



Street Classification and the Master Planning Process: Dynamic Policies/Static Documents

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Street Classification and the Master Planning Process

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Montgomery County Council directed the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) to prepare a report that studies the role of the County Code and planning documents known as “area master plans” and “functional master plans” in the street classification process.

Background: An area master plan establishes policies and provides planning guidance for a specific geographic area of the County. Area master plans typically include policies and recommendations concerning land use and zoning, urban design, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, historic resources, and public facilities. A functional master plan addresses a countywide function (such as transportation) or a specific planning element (such as historic preservation). The County Council expressed interest in learning how to resolve apparent conflicts among the policies and recommendations contained in these documents. For this report, OLO focused on the relationship among planning documents regarding one planning element, the classification of streets.

The term, “street classification” refers to the categorization of streets based on the function, purpose, and/or use of a roadway and its right-of-way. In 2022, the County Council approved legislation that significantly modified the County’s approach to classifying streets. Prior to the legislation, the County classified streets using a traditional functional system predicated primarily on automotive vehicle mobility and property access. Under the new “Complete Streets” approach adopted by the County, “street classification is viewed from a multimodal or people-focused perspective that is context sensitive. Street classification is based on both the land use context and street function.”¹

The 2022 County Code amendments replaced the previous street classifications with the 18 County street classifications set forth in the 2021 Complete Streets Design Guide (CSDG). The CSDG is a comprehensive guide for the design, operation, and maintenance of streets including speed limits, number of vehicle lanes, lane widths, median width, sidewalk width, dedicated transitway lanes, traffic calming, on-street parking, bikeways, and landscaping. CSDG guidelines are intended to apply to future construction and re-construction projects.

As noted above, several street classifications are dependent on “land use context,” that is, the level and character of development adjacent to a roadway segment. The County Code established five areas for the purpose of street classification: Downtown, Town Center, Country, Industrial, and Suburban. Many of the County’s street classifications are designated exclusively for particular land use areas.

¹ [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2024 Technical Update, Public Hearing Draft,, page 11.](#)

County Street Classification Process: The Montgomery County street classification process is governed by both legislation and planning documents.

County Code: The County Code establishes the procedure method for interim and future land use area designations and street classifications. The Code:

- Creates five land use area designations (downtown, town center, country, industrial, and suburban).
- Establishes interim land use area designations for nine downtown and 23 town center areas.
- Authorizes modification of land use area designations by future functional or area master plans.
- Creates 18 “Complete Street” street classifications.
- Assigns interim “Complete Street” street classifications through a crosswalk between the previous classifications and the new “Complete Street” street classifications.
- Authorizes modification of street classifications by future functional or area master plans.
- Authorizes DOT to change street classifications (under certain circumstances) outside the functional/area master plan process.

Functional Master Plans: Functional master plans apply land use area designations and street classifications consistent with the process set forth in the County Code.

- The Pedestrian Plan adopts the Complete Streets approach and assigns land use area types to specific locations in the County but acknowledges that future master plans may modify area designations.
- The pending Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) update adopts the Pedestrian Plan’s area designations and reassesses street classifications established in the County Code and area master plans.
- The Rustic Roads Plan establishes unique road specifications for streets classified as either rustic roads or exceptional rustic roads.

Area Master Plans: Street classification in area master plans varies depending on the approval date of the plan:

- Area master plans approved prior to the 2022 County Code amendments include old street classifications. These classifications have been changed to new Complete Streets classifications as specified in the County Code. Pre-2022 area master plans have been amended by the Pedestrian Plan that designated land use areas throughout the County.
- Area master plans approved after the 2022 amendments to the County Code include Complete Streets land use area designations and street classifications.
- Street classifications in any area master plan may be modified by amendments to the MPOHT as well as any other subsequent functional or area master plan.

Dynamic Policies/Static Documents: Functional and area master plans are, in some ways, static documents and, in other ways, dynamic documents. Upon a plan's approval, the content of that document becomes fixed and static, a historic reference to the planning decisions adopted by the County at that point in time. A reader of the master plan will find policies and recommendations – including those for street classifications – that were accurate at the time of the plan's approval.

However, functional and area master plans can, and frequently do, amend policies and recommendations – including those related to street classifications – contained in other plans. Thus, while the plan documents themselves remain fixed and static, the policies and recommendations contained in functional and area master plans may be revisited by subsequent plans and are subject to modification. As a result, each individual plan document may or may not contain the final word on a particular street classification. A County resident or property owner may not find current street classifications simply by looking at a single area or functional master plan, or the Planning Department's web page for that plan.

Accessibility of Street Classification Information: The Planning Department maintains an online interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) called MCAtlas. MCAtlas includes a layer that identifies locations in the County based on the five Complete Streets land use areas as well as a layer that specifies the classification of individual streets or street segments. An experienced MCAtlas may navigate through the GIS layers to find this information; however, individuals who are not regular users of MCAtlas likely will be challenged to quickly extract street classification information from this tool. However, the Planning Department maintains other online tools that allow users to more readily access street classification information.

The Planning Department's Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) web page posts links to two maps and a table that provide direct access to street classification information in fewer user steps than through MCAtlas. From the MPOHT web page, a resident or property owner may click on the "Approved Streets and Transitways Online Map" to open up an interactive map and then either type in a street address or zoom the map to a specific location. With a click on the street, the map displays information about the street including its current classification. The MPOHT online map also allows users to click a box to locate the boundaries of Complete Streets land use areas.

The Planning Department's website also provides a traditional, non-interactive map that displays street classifications. From the MPOHT web page, residents may click on "Approved Streets and Transitways Network" and then click on "MPOHT Mapbook" to access a grid overlaying a map of the full County. Users may then select a grid to view a map with a key displaying street classifications in a selected portion of the County. In addition, the Planning Department's website posts an alphabetical list of County streets with information about specific streets and street segments including classification. From the MPOHT web page, residents may click on "Approved Streets and Transitways Network" and then click on "MPOHT Classification Table" to access the list.

At present, the interactive Approved Streets and Transitways Online Map, the Mapbook, and the Street Classification Table are accessible from the MPOHT home page or from other pages linked to the MPOHT home page; however, these tools are not accessible from, nor mentioned on, the home pages for area master plans. As such, a resident or property owner who is not previously familiar with the MPOHT likely would be unaware of the existence of these tools.

OLO Observations and Discussion Questions: Upon final approval, functional and area master plans are fixed and static documents. Nonetheless, the policies and recommendations contained in these plans may be revisited and amended by other subsequent plans. When different plans set forth different policies and recommendations on the same matter, the most recently approved plan controls.

A reader of one plan may be unaware of subsequent policy amendments that appear in an entirely different plan. For example, a person who reads an area master plan to identify a street classification may not have any indication that the classification shown in the area master plan was subsequently amended by a functional plan such as the MPOHT.

The Planning Department has developed online maps and a table that readily identify current street classifications. However, a resident or property owner who is not well-versed in County planning processes may not know that these tools are available.

OLO suggests the Planning Department consider altering the emphasis of planning area web pages from the current model which is focused primarily on the static master plan document to a model which focuses on disseminating a range of up-to-date information relevant to each plan area. Toward this end, OLO suggests that Councilmembers discuss the following two questions with the Planning Department.

1. How can the Planning Department make up-to-date street classification information more accessible to the public? Should the Planning Department imbed direct links to street classification tools in area master plan home pages?
2. What other dynamic planning and development information should appear on area master plan home pages?

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Montgomery County Council directed the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) to prepare a report that studies the relationship among planning documents known as “functional master plans,” and “area master plans,” and other planning documents. The County Council expressed interest in learning how to resolve apparent conflicts among the policies and recommendations contained in these documents. For this report, OLO focused on the relationship among planning documents regarding one planning element, the classification of streets. This report includes an overview of County land use planning documents, a discussion of the role of each of these documents in the street classification process, and a review of the public accessibility of street classification information.

A. Report Structure

This OLO report contains the following chapters:

- **Chapter 2, Overview of Land Use Plans**, provides an overview of the legal framework that governs the development of planning documents in Montgomery County, identifies the types of planning documents that govern land use in the County and discusses the process for amending land use documents.
- **Chapter 3, Street Classification and Design**, describes the street classification system employed in Montgomery County, and introduces the “Complete Streets” design approach.
- **Chapter 4, Street Classification in the County Code**, summarizes the street classification process established in the County Code.
- **Chapter 5, Street Classification in Functional Master Plans**, presents street classification recommendations included in current approved functional master plans.
- **Chapter 6, Street Classification in Area Master Plans**, discusses the presentation of street classification recommendations in two area master plans.
- **Chapter 7, Summary of Land Use Area Designation and Street Classification Processes**, presents a summary of the land use area designation and street classification processes.
- **Chapter 8, Accessibility of Street Classification Information**, describes the availability and accessibility of resources with information about classification of County streets.
- **Chapter 9, Discussion Questions**, presents two questions for Councilmembers to discuss with the Planning Department.

B. Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF LAND USE PLANS

This chapter provides an overview of the legal framework that governs the development of planning documents in Montgomery County. The chapter further identifies the types of planning documents that govern land use in the County and the process for amending these documents.

A. Legal Framework

The Regional District Act in Maryland law authorizes the Planning Board² to prepare planning documents that regulate land use, development, and the provision of public facilities. As stated in the [Land Use Article, Section 20-202](#), the Planning Board:

- *is responsible for planning, subdivision, and zoning functions that are primarily local in scope; and*
- *shall exercise, within the county planning board's jurisdiction, the following powers: planning; zoning; subdivision; ...; and any related matter.*

State law grants the Montgomery County Council, acting as the District Council³, the responsibility to direct the Planning Board to develop a General Plan, area master plans, and functional plans to govern land use and development within the Montgomery County portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District (see Sections [20-101](#), [20-203](#), and [21-105](#) of the Land Use Article).

The County Code further delineates the planning process in Montgomery County. As stated in [Section 33A-3](#), either the Planning Board or the Council may initiate work to create or amend a plan.

The Commission [that is, the Planning Board] or the District Council shall initiate work on a plan in accordance with the provisions of Title 21 of the Regional District Act.

As [defined in the County Code](#), the word “plan” in the above provision includes the General Plan, an area master plan, and functional plans.

² The term “Planning Board” used in this report refers to the body composed of the Montgomery County Commissioners of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

³ The Montgomery County Council sits as the “District Council” when considering land use and planning matters for the portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District located in Montgomery County.

[Section 33A-4](#) of the County Code establishes the procedures for plan amendments:

The initiation, preparation, approval, adoption, publication and certification of amendments to plan shall take place in accordance with the same procedures as are established by this chapter with respect to plans.

Plans prepared by the Planning Board are subject to approval by the County Council as detailed in the County Code, [Section 33A-9](#).

B. Types of Plans

This section describes the types of land use plans that govern development in Montgomery County.

General Plan

The central planning document in Montgomery County is the General Plan. The General Plan is a long-term guide for the development of the County that defines the basic land use policies and context for development in the County. The current County General Plan is [Thrive Montgomery 2050](#), approved by the County Council in 2022.

More detailed and geographically specific long-term planning recommendations appear in area master plans and functional plans.

Area Master Plans

An “area master plan” establishes policies and provides planning guidance for a specific geographic area of the County. Area master plans typically include policies and recommendations concerning land use and zoning, urban design, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, historic resources, and public facilities. An area master plan may address an entire [planning area](#) or a portion of a planning area such as a [Sector Plan](#) or [Neighborhood Plan](#). Alternatively, an area master plan may traverse multiple planning areas, such as a [Corridor Plan](#).

