



WELCOME

New Town Task Force Feedback *Zoning in Columbia*

Public Meeting

April 8, 2026; In-Person

April 9, 2026; WebEx

PLEASE SIGN IN



Task Force Purpose

HoCo by Design

“The New Town Task Force is a vital component to ensuring the Columbia of tomorrow is informed by a community-first approach.”

- County Executive Calvin Ball

CHARACTER-BASED ELEMENTS

Character-based code elements emphasize context of development and may apply to a designated area or more generally within the overall land use regulations and zoning codes. They could be used to regulate a number of factors, including building height and placement, parking locations, street frontage, sidewalks, planting areas, drainage, density, and the street itself. This information is conveyed through specific instructions and often includes easy-to-understand diagrams or other graphic illustrations.

While character-based concepts can be applied anywhere, they are most successful in areas that have a mix of uses, historic communities, and Rural Crossroad areas. A character-based approach to land use regulation in Howard County may yield more walkable, compact, and diverse mixed-use environments.

Character-based code elements are used to achieve the following:

1. Create neighborhoods where development is appropriately scaled to the public realm.
2. Encourage active transportation (e.g. walking, biking, etc.).
3. Foster social cohesion.

Columbia's original master plan contained a focus on open space in preserved over the decades and results in a wooded suburban community representing an earlier era, is also part of the community's signature features was to provide a full-spectrum of housing that still exists today and provides options in the County. Older parts of Columbia have some of the County's most multi-family units and more affordable older single-family homes and are acknowledged and considered when determining locations for new affordable housing.

The New Town Zoning District represents more than 14,000 acres and is a planned community by a visionary developer over 50 years ago. It is the best places to live in the country. Columbia has a unique sense of place that and strengthen. As a complement to character-based or hybrid zoning manuals can serve as a framework for preferred architectural patterns. They can provide guidelines and standards for building types, building components, roof types and details, windows, doors, porches, and other architectural elements for landscaping, lighting, fences, walls, signage, and other outdoor elements specific districts, neighborhoods, or activity centers in the community. Challenging to develop, form-based elements can be used to support hybrid approaches to further achieve desired character outcomes.

The HoCo By Design Character Areas technical appendix provides additional code updates.

The regulatory framework of New Town zoning establishes minimum and maximum proportions of open space, residential, commercial, industrial, and other land uses in addition to an overall density cap. Past General Plans evaluated and recommended updates to this framework resulting in the 2009 Village Center Revitalization zoning process update and the 2010 Downtown Columbia Master Plan which added residential units above this cap and established different land use percentages for Downtown. The New Town District is comprised of 268 approved Final Development Plans (FDPs) that enumerate parcel-specific regulations and cross-reference use and bulk provisions of non-New Town zoning districts. The FDP structure was designed to provide significant flexibility to the master developer and majority land owner of this planned community as it was developing. This regulatory structure and associated processes could be evaluated to ensure more efficient administration of the New Town Zone.

A review of the New Town Zoning District and its character-defining elements by a task force would provide an opportunity to ensure that the regulatory structure is calibrated to successfully carry forward New Town zoning.

*Chapter 7: Quality by Design, QBD - 30
Implementing Actions*

4. Create a taskforce that is appointed by County Council and the County Executive to evaluate and make recommendations on how to carry forward New Town's planned community framework.

Task Force Purpose, E.O.

Executive Order 2025-09 and 2025-10

County Executive
Of
Howard County, Maryland

Executive Order: 2025-09
Date: May 14, 2025
Subject: Creating a New Town Task Force

WHEREAS, the County's General Plan, HoCo By Design, was adopted in October of 2023 and took effect December of 2023; and

WHEREAS, to date, the Department of Planning and Zoning has worked to implement several aspects of HoCo By Design since its adoption, to include: convening an Affordable Housing Working Group to develop recommendations related to growth management strategies for this component of housing; convening the Adequate Public Facilities Act Review Committee to develop recommendations for revisions to the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO); advancing a comprehensive master planning effort for the future of the 1,100 acre Columbia Gateway office park; progressing updates to the Howard County Landscape Manual; and will soon commence projects to update the Route 1 and Route 40 Design Manuals; and

WHEREAS, HoCo By Design describes the New Town (NT) zoning district in Columbia of over 14,000 acres and 28,000 parcels as having a unique sense of place that its residents want to preserve, enhance, and strengthen; and

WHEREAS, the General Plan identifies that a review of the New Town (NT) zoning district and its character-defining elements by a task force would provide an opportunity to ensure that the regulatory structure is calibrated to successfully carry forward New Town (NT) zoning; and

