

ESSCP Preliminary Recommendations Glossary

Accessibility

People with a disability are afforded the opportunity to acquire information, engage in interactions, and enjoy services in a similar amount of time and effort as people without a disability;

The number of places – shops, jobs, recreation, etc. – a person can get to in a given amount of time. Accessibility can be increased by improving mobility and/or land use proximity.

Activation (of a public space)

Public spaces can be activated through physical interventions, such as different amenities, public art, building placement and size and landscaping.

ADA Accessibility Standards

Accessibility standards issued under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) that apply to places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government facilities in new construction, alterations, and additions.

Adaptive reuse

The process of reusing an existing building or structure for a purpose other than that for which it was originally built or designed.

Affordable housing

Housing that is either built under a government regulation or a binding agreement that requires the unit to be affordable to households at or below specified income levels.

Deeply affordable housing

Housing units affordable to households earning at or below 50% of the area median income.

Market-rate affordable housing

Market-rate residential units that are affordable to low and middle-income households without public subsidies. It generally refers to rental housing but can include ownership properties as well. In Montgomery County, it generally refers to units affordable to households at or below 80% of AMI.

Albedo

The fraction of solar light that a surface reflects by the sun. If all light is reflected, it's 100% or equal to 1.0 . If 30% is reflected, the albedo is 0.3.

Amenities

Public or privately provided facilities within a development that enhance public enjoyment. Amenities can include physical enhancements to public and private spaces that make those spaces more inviting to the general public. These enhancements can include specialty paving, lighting, landscaping and artwork, as well as financial contributions toward any of these elements.

Area median income (AMI)

The midpoint of a specific region's income distribution, calculated annually by the Department of Housing and Urban Development based on American Community Survey data. It determines income eligibility for affordable housing programs (e.g., 30%, 50%, 80% AMI). These figures are adjusted for household size and, in some cases, high housing costs.

Area Connector

Area Connectors are primarily residential through streets that tend to serve a moderate amount of traffic volume. These streets may have longer or comparable block lengths and often serve longer-distance travel compared to Neighborhood Connectors.

Bike Lanes

Conventional Bike Lanes

Portions of the street that have been designated by striping, signage, and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

Buffered Bike Lanes

Conventional bike lanes paired with a designated buffer space separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane and/or parking lane to increase the comfort of bicyclists.

Biophilic design

The practice of designing the built environment with a focus on connecting with nature.

Bird-safe design

Designing structures and landscapes to minimize features that cause bird mortality and incorporating materials that actively deter collisions with glass.

Breezeways

Type of bikeway aimed to provide the highest level of comfort, convenience, safety and efficiency for bicyclists of all ages and abilities. The Breezeway Network prioritizes higher speed bicycle travel between major activity centers, including central business districts, transit stations, and job centers.

Business incubator

Business incubators provide various resources and services to startup businesses in their very early stages; including but not limited to support in accessing funding sources, physical workspaces, legal/regulatory advising, and networking.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

A high-quality and high-capacity bus-based transit system that delivers fast, comfortable, reliable, and cost-effective transit service. This may include elements such as: dedicated lanes for buses, off-board fare collection systems and advanced transit information systems.

Capital Bikeshare

Bike sharing program in the DC metro region where participants access a bicycle using a key fob or credit card and can return bicycles to any station in the network.

Capital improvement projects (CIP)

A six-year comprehensive statement of the objectives with cost estimates and proposed construction schedules for capital projects and programs for all agencies for which the county sets tax rates or approves budgets or programs. Examples include the construction of public schools, street maintenance, and parks improvements.

Carbon sequestration

The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide. It is usually synonymous with Carbon Drawdown and Carbon Removal.

Channelized lanes

Channelized right turn lanes (often called slip lanes) are designed to encourage the uncontrolled flow of right turns at fast speeds.

Channel sinuosity

Sinuosity is a measure of how much a body of water meanders or bends.

Civic Green

This park type is under the urban parks category for Parks Classification (2022 PROS Plan Appendices) and is designed to be formally planned, flexible, and programmed open spaces that serve as places for informal gathering, quiet contemplation, or large special events. (See Energized Public Spaces Design Guidelines for more details on key design elements of this park type.)

Climate adaptation

The capability of people, systems, and assets to cope with a climate hazard.

Climate resiliency

The ability of a system to absorb and recover from climate-induced impacts. Taking this approach helps mitigate and prepare for climate change.

Co-location

Locating more than one public facility in one place, but also could include a private facility such as affordable housing. For example, locating a library and a park on the same property or next to each other.