Functional Master Plans

[Section 21-106](#) of the Land Use Article of Maryland law authorizes the preparation and approval of a type of planning document referred to as a “functional master plan.” State law provides examples of the planning elements that may be included in a functional plan:

Subject to subsection (b) of this section, the Commission may adopt, and the appropriate district council may approve, a functional master plan for the various elements of the general plan, including:

- (1) transportation routes and facilities;*
- (2) hospitals and health centers;*
- (3) parks and other open spaces;*
- (4) police stations;*
- (5) fire stations; and*
- (6) utilities.*

The County Planning Department also provides a definition of the term, functional master plan. As defined in the Planning Department's online [glossary](#), a functional plan is "a type of master plan addressing a countywide function (Master Plan of Highways and Transitways), a system that spans more than one plan area (Purple Line Functional Plan), or a specific element of the general plan (Master Plan for Historic Preservation, Water Resources Functional Plan ...).

At present, there are ten approved functional master plans in effect (excluding those related to parks and open space):

- **Bicycle Master Plan**
- **Corridor Forward: The I-270 Transit Plan**
- **Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan**
- **Functional Master Plan for the Patuxent River**
- **Master Plan of Highways and Transitways**
- **Master Plan of Historic Preservation**
- **Pedestrian Master Plan**
- **Purple Line Functional Plan**
- **Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan**
- **Water Resources Plan**

This report addresses the interaction of the County Code, functional master plans, area master plans, and other planning documents in determining street classifications in Montgomery County. As such, the remainder of this report focuses on the role of the Pedestrian Master Plan, the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, and the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan in assigning street classifications.

C. Plan Amendments

The County's General Plan, area master plans, and functional master plans are subject to amendment. The Planning Board may prepare, and the County Council may approve, amendments to any of these documents. Each area and functional master plan and plan amendment is considered an amendment to the General Plan as stated in [Section 21-103](#) of the Land Use Article of State law:

The ... district council may designate a functional master plan, an area master plan, or an amendment to either plan, as an amendment to the general plan.

Moreover, one type of plan may amend another type. For example, an area master plan may amend another area master plan; a functional plan may amend one or multiple area master plans. In most cases, a newly approved area or functional master plan contains elements that amend the recommendations contained in multiple other plans. To illustrate this point, a paragraph excerpted from the Planning Board resolution approving the Pedestrian Functional Plan appears on the following page. This lengthy paragraph lists the eight functional plans and the 52 area master plans amended by the Pedestrian Plan.

Montgomery County Planning Board Resolution 23-107
(approving the Pedestrian Master Plan, October 25, 2023)

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montgomery County Planning Board and The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission do hereby adopt the said Pedestrian Master Plan, together with Thrive Montgomery 2050, as amended, and as amendment to portions of the following functional master plans: the Master Plan of Highways & Transitways (2018), the Bicycle Master Plan (2018), the Rustic Roads Functional Master Plan (2023), the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space Functional Master Plan (1980), the Purple Line Functional Plan (2010), the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (2013), the Intercounty Connector Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment: Bikeways and Interchanges (2009); as well as the following area master plans: the 10 Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment (2014), the Ashton Village Center Sector Plan (2021), the Aspen Hill Master Plan (1994), the Aspen Hill Minor Master Plan Amendment (2015), the Bethesda Downtown Sector Plan (2017), the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan (1990), the Boyds Master Plan (1985), the Burtonsville Commercial Crossroads Neighborhood Plan (2012), the Capitol View and Vicinity Sector Plan (1982), the Chevy Chase Lake Sector Plan (2013), the Clarksburg Master Plan and Hyattstown Special Study Area (1994), the Cloverly Master Plan (1997), the Damascus Master Plan (2006), the East Silver Spring Master Plan (2000), the Fairland Master Plan (1997), the Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills Sector Plan (2020), the Four Corners Master Plan (1996), the Friendship Heights Sector Plan (1998), the Gaithersburg and Vicinity Master Plan (1996), the Germantown Employment Area Sector Plan (2009), the Germantown Master Plan (1989), the Glenmont Sector Plan (2013), the Great Seneca Science Corridor Master Plan (2010), the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan (2017), the Grosvenor/Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan (2018), the Kemp Mill Master Plan (2001), the Kensington Sector Plan (2012), the Kensington/Wheaton Master Plan (1989), the Long Branch Sector Plan (2013), the MARC Rail Communities Sector Plan (2019), the Montgomery Village Master Plan (2016), the North and West Silver Spring Master Plan (2000), the North Bethesda/Garrett Park Master Plan (1992), the Olney Master Plan (2005), the Potomac Subregion Master Plan (2002), the Rock Spring Sector Plan (2017), the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan (1998), the Sandy Spring Rural Village Plan (2015), the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan (2021), the Shady Grove Sector Plan (2006), the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (2022), the Takoma/Langley Crossroads Sector Plan (2012), the Takoma Park Master Plan (2000), the Twinbrook Sector Plan (2009), the Upper Rock Creek Master Plan (2004), the Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan (2019), the Westbard Sector Plan (2016), the Wheaton CBD Sector Plan (2012), the White Flint Sector Plan (2010), the White Flint 2 Sector Plan (2018), the White Oak Master Plan (1997), and the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan (2014).

CHAPTER 3: STREET CLASSIFICATION AND DESIGN

This chapter defines the term, “street classification,” describes the street classification system employed in Montgomery County, and introduces the “Complete Streets” design approach.

A. Street Classification

The term, “street classification” refers to the categorization of streets based on the function, purpose, and/or use of a roadway and its right-of-way. In 2022, the County Council approved legislation that significantly modified the County’s approach to classifying streets. Prior to the legislation, the County classified streets using a traditional functional system predicated primarily on automotive vehicle mobility and property access. In 2022, the County adopted a “Complete Streets” classification system. As stated in the [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways – 2024 Technical Update, Public Hearing Draft](#), under the “Complete Street philosophy:”

Street classification is viewed from a multimodal or people-focused perspective that is context sensitive. Street classification is based on both the land use context and street function.... Land use context is classified by land use density and zoning, whereas street function is classified by spacing of intersections and driveways and to some extent, percentage of through-travel. (page 11)

In Montgomery County, the assignment of a particular classification to a specific street is implemented by the master plan process, most notably, through recommendations in area master plans and the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. A document called the [“Complete Street Design Guide”](#) (see Section B of this chapter) outlines the classification process:

Implementation of the Complete Streets Design Guide will require a comprehensive update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT). All roads now in the MPOHT would need to be re-evaluated using the new Street Types presented in the Complete Streets Design Guide. Proposed re-classifications would be recommended and presented to the public and the Planning Board through a detailed public involvement process.... Finalized recommendations would then undergo County Council review and approval. Once approved and adopted, county agencies, including the Montgomery County Planning Department, would modify existing review and design policy and standards using the Complete Streets Design Guide. (page 24)

The table on the following page presents each of the 18 street classifications as defined in [Section 49-31](#) of the County Code.

Street Classification and the Master Planning Process

Classification	County Code Definition
Freeway	Road meant exclusively for through movement of vehicles at a high speed. Access must be limited to grade-separated interchanges
Controlled Major Highway	Road meant exclusively for through movement of vehicles at a lower speed than a Freeway. Access must be limited to grade-separated interchanges or at-grade intersections with public roads
Parkway	Road meant exclusively for through movement of vehicles at a moderate speed. Access must be limited to grade-separated interchanges and at-grade intersections
Downtown Boulevard	Road in a downtown area that serves a high volume of vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, or transit users. Access to abutting properties is allowed but not preferable
Downtown Street	Road in a downtown area that serves a large share of pedestrians, bicyclists, or transit users. This road type is meant for circulation in commercial and mixed-use zones
Boulevard	Road that typically connects employment and entertainment centers, civic, commercial, and institutional land uses, and may also provide cross-county and regional connections. Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit users are to be accommodated
Town Center Boulevard	Road in a town center area that serves a moderate to high volume of vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, or transit users. Access to abutting properties is allowed but generally not preferable
Town Center Street	Road in a town center area that serves a larger share of pedestrians, bicyclists, or transit users... Access to abutting properties is expected
Area Connector	Two-lane street in a suburban area that typically connects employment and entertainment centers, civic, commercial, and institutional land uses, and may also provide limited regional connectivity and serve primary circulation in residential zones
Neighborhood Connector	Street in a suburban area providing primary circulation in residential zones and may also enable traffic to pass through a neighborhood
Neighborhood Street	Street that provides internal circulation within suburban areas. Access to abutting properties is expected
Neighborhood Yield Street	Neighborhood Street that is designed as a bi-directional one-lane street
Industrial Street	Road meant for circulation in areas consisting predominantly of industrial zones
Country Connector	Road in a country area that was previously classified as major highways, arterials, or country arterials
Country Road	Low intensity road in a country area
Alley	Right-of-way intended to provide secondary access to the rear or side of lots or buildings and not intended for transporting through traffic
Rustic/Exceptional Rustic Road	Road classified as such under Article 8 [of Streets and Roads Chapter of the County Code]
Residential/Commercial Shared Street	Street designed to create a shared traffic environment where pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized traffic may comfortably occupy the same space as motor vehicle traffic.

As noted above, several street classifications are dependent on “land use context,” that is, the level and character of development adjacent to a roadway segment. The County Code established five areas for the purpose of street classification:

- Downtown
- Town Center
- Country
- Industrial
- Suburban

Many of the County’s street classifications are designated exclusively for particular land use areas.

A fuller discussion of the current County street classification system including the designation of land use areas appears in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of this report.

B. Complete Streets Design

In Montgomery County, street design elements are governed by County law and regulations, area master plans, functional master plans, as well as the [Complete Streets Design Guide](#) (CSDG). The CSDG is a comprehensive guide, prepared jointly by the Planning Department and the County Department of Transportation, for the design, operation, and maintenance of streets. The first CSDG was published in 2021; the current CSDG (Version 1.2) was published in 2024. The current CSDG sets forth guidelines for a series of street design elements, including:

- Speed limits
- Number of vehicle through lanes
- Lane widths
- Median width
- Shoulder width
- Sidewalk width
- Spacing of pedestrian crossings
- Spacing of signalized intersections
- Left turn lanes
- Dedicated transitway lanes
- Traffic calming
- On-street parking
- On-street and separated bikeways
- Bus and transitway shelters
- Lighting
- Landscaping
- Utility undergrounding

CSDG guidelines are intended to apply to future construction and re-construction projects. As stated in the CSDG:

The street types presented here were developed to help guide future street construction and reconstruction projects based on the planned vision for the roadway. They are intended to help guide future street designs and roadway projects.

CSDG street design specifications serve as guidelines for future capital improvement projects and development project review. However, specifications in area master plans and in the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways may supersede the CSDG guidelines. In addition, provisions of the County Code and County regulations may also govern street design requirements. For example, [Section 48-19](#) of the County Code establishes requirements for the undergrounding of utilities in certain urban areas of the County. Finally, Planning Board approved area-specific Streetscape Standards and Design Guidelines also may override some CSDG guidelines.

CHAPTER 4: STREET CLASSIFICATION IN THE COUNTY CODE

Chapter 49 of the County Code governs the construction, repair, improvement, and maintenance of public streets including their associated rights-of-way. In 2022, the County Council approved two amendments to Chapter 49 that modified the street classification process in the County. In October 2022, the Council approved Bill 24-22 to amend Section [49-31](#) to apply the 2021 Complete Streets Design Guide specifications to the design, construction, and improvement of County maintained streets. In December 2022, the Council approved Bill 34-22 to correct errors in Bill 24-22.

