

HoCo By Design Implementation Reporting – 2023-2025

Planning Board Meeting

March 26, 2026

HoCo By Design (2023) Review



What is it?

A visionary document that outlines how and where the County should develop and grow as it adjusts to evolving economic, environmental, and social conditions over the next 20 years.



Who uses it?

Used by County leaders, decision makers, appointed board members, and the community to assess future development policies and community-wide decisions.

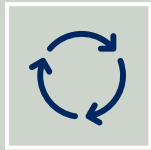


What does it do?

Guides implementing agencies in the review of development applications, ordinance amendments, and future investments as the County implements HoCo By Design's vision.



Why We Report & Why It Matters



Ensures the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) can create the 5-year mid-cycle performance report to County Council and State of Maryland in 2028, per Chapter 11 of the General Plan and pursuant to the Maryland land use code (Section 1.207(c)(6))











Maintains healthy relationships with County and partner agencies and keeps the general plan, HoCo By Design, an implementation priority



Assists DPZ with reporting on major planning and land use efforts

2025 Major Accomplishments by Chapter

<p>Adopted the Gateway Master Plan – Economic Prosperity</p> 	<p>Updated the County’s Landscape Manual– Quality By Design</p> 
<p>Commenced the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) Review Committee and Housing Affordability workgroup to finalize recommendations for APFO changes – Managing Growth and Dynamic Neighborhoods</p> 	<p>Drafted an Electric Vehicle (EV) charging permit process checklist through the Dept. of Licenses and Permits – Ecological Health</p> 
<p>Amended Zoning Regulations to address barriers to diversifying agricultural uses via Ag ZRA 217 – Economic Prosperity</p> 	<p>Expanded the Conservation Easement Program for environmentally significant sites and added 150 acres to Agricultural Land Preservation Program (ALPP) – Ecological Health</p> 
<p>Adopted the Housing Expansion and Affordability Act which became effective January 1, 2025. – Dynamic Neighborhoods</p> 	<p>Adopted the Renewable Energy Certainty Act which became effective July 1, 2025. – Ecological Health</p> 

HoCo By Design Implementation (2023-2025)

