

City of Hyattsville Community Legacy Revitalization Plan



The City of Hyattsville &
The Hyattsville Community
Development Corporation
2003

Prepared by:

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Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction	
Community Legacy Program	1.2
Existing Planning Initiatives.....	1.3
Process and Outreach Approach.....	1.5
How to Use the Legacy Plan.....	1.6
Report Framework.....	1.6
2.0 Existing Conditions	
Land Use.....	2.2
Commercial/Industrial.....	2.4
Neighborhoods and Housing.....	2.6
Parks and Recreation.....	2.8
Transportation and Circulation.....	2.10
Demographics.....	2.12
Economic Conditions.....	2.13
3.0 Assets + Issues	
Assets.....	3.1
Issues.....	3.3
Social Issues.....	3.3
Physical Issues.....	3.4
Economic Development Issues.....	3.5
4.0 Legacy Plan	
Overview of the Legacy Plan.....	4.2
Components of the Legacy Plan.....	4.2
Legacy Plan Schedule.....	4.6
5.0 Implementation	
Community Organizations and Programs.....	5.2
Economic Development Programs.....	5.10
Physical Improvements.....	5.14
Additional Programs and Projects.....	5.27
Implementation Summary.....	5.29
Appendix	
Alternative Scenarios.....	1
Funding and Financial Resources.....	6



List of Figures

- 2.1 Generalized Land Use
- 2.2 Commercial/Industrial Development
- 2.3 Neighborhoods and Housing
- 2.4 Open Space and Community Resources
- 2.5 Transportation and Circulation
- 2.6 Population Growth and Projections
- 2.7 Educational Attainment
- 2.8 Sector Employment

- 3.1 Opportunities and Constraints

- 4.1 Legacy Plan Summary Diagram
- 4.2 Route 1 Focus Area Physical Improvements
- 4.3 Hamilton Triangle Focus Area Physical Improvements
- 4.4 Legacy Plan Schedule - First Actions

- 5.1 Potential Gateway Along US Route 1
- 5.2 Potential Redevelopment Scenario - Old City Hall Site
- 5.3 Mixed Use Town Center - West
- 5.4 Proposed Downtown Circulation Pattern
- 5.5 Parcels Near Hamilton Triangle Appropriate for Consolidation
- 5.6 Implementation Summary Matrix

- Appendix Figure 1: Scenario A. Building On Previous Plans
- Appendix Figure 2: Scenario B: Creating the Green Envelope
- Appendix Figure 3: Scenario C: Growing One Hyattsville



INTRODUCTION 1.0

The City of Hyattsville is poised for a resurgence in development activity and investment that is reminiscent of previous eras.

The City of Hyattsville is an incorporated town within Prince George’s County, Maryland, that covers an area of 2.18 square miles and provides a home to approximately 15,000 residents. It is located just over a mile from the District of Columbia, and less than six miles from the dome of the U.S. Capitol. Situated about one mile south of the University of Maryland’s main campus, it is served by a well-developed public transit system, and is adjacent to a network of regional park and open space systems.

Hyattsville was created along the first turnpike linking Baltimore and Washington, and along an early branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. These important transportation routes helped begin the transformation of the rural landscape of Prince George’s County, that by the beginning of the twentieth century had turned small crossroads like Hyattsville’s into important centers of population and commercial activity.

After being left behind for many years as sprawling growth and changing commercial centers followed the new freeways to the outer suburbs, a renewed interest in smarter development that takes advantage

The City of Hyattsville, Maryland, is located within the Washington DC Metropolitan Region.



of the attractive character and existing public infrastructure of established communities has once again focused attention on inner suburbs as areas for strategic investment. Public incentives are making private reinvestment decisions by property developers more attractive. The City of Hyattsville recognizes that it stands at the threshold of a resurgence and is preparing to take steps to encourage investment and economic development that will improve the quality of life for its residents, both current and future.

In September, 2002, the City received funding for the completion of this Legacy Plan from the Community Legacy Program of the State of Maryland's Department of Housing and Community Development. The purpose of this Plan is to consolidate the many previous planning studies' recommendations and analyses into a consensus-driven, realistic plan with a set of strategies to realize the City's full potential.

This Plan focuses on how to overcome the challenges facing the City and build upon the strong foundation of assets that already exist in Hyattsville. This city-wide Plan provides a blueprint for decision-makers as they consider steps for attracting investment and evaluate how to best use the resources -- both internal and external -- that will build a strong, sustainable community into the future.