This chapter summarizes the street classification process established in the County Code as a result of the enactment of Bills 24-22 and 34-22.

A. Land Use Area Types

As described in Chapter 3 of this report, the Complete Streets approach considers land use context in classifying streets. The 2022 amendments to the County Code created land use area types for the classification for roads. Section [49-31\(a\)](#) describes the five area types.

- (1) A **downtown** area consists of areas with the highest intensity of development.
- (2) A **town center** area consists of areas with moderate to high development intensity.
- (3) A **country** area is located within the designated Rural area.
- (4) An **industrial** area is an area with predominantly industrial zoning.
- (5) A **suburban** area is an area with predominantly residential zoning that is not already a downtown, town center, industrial, or country area.

The Code further enumerates eight geographic areas designated as downtowns and 23 geographic areas designated as town centers. However, the area designations specified in the Code are interim pending review through the master planning process. As stated in Section [49-31](#):

County area types are as follows until subsequently designated by functional plans, [area] master plans, or sector plans.... These areas may be created, eliminated or modified by functional plans, [area] master plans, or sector plans.

Thus, while the Code established initial Complete Streets land use area designations, the Code authorizes and anticipates review and possible redesignation of land use areas as the Planning Board and Council draft, review, approve, and adopt future master plans.

B. Complete Streets Street Classifications

The County Code requires that each street must be assigned a County classification and a federal classification.⁴ The 2022 Code amendments replaced the previous street classifications with the 18 County street classifications set forth in the 2021 Complete Streets Design Guide (CSDG). The [current CSDG \(Version 1.2, May 2024\)](#) maintains the same street classifications listed in the County Code.

1. Freeway
2. Controlled Major Highway
3. Parkway
4. Downtown Boulevard
5. Downtown Street
6. Boulevard
7. Town Center Boulevard
8. Town Center Street
9. Area Connector
10. Neighborhood Connector
11. Neighborhood Street
12. Neighborhood Yield Street
13. Industrial Street
14. Country Connector
15. Country Road
16. Alley
17. Rustic/Exceptional Rustic Road
18. Residential/ Commercial Shared Street

Definitions for each of the above street classifications appear in Chapter 3 of this report.

⁴ Federal classifications are assigned in accordance with the most recent edition of the Federal Highway Administration Highway Functional Classification typologies.

C. Assignment of Street Classifications

Prior to the 2022 Code amendments, County streets had been classified under the previous classification system through area master plans and the [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways](#) (MPOHT). To assign one of the new Complete Streets classifications to existing streets, the Code amendments established a crosswalk between the previous set of street classifications and the new Complete Street classifications. The box on the following page presents examples of the reclassification of roads affected by the 2022 Code amendments ([Section 49-31](#)).

The street reclassifications applied through the 2022 Code amendments were intended to be interim measures pending reconsidering through the master planning process. The code introduces the reclassification crosswalk with the following statement:

County classifications are assigned as follows until the roads are re-designated by functional plans, master plans, or sector plans.

Examples of Reclassification of Streets Under Complete Streets Approach
Montgomery County Code, Section 49-31(d)

Controlled Major Highways retain their classifications as Controlled Major Highways.

Parkways retain their classifications as Parkways.

Major highways:

- *located in a downtown area are classified as Downtown Boulevards.*
- *located in a town center area are classified as Town Center Boulevards.*

Arterials:

- *with 4 or more lanes located in a downtown area are classified as Downtown Boulevards.*
- *with fewer than 4 lanes located in a downtown area are classified as Downtown Streets.*
- *with more than 2 lanes located in a town center area are classified as Town Center Boulevards.*
- *with 2 lanes located in a town center area are classified as Town Center Streets.*

Business District Streets:

- *with 4 or more lanes located in a downtown area are classified as Downtown Boulevards.*
- *with fewer than 4 lanes located in a downtown area are classified as Downtown Streets.*
- *with more than 2 lanes that are not located in a downtown area are classified as Town Center Boulevards.*
- *with 2 lanes that are not located in a downtown area are classified as Town Center Streets.*

Primary Residential Streets

- *located in a country area are classified as Country Roads.*
- *not located in a country area are classified as Neighborhood Connectors.*

Secondary Residential Streets are classified as Neighborhood Streets.

Tertiary Residential Streets are classified as Neighborhood Streets.

Country Arterials are classified as Country Connectors.

The County Code establishes default classifications based on the crosswalk described above and assigns to the master planning process the role of confirming or modifying street classifications. However, the Code also provides an alternative method for changing the interim default street classifications. The Code grants the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT) authority to change street classifications (under certain circumstances) outside of the master planning process.

If, after consultation with the staff of the Planning Board, the Department of Transportation determines that the criteria ... are not suitable for a particular road, the Department may determine that a more context-sensitive classification ... applies in lieu of the default classifications.

To date, DOT has not invoked this authority to reclassify a street.

D. Summary of County Code Street Classification Provisions

The County Code establishes the procedure method for interim and future land use area designations and street classifications. In sum, the Code:

- Creates five land use area designations (downtown, town center, country, industrial, and suburban).
- Establishes interim land use area designations for nine downtown and 23 town center areas.
- Authorizes modification of land use area designations by future functional or area master plans.
- Creates 18 “Complete Street” street classifications.
- Assigns interim “Complete Street” street classifications through a crosswalk between the previous classifications and the new “Complete Street” street classifications.
- Authorizes modification of street classifications by future functional or area master plans.
- Authorizes DOT to change street classifications (under certain circumstances) outside the functional/area master plan process.

CHAPTER 5: STREET CLASSIFICATION IN FUNCTIONAL MASTER PLANS

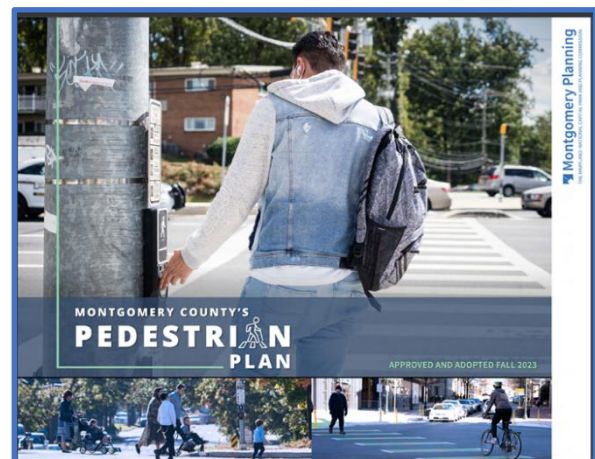
A functional master plan is a type of master plan addressing a Countywide function (such as transportation facilities) or a specific planning element (such as pedestrian mobility or historic preservation). Three County functional master plans address street classification:

1. Pedestrian Plan
2. Master Plan of Highways and Transitways
3. Rural Roads Master Plan

This chapter presents street classification recommendations included in currently approved functional master plans.

A. Pedestrian Plan

The County Council approved the [Pedestrian Master Plan](#) in October 2023. This functional master plan provides recommendations regarding right-of-way design guidelines, roadway standards, and capital investments intended to improve the pedestrian mobility throughout the County. The Pedestrian Plan clearly indicates that the [Complete Streets Design Guide](#) (CSDG) serves as a companion document. As stated in the Pedestrian Plan:



These recommendations advance the transition from the Road Code area type classification (Urban, Suburban, Rural) to the Complete Streets Design Guide classifications (Downtown, Town Center, Suburban, Industrial, Country) to ensure that pedestrian-friendly streets are provided as roadways are reconstructed in the years ahead. (page 3)

The plan is complemented by the county's Complete Streets Design Guide, a document that defines the appropriate speed limit, sidewalk width, and other roadway characteristics for every road in the county. (page 5)

The Pedestrian Plan describes the transition from the former street classification system to a new system governed by the [Complete Streets Design Guide](#) (CSDG). The plan presents a three-phase process to implement CSDG street classifications:

Phase 1: Enactment of Bill 24-22 and Bill 34-22. With the enactment of Bill 24-22 on November 7, 2022 and Bill 34-22 on December 27, 2022, the County Council established interim translations for CSDG street types (Downtown Boulevard, Downtown Street,

Town Center Boulevard, etc.) that are based on both the CSDG area types (Downtown, Town Center, Suburban, Industrial, and Country) and the previous street classification system. These interim street designations are estimated to be 90% accurate, reflecting that not all roads fit neatly into the 12 street types and that additional master planning review may be needed to refine some street classifications.

Phase 2: Master Plan Area Types in the Pedestrian Master Plan. To address some of the main deficiencies in the Phase 1 translation, and because the Pedestrian Master Plan includes recommendations that rely on CSDG area types, this plan replaces the interim area type designations in the county code with permanent area type designations throughout the county.

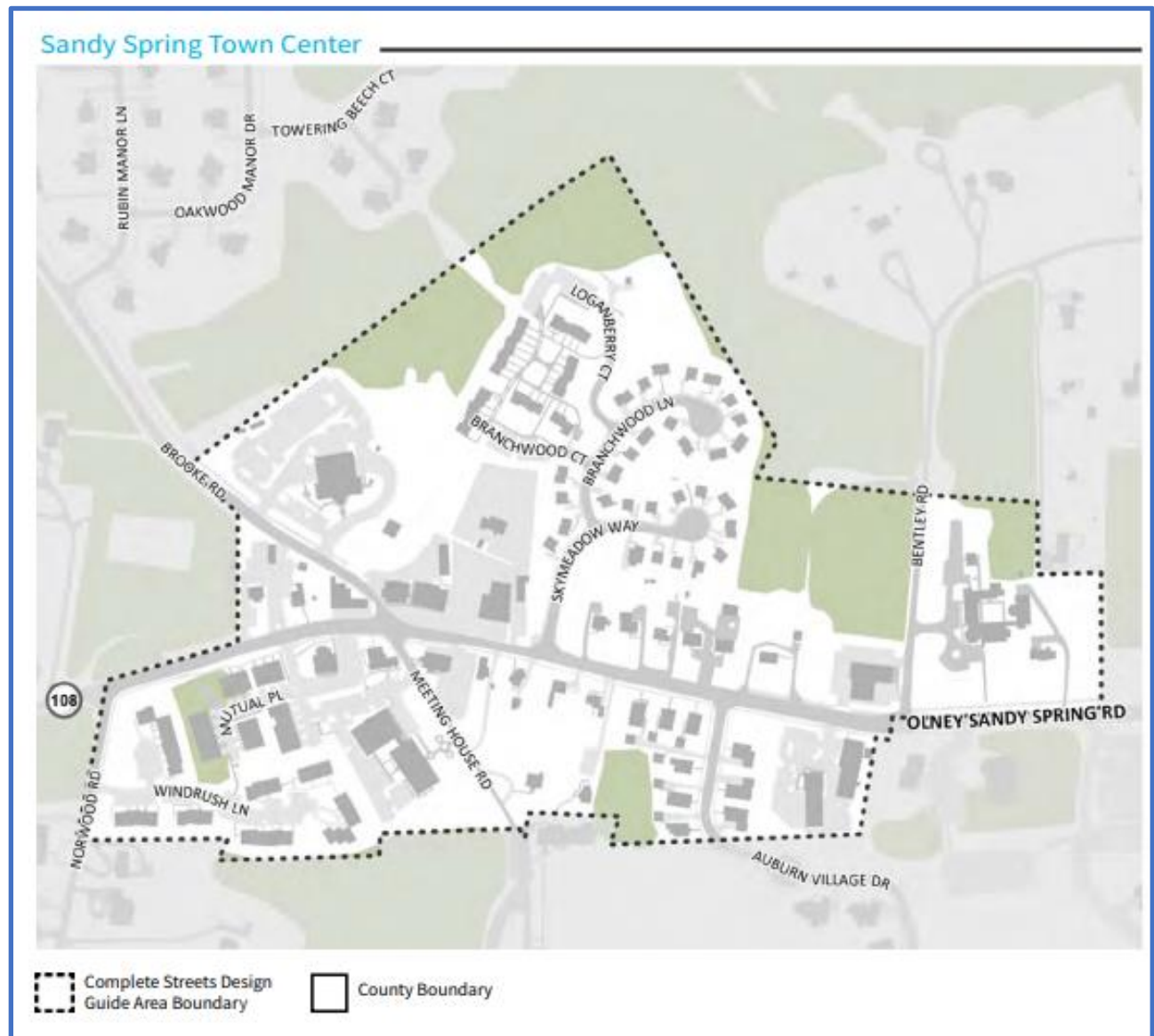
Phase 3: Master Plan Street Types in a Technical Update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. This plan update would reevaluate the classifications of all roads to fully ensure that each road is accurately and contextually classified. (Page 129)

The first phase in implementing CSDG street classification, amendment of the County Code, was completed prior to approval of the Pedestrian Plan. The second phase, approval of the Pedestrian Plan itself, replaced the interim land use area designations set forth in the Code with permanent area designations used to determine street classification land use context. The third phase, an update of the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, would follow approval of the Pedestrian Plan and would apply new CSDG street classifications to specific streets.