WHEREAS, the General Plan calls for the establishment of a task force to evaluate and make recommendations on how to carry forward New Town's planned community framework; and

WHEREAS, the General Plan specifies that the Task Force shall consist of members appointed by the County Council and the County Executive; and

WHEREAS, the County Executive received recommendations from the County Council for members to be appointed by this executive order.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED, that the New Town Task Force is established.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that the duties and responsibilities of the Task Force are to evaluate and make recommendations on how to carry forward New Town's planned community framework, including but not limited to, modifications to zoning regulations and development processes.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that the following individuals are appointed to serve as voting members on the New Town Task Force:

1. Matt Abrams
2. Nina Basu
3. Judelle Campbell
4. Nicole Campbell
5. David Costello
6. Sharon Cooper-Kerr
7. Greg DesRoches
8. Rene DuBois
9. Karin Emery
10. Brian England
11. Michael Golbersuch
12. Robbyn Harris
13. Ryan Hermann
14. Ian Kennedy
15. Joan Lancois
16. Tim May
17. Kristi Smith
18. Stacy Spann
19. Collin Sullivan
20. Ashley Vaughan

WHEREAS, on May 14, 2025, I issued Executive Order No. 2025-09 that established the New Town Task Force; and

WHEREAS, I wish to alter the membership of the Task Force to add a member.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED, that Fran LoPresti is added as a voting member of the New Town Task Force.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that all other provisions of Executive Order No. 2025-09 shall remain in effect.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, Calvin Ball, as County Executive of Howard County, Maryland have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of Howard County to be affixed this 14th day of June 2025.


Calvin Ball
County Executive

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that the Task Force shall issue a written report by May 31, 2026.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that the Task Force's report shall be provided to the County Executive and County Council and shall be considered as zoning changes are developed for the New Town (NT) zoning district.

AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, that the New Town Task Force and the terms of its members shall cease to exist on or about September 30, 2026.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, Calvin Ball, as County Executive of Howard County, Maryland have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of Howard County to be affixed this 14th day of May 2025.


Calvin Ball
County Executive

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED, that the New Town Task Force is established.

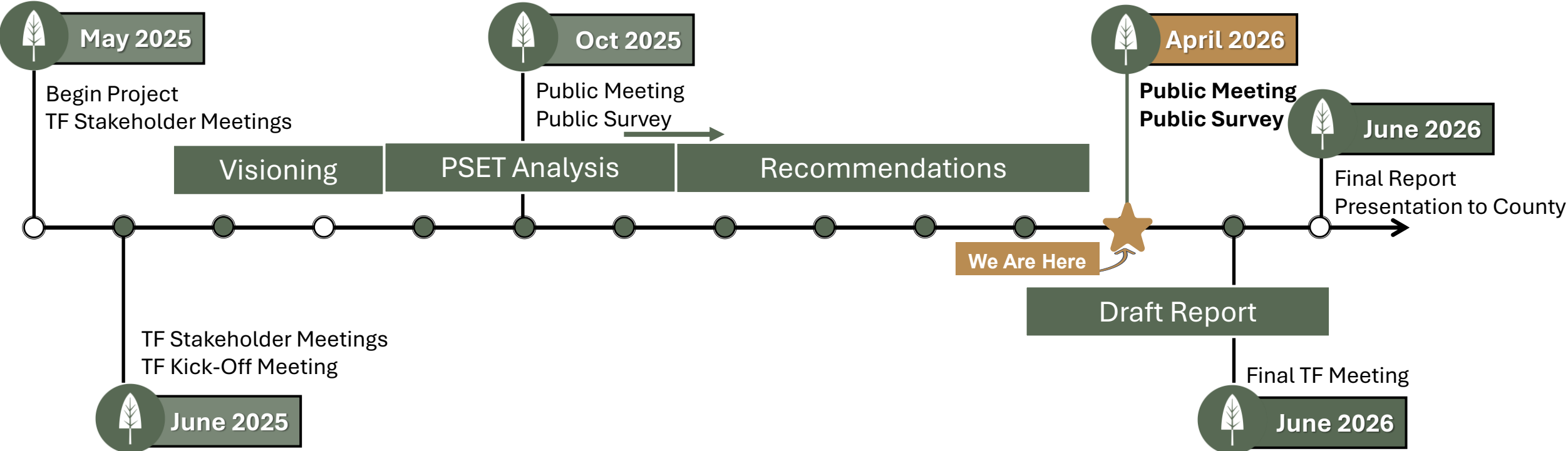
*AND BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the duties and responsibilities of the Task Force are to **evaluate and make recommendations** on how to carry forward New Town's planned community framework, including but not limited to, **modifications to zoning regulations and development processes.***

Overall Schedule



Anticipated Milestones

● Task Force Meeting



Background Information

New Town Zoning District Code 125.0

New Town Zoning District is the classification for Columbia, an unincorporated, planned community in Howard County, MD.