359
Reported Action Reviewed

281
Actions Underway

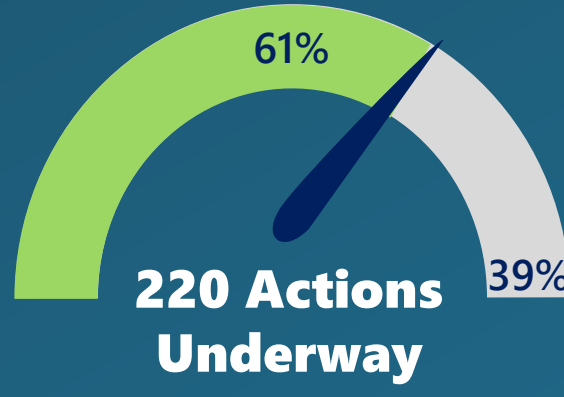
2
Years of Reporting

100%
Managing Growth Chapter Actions Completed

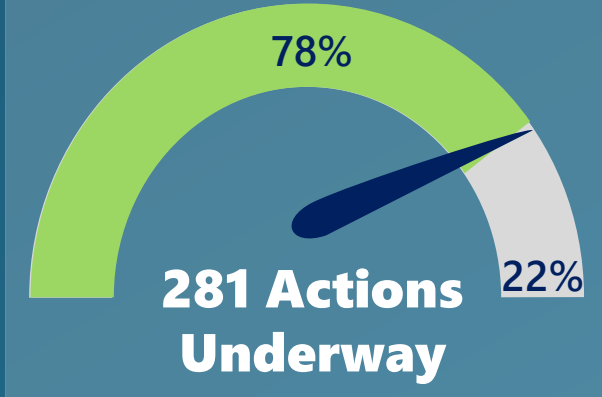
134
Equity In Action Designations

30
Reporting Partners

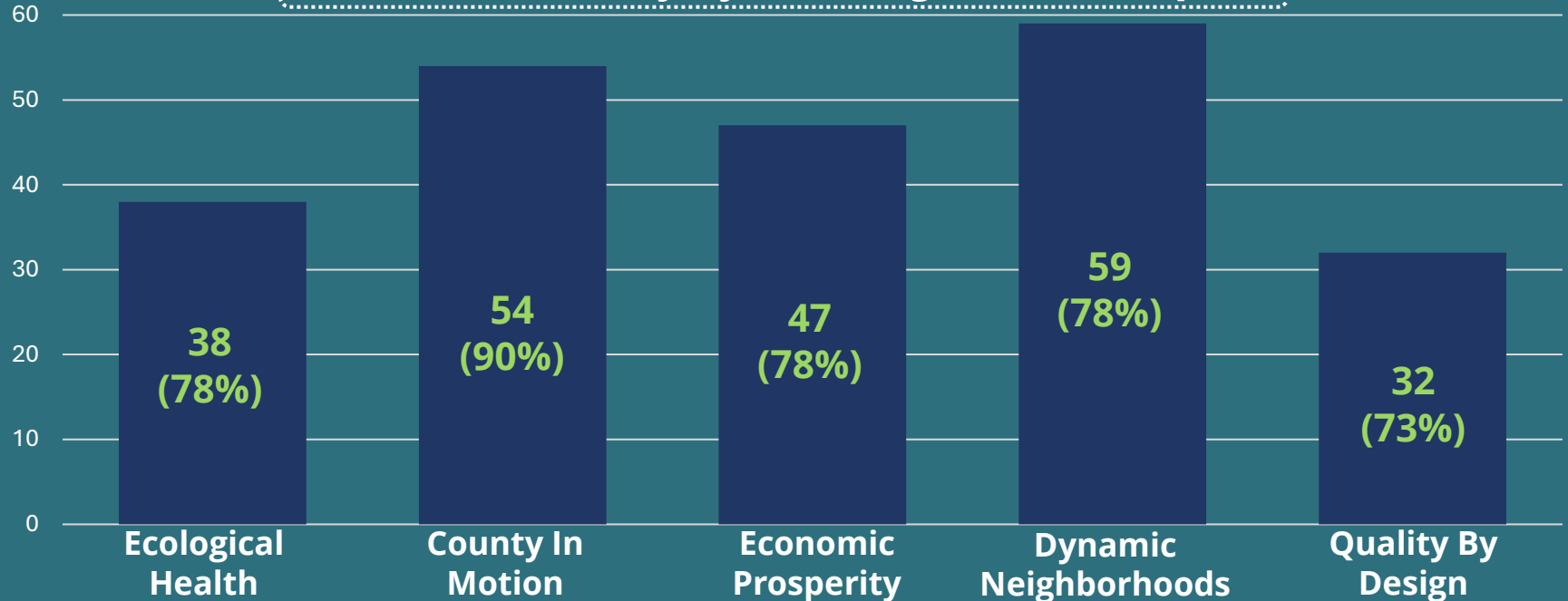
2024 – Total Actions Underway



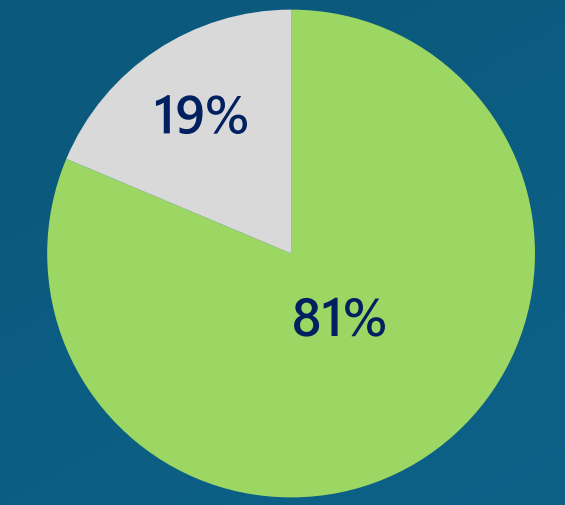
2025 – Total Actions Underway



Actions Underway by Planning Theme Chapter



Breakdown of Equity in Action Designated Actions



Legend: Underway (Green), Unreported/Not Started (Grey)
*Legend applies to all charts above



