



Department of Housing and Community Affairs  
 Division of Community Development  
 Montgomery County Government  
 100 Maryland Ave., 4th Floor  
 Rockville, MD 20850  
[www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov)  
 240-777-3600

# Burtonsville Community Legacy Plan Summary

Montgomery County, Maryland



Prepared by:



Basile Baumann Prost Cole & Associates, Inc.  
 177 Defense Highway, Suite 10  
 Annapolis, MD 21401



Rhodeside & Harwell  
 320 King Street, Suite 202  
 Alexandria, VA 22314

October 2008

# Introduction

## Overview and Purpose

Montgomery County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) retained the consulting team of Basile Baumann Prost Cole and Associates, Inc. (BBPC) (lead) and Rhodeside and Harwell, Inc. (RHI) (Sub-consultant) to develop the Burtonsville Community Legacy Plan. The Community Legacy Plan is intended to jump-start revitalization efforts in Burtonsville by establishing an implementable framework for these efforts.

As a result of numerous master planning efforts over the last ten years, Burtonsville residents are eager to see positive changes in their community. The Community Legacy Plan serves as a blueprint for undertaking future efforts to revitalize and enhance the Burtonsville Commercial District in accordance with community identified goals.

## Community Legacy Program

The Community Legacy Program is administered by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. The Program provides funding for local economic development activities that stimulate reinvestment and strengthen neighborhoods throughout Maryland. Funding is received through grants and/or loans. In order for the Burtonsville community to be eligible for funds from the Community Legacy Program, a comprehensive revitalization plan must be developed.

## Public Participation

The Burtonsville Community Legacy Plan is grounded in public participation. It is, by nature, a community driven document. A series of public workshops were held to fully capture the community's vision.

**Initial Stakeholder Meetings:** Initial meetings were held to gather information from the state and county government stakeholders to understand the issues that face Burtonsville from a regulatory perspective.

**Community Based Workshops:** Two public workshops were held to elicit community stakeholder input regarding community legacy area strengths, weaknesses and obstacles to investments and goals, objectives and visions for revitalization. The first workshop was held during lunch hours and was aimed at business owners, and the second was held later in the evening to cater to residents' availability. Together these meetings had approximately 48 community attendees.



Community members provided input at a three-hour charrette.

**Community Based Charrette:** Developed from stakeholder input, scenarios for revitalization were presented to the public in a three-hour Charrette. Community members were asked to provide their input on each scenario by identifying what they liked and did not like. Approximately 49 community members attended the Charrette.

**Presentation of the Plan:** The Community Legacy Plan was presented to the community in a final public meeting. This meeting provided stakeholders an opportunity to review the revitalization efforts identified in the Plan.

An implementable revitalization plan which specifically identifies projects to enhance business activities and homeownership begins with identifying both the underlying community strengths and the challenges to the stability and safety of the community. Burtonsville is a community which values its pastoral recreational spaces and rural history; however, certain elements, such as high traffic speeds, threaten this image. With the help of local residents and business owners through public workshops, an exhaustive list of the assets and issues in Burtonsville was produced. The following section identifies the fundamental assets and issues of the Burtonsville Community.

# Implementation

A strong plan meets community goals, offers practical and specific implementation strategies, and provides potential for the realization of broad-based benefits to the community. The Burtonsville Community Legacy Plan's implementation program assumes the partnership of public implementation entities and community members, including private property and business owners.

Several themes remain constant throughout the implementation program. These include:

- A focus on improvements to image, character, and cohesiveness of design to realize a vibrant Village Center
- Inclusion of green features (including green/low-impact design, recreational spaces, and new vegetation as part of streetscape creation and design)
- Promotion of new employment opportunities in the Burtonsville employment center to the east of US Route 29 through incentives for new construction of commercial facilities in this area
- Establishment of conditions that will support the addition of new home-ownership opportunities in the long-term consistent with maintaining the character and scale of the area.

Implementation elements have been divided into two broad timeframes: 1) the short-term (e.g. within 5 years) and 2) the long-term (e.g. within 10 years).

