

## **CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

The layout, design, and visual appearance of a community can have a profound impact on its quality of life and economic well-being. Centreville residents and visitors enjoy the community's small town appeal, attractive streetscapes, and historic architecture. Centreville exhibits a very real sense of place which is defined by its design and appearance. As the Town grows in the future, its most beneficial features should be preserved. New development should be designed and built to be complementary to the features that make Centreville a unique and pleasant place to live, work, and visit.

During the Citizen Advisory Committee meetings with the public in early 2006, a frequent theme of discussion was the value of the historic buildings and streetscapes in Centreville. Residents expressed consistent and positive favor toward the preservation of such areas and encouraged the use of design controls that reflect the historic attributes of the Town. Conversely, it was strongly felt that abandoned buildings and properties in disrepair were a visual and economic blight on the community and neighborhoods in which they are located, and on Centreville in general. Appendix B to this Community Plan contains a summary of comments made at the initial workshop in February of 2006.

### **Objectives**

As a means of encouraging good development design and preservation of community history, the following objectives are established:

1. Identify and preserve the Town's buildings and sites that have historical and/or architectural significance.
2. Ensure that infill development and redevelopment of sites located in close proximity to buildings with historical and/or architectural significance are accomplished in a manner that is compatible with and complementary to the historic and architectural character of the area.
3. Encourage the renovation and adaptive reuse of all structures that have historical and/or architectural significance. Make information available from the Town offices about tax credits that may be available for such work.
4. Encourage the physical and economic revitalization of the downtown business district through a coordinated program of streetscape and parking improvements designed to make the area more attractive and accessible for local shoppers and tourists.

5. Support the economically beneficial redevelopment of designated Redevelopment Areas as outlined in the Land Use Concept (Chapter 4) and ensure that the design of these areas is compatible with and complementary to the character of the Town.
6. Ensure that infill development and redevelopment in existing residential neighborhoods is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood in terms of density and general exterior appearance. In particular, ensure that single-family home conversions into apartments are accomplished in a manner that does not detract from the character and stability of the neighborhood.
7. Encourage home-based businesses and occupations while ensuring that these uses do not have adverse impacts on surrounding homes in terms of exterior appearance, traffic, noise, and other similar disturbances.
8. Encourage the rehabilitation of areas with deteriorating housing by assisting property owners to obtain available State grants and loans for housing improvements targeted to low- to moderate-income neighborhoods.
9. Ensure that the design of new residential neighborhoods is consistent with the recommendations contained in the Land Use Concept (Chapter 4) for areas designated as Town Growth Areas and Town Infill Areas.
10. Ensure that the design of new commercial/business development is consistent with the recommendations contained in the Land Use Concept.
11. Ensure that all areas of the Town and its Growth Area are eventually connected by a well-designed pedestrian pathway and sidewalk system as envisioned in Chapter 5.
12. The aesthetic quality of new development within the Town and its Growth Area should be of prime importance during the development review process. Development that does not generally conform to this Plan or is not deemed to add value to the community should not be encouraged.
13. Development designs and layouts which will result in disjointed residential subdivisions and typical highway strip commercial development should not be permitted. Links between these forms of development and the Central Business District (CBD) should be encouraged.
14. Scenic view corridors of open spaces and waterways from public streets should be preserved, wherever possible, through sensitive development design.

## Community Design Recommendations

Centreville's current Zoning Ordinance contains numerous provisions for the design of future development related to site planning, signs, parking, and bufferyard landscaping. These provisions are generally effective in the context of the existing Town zoning districts. Implementation of this Community Plan will entail revisions to the Zoning Ordinance, particularly to enact the recommended new zoning districts recommended in Chapter 4.

The following community design recommendations are general in nature and are meant to serve as a guide for:

- Future specific zoning regulation changes
- Future Growth Area developments
- Future public improvement policies

As has been stated earlier in this Community Plan, the future development of Growth Areas is intended to occur with the benefit of community facilities, such as public sewer and water. These new developments are meant to have an overall density of approximately 3.5 dwelling units per acre and utilize the design standards and zoning regulations adopted by the Town as a result of recommendations in this Plan. What is not intended is a direct replication of the Historic District of Centreville into the surrounding Growth Areas. This Plan proposes numerous new zoning districts, including TND (Traditional Neighborhood Development) and MUD (Mixed-Use Development) which will offer developers a variety of opportunities for innovative site design and the combining of uses where appropriate. Another common development pattern that is not intended to occur in the Growth Areas is large lot suburban sprawl that consumes inordinate amounts of land without the provision of open space, community character, and linkage to the core of Centreville.