The Pedestrian Plan revisited the land use area designations originally included in the County Code. More specifically, the Pedestrian Plan expands the number of Town Centers from the 23 locations listed in the County Code to a total of 46 locations. The plan also identifies nine Industrial areas; the County Code did not list any specific Industrial areas. The Pedestrian Plan includes detailed maps showing the boundaries of each Downtown, Town Center, and Industrial area, as shown in the example of the Sandy Spring Town Center boundary map that appears on the next page.

While the Pedestrian Plan amended existing area master plans by specifying land use area boundaries, the document clearly states that it is the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways that applies classifications to specific streets:

A street's classification is determined by the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. (page 129)



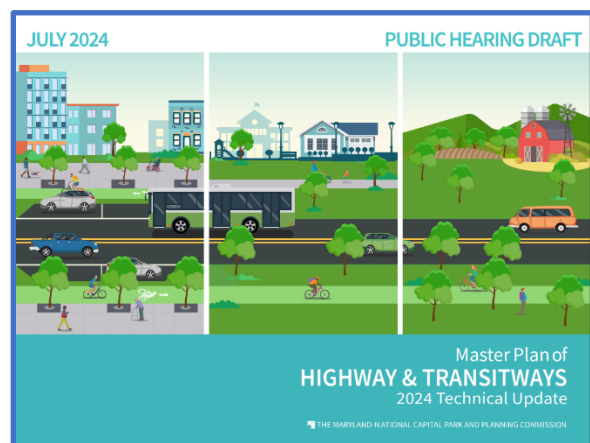
B. Master Plan of Highways and Transitways

The [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways](#) (MPOHT) is the functional master plan that provides guidance for transportation capital improvements, preservation of rights-of-way to accommodate future transportation systems, and most importantly for this report, application of street classifications to specific streets. The Council most recently approved an update to the MPOHT in December 2018. The Planning Board and Planning Department currently are working on a new update to the MPOHT. As the writing of this report, the most recent full version of the MPOHT update was the [July 2024 Public Hearing Draft](#).

The MPOHT is frequently amended outside of the technical update process. Area master plans and other functional master plans can, and repeatedly do, amend elements of the MPOHT including street classifications. As stated in the MPOHT 2024 Technical Update, Public Hearing Draft:

The MPOHT has evolved through the continuing planning process in Montgomery County. It is amended every time an area master plan or functional master plan is adopted by the Montgomery County Council. (page 5)

The MPOHT 2024 Technical Update, Public Hearing Draft adopts the Complete Streets approach incorporated into the 2023 Pedestrian Plan. The Public Hearing Draft presents the same three phase Complete Streets implementation process outlined in the Pedestrian Plan (see Section A above) culminating in the future approved MPOHT Technical Update confirming or modifying specific street classifications. As such, the new MPOHT (if approved by the County Council without major modifications), will assign street classifications based on the five land use area designations and the 18 street classifications established in the 2022 County Code amendments.



C. Rural Roads Functional Master Plan

The County Council approved an update to the [Rustic Roads Master Plan](#) in December 2023. The County's Rustic Roads Program, established in [Chapter 49, Article 8 of the County Code](#), sets criteria for identifying "rustic roads" and "exceptional rustic roads" with characteristics worthy of preservation. The program further establishes standards for the upkeep and improvement of these two road classifications.

The 2023 plan update considered roads that have been nominated for inclusion in the Rustic Roads Program and provided the necessary details for several roads that are currently in the program but have incomplete descriptions. As stated in the 2023 update, the plan establishes roadway specifications for rustic and exceptional rustic roads that are separate and apart from the Complete Street guidelines:

The Complete Streets Style Guide defers to this plan for guidance on making improvements along rustic roads. (page 14)



D. Summary of Street Classification Recommendations in Functional Master Plans

Functional master plans apply land use area designations and street classifications consistent with the process set forth in the County Code. In sum:

- The [Pedestrian Plan](#) adopts the Complete Streets approach and assigns land use area types to specific locations in the County but acknowledges that future master plans may modify area designations.
- The pending [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways](#) update adopts the Pedestrian Plan's area designations and reassesses street classifications established in the County Code and area master plans.
- The [Rustic Roads Plan](#) establishes unique road specifications for streets classified as either rustic roads or exceptional rustic roads.

CHAPTER 6: STREET CLASSIFICATION IN AREA MASTER PLANS

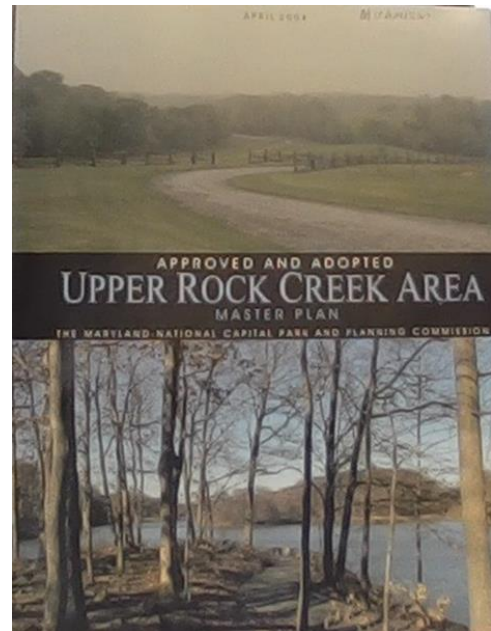
An area master plan provides planning guidance for specific geographic areas of the County and typically include recommendations concerning land use and zoning, urban design, transportation, parks and open space, the environment, historic resources, and public facilities. The transportation section of most area master plans assigns a classification to specific streets or sections of streets. As detailed below, the master plan street classifications changed significantly following the approval of the 2022 County Code amendments (see Chapter 4 of this report). This chapter discusses the presentation of street classifications in one area master plan that pre-dated the 2022 County Code amendments and another area master plan approved after the amendments.

A. Pre-2022 Area Master Plans (Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan)

The County Council approved the [Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan](#) in 2004. This plan (as with all other area master plans that pre-dated the 2022 Complete Streets amendments to the County Code) classifies streets using the previous classifications such as major highways, arterials, business streets, residential streets, or industrial streets. As an example, the street and highway classification table from the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan appears on the following page.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this report, the County previously classified streets using a traditional functional system predicated primarily on automotive vehicle mobility and property access. As stated in the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan:

The County's road classifications identify road function, service, and ultimate right-of-way width to create a rational road hierarchy and insure room for streetscape, sidewalks, and bikeways. Road classification changes are intended to make roadways consistent with road definitions in the County Code, intended road function, and ultimate road design and right-of-way. (page 67)



The 2022 amendments to the County Code both adopted new Complete Streets classifications and established a crosswalk between the previous set of street classifications and the new classifications. As a result, the County Code modified street classifications in pre-2022 area master plans (such as the Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan) to one of the new Complete Streets classifications. For example, a street classified as an arterial in a pre-2022 area master plan became reclassified as a downtown boulevard, downtown street, town center boulevard, or town center street depending on its location and the number of travel lanes.

2004 Upper Rock Creek Area Master Plan (page 73)

Street and Highway Classifications

Roadway		Limits	Minimum ROW Width (feet)	Number of Travel Lanes ¹
Freeways				
F-9	Intercounty Connector	Redland Road to North Branch of Rock Creek	300	6, divided, plus transitway facility
Major Highways				
M-21	Woodfield Road (MD 124)	Muncaster Mill Road to Warfield Road	120-150 ²	6, divided
M-23	East Gude Drive	CSX Railroad to Southlawn Lane	120	4, divided
M-42	Shady Grove Road	Mill Run Drive to Muncaster Mill Road	120-150 ²	6, divided
M-60	Olney-Laytonsville Road (MD 108)	Laytonsville Town Boundary to Plan Boundary	120	4, divided
M-83	Midcounty Highway	Redland Road to F-9	150	4-6, divided
Arterials				
A-42	Bowie Mill Road	Muncaster Mill Road to North Branch of Rock Creek	80	2
A-93	Muncaster Mill Road (MD 115)	Woodfield Road to Redland Road	100	4, divided
A-93	Muncaster Mill Road (MD 115)	Redland Road to North Branch of Rock Creek	80	2
A-95	Fieldcrest Road	Woodfield Road to Olney-Laytonsville Road	80	2
A-102	Muncaster Road	Muncaster Mill Road to Olney-Laytonsville Road	80	2

¹ These are the number of planned through travel lanes for each segment, not including lanes for turning, parking, acceleration, deceleration, or other purposes auxiliary to through travel

² Current design plans for these roadways call for six lanes within a 120-foot right-of-way. These plans should be implemented. Future subdivisions should require 150-foot rights-of-way for long term planning purposes.

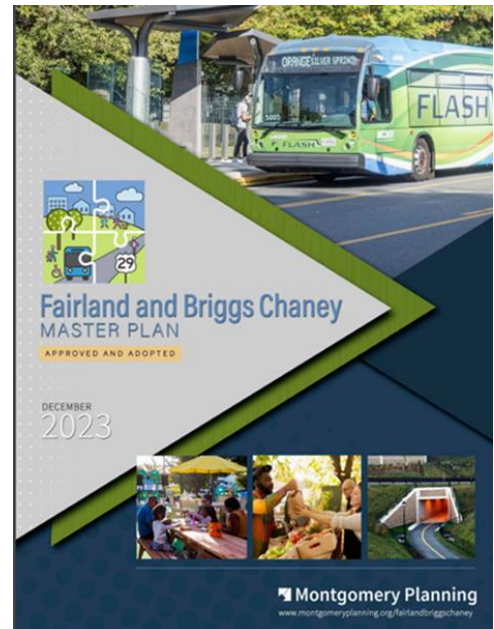
B. Post-2022 Area Master Plans (Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan)

The County Council approved the [Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan](#) in 2023. This plan was approved following the 2022 County Code amendments, and so, incorporates the Complete Streets approach in land use, transportation, and streetscaping design recommendations. As stated in the Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan:

The Master Plan... implements the county's forward-thinking policies including... Complete Streets... (page 6)

The Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan designates specific locations as Complete Street land use areas such as “Downtown:” and “Town Center” and promotes right-of-way and street specifications consistent with the Complete Streets Design Guide for each area type. The Master Plan also classifies specific streets using the Complete Streets classifications established in the 2022 County Code amendments.