CHAPTER 3

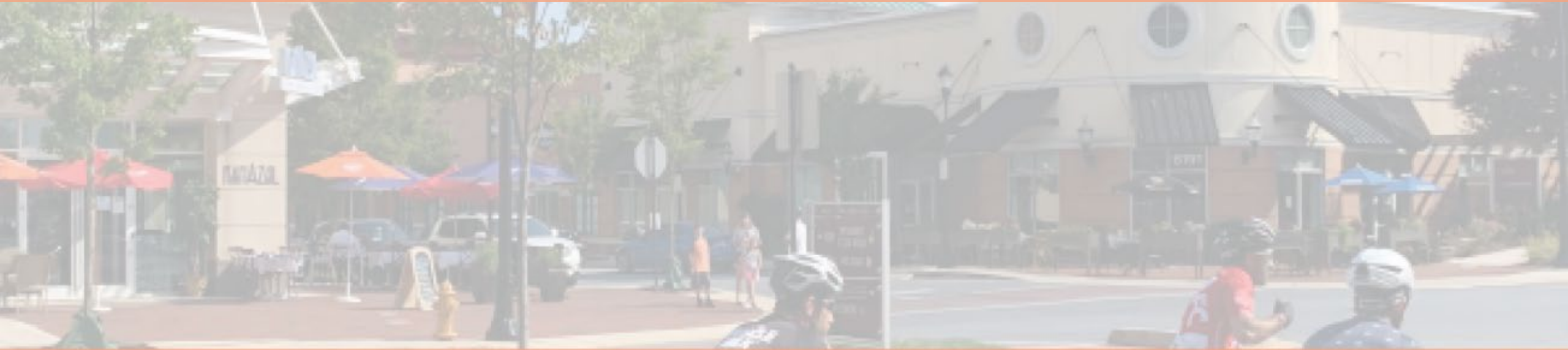
ECOLOGICAL HEALTH



Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: EH-1:</p> <p><i>Continue to support the County's ecological health.</i></p>	<p>Action EH-1.4: Establish a natural resource protection goal for the County and each major watershed to help protect biodiversity and mitigate climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Office of Community Sustainability (OCS) reported the tree planting goal set by the County Executive is set to reach 50% canopy coverage by 2030. The County increased its tree plantings since January 2025.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: EH-2:</p> <p><i>Seek to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation goals as specified in the Howard County Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, or the most recently adopted Plan, into all county programs, projects, policies, and regulations.</i></p>	<p>Action EH-2.1: Ensure the Howard County Climate Action and Resiliency Plan update continues to maximize opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change with clear goals and strategies, and that county departments' policies are aligned with the plan's goals and strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OCS reported the Climate Action Plan (CAP) work groups coordinate across departments to ensure policies align and work to meet goals.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: EH-9:</p> <p><i>Continue to promote agricultural land preservation, recognizing that uncommitted land in the Rural West is a diminishing resource.</i></p>	<p>Action EH-9.4: Evaluate strategies to identify, expand and preserve agricultural land uses within the Planned Service Area, to include a review of regulations specific to agricultural use and preservation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department of Planning & Zoning (DPZ) reported on their extensive Fall 2025 research for Agriculture in the East data and findings. A presentation was given to the Agricultural Preservation Board at their October 2025 meeting. The Ag Board recommended to County Council the establishment of a workgroup.