Community Legacy Program

The Community Legacy Program is intended to assist communities and local decision-makers. The program provides assistance, funding and support for the revitalization of transitional or at-risk urban communities. One requirement of the program is the completion of a Community Legacy Revitalization Plan.

The Goals of the Legacy Program include:

- Stabilize and Enhance the Community;
- Address Local Revitalization Issues;
- Develop Comprehensive Recommendations;
- Engage a Broad Cross-section of Stakeholders;
- Minimize Negative Perceptions;
- Create a Distinctive Sense of Place;
- Attract New Investment;
- Protect Historic Resources;
- Achieve Consensus for Implementation; and
- Identify Funding Strategies for Revitalization.

1845
In 1845, Christopher Clark Hyatt purchased land between the railroad and the turnpike and subdivided it into housing lots. Many of the Victorian homes now characteristic of Hyattsville were built around this time. The town that would bear Hyatt's name grew from 20 homes in 1872 to 172 homes in 1882. Soon other developers in the region began to purchase parcels and in April of 1886, the Act of Incorporation of the City of Hyattsville was signed into law.

1886
1892
In 1892, the town of Hyattsville made national news by becoming the first municipality to adopt the controversial Single Tax system. The town made news again in 1917 when Dr. J. Harris Rogers developed the underground and underwater telegraph cable. As America entered the First World War, the Secretary of the Navy recognized the importance of Roger's discovery and issued a patent.

This Community Legacy Plan was prepared through a nine-month process that consisted of three primary phases. These include:

- **Understanding the Community.** The first phase included comprehensive data collection, initial public input, and analysis of city-wide opportunities and constraints.
- **Plan Alternatives.** The second phase included the preparation of alternative scenarios, the identification of a preferred plan, and the development of preliminary implementation strategies.
- **Plan Development.** The third phase included documentation of the analysis effort, refinement of the recommendations, and further development of implementation actions.

Development along Hyattsville's commercial corridors, especially Route 1, catered to the popularity of the automobile. Large tracts of land developed into auto-oriented uses, making Hyattsville a destination to purchase new and used cars. As development patterns continued to change, commercial development throughout the region extended beyond the inner suburbs of Washington DC, including Hyattsville. Described by some as urban sprawl, housing, commercial and employment growth was moving away from urban areas in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The expansion of Hyattsville sometimes came at a cost to its historic heritage. Many of the early homes, including those of prominent Hyattsville residents like Rogers, were demolished to make room for new development. Many more were renovated to function as rooming houses around mid-century. In the late 1970s, local residents recognized the need for a preservation of Hyattsville's historic character and began to photograph and document the remaining housing stock. In 1982, the Hyattsville Historic District was accepted into the National Register of Historic Places.

County and is therefore eligible for a variety of state programs and funding pools. The City also successfully applied and was awarded designation as a Community Legacy Area, enabling the City to compete for additional funding for revitalization efforts.

According to the Maryland Department of Planning, the State has adopted the following principles of Smart Growth, which provide guidance for new development, infill development, and redevelopment:

- Mix land uses;
- Take advantage of compact building design;
- Create housing opportunities and choices;
- Create walkable communities;
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas;
- Provide a variety of transportation options;
- Strengthen and direct development to existing communities;
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective; and
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

The State continues to work with local governments to pursue policies that promote the efficient use of land. The Gateway Arts District, including the City of Hyattsville, falls within one of Maryland's six (and Prince George's County's only) designated Arts and Entertainment Districts.

Prince George's County General Plan: The Prince George's County General Plan, approved by the County Council in October 2002, provides long-range guidance for the future growth of the County. The plan divides the County into three development tiers

Existing Planning Initiatives

Over the past several years Hyattsville has been involved in or affected by several planning studies and initiatives at both the state, county and local levels. Because this Legacy Plan builds upon previous and current plans, a summary of relevant studies and initiatives is provided below.

Maryland Policies: In 1997 the Maryland General Assembly passed five pieces of legislation and budget initiatives including Priority Funding Areas, Brownfields, Live Near Your Work, Job Creation Tax Credits, and Rural Legacy. These initiatives, often referred to as "Smart Growth" policies, are intended to address sprawl and target state funding and programs to already established communities and designated growth areas. More specifically, Priority Funding Areas identify areas where the State will focus on growth-related infrastructure. The City of Hyattsville falls within a designated priority funding area in Prince George's

(Developed, Developing, Rural). Hyattsville is located in the Developed Tier, and contains stretches of the Baltimore Avenue Corridor, the Prince George's Plaza Metro Regional Center, and the West Hyattsville Community Center. The General Plan provides a set of Countywide planning policies identifying Centers and Corridors where intensive mixed-use (residential, commercial and employment development) is encouraged. The Plan also makes recommendations for infrastructure investments, includes guidance for economic development, revitalization, housing, urban design and historic preservation. The Plan is amended by area master plans and functional plans (<http://www.mncppc.org/cpd/generalplan.htm>).

Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Area 68: Developed in 1994 by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), the Plan addresses Brentwood, Colmar Manor, Cottage City, Edmonston, Hyattsville, Mount Rainier, North Brentwood and Riverdale and the unincorporated areas of Avondale and University Hills. The Plan includes recommendations on land use and zoning changes for the planning area, with the exception of areas addressed in the Transit District Overlay Zones (TDOZ) and Transit District Development Plans. Detailed plans for revitalization include a newly defined Hyattsville Town Center with Mixed Use Zoning and specific action steps to support implementation.

Baltimore Avenue Redevelopment Study: Commissioned by the City, and completed in 1997, the study area included an area bounded by Baltimore Avenue (US Route 1) on the east; Jefferson Street on the north; Church Place, an alley, on the west; and Farragut Street on the south. The study identified key issues, challenges and opportunities for redevelopment of the study area and identified three alternatives for consideration. The major preferred alternative recommendations included the development of a Restaurant Row between Farragut and Gallatin Streets; demolition of the former City Hall building and construction of 96 housing units in a six-story building with underground and shared surface parking; enhancement of Church Place alley as a pedestrian street; and improvements to internal circulation.

Prince George's Plaza Transit District Development Plan (TDDP) for the Transit District Overlay Zone (TDOZ): Approved in 1998, the TDDP provides guidance on the future physical development of approximately 300 acres of land surrounding the Prince George's Plaza Metro Station. The Plan includes specific mandatory development requirements and site

design guidelines for each sub area within the transit district. A portion of the Prince George's Plaza Transit District west of Belcrest Road and north of East West Highway is located within the City of Hyattsville.

West Hyattsville Transit District Development Plan (TDDP) for the Transit District Overlay Zone (TDOZ): The West Hyattsville TDDP, approved in 1998, addresses about 150 acres of land surrounding the West Hyattsville Metro Station. The TDDP will control the use and development of land within the TDDP area and includes specific mandatory development requirements and site design guidelines for each sub area within the transit district. The Plan is currently undergoing a public process to revise it to address the recommendations of the West Hyattsville TOD Strategy.

West Hyattsville Transit Oriented Development Strategy: Developed in 2003, this strategy builds upon the TDDP and is a joint project of MDOT/Planning, the Governor's Office of Smart Growth, the City of Hyattsville, WMATA and the M-NCPPC Planning Department. The Strategy serves as a "pilot" project for the Planning Department's county-wide strategic plan for transit-oriented development and is aimed at developing the County's first transit village around the West Hyattsville Metro Station. Three alternative development concepts for the Transit District were created and evaluated as part of the process. The proposed strategy recommends new residential development, connections to existing open space and parks as well as a new lake, additional retail along Hamilton Street and landscaping treatments along Ager and Queens Chapel Roads. The development program features 3,611 residential units on 116 acres and about 1.2 million square feet of office and retail use. Implementation of the concept will require significant public investments and public actions to encourage private investment.

Gateway Arts District Economic and Market Analysis: Prepared by ZHA, Inc., in 2003, this report assesses the market and economic trends of Mount Rainier, North Brentwood, Brentwood and Hyattsville. The report identifies issues and obstacles to reinvestment and makes recommendations for attracting new investment that is consistent with the goals of the Gateway Arts District. The report suggests that the introduction of a critical mass of employees and residents will help position Hyattsville to attract major mixed use development and help Hyattsville become the economic engine of the Gateway Arts District.

Anacostia Trails Heritage Management Plan: The plan, completed in 2001, constitutes Prince George's County's and the City of Laurel's management plan for heritage tourism in the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area (ATHA) in the northern part of Prince George's County. The plan describes ATHA and the heritage tourism resources contained therein; provides strategies for heritage tourism, interpretation, stewardship and linkages; and discusses implementation practices.

Gateway Arts District Planning Study: The Prince George's Gateway Arts District Planning Study, completed in September 2001 provides guidance for future planning, revitalization and development activities in the Prince George's County Gateway Arts District. The Gateway Arts District encompasses the US Route 1 corridor extending from the District of Columbia northward for about two miles and includes the communities of Mount Rainier, Brentwood, North Brentwood and Hyattsville. The study identifies four anchor projects within the arts district, one in each of the four municipalities. The anchor project proposed for Hyattsville includes the development of affordable live/work spaces for artists.

