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Town of Upper Marlboro Vision Plan

Introduction

The Town of Upper Marlboro has a rich history dating back to the earliest colonial times and retains a close-knit, small-town culture. As the county seat of Prince George’s County, it is the region’s historical center of commerce and entertainment.

This Vision Plan will articulate the core values of the Town and define how those values inform and drive the development of the Downtown, the culture, the places, and the businesses.

Vision

Downtown Upper Marlboro will be an authentic, vibrant, thriving historic town that leverages its history while boldly embracing an inclusive future.

Values

- Thriving & vibrant Downtown
- Safety
- Outdoor recreation
- Natural beauty
- Family-friendly places
- Community connections

The Plan

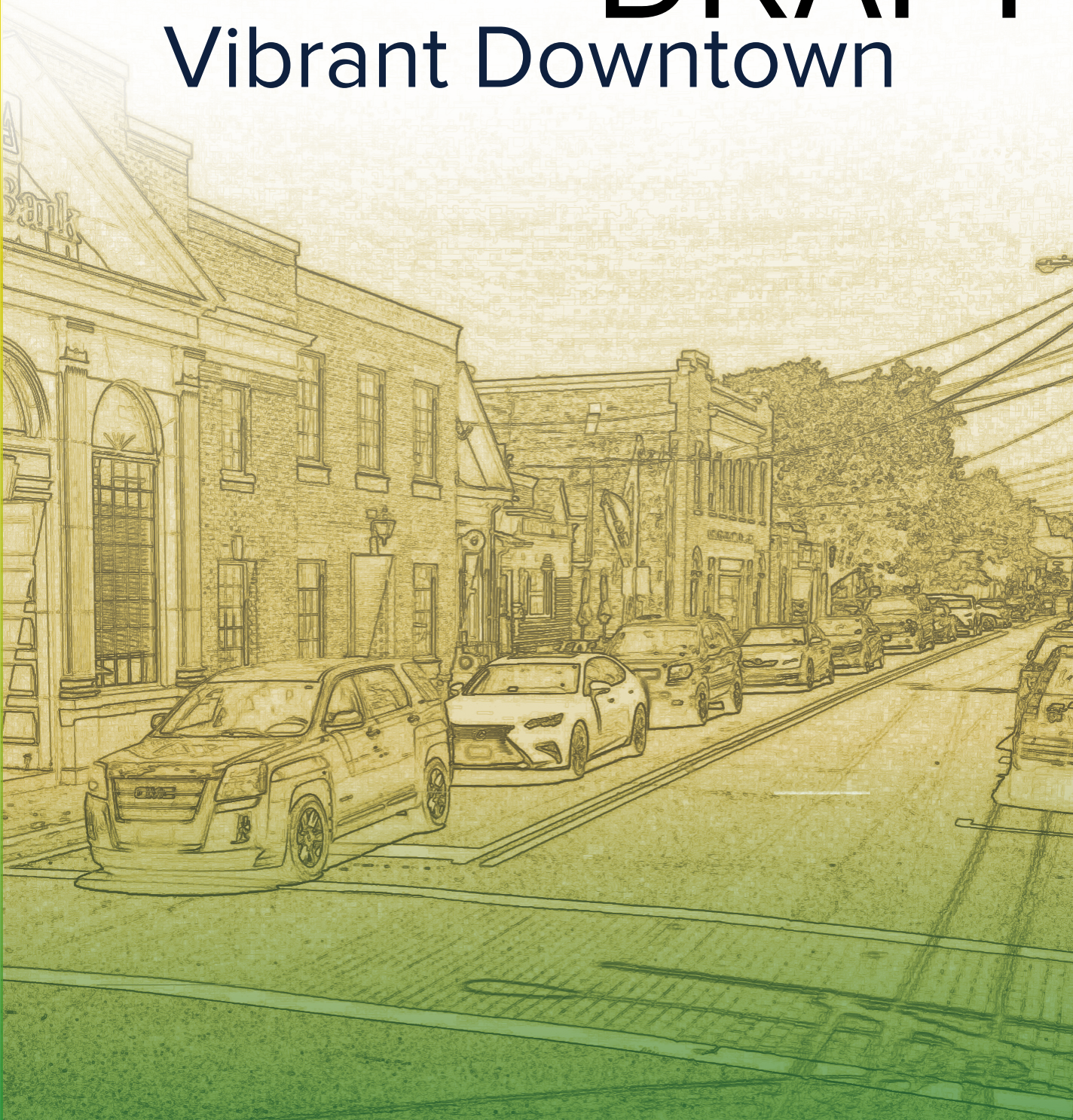
This Vision Plan outlines specific priorities to create a vibrant, connected, and safe place.