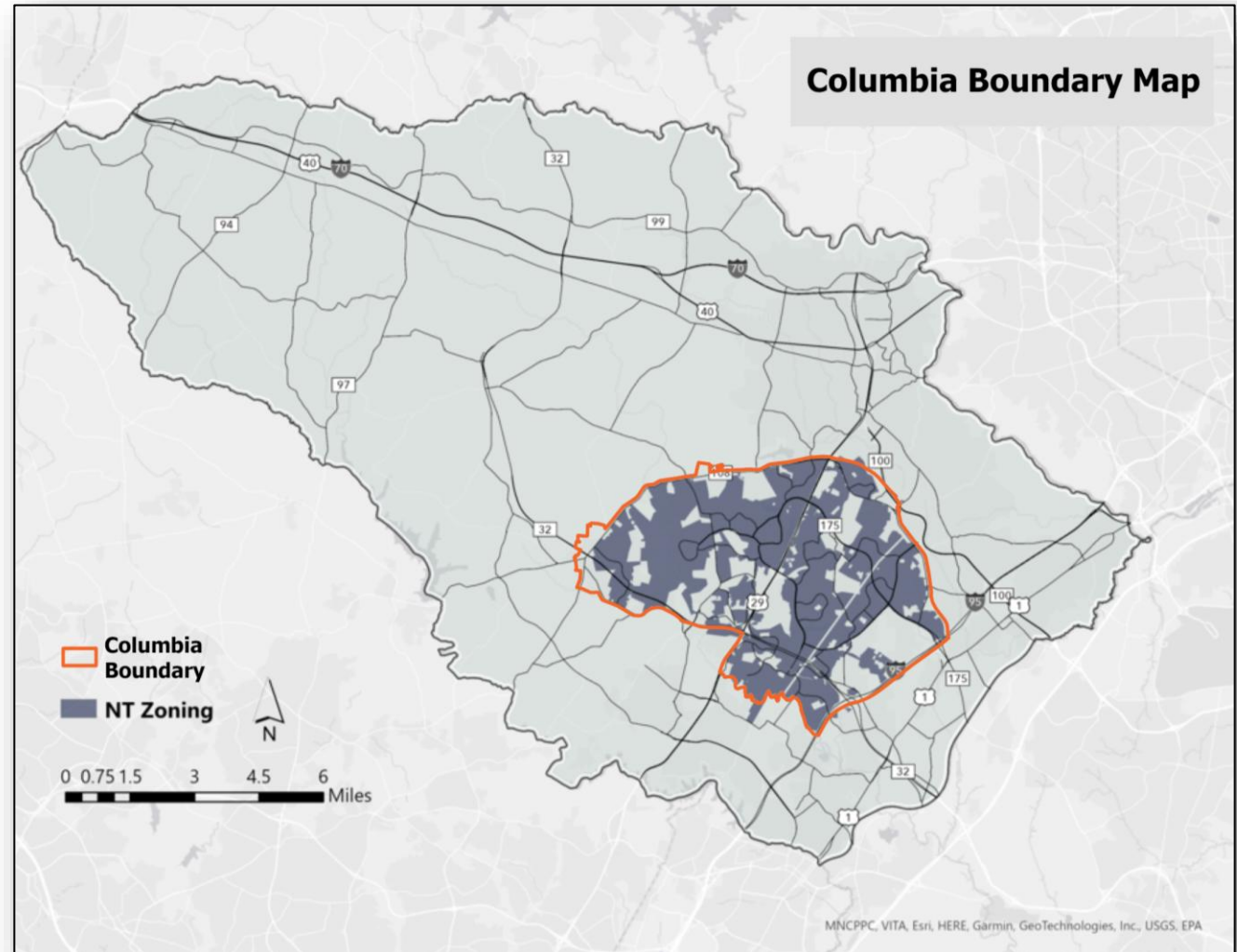
- Created in 1965
- Initially created with 13,690 acres, currently 14,272 acres
- Unlike traditional zoning districts, New Town Zoning includes plans that regulate land use mixes at the neighborhood level

Location Map, Columbia

Columbia Boundary Map

The boundary map outlines the area known as “New Town” and serves as a reference for the area.