Community-serving institutions

Public or private institutions that include important community uses, such as places of worship, libraries, community centers, recreation centers, nonprofit organizations, food distributions, meetings spaces and/or service centers.

Commercial land trust (CLT)

A non-profit organization that acquires land and maintains ownership of it permanently. The organization enters a long-term, renewable lease with prospective business owners instead of a traditional sale. When the property is sold, the business owners earns only a portion of the increased property value. The remainder is kept by the organization, preserving the affordability for future businesses.

Commercial/Residential zones (CR zones)

A family of mixed-use zoning that can include both commercial and residential uses at varying densities and heights. The CR family of zones includes Commercial Residential Neighborhood (CRN), Commercial Residential Town (CRT), and Commercial Residential (CR) zones. The zones promote economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable development patterns where people can live, work, recreate, and access services and amenities.

Community Equity Index (CEI)

A composite measure of equity-related indicators that helps users understand socio-economic conditions that drive advantage and disadvantage across the county. It measures the extent to which individual neighborhoods are representative of the socio-economic diversity of the county.

Conservation parks

Large natural areas acquired to preserve specific natural archaeological, and/or historic features. These parks also provide opportunities for compatible recreational activities.

Corridors

The area paralleling a major transportation facility, such as a highway, boulevard, or transitway.

Cottage courts

Small groupings of housing around a shared public space.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles

An approach to problem-solving that considers environmental conditions and the opportunities they offer for crime or other unintended and undesirable behaviors.

Curb extensions

Curb extensions extend a section of sidewalk into the roadway at intersections and other crossing locations to shorten crossing distances and increase pedestrian comfort and visibility. Also called bulb outs or neck downs.

Density

A measure of the amount of development on a property. Density is often expressed as the number of residential units per acre of land (or another unit of measure), or the total amount of residential or commercial square footage on a property. When expressed as the ratio of residential or commercial square footage to square footage of lot area, it is called Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

Duplex

A residential structure that typically resembles a single housing unit but contains two dwelling units. It can be arranged as two units next to each other sharing a common wall, or one unit above the other.

Equity

Fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people.

“Eyes on the street”

*The concept of public safety created through the natural surveillance of an area by the residents and users of that area. The idea that the presence of people in a public space deters crime. The concept is attributed to urbanist Jane Jacobs and discussed in the book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961.*

Façade

The front of a building. Typically, the primary side facing onto a public space such as a street or park.

Fenestration

The arrangement, proportioning, and design of windows and doors in a building.

Food forest

Food forests support forest ecosystems and connect communities with nature. Trees of different sizes produce nuts and fruit, while their shade can support a variety of fresh, flavorful mushrooms, herbs, and berries.

Floodplains

The flat area adjacent to the channel constructed by the stream and overflowed by the stream at a recurrence interval of about two years or less. Forest Conservation Easement

A grant or reservation by the owner of land for the use of all or a portion of the land to others, including the public, to protect existing forest or newly planted forest on properties under development.

Frontages

A property line shared with an existing or master-planned public or private road, street, highway, or alley right-of way, open space, or easement boundary.

Front-loaded driveways or garages

A building in which the driveway or garage door faces the street, and vehicles access the property directly from the street instead of an alley.

Grading

The process of moving soil within a site by leveling or shaping the ground elevation or slopes to prepare for construction.

Green cover

The integration of vegetation into the landscape to minimize local temperatures, enhance greenhouse gas sequestration, encourage groundwater recharge, and increase plant and animal biodiversity. Green cover may include forests, trees, gardens, vegetated parks, greenways, habitat corridors, street trees, and green roofs.

Green infrastructure

Similar to Green Cover, Green infrastructure refers to a network of natural and designed landscape features that manage stormwater and provide environmental and community benefits. Common examples include rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavements, stormwater harvesting, and bioswales. These systems help treat stormwater, reduce flood risk, improve water quality, and create more beautiful and resilient communities, as they are often more cost-effective and provide more benefits than traditional "gray infrastructure" like pipes and treatment plants. Growth Corridors

Major roads in the county that are recommended by [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#) to accommodate most new growth.

Headwaters

The upper reaches of a stream near its source or the region where groundwater emerges to the surface to form a surface stream.

Heat island effect

Urbanized areas that experience higher temperatures than outlying areas. Structures such as buildings, roads, and other infrastructure absorb and re-emit the sun's heat more than natural landscapes such as forests and bodies of water.

