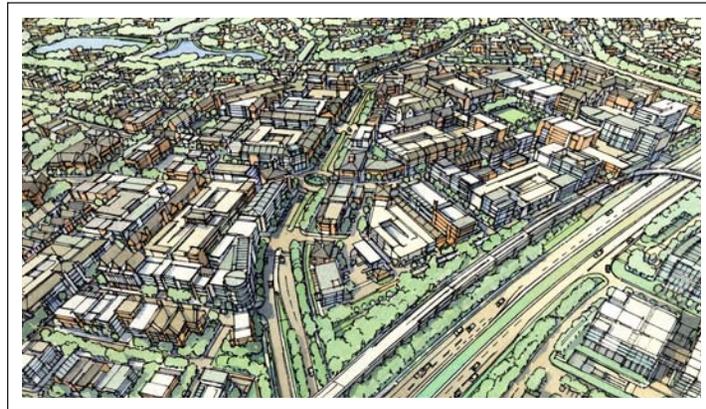


# KENTLANDS BOULEVARD

## Commercial District



Special Study Area Eight, an Amendment to the 2003 Land Use Plan  
City of Gaithersburg, Maryland  
Adopted - May 5, 2008



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### *City of Gaithersburg Mayor and Council*

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Kentlands Citizens Assembly  
Lakelands Community Association  
Quince Orchard Park Community Association

### *Approval / Adoption*

Planning Commission Approval - April 16, 2008  
by Resolution PCR-2-08  
  
Mayor and City Council Adoption - May 5, 2008  
by Resolution R-41-08

## SPECIAL THANKS

*The Project Team would especially like to thank the City of Gaithersburg Planning Staff for their hard work during the planning effort including their preparations for the three educational workshops and the community design charrette. Without their help, these events would not have been possible.*

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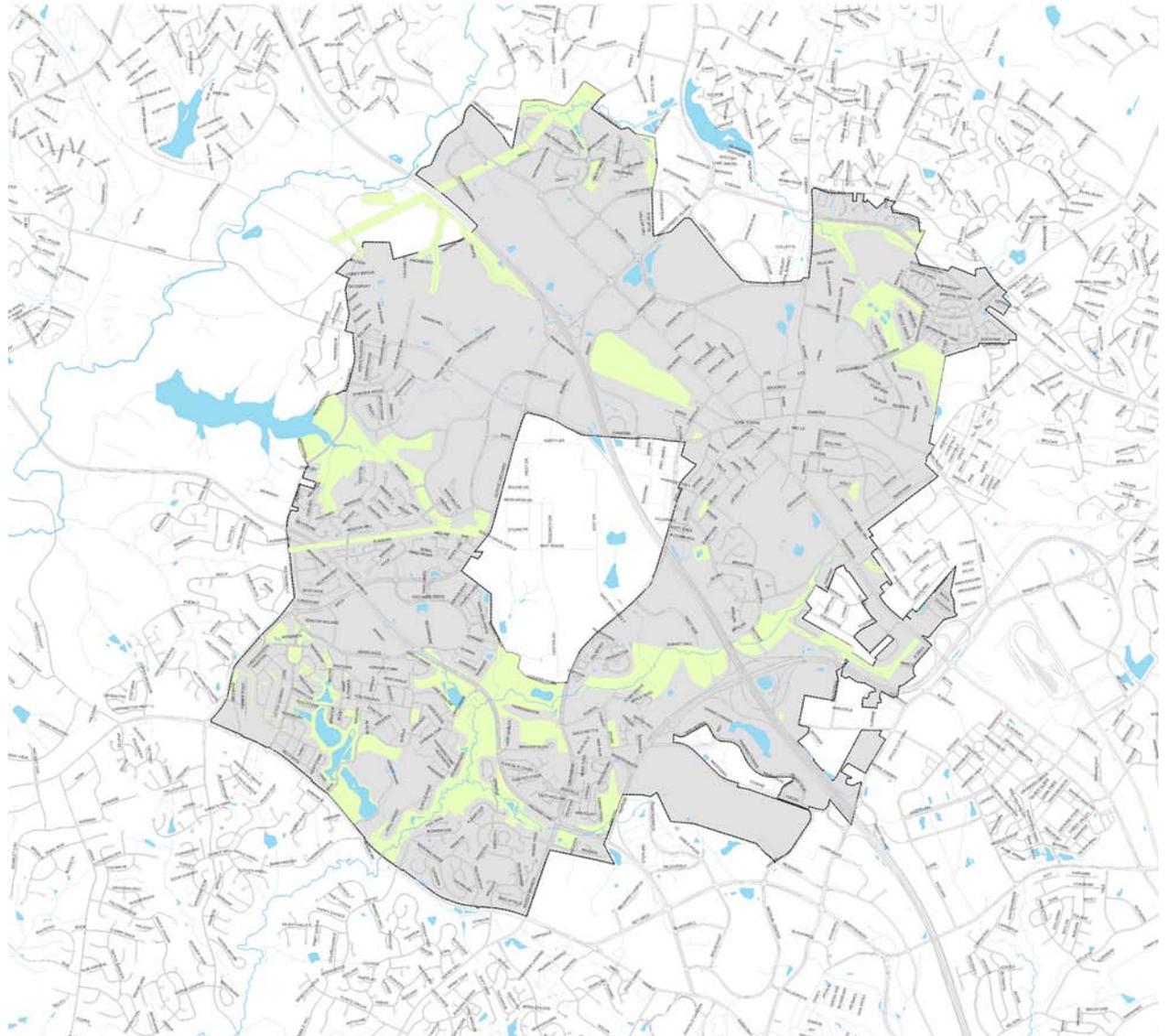
# 1. PURPOSE