- Much of Columbia is zoned New Town
- Land within Columbia but not zoned New Town are considered outparcels and are zoned M2, B1, R-20, etc.



Background Information

James W. Rouse established four goals for Columbia

1. To Build a Complete City.
2. To Respect the Land.
3. To Provide for the Growth of the People.
4. To Make a Profit.

“We must believe, because it is true, that people are affected by their environment...scale, by color and texture, by nature and beauty, that they can be uplifted, made comfortable, made important.”

- Jim Rouse



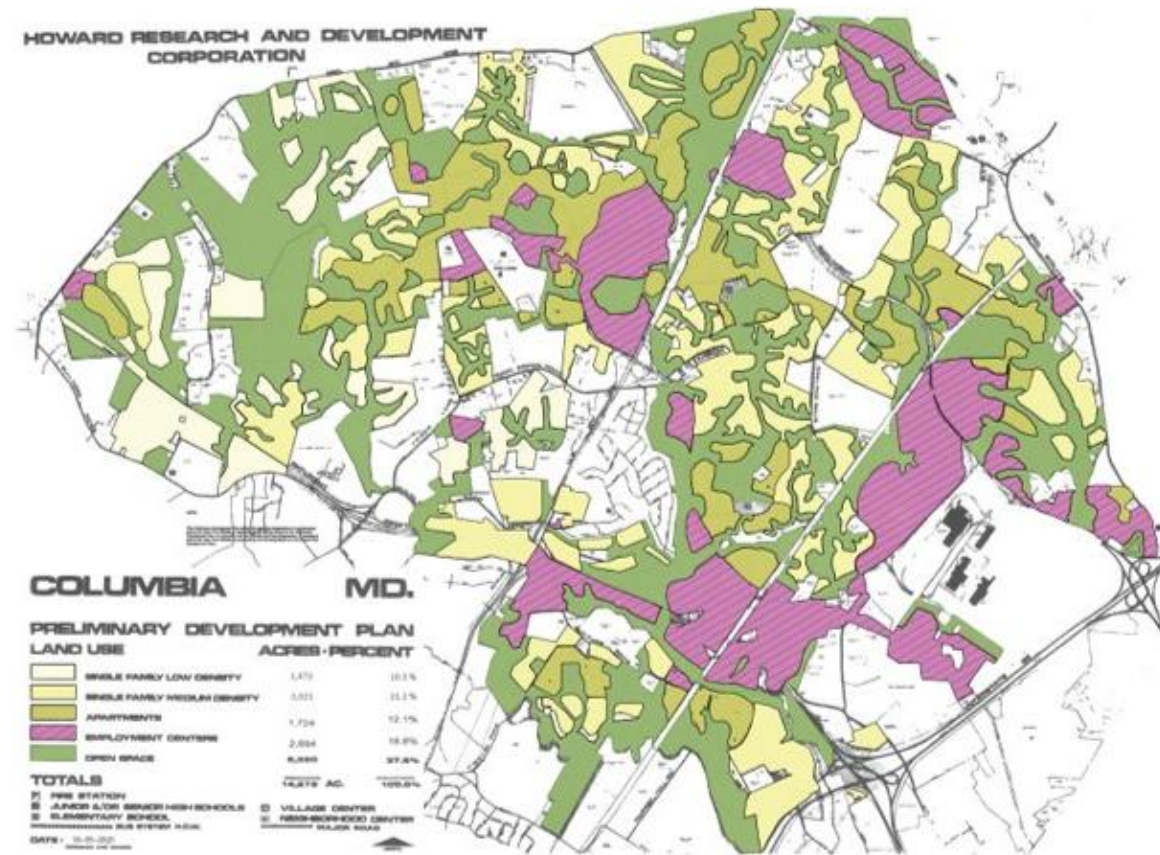
Display at American Visionary Arts Museum

NT District Density



Map Legend	Land Use	Acres	Dwelling Units Approved	Max Density*	Approved Density
	Single Family Low Density	1,473	2,711	2	1.8404
	Single Family Medium Density	3,021	8,689	4	2.8762
	Apartments – Single Family Attached	757	7,254	10	9.5825
	Apartment – Multifamily	967	14,463	15	14.9565
	Employment	2,694	1,477	N/A	0.5482
	Open Space	5,360	0	N/A	0
	Total NT District	14,272	34,594	2.5	2.4239