HAWK (high-intensity activated crosswalk) signal

System of flashing lights to highlight when a pedestrian crossing is in use. It is designed to help pedestrians cross busy or higher-speed streets at midblock crossings and uncontrolled intersections.

High injury network (HIN) corridors

Roads in Montgomery County's Vision Zero Action Plan with four or more severe or fatal collisions between 2015 and 2019. (Montgomery Planning Glossary)

Housing Opportunity Commission (HOC)

HOC is the county's designated Public Housing Authority, operating also as a Housing Finance Agency and public developer for the county. HOC develops housing, provides mortgage financing to developers and first-time homebuyers, manages various rental

units, administers rental subsidy programs (including the Housing Choice Voucher Program) and provides counseling and support services.

Impervious surface

Any surface that prevents or significantly impedes the infiltration of water into the underlying soil, including any structure, building, patio, road, sidewalk, driveway, parking surface, compacted gravel, pavement, asphalt, concrete, stone, brick, tile, swimming pool, or artificial turf.

Infill development

Development that takes place on vacant or underutilized parcels within an area that is already developed and has access to existing urban services.

Incentive zoning

Incentive zoning is an established and time-tested mechanism within zoning that generally permits developers to receive benefits to their project in exchange for benefits to the community.

Ladder crosswalks

A type of high-visibility marked crosswalk that uses pavement markings that are both parallel and perpendicular to the motor vehicle path of travel.

Leading pedestrian intervals (LPI)

An approach to traffic signalization that provides pedestrians a head start to enter the intersection.

Legacy (/international) business marketing programs

Programs that provide a way to incentivize the preservation of local businesses that meet specific criteria. These criteria are related to each business's tenure and support small, independently owned businesses that provide a particular community value.

Massing

The relationship of a building's various parts to each other. Architectural elements such as windows, doors and roofs as well as interior floor plans can affect building mass. Massing is important because it is one of several details that determine the visual interest of a building, the perception of the building's volume and how it blends with its surroundings.

Micro-retail/ Micro-business

Retail businesses that can benefit from smaller-than-usual spaces because they are startups or have minimal space or facility requirements. Micro-retail spaces can be market-hall-style spaces, shared spaces, or small stand-alone outlets.

Mixed-use

A development that typically contains residential and commercial uses in the same building or within a small area. For example, a residential building with ground floor retail is a typical mixed-use development.

Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs)

A Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU) is a home offered at below-market prices so households earning roughly 65% to 70% of area median income (AMI) can afford to live in Montgomery County. MPDUs are created through the County's inclusionary zoning program, which requires new housing developments to provide a share of affordable units.

In developments with 20 or more units, builders must set aside 12.5% to 15% of homes as MPDUs, affordable up to 65% AMI in garden-style buildings and 70% AMI in high-rise buildings. Developments with 11 to 19 units don't have to include MPDUs but must instead contribute to the Housing Initiatives Fund (HIF), which supports affordable housing across the County.

Multi-modal

Of and relating to multiple travel modes, such as walking, bicycling, using transit, and motor vehicles.

Multiplexes

A multiplex is a residential building with two, three, or four units – also called a duplex, triplex, or quadplex.

Neighborhood connector roads

Neighborhood Connectors are residential through streets. While the land uses are predominately medium- or low-intensity residential development, some businesses may be present.

Neighborhood green

This park type is under the urban parks category for Parks Classification (2022 PROS Plan Appendices) and is designed to be formally planned, yet flexible to serve informal gatherings, lunchtime relaxation, or small special event gatherings. (see Energized

Public Spaces Design Guidelines for more details on key design elements of this park type)

Neighborhood park

These parks are generally walk-to parks, providing informal leisure opportunities and recreation serving residents and workers. Existing neighborhood parks typically provide about five acres of open space developed with a sitting area, playground, informal play field, and sport courts. These parks provide a flexible space that supports social connections, physical activities and access to nature serving mostly local residents and nearby workers. (Montgomery County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan)

Node

An area where activity is concentrated, often around transit stops, major intersections or community destinations. Nodes typically include a mix of uses—such as housing, shops, services, and public spaces—and are designed to be easy to reach by walking, biking, and transit.

On-road trail connections

Stretches of park trails where the trail cannot be accommodated on parkland and must be routed along the public right-of-way, such as side paths, sidewalks, separated bike lanes, neighborhood greenways, etc.

Overlay zone

Overlay zones are mapped zones that provide requirements and standards in addition to those of the underlying zone that are necessary to achieve the planning goals and objectives for development or redevelopment of an area. Overlay zones are created in areas of critical public interest and provide uniform comprehensive development regulations for an area.