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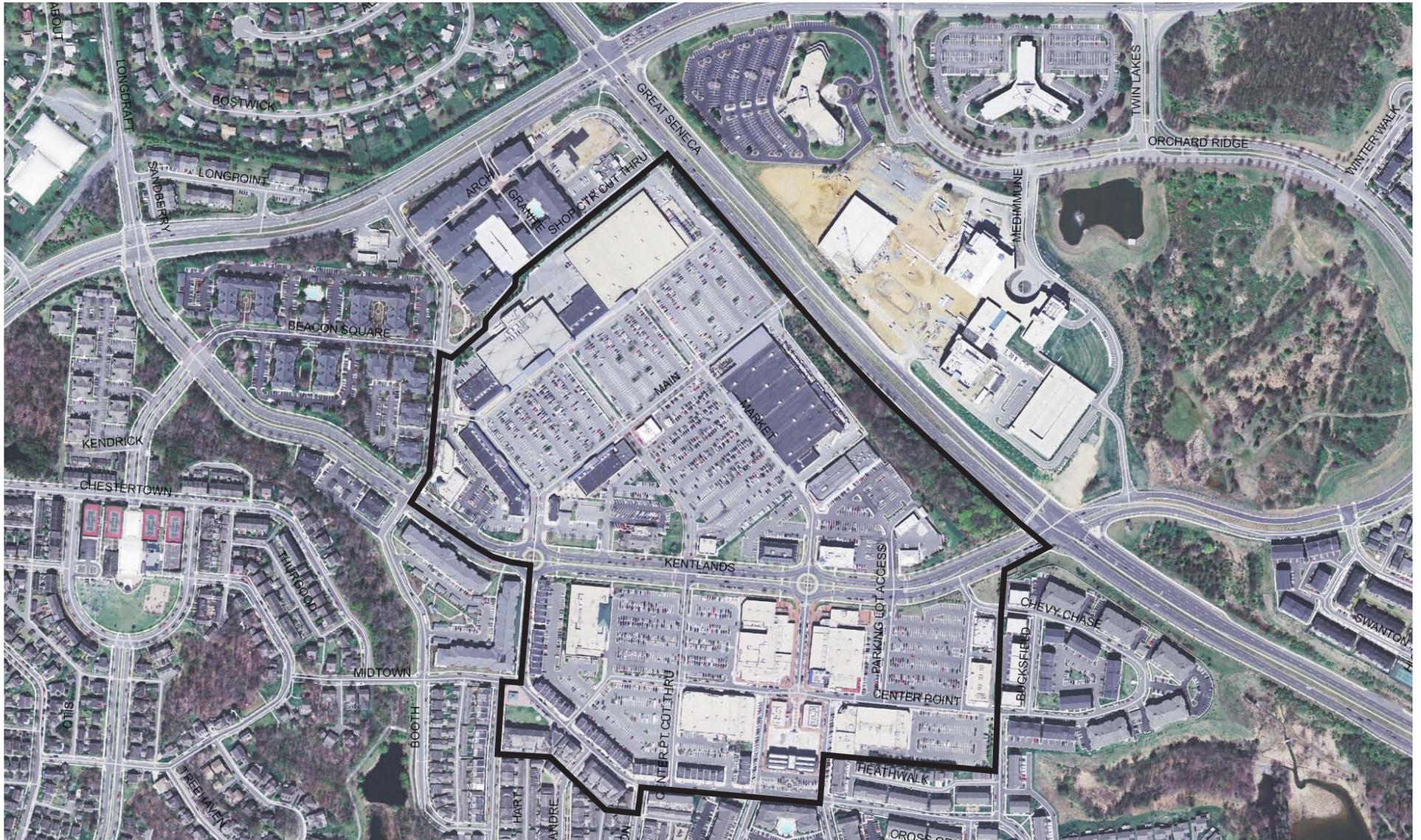
## CONTEXT

### *Place in the Region*

Located in the heart of Montgomery County, Maryland, the City of Gaithersburg occupies approximately 10 square miles only a short distance to the District of Columbia's borders making it an ideal location in the Washington metropolitan region. Within the City, there are approximately 59,000 residents and 24,000 dwelling units. The City of Gaithersburg is home to well known communities, including Kentlands and Lakelands. First designed during a charrette in 1988, the Kentlands has been a thriving and successful community for many years.