CHAPTER 4

COUNTY IN MOTION



Chapter 4: County in Motion – 60 Actions

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: CIM-6:</p> <p><i>Focus on improvements to the transportation system that improve travel reliability.</i></p>	<p>Action CIM-6.2: Develop real-time traffic monitoring and coordinate transportation and emergency resources to address non-recurring congestion due to weather and crashes on the local and regional transportation system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) reported through the Emergency Operations Center, OEM can monitor traffic during incidents. Additionally, for weather and other emergencies, OEM monitors the forecast, coordinates with the National Weather Service (NWS), and works with County partners withing the Emergency Operations Management Group (EMOG) including the Joint Information Center (JIC) before and during activations to provide information on traffic disruptions and inclement weather to the public. OEM can also tap into state and regional resources such as the Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC), Maryland Center for Analysis and Coordination (MCAC), and the Maryland Intrastate Emergency Management Assistance Compact (MIEMAC) to respond to incidents. These actions are a part of the County's emergency operations plans and are integrated into the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p> Policy: CIM-5:</p> <p><i>CIM-11: Deliver transportation system improvements that support efforts to reduce reliance on automobile trips, improve air quality, and give people cost-effective and sustainable choices on how they get to work, home, school, and play.</i></p>	<p>Action CIM-5.7: Implement Development Regulations that require site plans that allow access to buildings by transit, bicycle, walking, and micromobility services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that the County’s Complete Streets initiative has been implemented in Development Review. And the Division of Land Development staff provides comments to increase connectivity.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: CIM-11:</p> <p><i>CIM-11: Advance transportation planning and transportation investments to support an economically and environmentally sustainable transportation system that moves people safely and efficiently throughout the County and supports the land use and equity goals in HoCo By Design, including its emphasis on mixed-use activity centers. Similarly, advance land use patterns and individual site development that support an economically and environmentally sustainable transportation system.</i></p>	<p>Action CIM-11.5: Ensure the Design Manual is consistent with the General Plan as part of the regular update process for the Design Manual.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Office of Transportation (OOT) reported that as part of the County’s Complete Streets initiative, the Design Manual has been updated to include new roadway types.




CHAPTER 5

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY




Chapter 5: Economic Prosperity – 60 Actions

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: EP-5:</p> <p><i>Create job opportunities through new mixed-use activity centers that serve as destinations and include a mix of uses that compliment and support one another and improve the jobs-housing balance.</i></p>	<p>Action EP-5.4: 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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported on the successful adoption of the Gateway Master Plan on October 9, 2025. The Gateway Master Plan provides a comprehensive, actionable roadmap for transforming it into an "innovation district" - a vibrant, mixed-use hub for research, ideas, and creativity.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p> Policy: EP-8:</p> <p><i>Support an educated and skilled workforce with specific attention and resources devoted to breaking barriers to employment and education while achieving greater racial and social inclusion in the workplace.</i></p>	<p>Action EP-8.5: Invest in reliable affordable broadband to ensure that lower-income residents have equal access to education and employment opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department of Technology and Communication Services (DTCS) reported Verizon prepared its application for an Infrastructure Grant, Verizon contacted Cable Administration regarding unserved areas in Western Howard County. Verizon included the unserved areas in their application to the Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband for their Maryland Network Infrastructure Grant and was awarded 721,374 in 2023 to expand Broadband coverage. Howard County residents benefitted from Verizon’s receipt of the grant and broadband expansion; however, Howard County Government is not involved in the management or deployment of Verizon services.

Chapter 5: Economic Prosperity – 60 Actions

Policy	Implementing Actions
<p>Policy: EP-13:</p> <p><i>Reduce regulatory barriers to diversified agricultural operations in both the Rural West and the East.</i></p>	<p> Action EP-13.1: Update the Zoning Regulations and other policies to promote agricultural expansion and diversification, especially for on-farm processing and other agribusiness opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPZ reported that ZRA 217 was approved by County Council to expand agribusiness and agritourism opportunities.
	<p>Action EP-13.2: Work with agricultural and community stakeholders to review and update the Zoning Regulations and other regulations to create more opportunities for agritourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPZ reported that ZRA 217 was approved by County Council to expand agribusiness and agritourism opportunities.
	<p>Action EP-13.3: Reduce barriers to the burgeoning demand for on-farm breweries, wineries, cideries, meaderies, distilleries, farm stays, event venues, and other agritourism uses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPZ reported that ZRA 217 was approved by County Council to expand agribusiness and agritourism opportunities.