Recommendations for community design:

1. The Town should continue to take advantage of its status as a ~~Revitalization~~ <sup>Revitalization</sup> Area as designated by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. Specific areas targeted by the Town are eligible for loan and grant assistance through programs such as:
  - a. Office and Commercial Space Conversion Initiative
  - b. Neighborhood Business Works Program
  - c. Sidewalk Retrofit Program
  - d. Job Creation Tax Credit Program
  - e. Capital and Non-Capital Historic Preservation Grant Program
  - f. Historic Communities Investment Fund

2. The Town should continue to investigate participation in the State's Brownfields program to encourage the redevelopment of sites that once housed industrial uses where contamination may be a deterrent to development of new uses. To be eligible, a site must be vacant, underutilized, and located where remediation is feasible. An additional condition is that the redevelopment will create jobs and increase the Town's tax base. Design Illustrations 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 show several options available for typical redevelopment areas.
3. Proposed roads shown on Figure 11 (Future Town Land Use) should be subject to acquisition efforts as development occurs in their vicinity. Efforts need to be made to retain the rural character of these proposed roads through the use of adjacent open space and landscaping. Proposed roads within and near the current Town boundaries should be the subject of street tree and landscape plantings. Design Illustrations 4 and 5 provide examples of two types of street cross sections.
4. Planned Unit Development in the Growth Areas should be designed to link with existing Town streets and should encourage pedestrian use sidewalks that provide connections to the Central Business District, other business areas, schools, and other institutional uses. Modified grid street patterns, traditional Town lot layouts, and integrated open spaces should be encouraged. Dead end streets and cul-de-sacs should be avoided. Sidewalks and street trees should be required. Community open space in the form of tot lots, and neighborhood and community parks should be functional and useable. Design Illustration 1 is an example of how new neighborhoods should relate to the Town's existing pattern.
5. Proposed Town commercial areas should be designed to utilize groupings of clustered buildings, as opposed to standard strip commercial structures. Parking and pedestrian spaces should be integrated into the project rather than separated from buildings and structures. All building façades visible from adjoining properties or a street should have an architectural theme and appearance. Façades should reflect local vernacular architectural styles. Flat roofs should be discouraged. Design Illustrations 6, 7 and 8 show the alternative site design options, while Design Illustrations 15 and 16 describe a typical site plan and cross section of the Mixed-Use Corridor.
6. Parking areas should be located in and around building masses and should be heavily landscaped with shade trees. Adequate signage should be permitted with an emphasis on aesthetics. All mechanical equipment and service areas should be screened from public view.
7. Town and County Planned Business Parks should be designed as a complete development unit, as opposed to incremental and unrelated building sites. Stormwater management and forest conservation practices should be

consolidated rather than site specific. Business Parks should incorporate internal access designed to accommodate the intended users. Perimeter landscaping and highway corridor buffering should be planned and implemented. Exterior storage areas should be discouraged and only permitted with adequate screening.

8. Greenways and trails should be planned and implemented as development occurs in and around the Town. Existing sidewalks and trails should be extended when new development abuts existing developments. Portions of planned trails should be implemented as outlying development in Growth Areas occurs. Design Illustrations 2 and 3 portray typical greenway cross sections and show the relationships to surrounding areas.
9. Street standards should be adopted that reflect Town scale development needs and respond to emerging trends in engineering. The proposed development form outlined previously requires an ordered, hierarchal street system, where larger street types handle different traffic requirements than smaller, neighborhood-only type streets. Streets should be designed to accommodate safe traffic for the adjoining use proposed. They should also function as a corridor for pedestrian trail systems. All street sections should require street trees and lighting scaled to the need and land use to be served. Design Illustrations 4 and 5 show two typical street type cross sections with pedestrian areas and landscaping.
10. Streetscape improvements should be maintained or considered for the Central Business District and other Town commercial areas leading into Centreville. Examples are as follows:
  - a. Street trees along sidewalk edges.
  - b. Brick sidewalks or stamped pavement along commercial street frontages in historic areas.
  - c. Sidewalk benches and informational signage.
  - d. Pedestrian and building foundation lighting.
  - e. Ultimate relocation of utility lines and poles from the streetscape.
  - f. Relocation of parking areas to the side and rear of buildings.
  - g. Building façade renovations in keeping with character of building.
  - h. Location of new buildings to maintain adjoining setbacks.
  - i. Public participation in placing public art at key locations.
11. Ensure linkage of Redevelopment Area 1 to CBD through the use of pedestrian and open space corridors. Design Illustrations 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 offer examples of connection options for this Redevelopment Area.
12. Ensure public access to Redevelopment Area 5, the historic Wharf area of Centreville. Design Illustration 14 is an example of potential development options.