STUDY AREA



## CONTEXT

### *Project Study Area*



Adjacent to the Lakelands, Kentlands and Quince Orchard Park communities, the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District (KBCD) is an 80 acre commercial area divided by a four lane boulevard. The district was identified in the City's 2003 Master Plan Update as one of ten Special Study Areas. These special areas within the City were identified as participants in planning processes that intensively review the existing conditions of the area while employing extensive community participation to assess the future development of the area.

The north side of Kentlands Boulevard is predominately retail, consisting of a 22-acre Kentlands Square Shopping Center with approximately 250,000 square feet of retail and Kentlands Place, a 15-acre area consisting of approximately 137,000 square feet of retail and 16,000 square feet of office. Several smaller parcels abut Kentlands Boulevard on the north side and are an infill mix of retail, office and restaurant uses.

The south side of Kentlands Boulevard is predominately retail, consisting of a 20-acre Market Square Shopping Center consisting of 252,000 square feet of retail. In addition to the retail center, more than 50 live-work units adjacent to the retail center which are included in the study area. In addition, the south side is more pedestrian-friendly and walkable along Market Street, Main Street and near the town square.

## PROJECT FOUNDATION

Updating the City's Master Plan for the Special Study Area – Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District – is the primary purpose of the planning effort. When completed, the results of the planning effort will update the 2003 Master Plan and provide guidance for future development in the area. In addition, the study is designed to obtain public input on the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) and its alignment along Great Seneca Highway.



## THE PLANNING PROCESS

A successful planning process recognizes basic components in order to establish a context for change. The components include public engagement and dynamic public process, community impact, financial requirements, revenue sources, transportation, circulation, parking, land use, architecture and environmental design. The goal is a master plan that will guide the future growth of the study area, specific enough to show location and character of future development, yet flexible in order to accommodate programmatic changes or other evolving factors.



From the beginning, the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District planning effort had a compressed timeframe. The project team's primary goal during the duration of the project was to solicit public comments, work to build community support and recommend actions for implementation. Although the project only spanned a short time, June 2007 to January 2008, the quick turnaround established a short feedback loop of interaction between the community, project team, staff and key stakeholders.



## PROJECT GOALS

The Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District planning effort had three primary goals: establish a vision for the study area, engage the community in a dynamic public process and create a plan for incremental change. While these goals were broad in nature, it empowered the project team to guide the community and stakeholders through the process for establishing their own vision for the future. Subsequently, the community and participants were in charge of determining the ultimate outcome with the leadership and expertise of the project team.

### *Establish a Vision*

Establishing a clear, achievable vision for the future of Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District was a primary goal of the planning effort. Over the years, the adjacent community has seen the shopping district concept change from a regional shopping destination anchored by major national tenants to its current form of big box retail stores and parking lots. While many residents feel the center is operating satisfactorily 'as is,' other residents believe that the shopping district has more potential to evolve into a form that is consistent with the character of the established surrounding neighborhoods of Kentlands, Lakelands and Quince Orchard Park.





## *Engage the Community*

A highly participatory process and community design charrette were critical elements of the planning process from the onset. Periodically throughout the process, three public workshops and a design charrette were held to engage the community in determining the future of the area. Citizens were asked to share their viewpoints, to respond to concepts and strategies, and to react to plan schemes and designs. A statistically valid telephone survey was conducted to engage the community on a range of topics relevant to the process and the survey targeted various parts of the City. Finally, a project website was set up to provide a platform for disseminating information to the general public. Presentations, meeting notes, project updates and design concepts were uploaded on a regular basis to ensure that the public had a chance to review material and respond with comments during the process.

## *Create a Plan for Incremental Change*

The effort focused on establishing prioritized, achievable short- and long-term plans to provide the City with a framework for incremental change. The long-term plans created during the design charrette build upon the short-term schemes that are achievable today to ensure that the foundation laid in the short-term will not preclude the long-term vision of the shopping district. In addition, several alternative scenarios for the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) station were explored as the alignment options are still being studied by Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) and the exact station location is still unknown. These plan alternatives that focus on the short- and long-term vision for the place enable the City to respond as the market changes and the future of the CCT alignment is resolved.

KENTLANDS BOULEVARD

Commercial District

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## 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

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## DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

*Figure-Ground*



Planned by the principles of New Urbanism, the study area's adjacent communities were designed in a compact development pattern. The current form of development within the KBCD does not support the pedestrian-friendly public realm like the residential communities. Potential infill development has the opportunity to fill in the parking lots to make the area more urban and walkable.

*Parks & Open Space*



The fine-grain development pattern that exists affords the residents to preserve natural areas for the enjoyment of the community. Lakes and stream valleys are protected and the development pattern responds to natural conditions. The study area's primary open spaces are found in hardscape plazas, cafe seating and very small green parks. Additional development will yield more opportunities for open spaces that support the urban pattern of development.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

Zoning



The study area's mixed use zoning classification permits a variety of land uses within the study area. This flexibility permits a range of development opportunities to occur in the future.

