



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

Gateway Master Plan

Planning Board Meeting of August 7, 2025

Petitioner:

Lynda Eisenberg, Director, Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)

DPZ Contacts:

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Request:

Request of the Planning Board to hold a public meeting for input and recommendation to the County Council on the Gateway Master Plan (the Plan), a proposed General Plan Amendment.

Background:

HoCo By Design, the general plan for Howard County, envisions Gateway as a Regional Activity Center, which represents a major hub for employment, entertainment, and innovation in the County. HoCo By Design's implementing action EP-5.4 calls for DPZ to:

“Develop a master plan for Gateway that describes the area's desired future mix of uses, open space network, development phasing and intensity, building height range, and infrastructure approach. Build upon the general considerations included in the HoCo By Design Focus Areas technical appendix.”

Description:

The master plan presents a comprehensive, actionable roadmap to guide the long-term transformation of Gateway into a thriving innovation district, a major hub for cybersecurity, defense, technology, artificial intelligence (AI), quantum, and other emerging industries that also offers residents a connected, vibrant, and thriving community in which to live, work, and play.

Eight planning principles provide the overarching foundation for Gateway's long-term transformation:

1. **Innovation and Growth:** establish the Gateway Innovation District as an epicenter for employment, research, and innovation
2. **Mix the Uses:** create a mixed-use, walkable physical environment that supports innovation and creates a socially vibrant, pedestrian-focused community
3. **A Unique Sense of Place:** create a “there, there” for Gateway – recognizable shared open spaces for the community

4. **A Place for People:** develop a multi-generational, accessible, and mixed-income community where all people can thrive
5. **Walkable Environment:** establish a human-scale urban form that prioritizes walkability
6. **Sustainability and Resiliency:** take green design to the next level
7. **Transportation and Mobility:** develop a multi-modal transportation network that welcomes people traveling via all modes
8. **Flexibility Over Time:** establish a market-based, flexible implementation framework

Key features of the plan that advance its vision and principles include:

- An Innovation Hub – ideally located near the existing Maryland Innovation Center (MIC) offering research labs, coworking space, and places for partnership between businesses, universities, and startups
- Nodes – strategic locations, at future key intersections or around existing and future assets, intended for higher-intensity, mixed-use redevelopment, where retail and public gathering spaces will be concentrated
- The Woonerf – a pedestrian-oriented space designed for people, bicycles, and slow-moving cars, with an emphasis on bringing people together
- Open Space – an interconnected framework of varying typologies including a linear park, urban plazas, neighborhood parks, pocket parks, and connection to the 3.1-mile CSX rail trail
- A mix of flexible office space, residential housing, and public amenities attractive to global companies and local entrepreneurs
- Multi-modal transportation, sustainability strategies, and public infrastructure that supports smart, resilient, and connected growth

Public Outreach:

Since launching the plan in January of 2024, DPZ has sought community involvement to shape the plan. As part of this effort, three public meetings were held, attracting 400 participants. In addition, numerous stakeholder meetings and focus groups were held. Highlights from public feedback are available in the [Gateway Master Plan Engagement Summary](#).

A 23-member appointed Master Plan Advisory Committee served as a sounding board for the project. The Advisory Committee met five times over the course of the project and included Gateway property and business owners, economic development experts, community members, and advocates for housing, planning, transportation, and sustainability. Meeting summaries are available on the [Advisory Committee website](#).

The team also engaged the Planning Board in two workshops throughout the process. These workshops were held on February 6, 2025, and June 26, 2025. Video recordings of these workshops are available on the [Planning Board website](#).

The draft Gateway Master Plan was released in June 2025 and available for public comment from June 18 to July 8.

Technical Planning:

A technical planning process was undertaken to assess existing conditions and opportunities. The process focused on site conditions, urban design, placemaking, environment and sustainability, multi-modal transportation, infrastructure phasing, land use and public facilities, and market sectors. Key findings from assessments were presented to the Advisory Committee and highlighted in public events.


Planning Board Review:

§16.900(j)(1)(III) states that a bill proposing amendment of the general plan shall not be added to the Council's legislative agenda until the County Council has received a recommendation and report from the Planning Board.

DPZ Recommendation:

That the Planning Board recommend approval of the Gateway Master Plan (Attachment A) as an amendment to HoCo By Design, the general plan for Howard County.

Acting For

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Lynda Eisenberg, AICP, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

7/24/2025

Date

Attachment

A – Gateway Master Plan Legislative Draft, July 2025