The street and highway classification table (with the new Complete Streets classifications) from the Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan appears on the following page.



2023 Fairland and Briggs Chaney Master Plan (page 70)

TABLE 5: Street Classification and Right-of-Way (ROW) Recommendations (sorted by County Classification)

Street	From (east or north)	To (west or south)	Minimum Planned ROW (ft)	Existing Lanes	Planned Lanes	Target Speed (mph)
Downtown Boulevard						
East Randolph Road	Columbia Pike	Serpentine Way	120	4	4	25
Downtown Street						
Old Columbia Pike	150 feet south of Ruxton Road	Featherwood Street	80	2	2	25
Tech Road	Columbia Pike	Old Columbia Pike	80	4	4	25
Boulevard						
East Randolph Road	Serpentine Way	Paint Branch stream/western plan boundary	80	5	4	35
Town Center Boulevard						
Briggs Chaney Road	Intercounty Connector (MD 200)	Old Columbia Pike	120	4	4	30
Town Center Street						
Automobile Boulevard	Briggs Chaney Road	Automobile Boulevard	80	2	2	25
Castle Boulevard (proposed) (a)	Ballinger Drive	Fairland Crossing Apartments	80	2	2	25
Castle Boulevard	Fairland Crossing Apartments	Briggs Chaney Road	80	2	2	25
Fairland Road	Musgrove Road	western plan boundary	80	2	2	25
Gateshead Manor Way	Parkford Manor Drive	Briggs Chaney Road	70	2	2	25
Gateshead Manor Way (proposed) (e)	Briggs Chaney Road	Automobile Boulevard	70	2	2	25
Musgrove Road	Fairland Road	Old Columbia Pike	80	2	2	25
Old Columbia Pike	400 feet south of Edfinn Road	Musgrove Road	80	2	2	30
Robey Road	Ballinger Drive	Briggs Chaney Road	70	2	2	25
Robey Road (proposed) (d)	Briggs Chaney Road	Automobile Boulevard	70	2	2	25
Area Connector						
Briggs Chaney Road	Old Columbia Pike	western plan boundary	80	2	2	25
Greencastle Road	Columbia Pike (U.S. 29)	eastern plan boundary	80	2	2	25
Old Columbia Pike	northern plan boundary	400 feet south of Edfinn Road	80	2	2	25
Old Columbia Pike	Musgrove Road	150 feet south of Ruxton Road	80	2	2	25
Neighborhood Connector						
Aston Manor Way (proposed) (b)	Robey Road	Colgate Way	70	2	2	25
Aston Manor Way	Colgate Way	Briggs Chaney Road	70	2	2	25
Ballinger Drive	Wexhall Drive	Robey Road	70	2	2	25
Featherwood Street	Old Columbia (Old U.S. 29)	Loft Lane	70	2	2	25
Gateshead Manor Way	Aston Manor Drive	Parkford Manor Drive	70	2	2	25
new street (proposed) (c)	Greencastle Road	Sheffield Manor Drive	70	2	2	25
Old Columbia Pike	Featherwood Street	Cedar Hill Drive	80	2	2	25
Robey Road	Greencastle Road	Ballinger Drive	70	2	2	25
Sheffield Manor Drive	Aston Manor Drive	Guilford Run Lane	70	2	2	25
Stratford Garden Drive	East Randolph Road	Stratford Garden Drive	70	2	2	25
Wexhall Road	Greencastle Road	Ballinger Drive	70	2	2	25
Controlled Major Highway						
Columbia Pike (U.S. 29)	Greencastle Road	Paint Branch stream/southern plan boundary	200	6	6 + 2 Transit Lanes	45-55
Freeway						
Intercounty Connector (MD 200)	eastern plan boundary	western plan boundary	300	6	6	55<

C. Summary of Street Classification in Area Master Plans

Area master plans approved prior to the 2022 Complete Streets amendments to the County Code (and not yet updated) include the old street classifications. These classifications have been changed to new Complete Streets classifications as specified in the County Code. Furthermore, the pre-2022 area master plans have been amended by the Pedestrian Plan that designated land use areas throughout the County. Roadway classifications in older area master plans are also subject to potential modification by the Department of Transportation (see Chapter 4 of this report).

Area master plans approved after the 2022 amendments to the County Code include Complete Streets land use area designations and street classifications.

Street classifications in any area master plan may be modified by amendments to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways as well as any other subsequent functional or area master plan.

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY OF LAND USE AREA DESIGNATION AND STREET CLASSIFICATION PROCESSES

Previous chapters of this report described how provisions of the County Code as well as policies and recommendations in functional and area master plans shape the processes for designating land use areas and for classifying streets. This chapter presents a summary of the land use area designation and street classification processes.

A. Land Use Designation Process

The Complete Streets approach considers land use context in classifying streets. Several Complete Street classifications are dependent on “land use context,” that is, the level and character of development adjacent to a roadway segment. The 2022 amendments to the County Code established and defined five land use area types for the classification for roads: downtown, town center, country, industrial, and suburban. However, the Code authorizes and anticipates review and possible redesignation of area as the Planning Board and Council draft, review, approve, and adopt subsequent master plans.

The first master plan to revise the land use area designations was the 2023 Pedestrian (Functional) Master Plan. The Pedestrian Plan revisited the land use area designations originally included in the County Code and expanded the number of Town Centers from 23 to 46 locations. The plan also identifies nine Industrial areas not specified in the County Code. Furthermore, the Pedestrian Plan includes detailed maps showing the boundaries of each Downtown, Town Center, and Industrial area.

A schematic depicting the steps of the land use area designation process appears on the next page.

Designation of Land Use Areas		
Implementation Step	Means of Implementation	
Establishment and Definition of Land Use Areas	Amendments to County Code Section 49-31 (2022)	
Interim Designation of Specific Locations as Downtown or Town Center Areas	Amendments to County Code Section 49-31 (2022)	
Permanent Designation of Specific Locations as Downtown, Town Center, Industrial, Suburban, or Country Areas	Pedestrian Master Plan (2023) that amended multiple area master plans	
Potential Re-Designation of Land Use Areas	Future functional or area master plans	

B. Street Classification Process

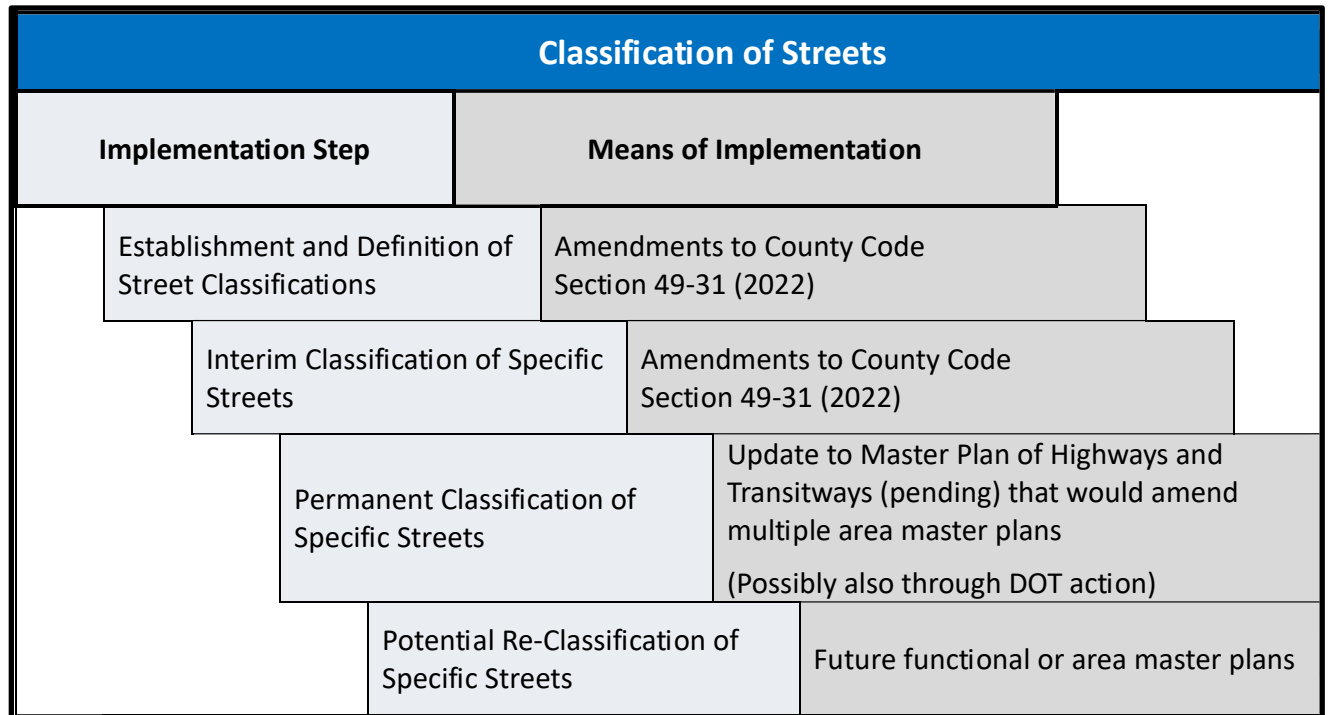
Prior to 2022, the County classified streets using a traditional functional system predicated primarily on automotive vehicle mobility and property access. In 2022, the County adopted a “Complete Streets” classification system with a multimodal perspective that is sensitive to land use context. The 2022 amendments to the County Code established and defined 18 Complete Streets street classifications. (See Chapter 3 of this report for the list of street classifications and their definitions.)

The amended County Code applied interim street classifications through a crosswalk between the previous set of street classifications and the new Complete Street classifications. (See Chapter 4 of this report for examples of how the County Code changed street classifications from the previous to the new classification system.) The street reclassifications applied by the 2022 Code amendments were intended to be interim measures. The County Code authorizes re-classification of streets through the functional and area master planning process. The pending update to the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways will apply permanent classifications to County streets.

The County Code also provides an alternative method for changing the interim default street classifications. The Code grants the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT) authority to change street classifications outside the master planning process upon a determination that “a more context-sensitive classification” is appropriate for a particular street. To date, DOT has not invoked this authority to reclassify a street.

Future functional and area master plans may modify the classification of any street or portion of a street. Thus, street classification is a dynamic process. Each subsequent functional or area master plan can, and frequently does, amend previous plans. **To determine the current classification of a specific street, the following rule applies: the most recently approved plan controls.**

A schematic depicting the steps of the street classification process appears below.



CHAPTER 8: ACCESSIBILITY OF STREET CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

This chapter describes the availability and accessibility of resources with information about classification of County streets.

A. Dynamic Street Classifications in Static Documents

Functional and area master plans are, in some ways, static documents and, in other ways, dynamic documents. Upon a plan's approval, the content of that document becomes fixed, a historic reference to the planning decisions adopted by the County at that point in time. A reader of the master plan will find policies and recommendations – including those for street classifications – that were accurate at the time of the plan's approval.

However, as mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, functional and area master plans can, and frequently do, amend policies and recommendations – including those related to street classifications – contained in other plans. Thus, while the plan documents themselves remain fixed and static, the policies and recommendations contained in functional and area master plans may be revisited by subsequent plans and are subject to modification. In sum, a sequence of static documents may each apply a classification to a particular street in a dynamic process in which the most recently approved plan controls.