CHAPTER 6

DYNAMIC NEIGHBORHOODS




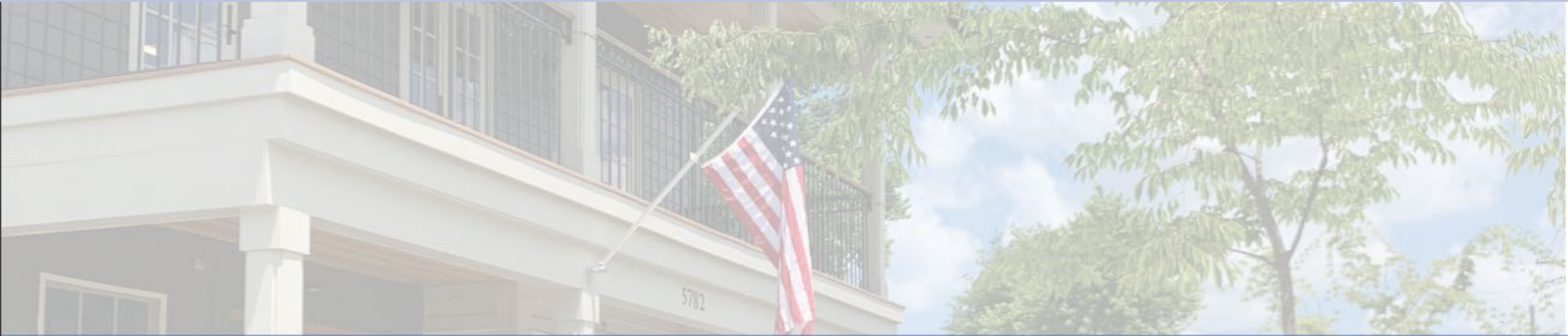
Chapter 6: Dynamic Neighborhoods – 76 Actions

Policy	Implementing Actions
<p> Policy: DN-2:</p> <p><i>Allow attached and detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on a variety of single-family attached and single-family detached lots that meet specific site development criteria in residential zoning districts.</i></p>	<p>Action DN-2.1: Explore a clear, predictable process and location-specific criteria for ADUs, including, but not limited to, consideration of lot coverage, lot size, setbacks, and other bulk regulations; stormwater management; and parking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPZ reported that ZRA 218/CB3-2026 was approved to allow for detached ADUs in certain zoning districts, under certain conditions.
	<p>Action DN-2.2: Consider revising the Zoning Regulations and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations to allow attached and detached ADUs that meet pre-determined location and site criteria. Provide parking requirements as needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPZ reported that ZRA 218/CB3-2026 was approved to allow for detached ADUs in certain zoning districts, under certain conditions.
	<p>Action DN-2.3: Establish a clear definition of ADUs in the updated Zoning Regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPZ reported that ZRA 218/CB3-2026 was approved to allow for detached ADUs in certain zoning districts, under certain conditions.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p> Policy: DN-6:</p> <p><i>Increase the supply of for-sale and rental housing units in all new developments attainable to low- and moderate-income households and special needs households.</i></p>	<p>Action DN-6.4: Establish a working group that consists of members appointed by the County Executive and the County Council and is concurrent with the evaluation of APFO to evaluate the feasibility of a targeted incentive program for affordable and accessible housing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that the Affordable Housing Work Group met in 2024 to discuss and propose recommendations related to each element described in the associated action. The Housing Expansion and Affordability Act (HB538) became effective January 1, 2025.• The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) reported that CB18-2025 provides incentives (APFO waiver and PILOT agreement) in exchange for more affordable units at a deeper affordability level.