Land Use



While a wide variety of uses are present within the study area and adjacent communities, the land uses are horizontally mixed. Future development affords the potential for vertically mixed-use buildings within the KBCD.

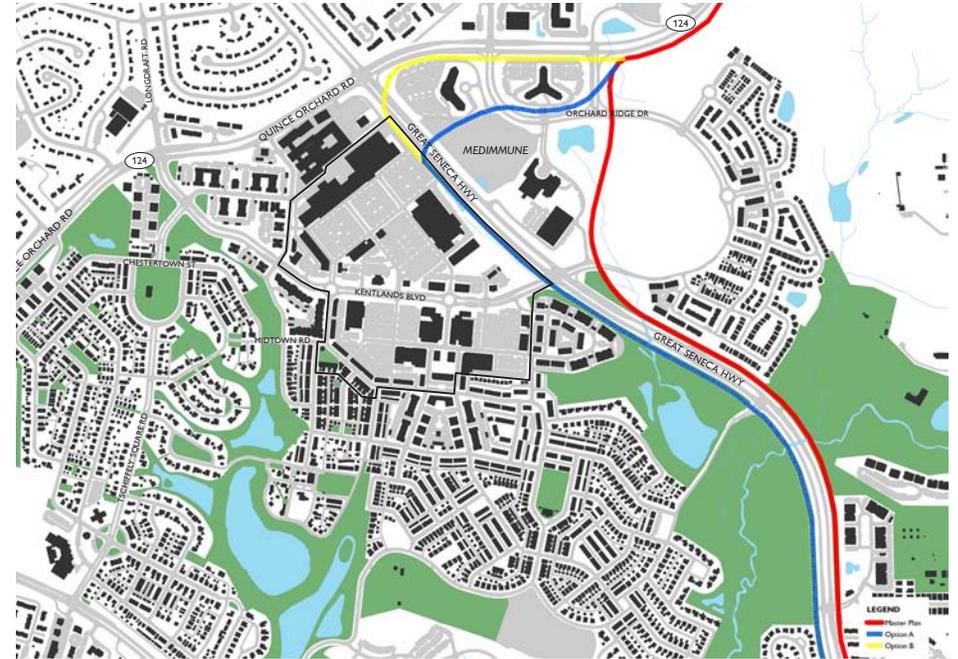
## TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

### *Street Network*



The current street grid of the study area is established by existing streets and the drive aisles of the parking lots associated with the Kentlands Square and Market Square Shopping Centers. While the drive aisles of the parking lots do not feel like streets today, they provide a logical framework for potential infill development in the future and an understandable framework for pedestrians and drivers.

### *Corridor Cities Transitway Alignment Options*



The Corridor Cities Transitway will impact the future of the development pattern within the KBCD. If the Master Plan Alignment option is changed to run on the southwest side of Great Seneca Highway, the KBCD has the potential to evolve into a mixed-use town center.

## 3. PUBLIC OUTREACH

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### *Purpose*

The community engagement strategy and encouraging public participation were critical elements from the beginning of the planning effort. Not only were City leaders and staff members cognizant of the need to obtain viewpoints from the immediate and surrounding community, they welcomed the opportunity to hear from the people living, working and shopping in the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District. Early in the process, the planning staff

and project team worked hand-in-hand to establish a community engagement plan to provide the community with multiple opportunities to interact with the project team, to ask questions and to voice their opinions and concerns.

The project team used three primary community engagement strategies to include the public in the process: project website, educational workshops, a

telephone survey and a five-day design charrette. Unlike many other design efforts, the project team and planning staff purposely held the charrette at the end of the project. This format allowed the project team to perform existing conditions analyses, listen to community comments and concerns and meet with key stakeholders before creating any plans.



**KENTLANDS**

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**a vision for Kentlands Boulevard**

**Upcoming Events**

September 17, 2007  
8:00 AM  
[Citizen Phone Survey Begins](#)

September 18, 2007  
8:00 AM  
[Citizen Phone Survey](#)

September 19, 2007  
8:00 AM  
[Citizen Phone Survey](#)

September 20, 2007  
8:00 AM  
[Citizen Phone Survey](#)

September 21, 2007  
8:00 PM  
[Citizen Phone Survey Ends](#)

October 4, 2007  
7:00 PM  
[CHARRETTE - OPENING PUBLIC WORKSHOP](#)

October 5, 2007  
1:00 PM  
[Charrette - Studio Observation](#)

October 6, 2007  
1:00 PM  
[Charrette - Studio Observation](#)

October 6, 2007  
4:30 PM  
[CHARRETTE - OPEN HOUSE](#)

October 8, 2007  
1:00 PM  
[Charrette - Studio Observation](#)

**about the project** [more](#) [images](#) [all](#)

PROJECT GOALS HOK will lead the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District planning effort to establish the vision and goals for the future of the area through the use of a highly participatory set of outreach activities to obtain stakeholder viewpoints on:- Characteristics of the Kentlands Blvd Commercial District that are successful - Characteristics of the KBCD that are NOT successful - Alignment changes proposed Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT) - Future infill development plans

visit our website at [www.KentlandsBoulevard.com](http://www.KentlandsBoulevard.com)

**project news**

**Workshop Presentations and Notes**  
9/17/2007  
Presentations and meeting notes for the Retail, Transportation and Urban Educational Workshops - held during the summer - have been uploaded. Please visit the "Documents" section of the page to download the individual presentations. [more](#)

**Survey Update**  
9/14/2007  
The citizen phone survey begins on Monday, Sept 17th and continues through the end of the week. Please note that the professional survey firm will be calling an area code while conducting the phone survey. We hope you will take the survey.