As a result, each individual plan document may or may not contain the final word on a particular street classification. A County resident or property owner may not find current street classifications simply by looking at a single area or functional master plan, or the Planning Department's web page for that plan. The next two sections of this chapter describe online tools maintained by the Planning Department that present information on current street classifications.

B. MCAtlas

The Planning Department maintains an online interactive Geographic Information System (GIS)⁵ called [MCAtlas](#). A trained MCAtlas user may access dozens of "layers"⁶ of information for particular locations in the County, including information related to:

- Zoning
- Development Plans
- Environmental Features
- Parks
- Public Facilities
- Special Taxing and Service Districts
- Water and Sewer Categories
- Election Districts
- Historic Resources
- Agricultural Easements
- Common Ownership Communities
- Topography

⁵ A Geographic Information System is a computer application that analyzes, consolidates, and maps information linked to a unique geographic location.

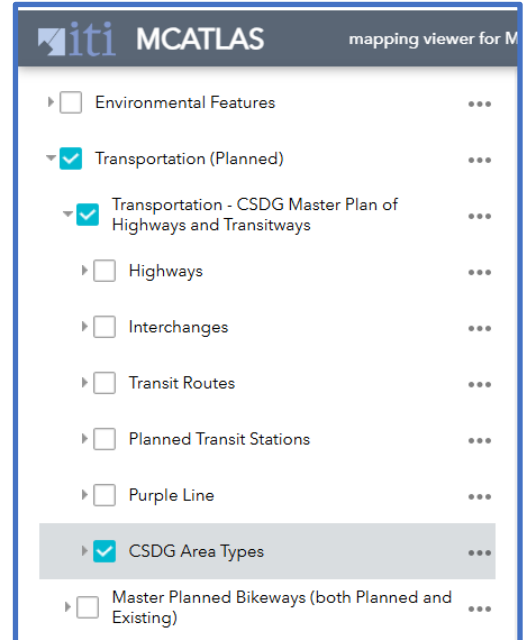
⁶ A GIS layer is database of the geographic locations for a specific class of information.

Street Classification and the Master Planning Process

MCAtlas includes a layer that identifies locations in the County based on the five Complete Streets land use areas as well as a layer that specifies the classification of individual streets or street segments. An MCAtlas user may find maps of Complete Street land use areas by selecting the following layers:

Primary Level	<i>Transportation (Planned)</i>
Secondary Level	<i>Transportation – CSDG Master Plan of Highways and Transitways</i>
Tertiary Level	<i>CSDG Area Types</i>

With the above three layer levels selected, MCAtlas produces a map of the entire County that displays Downtown, Town Center, Industrial, Country, and Suburban areas identified by different shading patterns. The user may then zoom in to any area of the County to view the area boundaries with greater specificity. For example, the image below depicts the MCAtlas map of the Sandy Spring Town Center.



MCAtlas Map of Sandy Spring Town Center

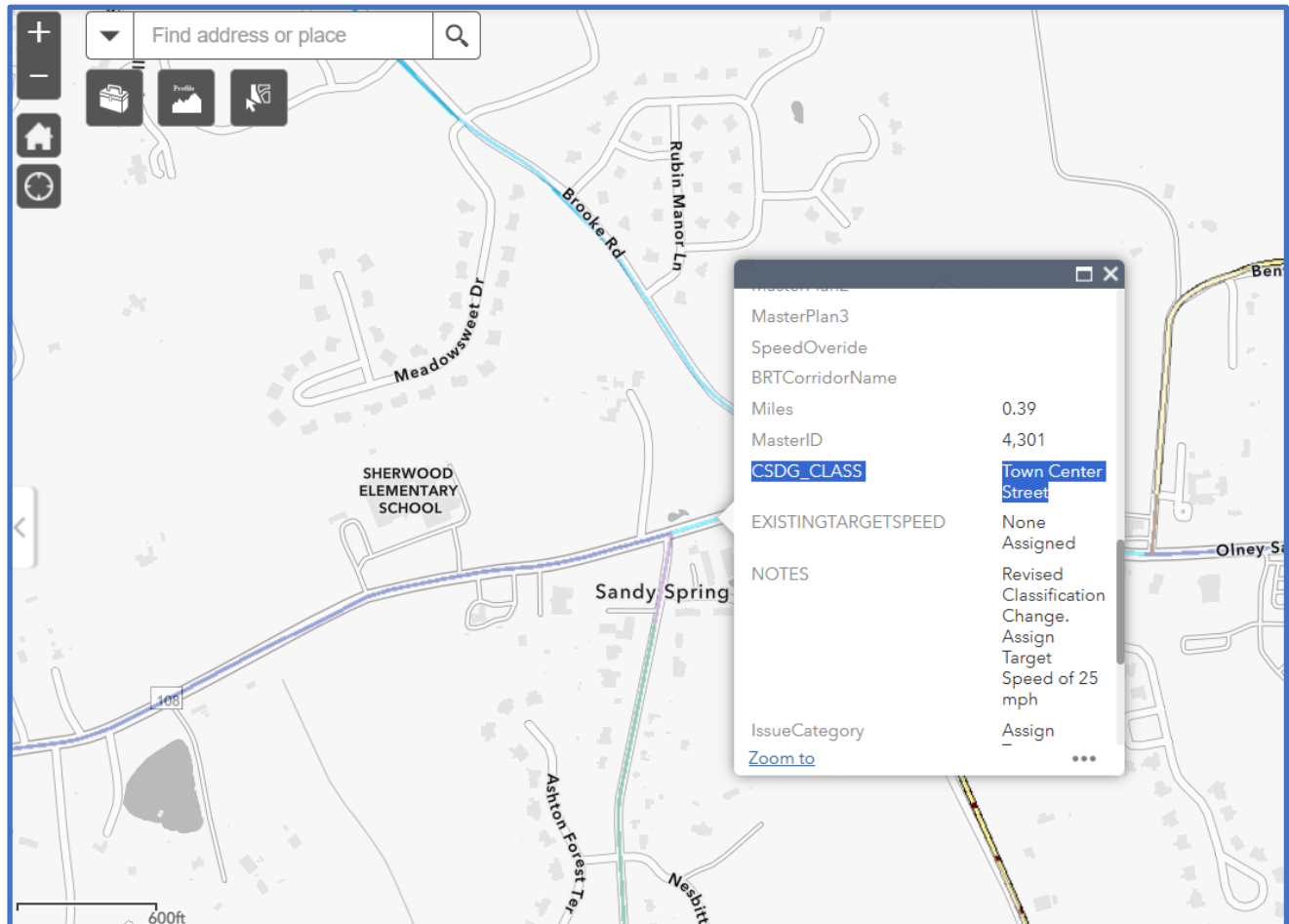
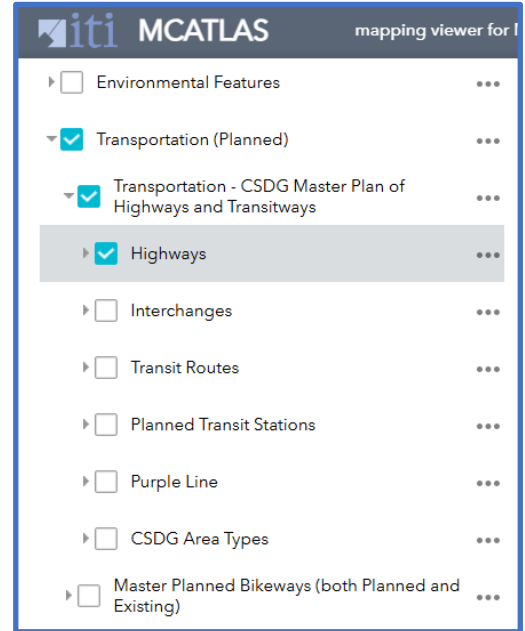


Street Classification and the Master Planning Process

MCAtlas also contains information about current street classifications. An MCAtlas user may find maps of with street classifications by selecting the following layers:

Primary Level	<i>Transportation (Planned)</i>
Secondary Level	<i>Transportation – CSDG Master Plan of Highways and Transitways</i>
Tertiary Level	<i>CSDG Area Types</i>

With the above three layer levels selected, MCAtlas produces a map of the entire County that displays all streets color coded by classification. The user may then zoom in to any area of the County to view a specific street or street segment. For example, the image below depicts the MCAtlas map of the portion of Olney-Sandy Spring Road located in the Sandy Spring Town Center. With a mouse click on the street, a pop-up box appears with information about the street including its classification as a Town Center Street.

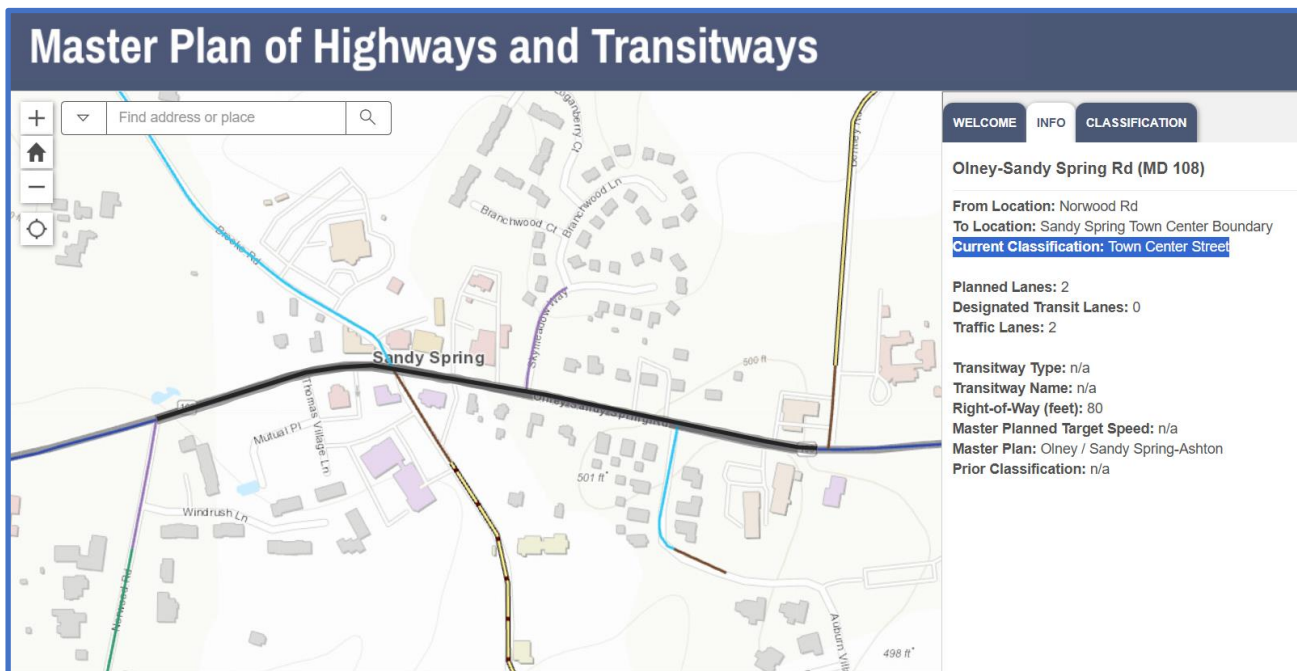


MCAtlas contains a large trove of detailed information which makes the tool simultaneously exceedingly valuable and exceedingly complex to use. Individuals who are not regular users of MCAtlas likely will be challenged to quickly extract information (such the classification of a specific street) from this application. However, as detailed in the next section, the Planning Department maintains other online tools that allow users to more readily access street classification information.