Chapter 6: Dynamic Neighborhoods – 76 Actions


Policy	Implementing Actions
<p> Policy: DN-7:</p> <p><i>Provide various incentives that encourage the development of for-sale and rental housing units affordable to low- and moderate-income households and special needs households, and preserve the County's existing affordable housing inventory.</i></p>	<p>Action DN-7.5: Continue to provide and increase downpayment assistance funding to income-eligible households through the County's Settlement Downpayment Loan Program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHCD reported the FY26 budget includes sufficient funding for Settlement Downpayment Loan Program (SDLP) program.
	<p>Action DN-7.6: Explore ways to allow homeowners in the County's moderate-income homeownership program to realize appreciation in their homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHCD reported that the current regulations detail the resale price calculation that provides appreciation to Moderate Income Housing Units (MIHU) homeowners.
	<p>Action DN-7.7: Establish a goal of zero net loss of existing housing affordable to households with income below 60% of the area median income while adding new affordable units to the County's housing inventory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHCD reported that MIHUs, Low Income Housing Units (LIHU) and Disabled Income Housing Units (DIHU) remain in the County's affordable housing inventory in perpetuity. Rental units are leased to households earning up to 60% of Howard County Median Income.



CHAPTER 7

QUALITY BY DESIGN



Policy	Implementing Action
<p> Policy: QBD-3:</p> <p><i>Focus on creating active, walkable, and universally accessible public realms in all new development and redevelopment and include a broad range of community spaces, as appropriate to each character area.</i></p>	<p>Action QBD-3.4: Establish goals and guidelines for providing community open spaces and park spaces to create more equitable access across different neighborhoods in Howard County. Ideally, residents should have a variety of open space choices within walking or biking distance of their home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP) reported that this task was completed as part of the preparation of the 2022 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) and will likely be completed again with revised metrics and inputs for the 2027 LPPRP.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: QBD-4:</p> <p><i>Develop context-sensitive design standards appropriate for various scales of infill development to effectively transition between larger developments and established uses, and to encourage compatibility of small-scale infill within established neighborhoods.</i></p>	<p>Action QBD-4.5: Update the Landscape Manual to reflect current best practices, and to provide clear direction on buffers that address the scale and mass of new development abutting existing development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that the County's Landscape Manual update was completed and adopted by County Council.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: QBD-8:</p> <p><i>Expand documentation, protection, and education regarding the County's diverse historic resources.</i></p>	<p>Action QBD-8.7: Participate in a statewide effort to create one master state map of all known cemeteries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that historic preservation planners were selected to be on the 2025 Maryland Inventory of Cemetery and Burial Sites Workgroup and worked on a report to the Governor and General Assembly. The report was submitted December 1, 2025, making recommendation for definitions and inventory information.

