrounding 13,000 acres, reaching from I-95 on the west to the MARC commuter rail line that forms much of the eastern edge of the county. (Figure 1, Regional Location Map.) The area has diverse land uses, but the fact that one-third of the land in the corridor was vacant or substantially underdeveloped provided opportunity for change in 2000 when the study began. As the location of 12 of the county's 24 major industrial parks, it is one of the county's economic engines, but one-story warehouse and distribution centers tend to be the dominant nonresidential land use. The corridor population has an income that is 62% of the county average and its population is somewhat younger than the rest of the county. The corridor has much of the county's affordable housing, apartments make it a bit denser than other locations, and it includes most of the mobile home parks in the county.

Planning Background and Approach

Interest in Route 1 revitalization was started by a small grassroots group of business owners working with their County Councilman, Guy Guzzone, in the southern part of the corridor. In 1999 our County Executive, Jim Robey, made the entire corridor one of his campaign issues. He told us that the corridor was aging and showing signs of neglect – and that Route 1, like all of Howard County, must be a good place to live and work.

The county's *General Plan 2000* designated the corridor as a focus for revitalization and called for a study of the corridor as one of the plan's first implementation priorities. The planning study was conducted in two phases. The 2001 Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Study described the results of the surveys and workshops, and recommended short-term strategies for addressing the six issues selected by the task force for the Phase 1 Report: promoting the positive, transforming the negative, setting the stage for revitalization, improving transportation, enhancing Route 1 appearance and addressing the needs of youth. The 2002 Phase 2 Report focused on the long-term solutions under the four topic areas selected by the task force: envisioning the future (which focused on land use issues), improving transportation, addressing environmental quality and fostering community well-being.

Citizen participation was a critical part of the planning process. A 30-member task force made up of residents, business people (including some from the original grassroots group) and representatives from the nonprofit sector guided decision-making. Two highly successful workshops attracted over 100 people each. Nationally-known planning consultant Tony Nelessen of A. Nelessen Associates, Inc. in Princeton, NJ was brought in as a facilitator for these workshops. At the first workshop, in March 2001, he stepped the audience through a Visual Preference Survey™ and a mapping exercise that identified areas with potential for change. At the second workshop with Nelessen, three months later, attendees learned the results of the preference survey and used those findings to

map land use plans for the corridor. The county also solicited community opinion through a survey of corridor businesses which identified the issues and concerns of that sector.

Overview: Corridor Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

We did not wait until the planning process was complete to begin addressing certain short-term issues identified by the community in the Phase 1 Report. We began to promote the positive aspects of the corridor and our positive vision for the future. We used every media available to do this, including a community cable television special. We took our findings “on the road” making public presentations to our planning board, county council and any civic group that would have us. We wanted to take immediate action to transform the negative as well. More than 100 citizens joined in a cleanup campaign. A few dozen participated in an interchange tree planting program. The county conducted a major sweep of the corridor to enforce the county sign code and reduce some of the visual clutter.

Environmental issues needed to be considered because seven of the county’s nine major rivers and streams cross beneath Route 1. Most of the corridor was developed before stormwater management; we soon learned that stormwater retrofit and restoration of degraded streams would be a long-term challenge.

Youth issues and community well-being were seen as important to a population where many struggle with poverty. We would need to learn more about these issues before we could develop a strategy to make needed changes and improvements. Our first step in this direction was to seek funding for a health and human services study to address these critical social issues.

Transportation and related streetscape conditions were significant issues that bridged both phases of the study. We acknowledged that transportation improvements were needed to address traffic capacity, access and safety in the corridor. Route 1 and the three major highways that cross it (MD 32, MD 175 and MD 100) are all owned by the state and serve both local and regional traffic. The county and the State Highway Administration would need to work together on decisions about long-term investment in corridor transportation infrastructure.

Transportation improvements, however, would have to address much more than Route 1 and the corridor roadway network. A multimodal strategy that included transit use and pedestrian access would be needed for the corridor. MARC rail connects Baltimore to Washington with four stations in the county. Improvements to that service could play an important role in supporting future development. Expansion of local bus and regional commuter bus service would be other components of a needed multimodal strategy. Although most of the corridor lacks sidewalks, a considerable number of pedestrians walk along the shoulders and in the roadway each day. We saw that pedestrian improvements would be essential. (Figure 2, Pedestrian Walking on Roadway Shoulder.) Streetscape aesthetics and the quality of the pedestrian experience are important. If we improved the public realm, we hoped private property owners would make improvements, too.

The most important issue for the corridor, however, has been land use. The Visual Preference Survey™, the community workshops and the task force all supported a change in development patterns in the corridor. Instead of strip commercial, we wanted to have more urban mixed-use commercial nodes along the corridor and at transit hubs. We agreed that office and manufacturing uses would provide more jobs – and better paying jobs – than would the current warehouses and auto-oriented businesses. The corridor needed to offer more housing. Many affordable mobile home communities have already disappeared from the corridor. Higher density, mixed use development was seen as the way to provide added housing opportunities. As part of the Phase 2 Report, the county engaged Tony Nelessen to produce the North Laurel Concept Plan, a case study for how the corridor could be developed in response to the land use visions identified in the Phase 1 Report. (Figure 3, North Laurel Visualization.)

