

# TOWN CENTER DESIGN CONCEPT

The initial community workshop of the Germantown Town Center Design Study was structured to gain an understanding of the community's perception of the future Town Center. During group discussions the following questions were asked:

Those places that were identified as having the **feel** desired of Town Center ranged from a small town in Ohio to Georgetown, Washington, D.C. Most often mentioned was the New England village.

A number of places were also suggested that relate to **main street** concepts. These included the French Quarter in New Orleans, and to main streets of Annapolis, Georgetown, and the recently developed Forrestal Village (outside of Princeton, New Jersey).

Also suggested were Central and Battery Parks in New York.

Attributes that were identified as the most important in describing these places included:

- village center
- main street
- unifying central space
- a sense of community
- overall sense of place
- intimate feel
- pedestrian orientation
- visual focus
- consistent streetscape
- architectural character

Specific characteristics that were identified for incorporation into the Germantown Town Center included the following:

- The Town Center is to include a balanced mix of uses and to include facilities for cultural, recreational, and leisure amenities.

It should include a community building to be centrally located and a focal point.

- The visual focus should be on the open spaces.
- In addition to parkland, open space should also include paved areas for pedestrian gathering, etc.
- Town Center is to be pedestrian-oriented.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

### DESIRABLE PLACES

### ATTRIBUTES

- Parking should be screened and behind the buildings (not between the buildings and the street).
- Buildings are to range from low- to mid-rise in height, with higher buildings in the center.
- The **Main Street** should be pedestrian in scale.
- Overall, the Town Center should have a common theme.
- Architectural quality and character are essential to the success of the Town Center.

## TOWN CENTER VISION

The vision perceived for the Germantown Town Center is that of a **traditional** downtown. The design of the Town Center proposes to reflect the traditional urban architecture of the mid-Atlantic region and, as Roger K. Lewis stated in his *Washington Post* article on Shaping the City, **emulate Townscape characteristics of historic communities whose physical organization, streets and public spaces, building form, usage, and landscaping seem so compelling.** These communities provide a model for the Town Center that most closely resembles the attributes sought by the community and the Master Plan; one that appears to address the common theme and architectural character desired.

The following **design conventions** that were identified by Roger Lewis\* are descriptive of the design character and **feel** desired for the Town Center. They include:

**DOMINANT CENTER** . . . defined by the crossing of two main streets lined by shops, stores, offices, and residences. Linked to this commercial cross-roads is the requisite New England **green** or **common**, surrounded by public streets and sidewalks. . .

■ **EDGES.** The . . . transition from rural (or suburban) to urban land use, is . . . perceivable . . . there is a strong sense of arrival in the town. . .

■ **STREETS.** Streets are shared equally by automobiles and pedestrians. Curbside parking . . . is usually available adjacent to sidewalks on both sides of the street. Generally there are no large parking lots between sidewalks and buildings.

Town plan is a typical grid pattern of streets and blocks, but the grid . . . shifts to accommodate topographic and other natural conditions or to reflect (existing development), . . . ownership and use.

Streets are not all the same size. The principal streets are several lanes wide, but . . . narrower residential streets are still wide enough to accommodate on-street parking.

■ **TREES.** Every street is lined along its sidewalks by deciduous trees, sometimes irregularly spaced. The town green is likewise replete with trees. Trees often dominate architecture as they form colonnades and canopies enveloping the streetscape and partially screen the volumes and facades of the town's two- to four-story buildings.

\* Roger K. Lewis, *Timeless Design in New Standard*, *The Washington Post*, August 25, 1990.

- **IN-BETWEEN.** The space between sidewalks and buildings is critical in forming the image of a community . . . It is the development, along with the dimension, of the strip of landscape between sidewalks and buildings that matters.

A symbolic relationship exists between street, sidewalk, front yard, and buildings . . .

- **MOVEMENT.** (Although an automobile may be needed to access town) . . . to cross town quickly, to transport goods, . . . walking is a feasible option, especially for socializing and shopping.

Ample sidewalks, other pedestrians, sheltering trees, flowering vegetation, interesting facade details, and inviting storefronts make walking a pleasant experience . . .

- **OFF-STREET PARKING.** . . . parking lots . . . are normally behind or alongside buildings, tucked away within blocks.

The design framework that is proposed for the Germantown Town Center results from a synthesis of the Master Plan, the Town Center Planning and Design Context, and the attributes and vision that has been identified.

## DESIGN FRAMEWORK

A summary of the proposed elements that constitute the recommended overall design character include:

- an urban character
- buildings facing on streets
- parking lots behind buildings (in courtyards; not between the building and street)
- parallel parking on secondary streets
- building heights to a maximum of seven stories (excepting the hotel and the high-rise residential towers)
- a pedestrian-oriented Main Street of a consistent character (from Middlebrook to Crystal Rock)
- Main Street to be a mixed use street of specialty retail and entertainment, offices, and residential
- commercial office and/or multi-family residential uses on MD-118
- multi-family residential uses adjoining the existing residential development to the north (of both TC-1 and TC-5)
- the development program proposed in the Master Plan
- distinctive and identifiable **gateways** at the major entrances to the Town Center and the entrances to the Town Center Core (TC-1) and the TC-5 retail center
- a landmark to identify Germantown, to be centrally located within the Town Center Core (TC-1)
- major, identical or related, and highly visible identifying elements at both the MARC Commuter Rail and Town Center Transit Stations
- consistent signage at the entrances to TC-1, 2, 3, and 5 developments

- the establishment of a hierarchy of streetscape treatments
- MD-118 developed as a **boulevard**
- Father Hurley, Middlebrook and Crystal Rock also to receive special streetscape treatments
- Lockbury Drive, Water Road and Old MD-118/Walter Johnson Drive designed as **special streets**, to be pedestrian-oriented and include a hiker/biker trail
- enhancement of the pedestrian circulation elements on Middlebrook (from the High School to the Town Center Core)
- sidewalks and trees on both sides of all streets
- a grid street system internal to TC-1 (connecting the major entrances from MD-118, Crystal Rock and Middlebrook)
- Waters Road to be upgraded in its current location through TC-5
- an intersection at Waters Road and MD-118, through to Old MD-118
- an interconnected street system internal to TC-5 (linking the MD-118, Wisteria Drive and Father Hurley Boulevard entrances)
- reinforcement and expansion of the Town Center-wide vehicular and pedestrian circulation linkages - as a continuation of Main Street through the existing shopping centers (Middlebrook and Wisteria) to TC-5
- an internal transit system that utilizes Main Street and links the proposed Town Center Transit Station (TC-2) through the Town Center Core, the existing shopping centers and the proposed service and retail park (TC-5) to the existing MARC Commuter Rail Station (TC-6) and the Historic District
- hiker/biker trails within the Town Center linking the three major adjacent open space systems to parkland and community facilities
- a major public park in TC-1 (incorporating the existing wetlands on the north of this site); this park is recommended to accommodate an outdoor assembly area (amphitheater) and related recreational facilities
- Town Center Commons centrally located in the Town Center Core (TC-1) on the north-south entrance boulevard and the east-west Main Street
- location of the Cultural Arts Center on the Town Center Commons within TC-1 (this facility is to occupy a focal point and is recommended to be freestanding)
- development of a indoor pool and the possible inclusion of the indoor building component of the Germantown Recreation Center on TC-5.