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Vibrant Downtown



VISION

Main Street is vibrant and bustling during the workday with excellent dining options, engaging gathering spots and inviting areas to walk and relax during evenings and weekends. Transit and parking are convenient and welcoming. Downtown is connected to the Schoolhouse Pond and surrounding trails by appealing walkways.

Experiencing Downtown

The image a community projects should not only be authentic to its core values but also present an affirmative, aspirational vision anticipating its future. Downtown Upper Marlboro is a symbol of the community's economic health, the partnership between the private and the public sectors, local quality of life, civic pride, history, and the heart of a community.

Streetscape

The appearance of buildings, storefronts, and streets plays an important role in shaping the character and identity of downtown. A cohesive streetscape with proper lighting, appealing landscaping, trees and well-designed and maintained facades creates a sense of unity and continuity and conveys an image of prosperity and relevance. Inviting, well-attended streetscapes lead to increased foot traffic, more business, and higher property values—creating a thriving and prosperous commercial district that benefits the entire community.

Tasteful landscaping incorporates seasonal colors and verdant contrasts to the brick and mortar buildings, shade trees all along Main Street, wide walkways, inviting spaces to sit and rest all combine to create an peaceful, welcoming ambiance that encourages walking and strolling. Visuals obstructions like power poles and discordant signage are eliminated to preserve sight lines and to maintain the aura of historicity.

Attractive lighting illuminates the downtown area, brightening the ambiance and enhancing the perception of safety.

Façades / Development

The historic buildings along Main Street - some dating back to the early 1700s are an irreplicable treasure. To stay authentic to the Town's history and leverage the charm of the existing building stock, the street's aspirational aesthetic is colonial-era historic.

New buildings are designed to integrate into the historic look of surrounding buildings. Building codes reflect design standards that preserve and enhance the historic district. New development in downtown will be two or three stories with restaurant and retail on the bottom floor and offices and housing on the upper floors.

Renovations of existing building stock will conform to the design standards.

In some cases, buildings along Main Street were originally designed as offices. Retail storefronts and restaurants create energy and generate foot traffic that is synergistic to adjacent businesses. Over time and utilizing incentives, office buildings are converted to retail and restaurants and the upstairs converted to housing. Utilizing upper floors for housing creates evening foot traffic downtown and enhances the sense of security.

Building owners make civic-minded investments to improve their façades and refurbish their buildings - contributing to a thriving commercial district.



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Experiencing Downtown

Wayfinding

Effective, appealing and prevalent signage (wayfinding) enhances the experience of residents and visitors. Clear signage and directions to key attractions, businesses, shopping areas, and cultural sites help visitors and tourists navigate easily, increasing their satisfaction and encouraging them to explore and spend - supporting local businesses and promoting economic growth.

Strategically placed throughout downtown, visible and visually appealing signs guide visitors in their discovery of Upper Marlboro, while reflecting the town's new branding. These signs are not only visually consistent but also deliver informative and overtly welcoming messages. The additional signages and monuments at the entrances of the downtown area enhance the overall experience for both residents and visitors. These new landmarks will proudly represent the town's grandeur and identity, serving as distinctive symbols that warmly welcome people into the heart of the community. The clear delineation of entrances not only provides practical guidance but also evokes a sense of excitement and anticipation, setting the stage for an immersive and memorable exploration of the vibrant downtown area.

