

HOUSING

This Plan seeks to enhance the established downtown residential community and create new housing options in townhouses and low-rise, high-density apartments.

VISION

Housing in the CBD offers residential options near work, services, and shopping, and creates a natural market for local businesses. The CBD's residents activate streets, parks, and civic spaces. They become a local population with a vested interest in the downtown. CBD housing also supports the State's Smart Growth initiative by rebuilding and enhancing an already established community.

Objective:

- Develop new residential projects to provide housing and encourage maintenance of existing housing, creating Silver Spring as an even more desirable residential market.

Summary Recommendations:

- Provide housing choice and market-feasible development options, including apartments and townhouses.
 - Rezone CBD properties to encourage residential development.
 - Convert selected public sector surface parking lots to housing.
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Silver Spring's residents are overwhelmingly renters, and the CBD's housing stock is a mix of market rate and affordable high-rise and garden apartments that offer a variety of amenities and convenience to Metrorail and downtown Washington, D.C. Over half of the CBD's residents commute by Metro.

As might be expected given the many apartment options, Silver Spring's residents are mostly young, working people who use and enjoy the amenities of a CBD—shops, parks, restaurants, and proximity to Metrorail. This population will offer important support to new downtown commercial and cultural activity. Apartment living and the proximity of the CBD's transit and service also attract a large senior citizen population.

While both Lenox Park and Alexander House, high-rise apartments recommended by the 1993 Plan, added to Silver Spring's housing stock, high-rise construction is expensive and rental rates do not presently cover construction costs. An examination of the CBD's housing potential found a strong demand for high-rise housing in the CBD, but that construction costs are too high to generate an economic return. The analysis also indicates low-rise, high-density apartment and townhouses could be economically feasible.

This Plan reaffirms the 1993 Plan's goal to create a thriving downtown residential community. Pursuant to this goal, it emphasizes market-based housing forms rather than high-rise construction. Townhouses and low-rise, high-density apartments are specifically encouraged since they are feasible in today's market and

offer size and ownership options to CBD residents (Figure 13, Map 35). At the same time, this Plan retains the potential for high-rise development near the Transit Center over the long-term.

Overall, the Plan seeks to create a downtown with amenities, services, and options that serve current residents, and also serve the surrounding residential neighborhoods. New housing options—townhouses and low-rise, high-density housing—will attract new residents to an activated downtown. The development of new residential projects will also stimulate reinvestment in existing housing, as Silver Spring becomes an even more desirable residential market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting existing housing and creating a diverse housing stock are important components of revitalizing the CBD. This Plan’s recommendations seek to create flexible, market-based, residential options for lifestyle, ownership, and location choices. Also, the Plan’s streetscape and development recommendations seek to create an attractive and active downtown for new and current residents. The following recommendations should be explored by the appropriate County agencies.

Rezone CBD properties to encourage residential development.

- Rezone CBD-0.5 sites to create additional densities that might be used for desired housing types—townhouses and low-rise, high-density housing in Fenton Village and South Silver Spring. Also, CBD zones include density bonuses for housing.

Create housing incentives in the CBD by converting publicly owned surface parking lots to housing.

- Fenton Village Parking Lot #3 on the block bounded by Thayer Avenue, Fenton Street, Silver Spring Avenue, and Georgia Avenue.
- Parking Lot #21 at the corner of Cameron and Spring Streets.
- M-NCPPC surface Parking Lot #2 along Spring Street.
- Conversion of publicly-owned surface parking lots should be preceded by analysis of parking needs and supply.

Figure 12 Low-Rise, High Density Housing Prototype