Paper Street

A dedicated public right of way for a road or street that has not been built.

Park

Publicly-owned parkland owned, operated and managed by M-NCPPC.

Parcel

A contiguous area of land described only in a deed recorded in the land records and not included on a record plat.

Parking corrals

An on-street location where bicycles, scooters, and other similar devices can be securely parked.

Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

PILOTs allow local governments, when authorized by state law, to receive negotiated payments instead of applicable real estate and special district taxes for a certain period of time. The intent is to help lower the cost of development in return for a commitment from a developer to provide a public benefit such as affordable housing to low-income residents.

Pedestrian internal circulation

A network of sidewalks or paths within a site development that allow for people to move safely and comfortably, connecting building entrances, open spaces and amenities.

Pedestrian-scale lighting

Lighting that ensures the pedestrian realm, including sidewalks, is well-lit.

Pedestrian refuge islands

Traffic median that is greater than or equal to six feet that provides a place to safely stand between directions of traffic and allows pedestrians to negotiate crossing only one direction of traffic at a time.

Permeable pavements

Pavements made of materials with the ability to permit the movement of water through them.

Placemaking

The act of improving a common space to make it welcoming and attractive, so it better serves the needs of the people who use it.

Place-management organization

Entity that coordinates and implements maintenance and improvement activities within a defined geographical area (often a business district or corridor) on behalf of property owners, business owners, and tenants within the area. Place management activities generally benefit multiple or all stakeholders within the district as complements to improvements made by individual property owners and businesses.

Plan Area

Specific area being addressed in a Master Plan. This is determined at the Scope of Work by the Planning Board.

Points of interest

Locations that offer activities to do such as play, eat, shop, learn, exercise, gather, etc.

Predevelopment loans

Short-term financing tools that pay for the upfront “soft costs” of a development project before construction begins. These costs could include architectural and engineering plans, legal fees, site assessments, and applications for funding. Because these expenses occur before any revenue is generated, they can be hard to finance, especially for nonprofit developers. Predevelopment loans help bridge this gap, making it possible to complete feasibility and planning work. They are widely used in affordable housing development to reduce risk and keep projects moving toward construction.

Priority Shared Lane Markings

Street markings that communicate bicyclist priority within a shared lane and guide bicyclists to ride outside of the door zone.

Privately owned public space (POPs)

Public space amenities that are often provided and maintained by a developer for public usage as part of their development requirements.

Protected crossings

Specific traffic control devices that improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and bicyclists crossing streets by reducing or eliminating conflicts, as well as increasing stopping and yielding for pedestrians and bicyclists, using measures such as traffic signals (full signals with pedestrian signals), pedestrian hybrid (HAWK) beacons, all-way stop control, or grade-separated crossings.

Purple Line

Future light rail service that will run from New Carrollton in Prince George’s County to Bethesda in Montgomery County.

Quadplex

A residential structure that contains four units.

Recreation

Recreation can be defined as active or passive. Active recreation is generally sports related and may be defined as activities that combine one or more of the following features: 1) formally organized teams and leagues, 2) require specialized sports equipment, or 3) are held at developed recreation sites, facilities, or fields. Passive

recreation is characterized by activities that are usually unstructured, require little use of physical facilities, and frequently involve interaction with natural resources.

Residential Parking Permit Areas (RPPA)

Parking permit program for local residents, created in an effort to provide relief for residents whose neighborhoods are impacted by certain public facilities, land uses and adjacent commercial districts.

Resiliency hubs

Resiliency hubs are community-serving facilities augmented to support residents and coordinate resource distribution and services before, during, or after a natural hazard event.

Right of first refusal (ROFR)

The County, the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), or any certified tenant organization (in that order) must be offered the opportunity to buy any multifamily rental housing development of 4 or more units before the owner sells to another party.

Right-of-way (Public Right-of-Way and Master Planned Right-of-Way)

The public right-of-way is a strip of land intended for travel by the public. A public right-of-way is occupied or intended to be occupied by a road, bikeway, sidewalk, path, or transit facility, as well as any ancillary facilities such as storm drains and stormwater management facilities. Public utilities such as electric transmission lines, telephone lines, cable TV lines, gas mains, water mains, and sanitary sewers may be permitted in the public right-of-way. A public right-of-way may be obtained by dedication as part of the development process or purchased in whole or in part by a public agency.

A master planned right-of way is the amount of land that a long-range master plan determines will be needed in the future to accommodate all modes of transportation—such as walking, biking, transit, and driving—based on projected community needs.