Implementation: Funding Tools

To make the vision a reality took multiple funding sources, both small and large, from a wide variety of partners. Funding to date has totaled about \$3 million. These relatively small, piecemeal, federal, state and local investments have helped move the project forward incrementally, but we have learned that it will take major funding – multimillion dollar federal and state grants with matching local investment in capital improvement projects – to implement vital major transportation changes. We were, of course, lucky to have the private sector willing to make the investment in development that would bring about land use change in the corridor. This is a critical factor in the success of the revitalization efforts thus far.

Federal Funding

The majority of Route 1 corridor implementation funding has come from the federal government. When we publicly announced the start of the Route 1 corridor revitalization initiative and the formation of a citizen task force, Senator Barbara Mikulski was on hand to present County Executive Jim Robey with a symbolic check for \$500,000. (Figure 4, Elected Official at Project Initiation.) In 2001 and 2004, Senators Sarbanes and Mikulski sponsored two \$500,000 special projects federal grants, administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, for streetscape improvements. Congress members Cardin and Cummings sponsored a \$1,000,000 earmark through the Transportation Equity Act of 2004. These earmark funds were provided to the State Highway Administration so that the state could work with the county in developing a comprehensive implementation strategy for Route 1 improvements. The draft results of this ongoing study are discussed under State Highway Administration Corridor Enhancement Strategy, below.

State Funding

In 2001 the Howard County Council adopted a resolution designating the Route 1 corridor revitalization study area as a “designated neighborhood” for the purposes of making the corridor eligible for the Smart Growth Designated Neighborhood Program of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. The designated

neighborhood status allowed the state to consider the Route 1 corridor for its various smart growth funding programs. Community Legacy and Smart Codes grants received through these programs are described below.

Maryland Mass Transit Administration

Beginning in 1997, the Maryland Mass Transit Administration (MTA) sponsored ten workshops throughout the state with the goal of creating economic development opportunities that would increase MTA or locally operated transit ridership and that would generally improve neighborhoods. MTA invited Howard County to participate in a workshop in 2001. The state contracted with Tony Nelessen to lead these workshops.

Maryland Department of Planning

Maryland Department of Planning, in fall 2002, awarded Howard County's Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) a \$10,000 grant as part of the state's Smart Codes initiative. With the grant, DPZ hired a consultant, ERM (Environmental Resources Management) of Annapolis, to help prepare illustrations and graphics for the Route 1 Manual. The manual was needed to show developers and residents how new land use patterns in the proposed three zoning districts in the Route 1 corridor may look when built.

State Highway Administration

The State Highway Administration is engaged in several capital projects along the corridor, some of which are described later in this paper, under *Implementation: Transportation and Streetscape Improvements*. These projects come through the state's District 7 office which oversees the projects. SHA's sidewalk retrofit fund, which requires a 50% match from the county, has helped extend sidewalk links in the corridor.

Community Legacy

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development provides modest grants through its Community Legacy program to assist urban neighborhoods, suburban communities and small towns that are experiencing decline and disinvestment. Since 2001, Howard County's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) has received Community Legacy grants totaling almost \$900,000 to help insure that more affordable housing will be available in the corridor for residents with a range of incomes.

The state grants, along with other monies, have primarily been used to acquire land for affordable dwelling units in the corridor. A 2005 award of \$150,000 is of particular note as it helped the county buy the land for a mixed use housing development in North Laurel. The development's 80 apartment units, which will be reserved for renters with moderate incomes, is the first development in the southern portion of the corridor being constructed using the new Corridor Activity Center zoning. Community Legacy grants have also been used to help first-time home buyers. The county uses the funds as a deferred loan to guarantee the purchase price of homes in the Route 1 corridor for low- to moderate-income buyers waiting for approvals for state or federal insured loans.

In response to a growing concern about displacement due to revitalization, the county was able to use a small portion of its 2003 Community Legacy grant to retain a consultant to gather information about those mobile home parks in the corridor whose residents may

be dislocated because of redevelopment. The consultant worked with park residents, managers and owners, and also helped the county formulate a relocation plan. A real estate specialist was also hired to work with businesses that may wish to find more suitable locations in the Route 1 corridor because of zoning changes or redevelopment proposals.

County Funding

The county has allocated between \$100,000 and \$250,000 per year in our own capital budget for streetscape improvement, totaling almost \$700,000 through fiscal year 2006.