**Charrette Schedule Posted**  
9/10/2007  
The Charrette schedule has been posted. Please check the document or images section of this site for more details on the events planned for the charrette (Sept 17-19th). The public is encouraged to attend the following primary charrette: Opening... [more](#)

**Citizen Survey Announced**  
9/5/2007  
For Release September 4, 2007 - Citizen Survey to be Conducted for Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District Charrette- The City of Gaithersburg and its public affairs firm partner Foley & Lardner will conduct a telephone survey of residents in select geographical areas as part of a multi-faceted communication and outreach effort concerning the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District. Taking place from September 17 through the 21, the survey will query residents on a variety of issues important to the future development of this dynamic commercial area.

**Location, Location..**  
8/27/2007  
Urban Design Workshop + Charrette Location Announced The Urban Design Workshop + Charrette will be held at 255 Kentlands Boulevard. The space, formerly located in the Kentlands Square Shopping Center, is being renovated and will be located in the Kentlands Square Shopping Center.

**Citizen Survey Announced**  
For Release September 4, 2007

Citizen Survey to be Conducted for Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District Charrette

Gaithersburg, MD. The City of Gaithersburg and its public affairs firm partner Foley & Lardner will conduct a telephone survey of residents in select geographical areas as part of a multi-faceted communication and outreach effort concerning the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District. Taking place from September 17 through the 21, the survey will query residents on a variety of issues important to the future development of this dynamic commercial area.

Feedback will be used to prepare for the charrette, or "planning exercise," which will bring together City officials and staff, key stakeholders, the regional community and the design team in a transparent process of discovery and problem-solving. The outcome will be a proposed vision for the study area, encompassing the retail centers and commercial uses along Kentlands Boulevard from Quince Orchard Road to Great Seneca Highway.

The charrette will take place October 4 - 9 at 255 Kentlands Boulevard in the Kentlands Square Shopping Center. Session times will vary. For more information visit [www.kentlandsboulevard.com](http://www.kentlandsboulevard.com), or contact the City of Gaithersburg Planning and Code Administration at 301-258-6330.

### Project Website

A dedicated project website was created as a platform to disseminate information, notify the community about public engagement activities and encourage interaction between interested parties. The website included: a project calendar with major milestones and meeting dates; summary reports and meeting notes for public review; and notifications and invitations for public engagement activities. Throughout the process, the community could access the website and gain up-to-date information on the project's status.

Citizens who signed up to receive notifications on the study's progress were sent occasional emails to announce document postings or meeting dates and locations.

## EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

The first portion of the multi-faceted outreach program for the planning effort was a series of educational workshops conducted at the beginning of the project. The team identified three key topic areas for public education: transportation, retail market and urban design. An individual night was devoted to each topic between July and September 2007. The workshops, held in a local middle school, began with a presentation by the project team and were followed by various discussions and interactive exercises.



*Transportation & Traffic Educational Workshop*

### *Transportation Workshop*

During the workshop on transportation and transit issues, the project team presented information on the study area's existing traffic and parking conditions and provided information to the public on the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT).

Adjacent to the study area, the planned CCT master plan alignment travels north on Great Seneca Highway on the east side of the roadway and

curves into Quince Orchard park just as it passes Kentlands Boulevard.

After the presentation, the attendees were divided into small group for facilitated discussions on traffic and transportation topics impacting the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District. Team members and City staff lead open format discussions on access and mobility, parking, transit and traffic issues. While

a broad range of ideas were shared during the session, a few common concerns were raised:

#### *Access & Mobility*

- Kentlands Boulevard is too wide, it acts as a divide, and it is difficult to cross as a pedestrian or bicyclist.
- Traffic circles are confusing for drivers and pedestrians; however, people preferred the current condition to replacing the circles with signalized intersections.
- Market Square is a 'walking destination' while Kentlands Square shopping center is a 'driving destination.'

#### *Transit*

- The quality and aesthetic value of the walk to transit (CCT) stops is key to its appeal.
- Convenience is a more important factor than cost when deciding to use transit or not.
- At present, most people indicated that it was easier – faster and more convenient – to drive rather than use transit.

## *Parking*

- Most agreed that there is not a parking problem at Kentlands Square or Market Square, but the City should be mindful of the strain future development will put on the area.
- People were okay with the idea of parking garages should future development warrant it in the study area.
- Many attendees did not want to pay for metered spaces or parking garage fees; however, the group did mention that it might not be a bad idea if there was a discount and/or validation option.