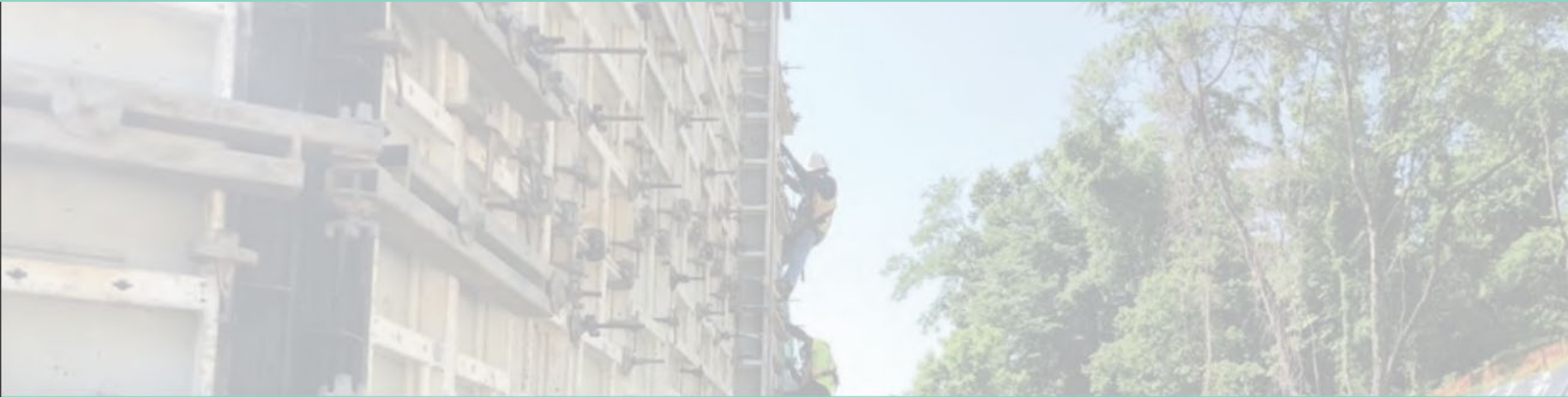


CHAPTER 8

PUBLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES



Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: PS-3:</p> <p><i>The County and Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) should collaborate on future school siting and develop tools that provide the flexibility needed to allow for alternative school designs, flexible site requirements, and adaptive reuse of underutilized properties.</i></p>	<p>Action PS-3.7: Ensure future redevelopment of Gateway into a Regional Activity Center includes a thorough evaluation of school capacity and that any deficiencies created through its redevelopment are mitigated by providing requisite school facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that the Gateway Master Plan, adopted in 2025, included an assessment of pupil yields under several scenarios. The plan then outlined preliminary recommendations regarding school capacity for the County and HCPSS to consider in the near-term and mid-term. For example, one recommendation suggested that incentives to support land dedication for public schools be evaluated as part of the development of an alternative zoning program for Gateway.



CHAPTER 9

SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE



Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: INF-1:</p> <p><i>Prioritize Capital Improvement Program requests that directly implement General Plan policies and implementing actions.</i></p>	<p>Action INF-1.1: Expand project statements to refer to policies and implementing actions in the General Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that work was done with OOB to develop a process to require project statements for new and substantially changed projects to include a statement that refers to general plan consistency in the Budget book starting in 2024.

Policy	Implementing Action
<p>Policy: INF-12:</p> <p><i>Reduce nitrogen loads from septic systems.</i></p>	<p>Action INF-12.2: Investigate options to establish and maintain a long-term septic system inspection and maintenance program for nitrogen reducing systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Howard County Health Department (HCHD) reported that the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) created a database to track and enforce Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) required operation and maintenance of nitrogen reducing treatment systems. HCHD utilizes a grant from MDE to oversee the Best Available Technology (BAT) operation and maintenance requirements for systems in Howard County. Noncompliant systems are referred to MDE for enforcement.



CHAPTER 10

MANAGING GROWTH



Chapter 10: Managing Growth – 2 Actions

Policy	Implementing Actions
<p>Policy: MG-1:</p> <p><i>Evaluate the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO), including current and anticipated development patterns and challenges, to support the vision and policies presented in HoCo By Design and in accordance with the law established for the review of APFO.</i></p>	<p>Action MG-1.1: [Refer to HoCo By Design for Action MG-1.1's detailed list of sub-actions]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that an APFO Review Committee was convened in August 2024. They completed their work in the fall of 2025 and submitted their recommendations to the County Executive and County Council. These action items were conducted as part of the APFO Review Committee's work effort.
	<p>Action MG-1.2: Appoint an Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) task force within one year of General Plan adoption to review and provide recommendations for APFO updates that reflect the vision and policies in HoCo By Design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DPZ reported that an APFO Review Committee convened in August 2024. They completed their work in the fall of 2025 and submitted their recommendations to the County Executive and County Council.

Next Steps

1. Continue to work with our 30 supporting agencies to report progress
2. Implement the 359 actions with County agencies to support the General Plan's vision
3. Document progress in the 5-year mid-cycle performance report



Reporting
Year 1

Reporting
Year 2

Reporting
Year 3

Reporting
Year 4

5-Year
Report

Questions?