Other Funding

Several other private and nonprofit sector partners are involved in funding improvements in the corridor as well:

BWI Airport

Since 2001, a BWI Airport Community Enhancement grant program has funded transportation-related community enhancement projects within two miles of the airport noise zone. Community associations in the greater Elkridge area have obtained more than \$200,000 in four separate awards for sidewalks, trees and street lights. Thanks to these awards, more of Elkridge is becoming a walkable neighborhood with a more attractive streetscape.

Horizon Foundation

The Horizon Foundation was formed from the merger of Howard County General Hospital with Johns Hopkins Medicine. The Foundation, whose mission is to advance community health and wellness in Howard County, has supported initiatives to address accessibility to services in the Route 1 corridor through two of its citizen advisory groups, the Southeast Horizon Council and the Elkridge Horizon Council. The 2002 Health and Human Services Study, funded by The Horizon Foundation, found fewer health and social service facilities in the corridor than in other areas of the county. As an outgrowth of that study, in January 2004, The Horizon Foundation made a multi-year grant to Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland to establish a satellite office in North Laurel. This office provides counseling for children, adolescents, adults and families and provides in-home services to the elderly and disabled residents of the Savage/North Laurel area. In the Elkridge area, The Horizon Foundation, working in partnership with the Office on Aging, has supported services for older adults through the work of the Elkridge Aging Alliance. In cooperation with Murray Hill Middle School and the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Foundation sponsored a summer camp in 2005 for disadvantaged youth living in the southeast portion of the county.

Private Bank Loan Program

The Route 1 Revitalization Loan program, which began in 2002, offers below prime rate loans to small businesses for improvements on their properties in the Route 1 corridor. Five local banks have approved more than \$25 million in loans for 24 projects to date. These loans are reviewed by the Department of Planning and Zoning and Howard

County's Economic Development Authority (EDA) for compliance with the revitalization goals for the Route 1 corridor.

Implementation: Zoning and Other Regulatory Tools

Zoning

Our main tool implementation tool has been zoning. Rezoning was seen as an especially effective strategy for areas with a high number of properties that were vacant or underutilized, with obsolete land uses or poorly maintained sites. In 2003/2004 we created three new districts to meet the vision articulated by the community and to encourage a desirable mix of compatible uses (Figure 5, Generalized Zoning Map.):

- **Corridor Activity Center** – CAC zoning is intended to encourage community- and pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development with a focus on residential use and supportive commercial uses.
- **Transit Oriented Development** – TOD zoning is intended to support high-density mixed-use office and residential development that makes use of the commuting potential of three of the four MARC rail stations in the corridor.
- **Corridor Employment** – CE zoning is intended to encourage redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial sites to include more street-oriented office buildings. The district eliminates auto-oriented uses such as motor-vehicle repair and storage and gas stations. It also eliminates convenience stores and freestanding fast food restaurants with drive through service and permits banks only as accessory uses. CE zoning now covers the majority of the US 1 frontage in the study area.

In proposing the rezoning of corridor properties to these new districts, we had to recognize that much of the land in the CAC and CE districts was already developed with light industrial uses. Thus, the Continuing Light Industrial (CLI) Overlay District was created to acknowledge these uses and allow them to continue without being considered nonconforming. Warehouse and industrial uses within existing buildings in the new zoning districts that will remain unchanged do not need to meet the new regulations.

In April 2004, the 2003/2004 Comprehensive Zoning plan became effective. Approximately 1,580 acres in the Route 1 corridor were rezoned to the three new districts: about 225 acres of CAC, 270 acres of TOD and 1,085 acres of CE.

Route 1 Manual

A Route 1 Manual was adopted by the County Council in 2004 as a regulatory companion to the zoning. It is intended to help guide owners, developers and agency reviewers who must use and interpret the new zoning regulations. The manual establishes standards for the Route 1 right-of-way, all properties that front on Route 1 and developments in the three new zoning districts. It describes the new districts in detail using before and after images to help convey the intent of the districts. Requirements and recommendations are established for streetscape design, site design and building design.

The manual also shows examples of buildings types we hope will be built in the corridor and offers illustrative site plans for sample properties.

Growth Management

Given its central location in the Baltimore-Washington corridor and its excellent school system, Howard County has long been considered a highly desirable place to live. Residential development growth has remained strong throughout the county, including the corridor. Elkridge, an older mixed use community at the northern end of the corridor, was recently named by Money Magazine in its 2007 rankings as one of its Top 100 Best Places to Live. Judged on a “combination of economic opportunity, good schools, safe streets, things to do and a real sense of community,” Elkridge ranked number 42 among populations of 7,500 to 50,000.