## *Traffic*

- The four-way stop between the two roundabouts on Kentlands Boulevard is hard to navigate and difficult for drivers and pedestrians.
- Crossing and left turns onto Kentlands Boulevard are not safe.

## *Retail Market Workshop*

The second workshop held during the process was a session covering the retail market. The presentation covered topics relating to what retailers want and why, site specific retail issues, and how retail market analyses are conducted and what the results indicate.

The purpose of the retail market analysis is to understand existing retail conditions, to identify impediments to retail, to determine retail development potential and to establish realistic expectations for the future retail. Retailers ask several major questions when investigating a new location. It is important for the retailers to know: how many people are nearby, how close by, how much money does their household have, value of nearby homes, level of education and number of family households. These questions are used to identify pockets of target customers. Local competition for spending around the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District is strong and abundant and located in a highly competitive market. Lack of visibility from drive-by traffic at KBCD is less than other places including Washingtonian Center and Lakeforest Mall.



*Retail Market Educational Workshop*





## KENTLANDS BOULEVARD

Commercial District

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*Street Hierarchy and Network.* The street network provides a range of options for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians to move within and through the area. While many networks are rectilinear or orthogonal, it is not mandatory. Many successful urban places have a network of curvilinear streets or streets that respond to the natural topography of the area. The key to the network is that the streets are interconnected to one another no matter what their form.

*Pedestrian Connectivity.* The urban fabric and form of development play a large role in how comfortable pedestrians feel in the built environment. Narrower streets with low speeds, buildings built close to the street to provide a sense of enclosure, sidewalks for pedestrians and well-marked crossings to signal drivers to use caution are all ways that the built environment can influence the comfort of pedestrians.

*Continuous Frontage.* Buildings built close to the street help frame the public realm, but it is important not just to line the street. The buildings must have doors, shop windows and active facades along main pedestrian routes. Large format retail stores provide a continuous building wall, but the stores only provide one point of entry and little to no activity for pedestrians. Active continuous frontage reinforces a pleasant pedestrian experience.

*Public Spaces.* Public spaces come in a variety of shapes and sizes for a range of activities in rural, urban and sub-urban areas. The appropriate type, size and character of public spaces use cues from the surrounding area to inform the nature of the space. In addition, sidewalks, plazas, and outdoor seating, although not green and heavily planted, are also examples of great public spaces in urban areas.

*Building Types.* A range of building types aids in the creation of a place with a rich urban texture. The palette of building types appropriate for an area may be limited to a small amount or expand to a wide variety. Each place is unique and the building types appropriate are reflective of the character as such.

Following the presentation outlining important urban design considerations for the study area, the group divided into three groups to discuss a set of topics. The comments below represent a summary of the group discussion.

### *Scale & Character*

- The two sides of Kentlands Boulevard may have different purposes; however, they should be viewed as one place. The look and feel of the two sides should be cohesive.
- In the future, the study area would be described as: a village center, town center or transit-oriented development/city center. (Opinions varied on what the future of the center should



be; however, very few attendees agreed that the center should be just an 'excellent shopping center.' Most people felt that the study area had the potential to be more. Many people felt that a hybrid model of village center, town center and city center would be a favorable outcome.)

- There should be a mix of uses including office, residential and retail.

### *Street Hierarchy & Network*

- Connectivity is vital and considering accessibility and bikes is equally as important.
- Main Street has no connectivity to Kentlands Boulevard.
- Kentlands Boulevard is a division, crossing is a huge challenge and the character is uninviting.

### *Pedestrian Connections / Continuous Frontage*

- There needs to be additional development to 'cover the backs' of the Main Street live-work units.
- There does need to be some visual breaks along frontages so streets are not overwhelming.



- There should be continuous frontage everywhere possible.

### *Public Spaces*

- Main Street Pavilion is used for special events and/or farmers markets.
- Market Square is active all of the time. It is "...attractive, surrounded by shops, a good people watching venue, and a good pedestrian cut through."
- More outdoor seating areas – like at Starbuck's – would be a good addition to the area.

### *Building Types*

- The current single-story box retail building type does not fit the future vision of the area.
- There shouldn't be any more live-works in the KBCD.
- Some people don't feel comfortable with buildings taller than 4-6 stories; others felt that taller buildings (10 stories) would be appropriate if they were set back at 4 stories; a few people felt that high rise buildings may be appropriate in the study area.

## SURVEY

### *Purpose*

In order to obtain a broad range of opinions, the telephone survey was an additional public engagement tool used to solicit feedback from the general public regarding the future vision of the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial Center. The survey included a sample from adjacent communities as well as members of the larger City and County population. A professional survey firm – Barry Zepowitz & Associates – conducted the telephone survey from September 17th – 22nd, 2007.