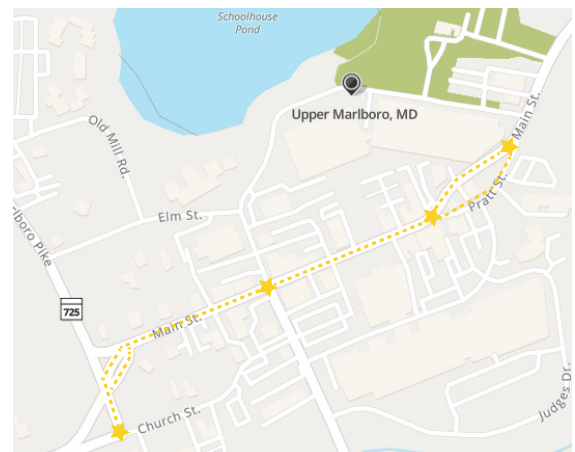
Informative signs direct visitors to abundant, easily accessible parking, from the parking to convenient access to Main Street, and highlights the access to the trail network. Signage highlights local businesses and serves as a business directory. QR codes link to an app that includes information about local businesses and events and curates walking tours.

Local businesses consistently project a friendly and welcoming image, fostering a positive and inviting environment. All private signage throughout the area is crafted with respect, helpfulness, and an inviting tone, further contributing to the overall welcoming atmosphere of Upper Marlboro.

Transportation

Forward-looking transportation connections ensure easy and sustainable access to the Town. From well-integrated bus routes and direct shuttle/trolley links to Metro train stations to designated bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly pathways, these transportation improvements are designed to create a seamless and convenient experience for visitors, allowing them to explore and enjoy the vibrant offerings of Upper Marlboro with minimal hassle.

By prioritizing sustainable transportation options, the town is not only making it more accessible for visitors but also contributing to the preservation of the environment and the overall livability of the community.



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Experiencing Downtown

Parking

Abundant and convenient parking encourages people to visit, shop, dine, and browse in the downtown district, boosting local businesses and the overall economic vitality. It creates the perception of easy access and is inviting and contributes to the overall livability and attractiveness of the downtown. The 2010 Parking Study found that there is “sufficient parking in Upper Marlboro.”

While convenient auto access is important, having parking lots for each business can lead to increased walking distances between buildings and detract from the appeal of a walkable downtown environment. Off-street parking, on the other hand, provides unimpeded access to shops and restaurants, allowing for a greater density of attractions within a short walking distance. This contiguous density enhances the overall experience, providing visitors with more to see and do.

To facilitate parking, off-street public parking lots are strategically located at both ends of Main Street. These lots are clearly identified with well-placed signage that directs visitors to the parking areas. The public lots offer low-cost or free parking options and feature convenient and well-marked access points to Main Street. Signboards are strategically placed to welcome visitors and guide them on their journey through downtown.

Private parking is reserved for off-street lots and is clearly indicated to visitors, providing clear directions to alternative parking areas. Excess parking, particularly along Main Street, is repurposed for infill development, ensuring optimal use of the available space and contributing to the ongoing revitalization of the area.



Thriving Businesses

Upper Marlboro’s locally-owned businesses are the foundation of the downtown district’s prosperity and community’s sense of place and connection. The businesses along Main Street play a vital role in creating a vibrant and thriving downtown. From unique shops to restaurants and service providers, the businesses in Upper Marlboro offer a diverse range of offerings that are authentic, unique and appealing and draw people from throughout the area.

Town Support

Upper Marlboro is renowned for its unique, eclectic, authentic shopping and eating scene. Visitors come from a wide area to engage in a unique experience that is completely different from the polished sameness of suburbia.

The Town supports the local business community through policies and programs that support local businesses and help them thrive. Through organic growth and annexation, the Town grows large enough to qualify for a Main Street designation and fully supports the program through grant applications and administrative support. The Town also pursues other grant opportunities to support its businesses.

Especially during the early stages of the renaissance, the Town plays an active role in identifying potential new businesses that would be good fits for its downtown and recruits them. The Town has compelling recruitment materials and an established incentive program to facilitate the recruitment efforts.

Business Network

Businesses in Upper Marlboro band together to provide opportunities to connect with other businesses, potential customers, and resources through a formal networking organization. The networking connections help business owners to build relationships and gain access to new markets, as well as providing opportunities for collaboration through joint marketing efforts, shared resources, and strategic partnerships to support their growth and innovation.