Adequate Public Facilities Housing Allocations

In an attempt to effectively manage the amount, pace and distribution of residential growth and to maintain its excellent quality of life, the county adopted the Adequate Public Facilities Act (APF) in 1992. Prior to its adoption, the county was averaging more than 3,000 new houses per year. In February 2001, in accordance with *General Plan 2000*, the annual number of new homes that can move through the development process was reduced to about 1,500. These annual numbers, known as housing unit allocations, are divided among each of the county’s five designated planning areas. Two subsequent council bills have increased the number of available allocations to 1,850 as an incentive to implement two major policy initiatives: Route 1 revitalization and affordable housing. In 2003 the County Council created an additional 250 allocations per year for revitalization of the US 1 corridor. Route 1 development projects may take these earmarked allocations as well as the allocations available within the corridor’s two planning areas (Southeast and Elkridge). However, no more than 60% of the Route 1 allocations may be granted in each of the planning areas in any year. In 2006 the County Council created an additional 100 allocations for small affordable dwelling units with one or two bedrooms and no larger than 900 sq. ft. or 1,200 sq. ft., respectively. The TOD project and several CAC projects have taken advantage of the affordable housing allocations. Route 1 allocations are in such demand that they have been requested for as far out as 2017.

Forecasting Corridor Growth

The latest adopted forecast, known as Round 7, includes *General Plan 2000* household, population and employment projections revised to incorporate the 2003/2004 Comprehensive Zoning and subsequent rezonings. These projections show that housing type distribution in the county is shifting. The supply of land zoned for single-family units is declining in the eastern portion of the county, which is the county’s Planned Service Area. Increases in apartments and single-family attached housing are projected, based in large part on three factors: the changes to zoning which created new mixed use zones along Route 1; additional opportunities to build smaller, but higher density age-restricted units for seniors; and regulations requiring more affordable housing.

At the time of the 2003/2004 Comprehensive Rezoning, the county estimated that the CAC and TOD rezonings would generate about 2,900 additional dwelling units in the corridor, which represented two-thirds of the total added capacity countywide. More than 4,000 residential units are currently in the review process in the CAC and TOD districts. We have already exceeded our General Plan and Comprehensive Zoning projections for the corridor and, based on revised projections, we expect the CAC and TOD districts to accommodate an additional 3,300 residential units. This dramatic increase from 2,900 to 7,300 projected units is based on two factors: first, the County Council approved several large additional CAC zoning at the request of property owners; and second, we underestimated the residential land use mix and achievable densities for the CAC and TOD parcels. The county updated its Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) Round 7 forecasts in December 2006 to reflect revised growth estimates for the Route 1 corridor.

The Route 1 corridor has almost 15,000 existing dwelling units at an average density of 1.07 dwelling units per acre (du/ac). The development capacity (land zoned for development, but as yet undeveloped) in the corridor is about 10,800 additional units, with about 5,300 of those units currently in the development review process and a remaining capacity of about 5,500 units. Upon buildout, which is projected for 2030, the number of units in the corridor will increase by 72% to about 25,800 units. While the Route 1 corridor represents 9% of the total county land area, it will have 35% of the projected units in the county. Upon buildout, the corridor's density (1.84 du/ac) will be slightly higher than the density for the rest of the County's Planned Service Area (1.67 du/ac). While these densities may appear low in comparison to Smart Growth targets, they are reflective of the considerable number of existing single-family detached homes in the corridor. Density for proposed development is increasing in the corridor, particularly in the CAC and TOD districts. The average density, as of September 2007, for the in-process Route 1 projects in the CAC and TOD districts was 21.4 du/ac, compared to an average density of 2.6 du/ac for in-process plans in other districts within the corridor. (Figure 6, Dwelling Units and Density.)

Figure 6
Dwelling Units and Density

| | Existing Units | Route 1 Units in Process 2007 | Future Route 1 Units 2030 | Total Units 2030 | Average Density |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| CAC-TOD Districts | NA | 4,091 | | | 21.4 du/ac |
| All Other Route 1 Districts | | 1,236 | | | 2.6 du/ac |
| Total Route 1 | 14,971 | 5,327 | 10,820 | 25,791 | 1.84 du/ac |
| Total Rest of PSA | 74,620 | NA | 14,741 | 89,361 | 1.67 du/ac |
| Total | 89,591 | | 25,561 | 115,152 | |

Source: Howard County DPZ, Research Division, Land Use and Plans in Process Databases

The residential growth over the upcoming decades will also show a shift in unit type. Existing units are 41% single-family detached, 32% single-family attached, 21%

apartment and 5.7% mobile homes. New development in the corridor will be mainly apartment (53.5%). In 2030, single-family detached, attached and apartment units will each represent about 31 to 35% of the housing stock, with mobile homes only 2.7% of the units in the corridor. (Figure 7, Dwelling Unit Types)

Figure 7
Dwelling Unit Types

| | Existing Units | % of Existing Units | Future Units | % of Future Units | Total Units 2030 | % of Total Units |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Single Family Detached | 6,134 | 41.0% | 1,928 | 17.8% | 8,062 | 31.3% |
| Single Family Attached | 4,786 | 32.0% | 3,255 | 30.1% | 8,041 | 31.2% |
| Apartments | 3,204 | 21.4% | 5,792 | 53.5% | 8,996 | 34.9% |
| Mobile Homes | 847 | 5.7% | (155) | -1.4% | 692 | 2.7% |
| Total | 14,971 | 100.0% | 10,820 | 100.0% | 25,791 | 100.0% |

Source: Howard County DPZ, Research Division, Land Use and Plans in Process Databases

Other Factors Affecting Growth Forecasts

Clearly, current county policy marks Route 1 as the county’s targeted growth area. This policy direction may shift somewhat in the upcoming years as the county considers proposals for increasing the development potential in Columbia downtown. Downtown development proposals under discussion project as many as 5,500 additional units, with as much as 90% of those units being apartments. If approved, such plans would reduce the relative percentage of growth seen in the corridor compared to county-wide growth.