### *Sample Area & Method*

Interviews for the survey were conducted by telephone by personnel from the aforementioned professional survey firm. The fully representative sample for the survey included 400 residents in four specified geo-areas. Three of the four areas are located within the City of Gaithersburg limits and one area is located in Montgomery County. These areas included:

- *Area 1* – Developments of Kentlands, Lakelands and Quince Orchard Park in the City of Gaithersburg
- *Area 2* – Area north of Area 1 bounded by Quince Orchard Road, Clopper Road, and Longdraft Road in the City of Gaithersburg
- *Area 3* – Area east-southeast of Area 1 and bounded by I-270, Sam Eig Highway, Muddy Branch Road, Mission Drive, and Darnestown Road in the City of Gaithersburg
- *Area 4* – Area southwest and northwest of Area 1 located in Montgomery County

### *Summary of Results*

Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District residents are clearly split in their feelings about additional business development in the Kentlands shopping areas. Approximately 54% of those surveyed oppose infill development, 35% support it and 11% are undecided. When asked if infill development should occur in already developed areas or in new undeveloped areas, only 19% of those surveyed cite 'neither' to indicate a 'no-growth' sentiment.

The residents of Area 1 (Kentlands, Lakelands and Quince Orchard Park) are the most supportive overall for growth, even though this additional development would occur in their 'backyard.' These residents are the most familiar with the shopping areas, frequent them the most, are the most familiar with the CCT, and tend to use public transportation more than residents of the other areas. Given these general observations, additional development in the Kentlands Boulevard Commercial District may indeed be welcomed rather than opposed when it does occur.

## THE CHARRETTE

### *Purpose*

The community design charrette was an interactive public engagement tool used to solicit feedback from the general public in a compressed timeframe. The purpose of the exercise was to bring the City, design team, property owners and the community together in a transparent process of mutual discovery and problem solving. The design charrette was an opportunity to:

- Foster collaboration among team members, local officials, property owners, community activists and the general public
- Concentrate creative energy and technical expertise
- Support the real-time testing and refinement of planning and design ideas

### *Timing*

The timing of the community design charrette within the overall project timeline was unique. Rather than conducting the design charrette at the beginning of the planning effort, the project team and planning staff decided to hold the exercise at the end of the public engagement process. Having the charrette at the conclusion of the project allowed the team to perform existing conditions analyses for the retail market, urban form and transportation network. In addition, all stakeholder interviews, group community meetings and educational workshops – completed prior to the event – gave the team background information and insight into the community's vision for the study area.



### *Format + Activities*



The five-day charrette included two large-scale public workshops, an open house, team design sessions and focused meetings with staff and key stakeholders. Each of these events was set up to enable participants to ask questions, provide comments and feedback, and view the progress of work. The design team included urban designers, planners, landscape architects and an illustrator. These individuals worked hand-in-hand with the retail and transportation consultants, City staff, and property owners to develop a vision grounded in reality with short- and long-term schemes.