C. MPOHT Online Maps and Classification Table

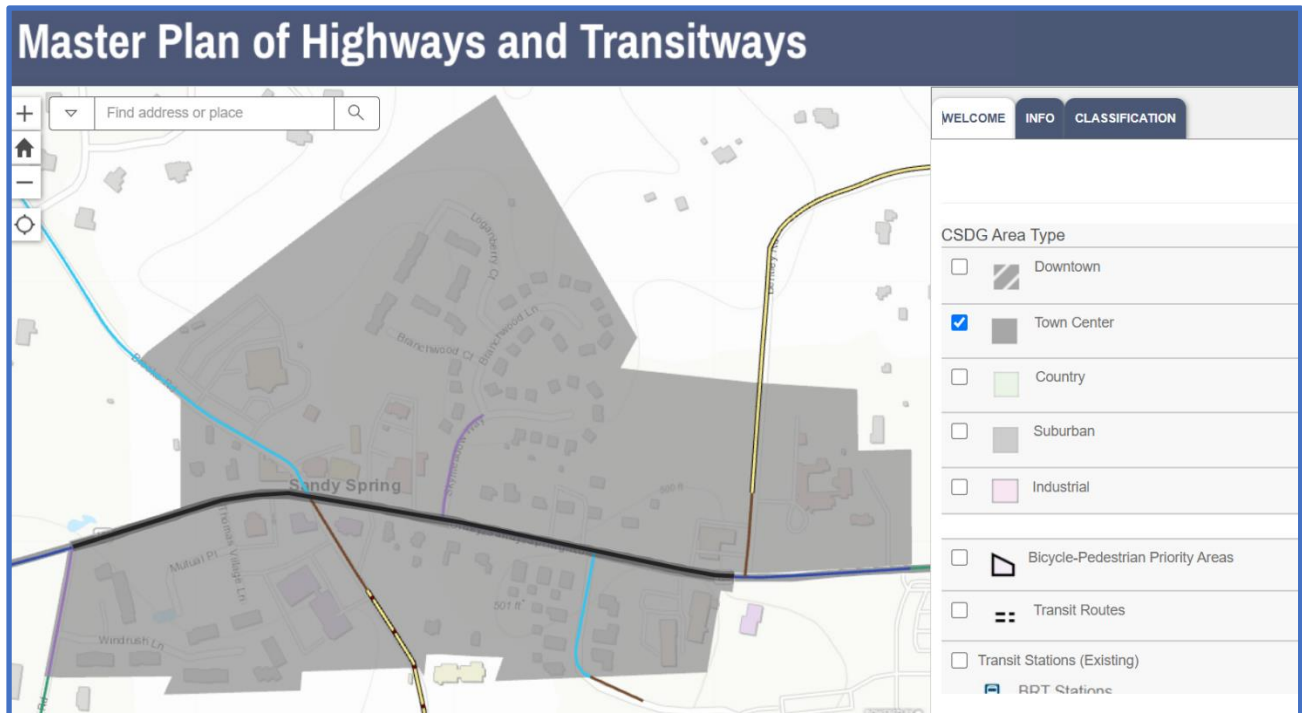
The Planning Department's [Master Plan of Highways and Transitways \(MPOHT\) web page](#) posts links to two maps and a table that provide direct access to street classification information in fewer user steps than through MCAtlas. From the MPOHT web page, a resident or property owner may click on the "[Approved Streets and Transitways Online Map](#)" to open up an interactive map and then either type in a street address or zoom the map to a specific location. With a click on the street, the map displays information about the street including its current classification.

The image below shows the MHOPT online map's display of the street classification for Olney-Sandy Spring Road in the Sandy Spring Town Center.

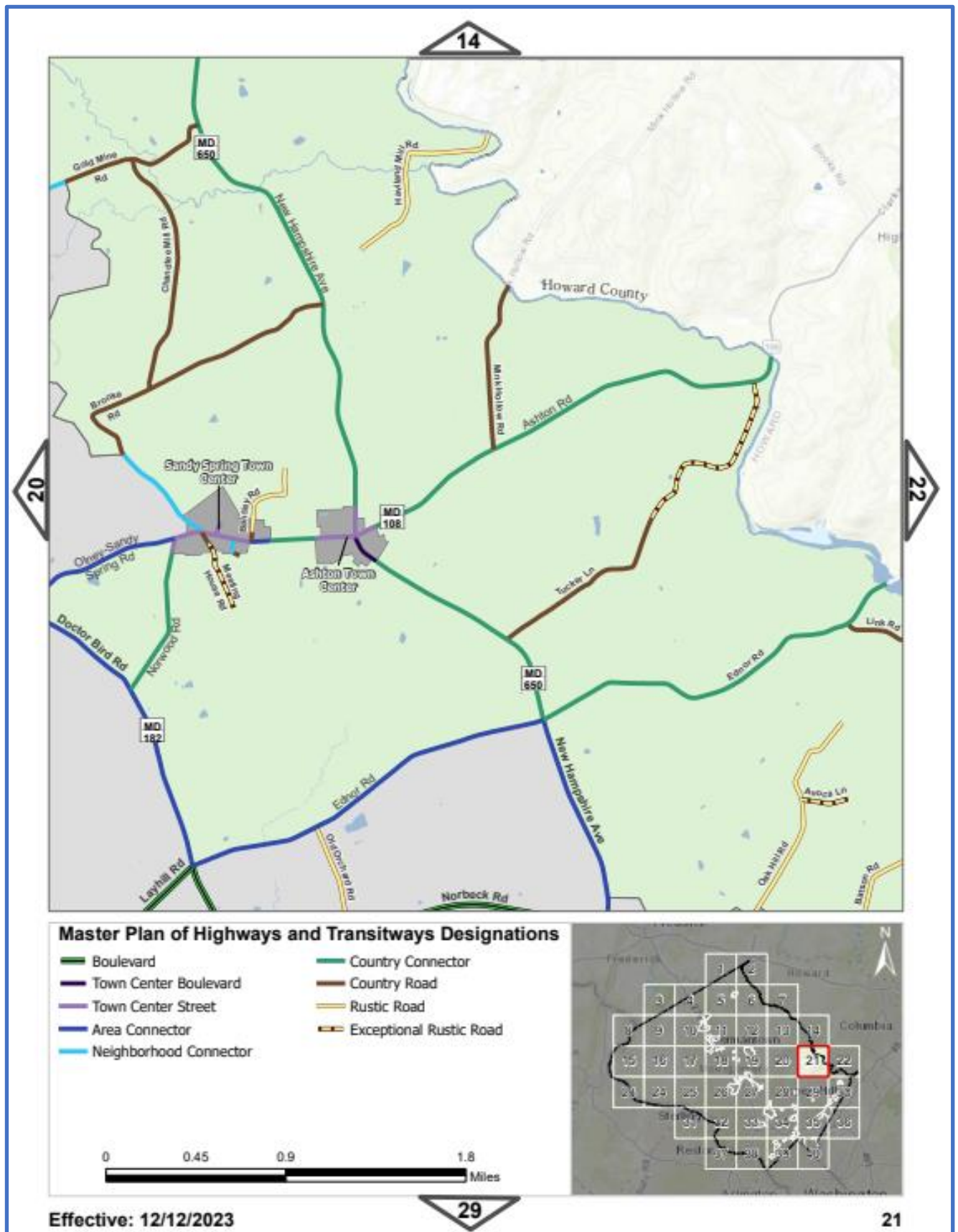


Street Classification and the Master Planning Process

The MPOHT online map also allows users to click a box to locate the boundaries of Complete Streets land use areas. The image below shows the map's presentation of the Sandy Spring Town Center boundaries.



The Planning Department's website also provides a traditional, non-interactive map that displays street classifications. From the MPOHT web page, residents may click on "Approved Streets and Transitways Network" and then click on "[MPOHT Mapbook](#)" to access a grid overlaying a map of the full County. Users may then select a grid to view a map with a key displaying street classifications in a selected portion of the County. The image on the following page shows the MPOHT Mapbook presentation of street classifications in the Sandy Spring area.



In addition, the Planning Department's website posts an alphabetical list of County streets with information about specific streets and street segments including classification. From the MPOHT web page, residents may click on "Approved Streets and Transitways Network" and then click on "[MPOHT Classification Table](#)" to access the list. The image on the following page shows the section of the list that includes Olney-Sandy Spring Road.

D. Online Location of Street Classification Tools

The interactive Approved Streets and Transitways Online Map, the Mapbook, and the Street Classification Table are accessible from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT) home page or from other pages linked to the MPOHT home page. At present, these tools are not accessible, nor are they mentioned, on the home pages for area master plans. As such, a resident or property owner who is not previously familiar with the MPOHT likely would not be aware of the existence of these tools.

Street Classification and the Master Planning Process

Master Plan of Highways and Transitways Functional Classification - Effective 12/12/2023