The Base Realignment and Closing (BRAC) process, approved by Congress in November 2005, is expected to generate an estimated 6,000 additional jobs at Fort Meade, which is located a few miles east of the study area in Anne Arundel County. An additional 16,000 jobs are expected at Fort Meade in addition to BRAC. While it is impossible to predict the precise impact that the BRAC process will have on the region and Route 1 corridor, it is expected to be a significant influence in the next four to six years. The main entrances to Fort Meade are located off MD 175 and MD 32, thus commuter traffic is expected to grow substantially on these roadways as the BRAC proceeds.

Implementation: Private Development Proposals

Corridor Activity Center Districts (CAC)

Developers have planned a total of seven projects using the CAC zoning district. The first five CAC development proposals, which were rezoned in 2004 during the Comprehensive Zoning process, are progressing in the review and approval process, with four of the projects now under construction. Subsequent to the Comprehensive Zoning, two additional large parcels have obtained rezoning to CAC. Located in the central area of the Route 1 Corridor north of MD 175, both projects are large sites that will be phased

over several years. By September 2007 almost half of land in the CAC district was in the development review process, representing almost 180 acres, with more than 1.1 million square feet of commercial development and 3,675 dwelling units. Almost 70% of the residential units and 51% of the commercial square footage in process in the Route 1 corridor is in the CAC district.

Transit Oriented Development Districts (TOD)

In August 2006, the state announced a proposal by Petrie-Ross Ventures to develop a 15-acre site at the Savage MARC Station. This property is the county's first TOD proposal. Petrie-Ross's \$175 million development conceptual program proposes one 152-room hotel, a 9,200 square foot restaurant, 20,964 square feet of retail use, 78,000 square feet of office space, 416 apartment units and a five-level parking garage that includes 1,000 spaces for MARC commuters.

Corridor Employment Districts (CE)

The county has not seen any significant proposals using the CE district, which has the largest acreage of any of the new districts. Only 41 of the more than 1,000 acres of CE zoned land is in the development review process, representing less than 70,000 square feet of commercial development. Much of the land in the district is already developed, although some of it is underutilized and holds the potential for future redevelopment. Developers have told the Department of Planning and Zoning that the market is not yet ready to build the multistory office buildings that have been encouraged in the prime areas along the corridor zoned for this use.

Other Corridor Development Districts

Economic development activity has occurred in locations other than the new corridor zoning districts. Of the 2.2 million square feet of commercial development currently in process in the corridor, almost 900,000 square feet are located outside the three new districts. Three recently-approved large projects outside the CAC, TOD and CE districts have been:

On Route 1 north of Whiskey Bottom Road, Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream has built what is claimed to be the world's largest ice cream plant, and expansion to the former Nestle Ice Cream plant. Because of the hundreds of new jobs that were created by this facility, both the state and the county contributed economic development incentives to Dreyer's development. Roadway and streetscape improvements were made as part of the construction process.

Several large warehouse and office building have been approved for the Patapsco Valley Business Park in Elkridge, a traditional M-1, Light Manufacturing district. The market for such uses continues to be strong in the corridor.

Atlantic Realty has renovated the long vacant, former Burlington Coat Factory building at US 1/ MD 175. The new development, called Columbia East Marketplace, has commercial condominiums for sale or lease for retail and service uses. Because of its prominent location on the Route 1 corridor at the Jessup gateway, the renovation of this

property will have a major visual impact on the corridor. The developers installed a much-needed sidewalk along the property frontage. The county subsequently extended the sidewalk to connect to an adjacent fast food restaurant, a popular destination near the busy US1 / MD 175 intersection.

Development Proposals – Achievements and Concerns

As the county accepted plans for development in the corridor we noted several outcomes, some positive, some of concern:

Mix of Uses

The CAC district was an immediate success. About half the land zoned CAC is now in the development review process. One of the first projects to break ground was a public-private partnership to build affordable housing. In general, our affordable housing goals were being met through this new infusion of new housing in the corridor. We did not realize how great an incentive we were providing when we allowed a gross residential density of 25 dwelling units/acre. Our original vision was for mixed use, with ground floor retail and upper floors a combination of residential and office uses. We had not legislated any particular mix of residential and office uses, except to require 300 square feet of retail per dwelling unit. The multistory office market was weak in the corridor; single story flex office / industrial was still a strong market segment. Retail demand was somewhat limited, especially for small, neighborhood-oriented ground floor retail. Most of the initial proposals we received were for four and five story apartment projects with minimal ground floor retail. Most small projects (10 acres and less) asked for and received permission to reduce the ratio to 200 square feet per unit, which the Department of Planning and Zoning could approve under a provision of the zoning regulations. One of the projects included a hotel as a commercial component, but only the larger projects, 40 acres and larger, included any significant office component.

