



# MONTGOMERY PLANNING WORKING DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

The small town of Ashton, Maryland, is rich with beautiful landscapes and history. Its village center is located at the well-traveled crossroads of MD 108 and MD 650, which provide access from Northern Montgomery County to Howard and Baltimore Counties.

A pending Sector Plan makes recommendations for 127 acres around this important intersection. The recommendations were based on community feedback to create a village center with opportunities for residents to connect, to enhance green spaces for gathering, to develop a more complete path system for biking and walking, and to improve safety.

All residents are invited to review the recommendations and take part in this ongoing planning for the future of Ashton!

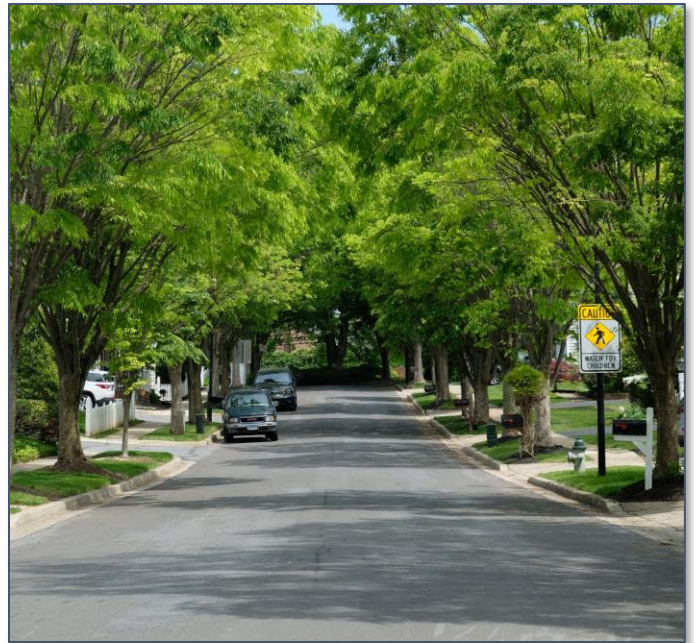
## PLANNING ASHTON'S FUTURE

Ashton's village center is envisioned as compact, low-rise, walkable and bikeable with a mix of land uses. Several key goal areas are reflected in the specific recommendations developed in the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan. They include:

- Preserve the rural character of Ashton supported by clusters of development in the village center.
- Transition from a vehicle-centric commercial crossroads into a viable, vibrant, rural village center with a variety of travel options.
- Prioritize walkability and bikeability while ensuring the adequacy of major transportation routes.
- Highlight the area's rich history, especially the Underground Railroad and Quaker Cluster of the Montgomery County Heritage Area.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

General summaries of the Plan's recommendations for the area as a whole are listed by category in this summary and available in detail in the Sector Plan.



### LAND AND BUILDINGS

The recommendations for land use and zoning aim to enhance the Plan's three distinct neighborhoods: the Village Core, as the vibrant, walkable center; the Residential Edge, as the residential transition from the village to the rural areas; and the Rural Buffer, an area providing the distinctly rural feel as one enters Ashton from surrounding towns:

- Preserve the village's rural character by encouraging a modest increase in residential density to promote sustainable and affordable growth that will invite young families to continue to move to the area.

### COMMUNITY DESIGN

Recommendations for building design standards aim to provide visual interest, engage the public and ensure that new projects enhance rather than detract from the historic village feel:

- Encourage variety and spacing of residential buildings. Space new buildings in the Village Core close to each other and the street to convey a village feel. Emphasize design elements like pitched roofs, varying rooflines and other architectural embellishments.
- Locate commercial uses near the main intersection of MD 108/650, framing the main streets.



## CONNECTIVITY

Connectivity recommendations focus on keeping transportation at an appropriate village scale and safe for all users, not just those in motor vehicles:

- Minimize the addition of road pavement except for necessary safety improvements. Manage traffic capacity without widening roads.
- Improve walkability and bikeability with signalized crossings, sidepaths and sidewalks. Limit driveways to prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists over vehicles.
- Expand bus service and routes and add a bus shelter.

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE

Ensuring access to quality open spaces for current and future residents to relax, gather or recreate together was identified as a need and is reflected in the recommendations:

- Create open spaces for social gathering, play and active recreation with amenities such as picnic areas, playgrounds, community gardens and dog parks.
- Make common areas more accessible and usable to the public. Consider the addition of public greens.
- Use open spaces to protect the area’s hallmark shade trees. Limit the use of fencing on open spaces unless necessary for safety.
- Add and extend trails to improve walking and biking options, including one at Sherwood High School to connect the village center to Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park.

## ENVIRONMENT

Environmental recommendations aim at protecting the soil and water in the vital Lower Patuxent River watershed and Hawlings River watershed areas:

- Protect water quality by retaining low-density development zoning in the Rural Buffer.
- Preserve water and soil and manage heat by creating shade via building and site design elements including landscaping with large canopy trees, using awnings and orienting buildings to cast shade on public or outdoor gathering spaces.
- Promote existing tree programs such as Shades of Green to increase shade and canopy coverage on private properties.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Only a few historic structures remain in the Plan area so preservation recommendations aim to protect and draw attention to the important history of the area:

- Use signage to encourage connection to the community’s deep Quaker and African American heritage and places in that history.
- Seek opportunities to commemorate Ashton’s origins as a rural commercial crossroads and home to free black settlers.

## TIMELINE

Residents are invited and encouraged to take part in the next steps in the planning process:

- April 16, 2020 ● Preliminary Recommendations presented to the Planning Board
- July 23, 2020 ● Working Draft presented to the Planning Board
- Sept. 10, 2020 ● Planning Board Public Hearing\*
- Fall 2020 ● Planning Board Work Sessions\*
- Dec. 2020 ● Plan sent to County Council\*

\* tentative date

## CONTACT THE STAFF

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