* Pursuant to Section 125.0.A.4 and 5 of the Howard County Zoning Regulations





Visioning Meetings

June and July Meetings

Task Force Vision

- *People and Community, Diversity and Inclusivity, Open Space and green space aid in maintaining the spirit of Columbia.*
- *Embrace the future while honoring the values that Columbia was based upon.*
- *Columbia is a place that needs to value its uniqueness / based on its history.*

The Vision for New Town Recommendations

PSET Principles

Preserve, Strengthen, Enhance, and Transform Principles

Areas to
PRESERVE



Areas to
STRENGTHEN



Areas to
ENHANCE



Residential / Non-Residential

Areas to
TRANSFORM



Less change / lower intensity

More change / greater intensity

Preserve

Protect and Maintain

Preserving what matters most

Strengthen

Strengthen existing communities and infrastructure

Strengthening what already works

Enhance

Adding into what is already working to be more robust

Enhancing what already exists

Transform

Transforming areas that are underutilized or poised for change

Transforming what needs to evolve

PSET Discussion

Key Elements for Discussion during PSET Meetings

- **Creating another New Town District**
- **Defining Credited Open Space**
- **Reviewing Original Petitioner Role**
- **Incorporating Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) Regulations**
- **Managing Density Caps**
- **Evaluating New Town District Structure**
- **Redefining Apartment Land Use**
- **Expansion of uses and materials, and design guidance in New Town Zoning**
- **Simplification of Regulations & Processes**

DRAFT Recommendations

Recommendation Development Process

- Potential Recommendations identified from:
 - Task Force PSET discussions
 - October 2025 Public Meeting Comment Cards
 - October – November 2025 Online Survey Results
 - 42 Potential Recommendations identified for discussion
- New Town Task Force Recommendations Meetings (January 2026 – March 2026)
 - 28 Recommendations identified to move forward to Technical Survey for review and input

DRAFT Recommendations

Creating Another New Town District

Howard County can create another New Town District by approving a plan for a very large, connected area of land that is designed to function as a complete community. The plan must show how housing, jobs, services, open space, and infrastructure will be provided over time in a coordinated way.

Preliminary Development Plan (PDP) / Comprehensive Sketch Plan (CSP) / Final Development Plan (FDP)

Section 125.0 establishes a three-step development process in which a CSP presents the overall development concept, a PDP refines the layout and compliance with zoning and design requirements, and a FDP provides final engineering details for approval and construction.

DRAFT Recommendations

Creating Another New Town District

* Task Force to revisit recommendations for further discussion after the Public Meetings.

Section Reference	Recommendation #	Preliminary Draft Motion for Discussion	NTTF PSET Meeting Date	NTTF Recommendations Meeting Date
Section 125.0.B	1	Maintain the original petitioner's ability to expand or restrict a New Town district *	September 30, 2025	January 27, 2026 February 17, 2026

PDP/CSP/FDP Structure

Section 125.0.	2	Maintain its current overall structure, but seek to simplify the approval and development process within New Town district	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	3	Standardize requirements by land use types across the FDPs *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	4	Remove CSPs as a step in the development process *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	5	Consolidate the FDPs and their requirements to create a table of permitted uses by area	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	6	Expand the types of uses that can be approved administratively by DPZ *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	7	Identify most effective opportunities for public engagement and maintain them as a priority throughout the development process *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026

DRAFT Recommendations

Defining Credited Open Space

Section 125.0 Credited Open Space refers to land within the New Town (NT) District that qualifies to be counted toward the district's required open space, provided it meets specific criteria such as being permanent, usable, and protected for conservation, recreation, environmental, scenic, or community purposes. This ensures that development intensity is balanced by preserved open areas that support public and environmental benefits.

Apartments Definition

Section 125.0 classifies apartments by building height and form and includes structures that are not single-family homes into that classification, such as townhomes.

DRAFT Recommendations

Defining Credited Open Space

* Task Force to revisit recommendations for further discussion after the Public Meetings.