The business network provides small businesses with a collective voice on issues that affect them—enabling them to advocate for policies and regulations that support their interests and address challenges that they may face. The combined market power and shared knowledge of the business owners gives them leverage when working with owners of buildings and

ensures that property owners are fulfilling their obligations as landlords and are investing in their properties.

The support of the Town business network boosts the vitality of all the businesses and the thriving ecosystem allows shops and restaurants to stay open into the evening hours and expand their service offerings.



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Connected Community



Residents of Upper Marlboro know their neighbors. They meet at community gatherings, sports events, in public spaces, parks, along trails, and on Main Street. The Town is a place where you can live and work or come home to relax from a job in the city.

Shared spaces and opportunities to gather facilitate connection. Accessible trails, public spaces, community events, and recreational opportunities for a wide range of interests and age groups provide the ability to connect.

Public Connections

Trails

Community trails are consistently identified as the most popular and highly used public amenities. Aside from the fitness benefits, walking engenders a connection with a place and promotes a sense of community.

Town residents value the trails that connect neighborhoods to downtown, Schoolhouse Pond, and the State Trail Network. The well-maintained and accessible trails are identified by trail markers and wayfinding signs throughout the Town. The trails provide such a pleasant experience and are so well connected to downtown, pond and amenities that they become an attraction, bringing visitors from surrounding areas and driving visitation and spending at local businesses.

The Water Street trail develops into a cafe district with restaurants and patio dining along the Patuxent River.

Public Parks

Public parks of various sizes serve as gathering places for planned activities and spontaneous connection. Public parks are a significant contributor to quality of life perception - particularly for families with children, pet owners and the physically active.

Upper Marlboro's has a network of neighborhood parks that are well-maintained, well-appointed, and have amenities and features that are relevant to residents. As new areas are annexed into the Town, they are evaluated for the prevalence and quality of their parks and remediation plans ensure they are quickly brought up to the Town's standards. These parks are thoughtfully designed with features that cater to the needs of residents, providing additional spaces for both residents and visitors to sit back, unwind, and relax.

Acknowledging the impact of parks on quality of life perceptions, the Town makes strategic investments to ensure the parks are prioritized and constantly being upgraded. The parks reflect the community's commitment to nature and provide convenient connections to the trail networks.



Public Connections **DRAFT**

Public Art

Public art contributes to the cultural enrichment of a community by adding aesthetic value and diversity to public spaces. It can reflect the history, heritage, and values of a community, fostering a sense of identity and pride among its residents. Public art has the power to transform mundane or neglected areas into vibrant and attractive spaces. Especially in the age of selfies, having unique and notable public art can draw visitors and generate buzz.

Building on the success of the painted horses and murals, public art that is consistent with the Town's brand and identity is integrated throughout the town and becomes a key driver of the Town's 'je ne sais pas' appeal. The Town has many 'Instagram-worthy' vignettes and pieces that become a driver of visits.

Local and regional artists are commissioned to do work based on themes that resonate with the community, and are consistent with the Town's brand and are done in partnerships with local businesses and artists. Vacant ground-floor spaces are provided free of charge to local artists as studios and visitors can watch art being created while strolling the Town.

Public Art

Art galleries provide a dedicated space where the local and regional artists can showcase their creative works, offering them an invaluable platform for exhibition. By seamlessly integrating these galleries into the town's overall brand and identity, they will contribute to the town's distinct and captivating charm. Collaborating with the local artists, the galleries will curate exhibitions that truly reflects the community's values and interests, allowing visitors to witness art in progress while exploring the town, thereby enriching their interactive and immersive experience.

Vacant shopfront space is offered to local artist as studio space at no cost so visitors to downtown can witness art in the making - enhancing the downtown experience while also creating more interest in the art.



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Facilitating Connection

Facilitating opportunities for community members to connect is essential for creating a strong and cohesive community. When community members connect with each other, they develop relationships and a sense of belonging, which can help to promote social cohesion and a shared sense of purpose. Connecting with others in the community can promote social and cultural understanding, as individuals learn about different perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. This can help to break down barriers and promote a more inclusive and welcoming community.

Downtown Events

Upper Marlboro is a destination location for community events that appeal to a wide range of interests and age groups. The Town's Events Committee, established in 2019 to build community and relationships, hosts events throughout the year. Building on the success of events such as Marlboro Day, Trunk or Treat, Outdoor Movie Nights, the Classic Car Show, the Happy Leaf Art Festival, additional high quality events are created.