13. Centreville should pursue designation and participation in the Maryland Main Street Program. This program would permit the Town to acquire technical expertise and guidance for Main Street preservation projects. Participation could also assist the Town in locating and acquiring grant and loan funding for Main Street projects in the CBD.
14. Utilize available resources of the Management Plan for the Stories of the Chesapeake Certified Heritage Area, as adopted by the Town. See Chapter 1, page 8, for more details.
15. Consider the adoption of a Livability Code compatible with Queen Anne's County and the Maryland Minimum Livability Code to address minimum property maintenance standards for housing, including equipment used for light, ventilation, heat, and sanitation. This should apply to owner occupied and rental housing, interior and exterior of units.

## **Design Standards**

All of the objectives listed in the above section on Objectives should be consolidated into Design Standards that would be adopted by the Town as regulations affecting new development and redevelopment in all zoning districts. Such guidelines would also be relevant to Growth Areas annexed into the Town. Examples of Design Standards elements are building density and materials, building styles and accessories, streetscape features, landscaping and buffering, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, lighting, and signage. In particular, it is recommended that the Design Standards include regulations for the preservation of historic structures and programs for their use and adaptive reuse.

## **Historic Preservation Recommendations**

The Centreville Community Plan of 1998 recommended that sections of the Town with historic and architectural significance be designated as historic districts. Within those districts, all new development, renovation, or demolition would have to be reviewed and approved by a historic commission. That recommendation has not been adopted as of the writing of this Plan; however, the Town has begun the process by identifying a historic district and a historic district is designated on the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, individual historic buildings within the Town have been included in the National Register. The enactment of regulations and the creation of a board have yet to be implemented. These two matters need to be addressed by the Town in order for the historic district to be truly meaningful. In some communities with similar regulations, historic preservation is seen as burdensome and a dilution of individual property rights. Although the goals of historic preservation are usually

seen as being beneficial, the application of regulations can sometimes be seen as a limitation on individual property rights. At the least, historic preservation can be a controversial municipal function.

With the above noted concerns in mind, it is the intent of this Community Plan to suggest that the proposed Design Standards incorporate a separate and distinct set of regulations aimed at the preservation of the Town's historic fabric within a defined historic district. These regulations would not necessarily be of a greater burden to a property owner than those for nonhistoric structures. The intent would be the creation of an achievable and enforceable set of standards that would foster preservation over the options of neglect, alteration, demolition, and replacement.

The administration of the historic preservation standards would be within the context of the Design Standards as a whole. Applications for required permits would be received and reviewed by the Town staff, followed by consideration by a reviewing body, when appropriate, which would approve or deny a proposal based on its conformity with regulations and compatibility with the community.

The following recommendations are made to facilitate the initial process of implementing a historic preservation program:

1. The Town's Historic District has been defined geographically and is found on Figure 2. Workshops with community leaders, local residents with an interest in historic preservation, State and regional preservation planners, and the general public should be held. The Historic District should be an overlay zoning district, providing supplemental regulation beyond that of the underlying zoning district.
2. The Town should expand an inventory of historic structures through coordination with the Maryland Historic Trust, other regional organizations, and local residents. The inventory should be made on acceptable forms and include data essential to contemporary collection techniques.
3. Standards to be incorporated into the Town's Historic District Design Standards need to be drafted and discussed with the community.
4. The Planning Commission and the residents of the Historic District should be educated about permit processing, technical issues of preservation planning, and the values of historic preservation.
5. The Town should continue to implement installation of historic markers for historic structures within the district.