Section Reference	Recommendation #	Preliminary Draft Motion for Discussion	NTTF PSET Meeting Date	NTTF Recommendations Meeting Date
Section 125.0.A.8.e	8	Define open space in the New Town Zoning District to provide greater clarity of uses and align with other county zoning district definitions *	September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026
	9	Maintain the current definition of open space in Section 125.0.A.8.e *	September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026
	10	Maintain required 36% open space	September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026
	11	Ensure permanent protection of currently established credited open space areas *	September 30, 2025	February 17, 2026

Apartments Definition

Section 125.0.5.b	12	Adjust the definition of apartments to align with other county zoning district definitions *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	13	Create a new land use category for single family attached housing types	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	14	Create a new land use category for diverse housing types, including missing middle housing types *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026

DRAFT Recommendations

Original Petitioner

The original petitioner is the landowner or long-term leaseholder who establishes the New Town District and retains responsibility for overall planning, coordination, and implementation of development, including filing and maintaining required plans and amendments.

Downtown and Village Center Process Simplification

Section 125.0 requires Downtown and Village Center projects to follow a 16-step review process, with public engagement opportunities throughout the 16-steps. This process starts with an overall vision and ends with detailed project approvals, focusing on walkability, mixed uses, and good design.

DRAFT Recommendations

Original Petitioner

* Task Force to revisit recommendations for further discussion after the Public Meetings.

Section Reference	Recommendation #	Preliminary Draft Motion for Discussion	NTTF PSET Meeting Date	NTTF Recommendations Meeting Date
Section 125.0.F.1	15	Remove the role of the original petitioner to amend commercial FDPs	December 9, 2025	February 17, 2026
	16	The county should review the potential for the Planning Board or another entity to take up the role of the original petitioner *	December 9, 2025	February 17, 2026

Downtown and Village Center Process Simplification

Section 125.0.E, H, I, Section 125.0.J, Section 125.0.K	17	Simplify the development process for Village Center redevelopment *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	18	Simplify the development process for Downtown Columbia redevelopment *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026
	19	Reduce the number of public meetings required for redevelopment processes *	November 18, 2025	February 17, 2026

DRAFT Recommendations

Density Cap Requirements

Section 125.0 includes a density cap requirement of 2.5 dwelling unit per acre.

Land Use Percentage Requirements

Section 125.0 land use requirements designate where and how residential, commercial, mixed-use, institutional, and open spaces may occur within the New Town District.

DRAFT Recommendations

Density Cap Requirements

* Task Force to revisit recommendations for further discussion after the Public Meetings.

Section Reference	Recommendation #	Preliminary Draft Motion for Discussion	NTTF PSET Meeting Date	NTTF Recommendations Meeting Date
Section 125.0.A.4	20	Maintain the density cap of 2.5 dwelling units per acre as is	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
	21	Consider excluding village centers from the New Town wide density cap	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026

Land Use Percentage Requirements

Section 125.0.A.8	22	Evaluate and consider adjusting the land use percentage requirements, outside of open spaces uses, in order to accommodate more diverse housing types	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
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DRAFT Recommendations

Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) Requirements

In Howard County, the Moderately Priced Housing Unit (MIHU) program requires certain residential developments to set aside a percentage of units as affordable housing for income-qualified households. These units must meet established pricing, size, and long-term affordability controls to support workforce and moderate-income housing needs. New Town Zoning District is currently excluded from this requirement.

Expansion of Uses, Materials, and Design Guidance

Uses, materials, and design guidance is primarily based on the FDPs and date back to the original FDP's developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

DRAFT Recommendations

* Task Force to revisit recommendations for further discussion after the Public Meetings.

Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) Requirements

Section Reference	Recommendation #	Preliminary Draft Motion for Discussion	NTTF PSET Meeting Date	NTTF Recommendations Meeting Date
Title 13 Subtitle 402	23	Encourage diversity of housing types throughout the New Town district	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
	24	Incentivize, rather than require, the provision of MIHUs	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026
	25	Maintain the existing exemption from MIHUs in New Town	October 28, 2025	March 24, 2026

Expansion of Uses, Materials, and Design Guidance

Section 125.0	26	Evaluate the expansion of the Design Advisory Panel role to review projects in New Town	December 9, 2025	March 24, 2026
	27	Explore the creation of pattern books to incentivize the use of modern and sustainable materials	December 9, 2025	March 24, 2026
	28	Incentivize and encourage universal design and accessibility in New Town zoning	December 9, 2025	March 24, 2026

Next Steps

We want to hear from YOU!

- **Take the technical survey!**
- Share your comments about Section 125.0 with the project team

Results from the survey will be used during final development of the Recommendations and report

Stay informed about the project process at
www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/new-town-task-force

Scan here:



Grab a Sticker

What is your interest in New Town?

I live in Columbia	I work in Columbia
I'm a Task Force Member	I develop land in Columbia

Stay informed about the project process at
www.howardcountymd.gov/boards-commissions/new-town-task-force