Scale of Projects

In the 2003/2004 Comprehensive Zoning, we proposed to rezone almost 1,600 acres to the three new districts. During the subsequent round of rezonings that included piecemeal zoning requests, more than 150 additional acres were rezoned to CAC. The “carrot” that attracted developers to the new district was the 25 du/ac residential density.

The CAC was envisioned as a small neighborhood-oriented, pedestrian-scaled concentration of shops, offices and homes. The zoning requirements and design guidelines that were established with smaller projects in mind caused concern when applied to larger properties. In particular, we found that the open space and amenity requirements were far too low compared to the requirements or other county zoning districts. The CAC and the TOD require 10% of the net site area to be pedestrian amenity areas, while other residential districts require a minimum of 25% of the gross area be open space. The Department is now considering amendments to both the zoning text and Route 1 Manual to adjust the open space and amenity area requirements.

Project Design

The Route 1 Revitalization Reports and the Route 1 Manual depicted the new districts with a New Urbanist flavor: buildings oriented to the street, with minimum setback; roads

forming grid patterns for a logical and cohesive development layout; formal open spaces punctuating the development, serving as community focal points; and attractive, well-articulated architecture with lively ground floor pedestrian orientation. Luckily, the projects being proposed were very much in keeping with the flavor we were seeking. (Figure 8, Proposed Savage MARC TOD.) Both the department and leaders in the development community had endorsed the idea of a design review panel for Route 1 as a means to elevate the design of projects along the corridor. Architectural review was a new element for Howard County, one that had not been part of the staff review process. The consensus seemed to support the establishment of such a panel. Proposed legislation to create the Design Advisory Panel (DAP) was drafted as were procedure guidelines and an application. This legislation was deferred as other planning initiatives moved up in the work program and as discussions continued as to what other areas of the county might also qualify for and benefit from professional design review. The legislative proposal, which will need County Council approval, is currently being reviewed by the Planning Board. With half the CAC land and one-third of the TOD projects now well along in the review or development process, the opportunity for a DAP to influence the development along the corridor is somewhat lessened.

Affordable Housing

The corridor has always been home to some of the county's most affordable housing. Because undeveloped land is scarce, housing is expensive in Howard County and the corridor is seeing its first influx of \$350,000 to \$750,000 homes. To ensure housing price diversity, the Corridor Activity Center (CAC) and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) require 15% MIHU. When the owners of the Aladdin Mobile Home Park petitioned for rezoning to CAC, the Planning Board recommended and the County Council approved the rezoning, but in response to their concern about the loss of 241 units, at capacity, of affordable housing, the Council amended the zoning regulations to require 25% of the residential development to be affordable for those developments that close an existing mobile home park.

Implementation: Transportation and Streetscape Improvements

Both the county and the state are doing minor roadway and streetscape improvements while more comprehensive transportation interventions are being planned.

Roadway Improvements

Because it is a state highway, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) is responsible for traffic operations and the roadway of Route 1. In recent years, they have installed improvements to the right-of-way that support the vision of the revitalized Route 1 corridor. For example, SHA added a traffic signal at Troy Hill Drive, the entrance to an industrial park. SHA also added pedestrian signals at Levering Avenue and at Loudon Avenue to aid pedestrians crossing Route 1. To improve safety at the Whiskey Bottom intersection, SHA regraded the intersection.

In 2006, the Maryland State Highway Administration completed their \$2.3 million project of redecking the bridge over the Patuxent River. The new deck replicated the

bridge's original 1949 design, including the ornamental railings. By using this design, the bridge reinforces the historic character of the roadway.

The county also implements roadway improvements. Dorsey Run Road is a county road parallel to and east of Route 1 that we hope will reduce truck traffic along Route 1. The road has heavy industrial and warehouse uses along its frontage. The extension of Dorsey Run Road from MD 175 to MD 103 was started this earlier this year.

Transit Improvements

Fixed route Howard Transit local bus service was expanded into the US 1 corridor, including Elkridge, Jessup and North Laurel. The purple route which serves the corridor from Elkridge south to Laurel was begun in 2004 and has seen a 9.8% increase in ridership over the last year. Once the effects of BRAC and other Fort Meade job growth are apparent, Howard Transit expects the need for new service areas and adjustments for changes in ridership will be addressed.

The county installed two bus shelters as part of the Whiskey Bottom intersection improvements mentioned above. The distinctive red shelter was selected to echo the industrial design and bold color of the historic Bollman Truss Bridge in Savage. (Figure 9, Bus Shelter.)