Main Street is the centerpiece of the events and the downtown is filled with residents and visitors who shop at the stores, browse the galleries, and eat at the restaurants and cafés. Ice cream shops, coffee shops, and food trucks in the downtown area serve an exciting variety of flavors and cuisines, satisfying the cravings of locals and visitors alike. Events are well-promoted and high quality but don't detract from the Town's culture of being family friendly, relaxed, and welcoming.

Libraries

Library upgrades transform it into a vibrant community gathering place, catering to the diverse needs and interests of residents. The library features comfortable seating areas, collaborative workspaces, and dedicated zones for children, teens, and adults. Through these upgrades, the library has evolved into a dynamic hub where individuals can gather, connect, and foster a sense of belonging, promoting the exchange of ideas and fostering lifelong learning.

Showplace Arena

There is strong collaboration and coordination between the Town and County for events at the Showplace Arena. Signage, inviting walkways, shuttle busses and marketing materials encourage participants in Showplace events to explore Main Street. Signage and marketing materials create awareness of and interest in Main Street.

For larger arena events there are concurrent events on Main Street that are synergistic events that bring event participants downtown.



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Safe Place

Upper Marlboro is a community where children walk to their bus stops and are safe. Kids walk and bike to meet up with their friends after school and on the weekends. Adults walk to commercial centers and parks for exercise or convenience. Town residents know police officers by name, consider them community partners and go to them with their concerns. When an emergency happens, residents know they will have a compassionate, safe, and timely response from their neighbors, police, fire, and EMS services.

Protecting People **DRAFT**

Roadway design has a strong impact on how people drive and has greater influence on driver behavior than the posted speed limit. Driver and pedestrian safety - feeling safe on the roads, is a significant quality of life determinant. The Town coordinates with the County and State Highway Administration to provide vehicular and non-vehicular routes.

Bike & Pedestrian Safety

Upper Marlboro coordinates with the County and SHA to design safer streets — such as narrowing traffic lanes and turn radii, curb extensions, high-visibility crosswalks, and creating connected and accessible sidewalks and bike networks.

Bus Stop Visibility

The placement of school bus stops dictates not only the routes that students will have to travel between home and the stop, but also the conditions in which the student will be waiting, and both impact student safety. The Town and Prince George's County Public Schools District work together to ensure that the sites of bus stops are located according to best practices for student safety.



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Strengthening Infrastructure

Strengthening infrastructure against flooding and sinkholes is crucial for ensuring the safety of people in a community. Floods and sinkholes can cause extensive damage to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure, and can even threaten the lives of those in affected areas. By strengthening infrastructure, such as improving drainage systems and reinforcing bridges and roadways, communities can reduce the risk of flooding and sinkholes and ensure that critical infrastructure remains intact during extreme weather events.

Flooding Mitigation

Flooding occurs regularly in Upper Marlboro, impacting mobility around Town as well as flooding residences, businesses, and government offices. If there is a large storm event upriver from Upper Marlboro it is possible for two to three of the four main entrances and exits to Town to flood and become impassable for a time. There are areas of Town where residents can be stuck in their neighborhoods because the roads are impassable. Further, homes frequently flood throughout town in large storm events. As climate conditions worsen the need for adequate stormwater management systems will only increase.

Public Works Crews monitor sites when there is potential flooding to close the sites when flooded to keep the drivers safe. Long-term solutions are studied and funding acquired. Over time, structural solutions dramatically reduce the incidence of and impact of flooding.

Sinkhole Prevention

A sinkhole is an area of ground that has no natural external surface drainage—when it rains, the water stays inside the sinkhole and typically drains into the subsurface. Sinkholes can vary drastically in size, and while they typically form slowly, the collapse tends to happen suddenly. Sinkholes can result from both natural and human causes, and the first step to preventing future sinkholes is to understand what is causing the sinkholes in Upper Marlboro.

The Department of Public Works coordinates with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), USGS, and Prince Georges County Soil Conservation District to study sinkholes in the Town and determine their cause. They jointly pursue funding to address and remediate current problem areas and prevent future occurrences.