The Prince George's County Gateway Arts District Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment (SMA): The Prince George's County Gateway Arts District Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) process was initiated in February 2002. Development of the Sector Plan and SMA is still underway; upon completion it will contain rezoning and a new Development District Overlay Zone which will put into place new development regulations to encourage a mix of uses and a more urban development pattern along the US Route 1 Corridor. The initial process included an imaging and activities workshop, a design charrette and follow-up workshop, and a development community roundtable discussion session. An outcome of the study is a vision for the Gateway Arts District that emphasizes the district as a focal point for arts activities of all types, as well as for socializing, entertainment, dining, and shopping. The plan is intended to capitalize on the large number of artists that live and work in the area and is aimed at creating economic development opportunities for artists that will build momentum for other revitalization projects.

A variety of methods were used to gain public input and feedback during the planning process.



Process and Outreach Approach

The planning process designed for this Community Legacy Plan was built on a clear understanding that the community outreach process itself would extend beyond the typical status quo in an effort to reach beyond the "usual suspects." Blessed with a diversifying population, it was apparent that special emphasis would need to be placed on gaining feedback from the growing Spanish-speaking community.

Early in the planning process a number of individual and group stakeholder interviews were held to discuss issues and assets and gain an understanding of needs. The list of stakeholders grew into a substantial

database that was later used to mail meeting notices.

Interviews were held with:

- *Businesses*
- *Hyattsville Preservation Association*
- *Gateway Arts District*
- *Police*
- *Faith Based Organizations*
- *Public Schools*
- *Recreation and Open Space*
- *Maryland State Highway Association*
- *Apartment Managers*

In addition, three public meetings were held at key points in the process. The first public meeting, held

May 17, 2003 presented a summary of existing conditions and provided participants a chance to reflect on favorable and unfavorable aspects of Hyattsville. This information, along with information from stakeholder meetings, helped inform the development of alternative scenarios which were presented at a second public meeting on June 17, 2003. During this meeting participants were asked to evaluate each alternative using symbols to designate likes and dislikes. Through further analysis and meetings with City Council, the Planning Committee and the Hyattsville Community Development Corporation (CDC), as well as the County Planning Staff, a preferred plan was devel-

oped and its priorities were presented during a third public meeting held on October 22, 2003. The Draft Plan, presented to City Council on December 8, 2003, was refined and the Final Plan was approved by City Council in January 2004.

A variety of outreach techniques were utilized to promote the public meetings including mailings, posting of English and Spanish-language flyers, newspaper inserts in the Hyattsville Reporter and Gazette, door to door announcements, Spanish Radio, and links on the City and project website. The project website also provided background about the study, materials available for downloading and instructions on how to become involved.

How to Use the Legacy Plan

The Legacy Plan is a living document that provides decision-makers, interested organizations and others with a clear set of First Actions and additional recommendations that will lead toward community revitalization. Information in the Legacy Plan should be used to help support efforts to obtain funding from federal, state, local and private sources.

To ensure that the plan maintains its applicability, it is recommended that City Council closely monitor and review its progress and formally update the Legacy Plan every two years. As First Actions are initiated and completed, the City should celebrate its successes. Interested citizens and organizations should stay informed of the progress toward implementing the Legacy Plan and use the recommendations as a guide for initiating grass-roots activities.

Report Framework

This Community Legacy Revitalization Plan report has been organized to present the analysis and findings of the Hyattsville planning effort, describe the public approach to developing the plan, and illustrate the community's preferred plan. This process is documented in the following report chapters:

Chapter 1 includes the background information necessary to understand the assignment. It includes the intent of the process and the steps taken for outreach and engagement throughout the process.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing conditions in Hyattsville. It describes the foundation of Hyattsville and outlines important trends.

Chapter 3 highlights the major issues facing revitalization efforts as well as the community assets on which the City can build.

Chapter 4 presents the preferred Legacy Plan with an emphasis on First Action priority recommendations.

Chapter 5 outlines the specific steps toward implementing the priority recommendations in the Legacy Plan, including the identification of key partners and order-of-magnitude of costs.

The **Appendix** includes a summary of the alternative scenarios that were presented to the public and the process of consensus building toward a preferred plan. A listing of federal, state, county, and private funding sources is also provided.