Streetscape Improvements

The state and the county have engaged in several minor streetscape improvement projects along Route 1. To date, these sidewalk, signage and planting streetscape projects have been selected based on safety needs, funding opportunities and community requests.

Sidewalks and Pedestrian Crossings

Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), District 7, constructed a sidewalk on southbound Route 1, south of Whiskey Bottom Road as part of SHA's nearby intersection improvement project. SHA added a pedestrian crossing signal at US 1 and Levering Avenue in Lower Elkridge in 2006. Because of the nearby Patapsco State Park's bike trails, pedestrians and bicyclists needed a safe crossing of US 1 at this location.

The Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning and Department of Public Works have collaborated on several sidewalk projects to date. The largest was the installation of more than half a mile of sidewalks and crosswalks along the west side of US 1 at the Gorman Road area, in the vicinity of Carmax and the Lincoln Center.

The Department of Planning and Zoning prepared a draft county-wide 2007 Pedestrian Master Plan that makes recommendations on the need for pedestrian systems within specific areas of the county. Pedestrian facilities along state roads, such as Routes 1 and 40, should be considered as high priorities. This plan is expected to guide selection of future sidewalk capital projects. However, comprehensive planning for streetscape improvements is needed, rather than the patchwork approach which has been used to date. Incremental improvements by the state and the county are not always well-

coordinated with the sidewalk and street tree improvements made by the private sector when properties are developed or redeveloped along the corridor. This issue is discussed further in the SHA Corridor Improvement Strategy section, below.

Community Gateway Signs

Four community gateway signs have been installed along the Route 1 roadway in North Laurel, Savage, Jessup and Elkridge. In June 2004, the county hosted an unveiling ceremony to celebrate the first community gateway sign. Federal, state and local elected officials joined community members for the event. The signs are distinctive with their Howard County logo, red letters identifying the locale and cast concrete pattern inspired by the stone construction of the corridor's historic Thomas Viaduct. (Figure 10, Community Gateway Sign.) Maintenance of the signs is a partnership between the Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation and Parks and local civic associations.

Interchange Planting Program

Dedicated volunteers and local Boy Scouts took part in tree planting programs at the Route 32 and Route 100 interchanges with US 1. The 2003 and 2004 events were coordinated by the Maryland State Highway Administration's (SHA) Partnership Planting Program and by the Department of Planning and Zoning. The volunteers planted approximately 50 trees in each location. Before and after planting, the participants enjoyed refreshments donated by area restaurants and food providers. These trees helped beautify the interchange, adding interest to the open expanse of the cloverleaf. Because these interchanges function as major gateways to the corridor, the beautification through tree planting is an important step in reaching the goal of improving the appearance of the Route 1 corridor.

Blossoms of Hope

The Blossoms of Hope program, started by Howard County Tourism, Inc. in cooperation with county government, allows individuals to sponsor a cherry tree planted on public land. Donated funds are reserved for the Howard County General Hospital's Claudia Mayer Cancer Resource and Image Center. The county and state have planted cherry trees along the corridor in support of this program. The Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) planted a grove of cherry trees in front of the Elkridge Library located on Route 1. DRP also planted Blossoms of Hope cherry trees at the Cedar Villa Heights Park and gave the old park entrance sign a "facelift" at the request of the Cedar Villa Heights community. As part of an SHA commitment to planting cherry trees in Howard County's state rights-of-way, SHA has planted more than 125 *Blossoms of Hope* in the Route 1 corridor.

State Highway Administration Corridor Enhancement Strategy

In 2005, using federal funding, the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) in partnership with Howard County's Department of Planning and Zoning began the US 1 Corridor Improvement Strategy project. This strategy's goal, as stated in the SHA's consultant's, Kittelson and Associates, Inc., Reconnaissance Survey (Kittelson, 2006), is to guide new policies and standards to enable the county and the state develop

transportation infrastructure and “to plan for, and make the best of, long-term private investment” in the corridor. The strategy provides a recommended approach for accommodating existing and future traffic while it also considers the aesthetics of the roadway and the need and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists, especially in the Corridor Activity Centers and other nodes of community activity. Finally, the strategy defines a range of actions to be taken by developers, the county and the state “to organize, phase and focus change”.

The SHA’s consultant works with a citizen’s advisory committee of 23 members who are business people or residents of the corridor. The consultant held a public open house meeting in 2006 attended by more than 60 people. In 2007, a public meeting held in two locations attracted 150 people.

The strategy’s findings, as stated in the Reconnaissance Survey (Kittelson, 2006), are consistent with the findings in the county’s corridor studies: the corridor lacks a “cohesive sense of place” due to a mix of land uses and the several highways, environmental features and large development parcels that divide the study area into distinct pockets of development. The strategy also notes that, although adequate capacity exists for the existing traffic on US 1, many intersections are approaching capacity, most notably the US 1/MD 175 intersection, where grade separation may be an option. The strategy found that “pedestrian and bicycle facilities are intermittent along US 1 and throughout the study area” and that “pedestrian-scale connections between uses are typically lacking in neighborhoods”.