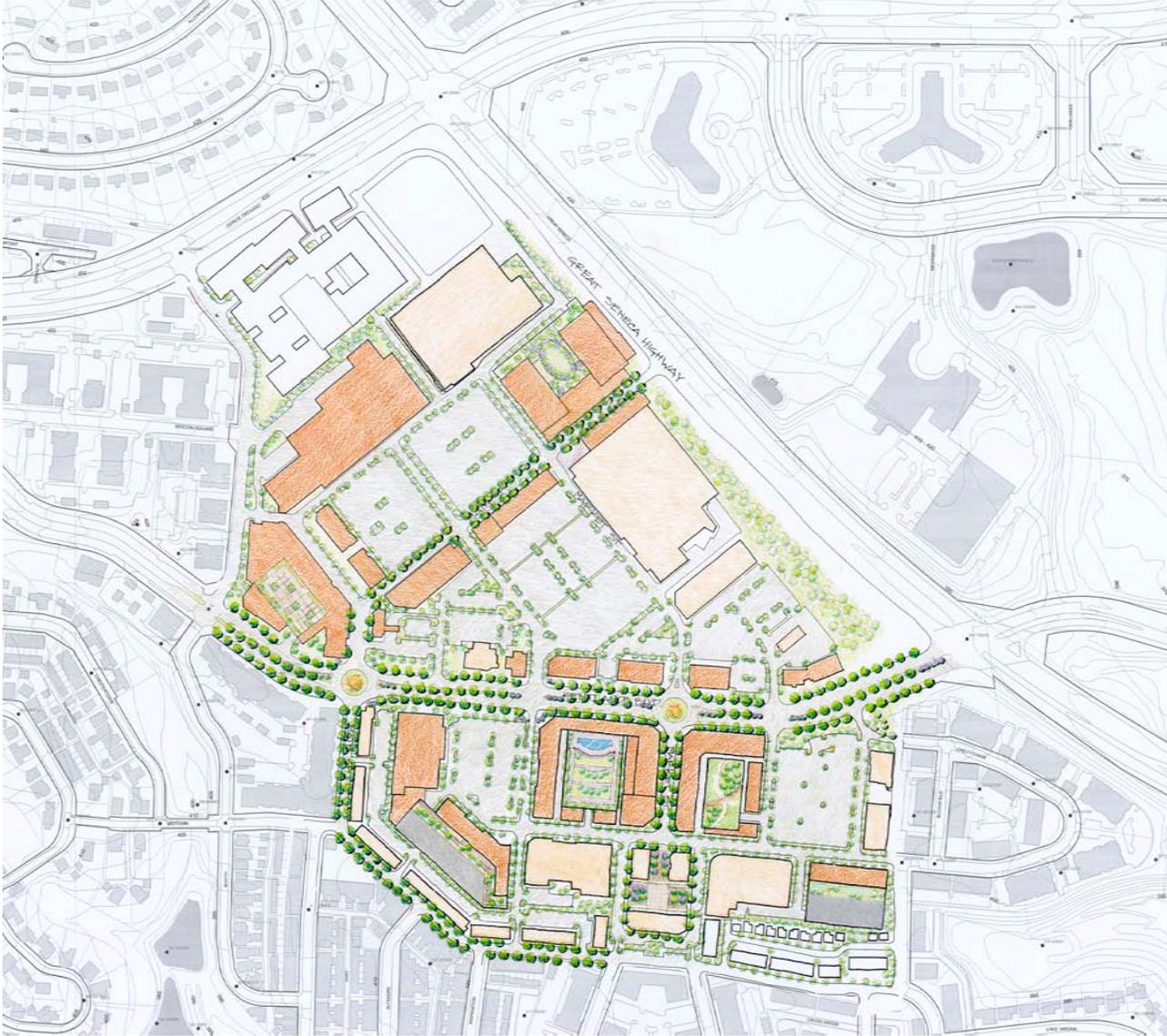
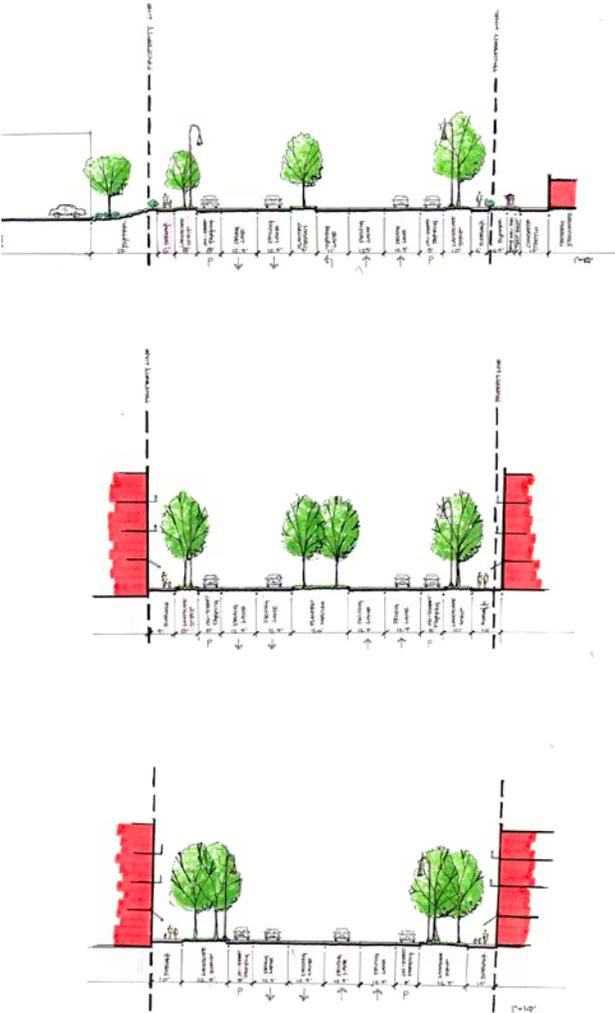
An opening meeting was held on Thursday, October 4th to summarize the findings of the retail market analysis and the telephone survey in addition to providing a brief synopsis of the three educational workshops – transportation, retail market and urban design – held during the summer. The purpose of reviewing the material was to provide the public with an opportunity to understand the process and give anyone a chance to give additional feedback and remarks. Any individual new to the planning effort was quickly brought up-to-date with the current status of the project.



While the project team developed design scenarios, staff and key stakeholder meetings were held intermittently throughout the process as needed to facilitate the creation of schemes and to test concepts.

To review initial design scenarios with the public, the project team held an informal open house the afternoon of Saturday, October 6th. The drop-in session with a pin-up area allowed the community to see the progress of the previous day. As the vision for the place is meant to be incremental, the scenarios presented focused on the short-term development opportunities that could be completed in the near future.

A closing public meeting was held on Tuesday, October 9th to review the scenarios created during the design charrette. To respond to the desire to implement the vision incrementally, the project team created one short-term and two long-term design scenarios. In addition, the design team furthered illustrated the design schemes through the use of several rendered drawings. The scenarios developed at the design charrette are reviewed in further detail in Section 4: The Plan.



Charrette Products.