Name	From Location	To Location	Classification	Master Plan	Existing Lanes	Planned Lanes	Transit Lanes	Traffic Lanes	ROW (Feet)	Target Speed
Old Columbia Pike	150 feet south of Ruxton Rd	Featherwood Street	Downtown Street	Fairland-Briggs Chaney Master Plan	2	2	0	2	80	25
Old Frederick Rd	Stringtown Rd	Clarksburg Rd (MD 121)	Town Center Street	Ten Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment (2014)	2	2	0	2	50	25
Old Frederick Rd	Clarksburg Rd (MD 121)	Snowden Farm Pkwy / Observation Dr Extended	Town Center Street	Ten Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment (2014)	2	2	0	2	50	25
Old Frederick Rd	Clarksburg Town Center Boundary	Stringtown Rd	Town Center Street	Ten Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment (2014)	2	2	0	2	50	
Old Frederick Rd	Roberts Tavern Dr	Clarksburg Town Center Boundary	Town Center Street	Ten Mile Creek Area Limited Amendment (2014)	2	2	0	2	50	
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	I-270	Tuckerman Ln	Boulevard	Countywide Transit Corridors	6	6 to 7	1 to 2	4 to 6	130	
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	140' west of Battery Ln	Cheshire Dr	Boulevard	North Bethesda/Garrett Park	6	6	0	6	130	
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Cheshire Dr	Rock Spring Dr	Downtown Boulevard	Rock Spring	6	6	0	6	120	
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Wilson Ln	Cordell Ave	Downtown Boulevard	Bethesda Downtown Plan	3	4	0	4	86	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Wisconsin Ave	Moorland Ln	Downtown Boulevard	Bethesda Downtown Plan	3	4	0	4	80	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Nebel St	Rockville Pike	Downtown Boulevard	White Flint Sector Plan	2	4	0	4	90	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Cordell Ave	140' west of Battery Ln	Downtown Boulevard	Bethesda Downtown Plan	4	4	0	4	100	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Moorland Ln	Wilson Ln	Downtown Boulevard	Bethesda Downtown Plan	3	4	0	4	82	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Tuckerman Ln	Nicholson Ln	Boulevard	Countywide Transit Corridors	6	6 to 7	1 to 2	4 to 6	126	
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Nicholson Ln	830' north of Nicholson Ln / Market St	Downtown Boulevard	White Flint 2 Sector Plan	6	6 to 7	1 to 2	4 to 6	150	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	400' east of Towne Rd	Rockville Pike (MD 355)	Downtown Boulevard	Countywide Transit Corridors	4	4	0	4	120	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Towne Rd	400' east of Towne Rd	Downtown Boulevard	White Flint Sector Plan	4	4	0	4	120	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	830' north of Nicholson Ln / Market St	Executive Blvd / Towne Rd	Downtown Boulevard	White Flint 2 Sector Plan	6	6 to 7	1 to 2	4 to 6	150	25
Old Georgetown Rd (MD 187)	Rock Spring Dr	I-270	Downtown Boulevard	Rock Spring	6	6 to 7	1 to 2	4 to 6	150	
Old Hundred Rd	Barnesville Rd	Peach Tree Rd	Rustic Road	Rustic Roads Functional Plan (2023)	2	2	0	2	80	30
Old Hundred Rd	Barnesville Rd	Hyattstown Town Center Boundary	Country Connector	Rustic Roads Functional Plan (2023)	2	2	0	2	80	
Old Hundred Rd	Hyattstown Town Center Boundary	Frederick Rd	Country Connector	Rustic Roads Functional Plan (2023)	2	2	0	2	80	
Old Orchard Rd	Ednor Rd	End of Road	Rustic Road	Rustic Roads Functional Plan (2023)	2	2	0	2	70	30
Old River Rd	Montevideo Rd	River Rd	Rustic Road	Rustic Roads Functional Plan (2023)	2	2	0	2	70	30
Old Stage Rd	Dinwiddie Dr	Tilden Ln	Neighborhood Connector	North Bethesda/Garrett Park	2	2	0	2	70	
Old Vic Blvd	Olney-Sandy Spring Rd	Batchellors Forest Rd	Neighborhood Connector	Olney	2	2	0	2	70	
Olney Mill Rd	Olney-Laytonsville Rd	Wickham Road	Neighborhood Connector	2018 MPOHT Technical Update	2	2	0	2	70	
Olney Mill Rd	Gold Mine Rd	Olney-Laytonsville Rd	Neighborhood Connector	Olney	2	2	0	2	70	
Olney-Laytonsville Rd (MD 108)	Approx. 250' north of Olney Mill Rd	Olney Town Center Boundary	Boulevard	Olney	4	4	0	4	150	
Olney-Laytonsville Rd (MD 108)	Approx. 250' south of Maple Knoll Dr (Laytonsville south boundary)	Suburban Boundary	Boulevard	Olney	2	4	0	4	150	
Olney-Laytonsville Rd (MD 108)	Suburban Boundary	Approx. 250' north of Olney Mill Rd	Boulevard	Olney	2	4	0	4	150	
Olney-Laytonsville Rd (MD 108)	Olney Town Center Boundary	Georgia Ave (MD 97)	Town Center Boulevard	Olney	4	4	0	4	150	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Prince Philip Dr	Doctor Bird Rd	Boulevard	Olney	4	4	0	4	150	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Doctor Bird Rd	Nonwood Rd	Area Connector	Olney / Sandy Spring-Ashton	2	2	0	2	80	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Georgia Ave	Spartan Rd	Town Center Boulevard	Countywide Transit Corridors	4	4	0	4	150	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	500' east of Bentley Rd	Ashton Town Center Boundary	Country Connector	Olney / Sandy Spring-Ashton	2	2	0	2	80	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Ashton Town Center Boundary	Ashton Rd/New Hampshire Ave	Town Center Street	Olney / Sandy Spring-Ashton	2	2	0	2	80	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Nonwood Rd	Sandy Spring Town Center Boundary	Town Center Street	Olney / Sandy Spring-Ashton	2	2	0	2	80	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Sandy Spring Town Center Boundary	500' east of Bentley Rd	Area Connector	Olney / Sandy Spring-Ashton	2	2	0	2	80	
Olney-Sandy Spring Rd (MD 108)	Spartan Rd	Prince Phillip Dr	Boulevard	Countywide Transit Corridors	4	4	0	4	150	
Omega Dr	Fields Rd	Key West Ave	Downtown Boulevard	Great Seneca Science Corridor	2	4	0	4	100	30

CHAPTER 9: OLO OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Upon final approval, functional and area master plans are fixed and static documents. Nonetheless, the policies and recommendations contained in these plans may be revisited and amended by other subsequent plans. When different plans set forth different policies and recommendations on the same matter, the most recently approved plan controls.

A reader of one plan may be unaware of subsequent policy amendments that appear in an entirely different plan. For example, a person who reads an area master plan to identify a street classification may not have any indication that the classification shown in the area master plan was subsequently amended by a functional plan such as the Pedestrian Plan or the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways (MPOHT).

The Planning Department has developed online maps and a table that readily allow residents and property owners to identify current street classifications. At present, these tools are accessible solely via the MPOHT web pages, but are not accessible from, nor mentioned on, area master plan home pages. A person who is not knowledgeable about the detailed content of the MPOHT likely would be unaware of the existence of these tools. A resident or property owner may be most aware of their local area master plan but may not know that tools are available to learn whether street classifications in the area master plan have been amended by another document.

Councilmembers may wish to consider ways to make current information more accessible to County residents and property owners. **OLO suggests that the Planning Department consider altering the emphasis of planning area web pages from the current model which is focused primarily on the static master plan document to a model which focuses on disseminating a range of up-to-date planning-related information relevant to each plan area.** Toward this end, OLO suggests that Councilmembers discuss the following two questions with the Planning Department.

- 1. How can the Planning Department make up-to-date street classification information more accessible to the public? Should the Planning Department imbed direct links to street classification tools in area master plan home pages?***

County residents or property owners may seek to find planning policies and recommendations relevant to a particular area of the County by reading the area master plan for that area. As noted above, however, the reader of the master plan would not know whether the policies and recommendations contained in that plan have been amended by a subsequent document. The Planning Department has developed useful tools to help resident and property owners identify the current classification of specific streets. However, these tools are not accessible from area master plan web pages.

To make current street classification more accessible, OLO suggests Councilmember discuss with the Planning Department the feasibility of imbedding direct links to existing street classification tools in area master plan home pages.

2. What other dynamic planning and development information should appear on area master plan home pages?

Street classifications is just one example of the type of information that may originally appear in an area master plan but that may be subject to change after approval of the plan.

Councilmembers may wish to discuss with the Planning Department whether area master plan web pages could include up-to-date geographically-specific information regarding other land use planning and development matters. Some examples of related information include:

- Transportation and Mobility Maps: The Planning Department has developed several maps that present useful information on transportation facilities and ease of mobility for specific locations in the County. These maps include the [Bicycle Network](#) map, the Pedestrian [Level of Comfort](#) map, and the [Intersection Analysis](#) map. At present, these tools are not accessible from area master plan web pages.
- Status of Development Projects: Some area master plan web pages include an interactive map that identifies properties with development proposals currently under consideration or recently approved. However, many area master plan web pages do not include a similar map of current development projects.
- Status of Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Projects: Many area master plans include recommendations for new CIP projects in the plan area. However, most area master plan web pages do not offer any information on the implementation status of recommended CIP projects.
- Placemaking Projects: In recent years, the Planning Department engaged in a series on location-specific “[placemaking projects](#).” The Department defines placemaking as “a people-centered approach to the planning process, design and management of public spaces.” The Planning Department’s website includes placemaking pages for [Burtonsville](#), [Damascus](#), [Fairland and Briggs Chaney](#), [Long Branch](#), the [Pike District](#), [Silver Spring](#), [Wheaton](#), and [White Flint](#). Links to these placemaking projects appear on some, but not all, of the relevant area master plan home pages.

CHAPTER 10: PLANNING DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

OLO shared a draft of this report with the Planning Department. OLO appreciates the time taken by staff to review the draft report and provide comments. This final report incorporates technical corrections and feedback from these stakeholders.

In addition, the Planning Department Director provided written comments addressing the discussion questions presented by OLO in Chapter 9 of this report. The Planning Department Director's comments appear on the next page.



March 13, 2025

Aron Trombka

Senior Legislative Analyst
Office of Legislative Oversight
Montgomery County Council

Dear Mr. Trombka,

Thank you for providing Montgomery Planning the opportunity to respond to the questions posed in the Office of Legislative Oversight's (OLO) Draft Street Classification and Master Planning Process report. The report accurately evaluates the relationship between functional plans, area master plans and other planning documents, and identifies the challenge in conveying to community members that "while the plan documents themselves remain fixed and static, the policies and recommendations contained in functional and area master plans may be revisited by subsequent plans and are subject to modification." Over the years Montgomery Planning has addressed this issue by creating online maps that depict current master plan recommendations.

The report poses two questions:

- How can the Planning Department make up-to-date street classification information more accessible to the public? Should the Planning Department imbed direct links to street classification tools in area master plan home pages?
- What other dynamic planning and development information should appear on area master plan home pages?

Montgomery Planning seeks to provide a positive user experience for community members visiting our webpages. In considering the questions posed by the OLO report, we carefully considered the value that adding links to area master plan home pages would provide the community, as webpages that are excessively cluttered can negatively impact the user experience.

Montgomery Planning will take the following actions:

- Provide direct links to the **street classification** (mcatlas.org/mpoht) and **bicycle network** (mcatlas.org/bikeplan) maps on all area master plan home pages. As area master plan pages currently only provide links to approved master plans that contain static street classification and bicycle network recommendations, adding direct links to these maps will help community members to better understand current master plan recommendations.
- Montgomery Planning currently provides a map highlighting local **development projects** on many area master plan home pages and will continue to add maps to those home pages that do not have development project maps. Montgomery Planning is the definitive source of

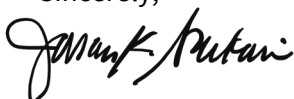
information about approved development projects and community members frequently visit our webpages to seek this information.

- While Montgomery Planning acknowledges that providing maps that highlight local **capital projects** on all area master plan home pages would be useful to community members, our department is not the definitive source of information about these projects. Consistently and reliably maintaining information on applicable capital projects, including each project's current status, can be a resource intensive effort for the department. Therefore, each area master plan team will determine whether to provide information about local capital projects based on the resources they can dedicate to consistently maintaining this information.
- Montgomery Planning does not support providing direct links to the **Pedestrian Level of Comfort** (mcatlas.org/pedplan), **Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress** (mcatlas.org/bikestress) or **Intersections Analysis** map (mcatlas.org/intersections) on area master plan webpages. While these resources provide valuable information, stakeholders are more likely to use area master plan webpages to search for information related to street classification, the bicycle network and development projects. The Planning Department believes that to limit excessive information on area master plan webpages, it is more effective to highlight the Pedestrian Level of Comfort, Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress and Intersections Analysis maps via our [Transportation portal](#).
- Montgomery Planning currently provides direct links to **Placemaking Projects** from area master plan home pages. Typically, the department has two to three placemaking projects underway countywide, at any given time.

I also wanted to provide background information about Montgomery Planning's website. Our website is our most important communication tool for our stakeholders. In early 2024, montgomeryplanning.org was redesigned to improve accessibility, user experience, navigation and improve search functionality for information about master plans and projects. To better understand the experiences of residents and other key stakeholders, Montgomery Planning held focus groups and conducted an online questionnaire to solicit feedback. The findings served as the foundation for our website redesign. Based on this feedback, information on master plans and other projects was organized into broad planning topics (such as transportation and housing) and geographic based pages so residents could more easily find planning information relevant to their communities. These neighborhood pages feature development maps, links to master plans and projects, and other planning related links. Montgomery Planning will continue to update these pages with relevant information.

Thank you again for providing Montgomery Planning the opportunity to review OLO's Draft Street Classification and Master Planning Process report. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to David Anspacher, Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division at 301-495-2191 or David.Anspacher@montgomeryplanning.org.

Sincerely,



Jason K. Sartori

Director

Montgomery County Planning Department