Safe Passage Zones

Designated routes or areas, typically near schools, where community members, volunteers, and local authorities collaborate to ensure students can travel safely to and from school. These zones aim to reduce crime, improve school attendance, and promote a sense of security through visibility, support, and conflict de-escalation. Locations are identified using crime and safety data, and staffed by trained “Safe Passage” personnel who walk with students, monitor transit points, and engage with the community to build trust and foster a safe environment. It can also be broadened to incorporate routes or areas traveled by other potentially vulnerable populations.

Safe Routes to School

Efforts by parents, schools, community leaders, and local, state, and federal governments to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school. A Safe Routes to School program can include encouragement, education, and engineering in service of this goal.

Screen

A visual barrier.

Separated Bikeway

A type of Bikeway that provides physical separation from traffic and include sidepaths and separated bike lanes.

Setback

The minimum distance that a structure or parking area must be located from a specified lot line or right-of-way.

Shared Road Bikeway

A type of Bikeway that shares space with automobiles. They include neighborhood greenways in suburban areas, shared streets in urban areas and priority shared lane markings where there is insufficient space for a dedicated bikeway.

Sidepath

A type of Separated Bikeway located parallel to and within the road right-of-way, providing two-way travel for walking, rolling, bicycling, jogging and skating. Also known as Shared Use Paths.

Signalized intersection

Intersections that provide various signals for traffic and pedestrians.

Solar canopy

A structure that is designed to harness solar energy by using photovoltaic panels mounted on top of it.

Solar energy

Electrical energy generated from solar radiation.

Active solar energy

Energy from systems that have devices to convert the sun's energy into a more usable form, such as hot water or electricity.

Passive solar energy

Energy from structures whose design, placement, or materials optimize the use of heat or light directly from the sun.

Solar Reflectance

Solar reflectance is the surface capability to reflect solar radiation back to the hemisphere where the solar source is located.

Stakeholders

A person or group who is involved in or affected by a course of action.

Stormwater management

The collection, conveyance, storage, treatment, and disposal of stormwater runoff to prevent accelerated channel erosion, increased flood damage, and degradation of water quality.

Street buffers

The space between the travel or curbside zones and the bikeway or sidewalk.

Streetscapes

The improvements within and adjoining a street right-of-way that influence our perception of streets. It includes the width of the roadway, street trees and landscaping, sidewalk/pavement, street lighting, and other street furniture.

Structured parking

An above-ground or below-ground parking garage.

Supportive housing

Permanent or temporary housing offered to people who have experienced homelessness along with social services.

Surface parking

An uncovered parking area that is at ground level, rather than above-ground or below-ground.

Sustainability

The practice of meeting the economic, social, and environmental needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future.

Technical assistance

Programs that can connect business owners to public and private programs that may be able to help with things such as, business planning, accounting, license application, marketing, and tax filing.

Third places

Places for informal social interaction outside of the home or workplace.

Traffic calming strategies

Physical changes to a street or roadway used to improve safety by decreasing traffic speed and/or volume and/or improving visibility. Methods of traffic calming include traffic circles, speed humps, and curb extensions.

Tree canopy

The layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that cover the ground when viewed from above and that can be measured as a percentage of a land area shaded by trees.

Triplex

A residential structure that contains three units.

Underutilized properties

A vacant property or one that is developed at an amount less than permitted by the applicable zoning controls.

Urban park

Urban parks are strategically located to allow access by walking and biking to and from public transit and other complementary land uses to support the goals of encouraging physical activity, facilitating social connection, accessing nature, and promoting economic prosperity. Some urban parks are the “heart and civic center” of urbanizing areas emphasizing social gatherings, while others provide complementary uses and functions emphasizing nature-contemplation or physical activity. Some parks located in larger urban areas, including Bethesda, Silver Spring, Friendship Heights, White Flint and Wheaton generally serve as destination parks.

Vision Zero

A strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.

Walkability

A term to describe the extent to which an area supports or encourages walking.

Wayfinding

Signs providing distance and direction to destinations.

Workforce housing

Housing reserved for middle-income households earning above MPDU limits (70% AMI) and up to 120% AMI in Montgomery County. In Montgomery County, Workforce Housing Units (WFHU) are priced or rented at controlled levels to serve households that do not qualify for MPDUs but still face affordability challenges. Income eligibility and price limits are set by the County to target moderate- to middle-income workers, as defined in the Workforce Housing Program regulations (Montgomery County Code, Chapter 25B).