The US 1 roadway, because it is a state road, must satisfy traffic operations needs as determined by SHA. For that reason, SHA recommends increasing the roadway to six lanes with a median. This recommendation is contrary to the direction taken to date by the county’s revitalization study which prefers four lanes with median for a more “main street” character to the corridor. Howard County expects to revise the design requirements of the Route 1 Manual to reflect the new direction of the US 1 roadway design. With SHA’s cooperation and support for changing the existing character of the streetscape along US 1, the SHA consultant’s strategy will act as a guide for the county to achieve the desired character for the corridor.

The rapid pace of development in the CAC districts which began after the zoning was adopted in 2004 and the new, recent design direction from SHA and its consultant creates, at the moment, a certain level of uncertainty in the application of design requirements along US 1. Because some developments will be constructed according to the existing regulations while later developments are expected to follow the new regulations which are still being crafted, the hodge-podge of design along the US 1 roadway will continue for the foreseeable future. However, once the regulations governing the US 1 roadway and its edges are in place, the county can expect to slowly achieve a greater sense of order in the corridor.

Lessons Learned

Howard County's Route 1 corridor revitalization process formally began about seven years ago. The planning process and the implementation process are still ongoing. The results are piecemeal, as might be expected in an 11-mile long corridor. Land use change has begun as a result of the county's zoning and growth management policies, and because the private sector has willingly invested in the corridor. Comprehensive infrastructure improvements are lagging behind, however. We hope that SHA's Corridor Enhancement Study will guide the state and county to acquire the needed right-of-way, then make the substantial roadway improvements outlined in the draft Issues, Opportunities and Strategies report.

As we look back on the process to date, what have we learned from the Route 1 corridor revitalization process?

- **Be sure that you have political support.** With the elected officials' endorsements and the resulting sense of a common mission, we experienced more cooperation from our partners in county and state government. Political will pulls the various agencies of government together and gives a feeling of empowerment to the citizens groups involved. County, state and federal elected officials all demonstrated their support, attended events and, wherever possible, contributed what funding they could.
- **Make everyone a part of the process.** We sought broad-based community support at each step in the process. Citizen participation in workshops and task forces has always been strong. We keep all interested parties involved through well publicized, professional-led events, web updates and newsletters. Our 2003/2004 Comprehensive Zoning was a long, often difficult and controversial process – everywhere but in the Route 1 corridor. Because everyone was aware of what we were doing, there were no surprises and our rezoning sailed through with minimal opposition.
- **Revitalizing a corridor is a long incremental process.** It took a long time for the corridor to get to its current state and it will be a long process to transform it. It will take lots of time, lots of money, lots of cooperation from the state (who owns the right-of-way) and from other county departments, and it will take full-time dedicated staff to follow through. Most projects currently in the development review process are larger vacant sites where substantial density increases were granted under new zoning. It may take considerable time before we see proposals for properties that will require substantial redevelopment and for smaller properties where parcel consolidation will be needed for effective land use.
- **Don't wait until planning is complete to start implementation.** You can't wait years to show results of a study. You must show the community and business interests that you are serious. Choose several short-term issues that everyone agrees on and start implementing them while you are still planning.
- **You can't figure it all out at the beginning.** Development of the corridor is occurring faster than we had expected. We didn't expect the first major changes to be the closing of several mobile home parks to make way for redevelopment. We had to scramble to do relocation planning. We will have had to modify our zoning

- regulations and design manual standards to reflect market realities and to correct some of the bulk regulations that need adjustment.
- **Never doubt that you can make a difference.** You must believe in what you are doing and spread that belief. We were grateful to have learned from other jurisdictions that started the process long before we did. We believe it is important to share what you have learned and celebrate your successes. Maryland's Smart Growth program and Howard County's Route 1 corridor revitalization program are examples of planning successes, although at different scales, that are well-worth celebrating.

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1. Regional Location Map



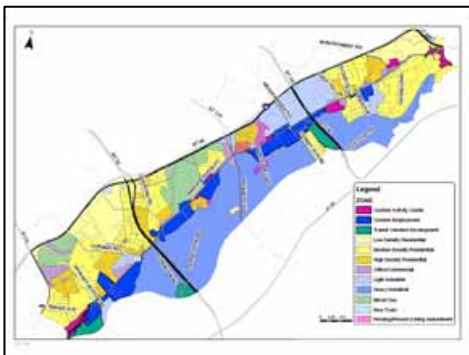
2. Pedestrian Walking on Roadway Shoulder



3. North Laurel Visualization



4. Elected Officials at Project Initiation



5. Generalized Zoning Map



8. Proposed Savage MARC TOD



9. Bus Shelter



10. Community Gateway Sign