The following table provides a summary of the suggested short- and long-term recommendations:

Burtonsville Community Legacy Plan Recommendations and Timeframe	
<i>1. Design of public and private space</i>	
a. Streetscape enhancement	1-5 years
b. Façade enhancements	1-5 years
c. Community greenspace	2-5 years
d. Greenways, Bicycle & Pedestrian Linkages	continuous
e. Community Signage	2-5 years
f. Directional Signage on highways	1-5 years
<i>2. Transportation and parking</i>	
a. Burtonsville Access Road, traffic signal	1-5 years
b. Parking lot design north of MD Route 198	2-5 years
c. MD Route 198 improvements	1-5 years
d. Walkways and Bikeways	2-5 years
<i>3. Art and culture</i>	
a. Gateway improvements east	2-5 years
b. Gateway improvements west	2-5 years
<i>4. Social aspects</i>	
a. Village green property acquisition	2-5 years
<i>5. Environmental sustainability</i>	
a. Stormwater management	1-5 years
b. Inclusion of green & low-impact features	2-5 years
c. Landscaping improvements	2-5 years
<i>6. Economic development</i>	
a. Analysis of redevelopment potential	1-5 years
b. Outreach to new & existing businesses	1-5 years
<i>7. Housing</i>	
a. Encouragement of homeownership	1-5 years
b. Prevention of foreclosures	1-2 years
1. Encourage appropriate housing	
2. Revitalization south of MD Route 198	
3. Continued application of green standards	
4. Continued expansion of employment center	
5. Community linkages	
6-10 years	

### Housing

- Encourage homeownership by promoting programs to assist renters in becoming financially prepared to purchase a home in Montgomery County.
- Encourage construction of “move up” housing to retain residents within the community and to maintain a healthy range of socio-economic demographics.
- Participate in Foreclosure Prevention programs.



*Burtonsville offers a broad variety of ages, styles and types of housing.*

### Long-Term Recommendations (6-10 years)

Short-term improvements set the stage for additional improvements and expanded opportunities for employment and homeownership in the long-term timeframe of 6 to 10 years. Comprehensive enhancements including those related to design, transportation and parking, environmental sustainability, economic factors, and homeownership opportunities promote long-term vitality.

#### **Design of the public and private space:**

- Continue streetscape enhancements along MD Route 198 not previously covered in the first five years
- Facilitate redevelopment opportunities and façade improvements to properties fronting on the south side of MD Route 198 between the southbound ramp to US Route 29 and Old Columbia Pike

#### **Transportation and parking:**

- Construct a new village scale street to the rear of the commercial area south of MD Route 198 along Tolsen Place. The design of the new street should be similar to that of the Burtonsville Access Road. The new street would improve enhanced access for local traffic to commercial businesses in the area.
- Explore additional parking strategies to accommodate new development. These strategies may range from shared parking to a parking structure.

#### **Environmental sustainability:**

- Encourage the use of green and low-impact design features in the design of new buildings and public spaces.
- Provide landscaping treatment at gateways, along pedestrian thoroughfares, and within community gathering space
- Enhance landscaping on the road sides and in the median and install flowering plants on the bridge slope with an emphasis on the use of low-maintenance, native species (see illustrations)
- Protect and preserve the Patuxent Watershed.

#### **Economic development:**

- Support the preservation of small businesses in Burtonsville.
- Support the assemblage of smaller properties to facilitate a comprehensive redevelopment of the commercial area along MD Route 198. A comprehensive redevelopment may require the demolition of the existing structures.
- Encourage opportunities for new businesses and commercial development, and expansion of the Burtonsville employment center with new buildings and associated employment

### Housing:

- Recommend consideration of mixed use development in the Burtonsville Village Center. Housing is permitted in the current C-2 zone by special exception and is specifically recommended along the Burtonsville Access Road that wraps around the village center greenspace. These units would be appealing to young professionals, independent seniors and those interested in home-based occupations near an established commercial node.
- Encourage and maintain a wide choice of housing types and neighborhoods for people of all incomes, ages, lifestyles, and physical capabilities at appropriate densities and locations within the Community Legacy Area.

# Community Legacy Area

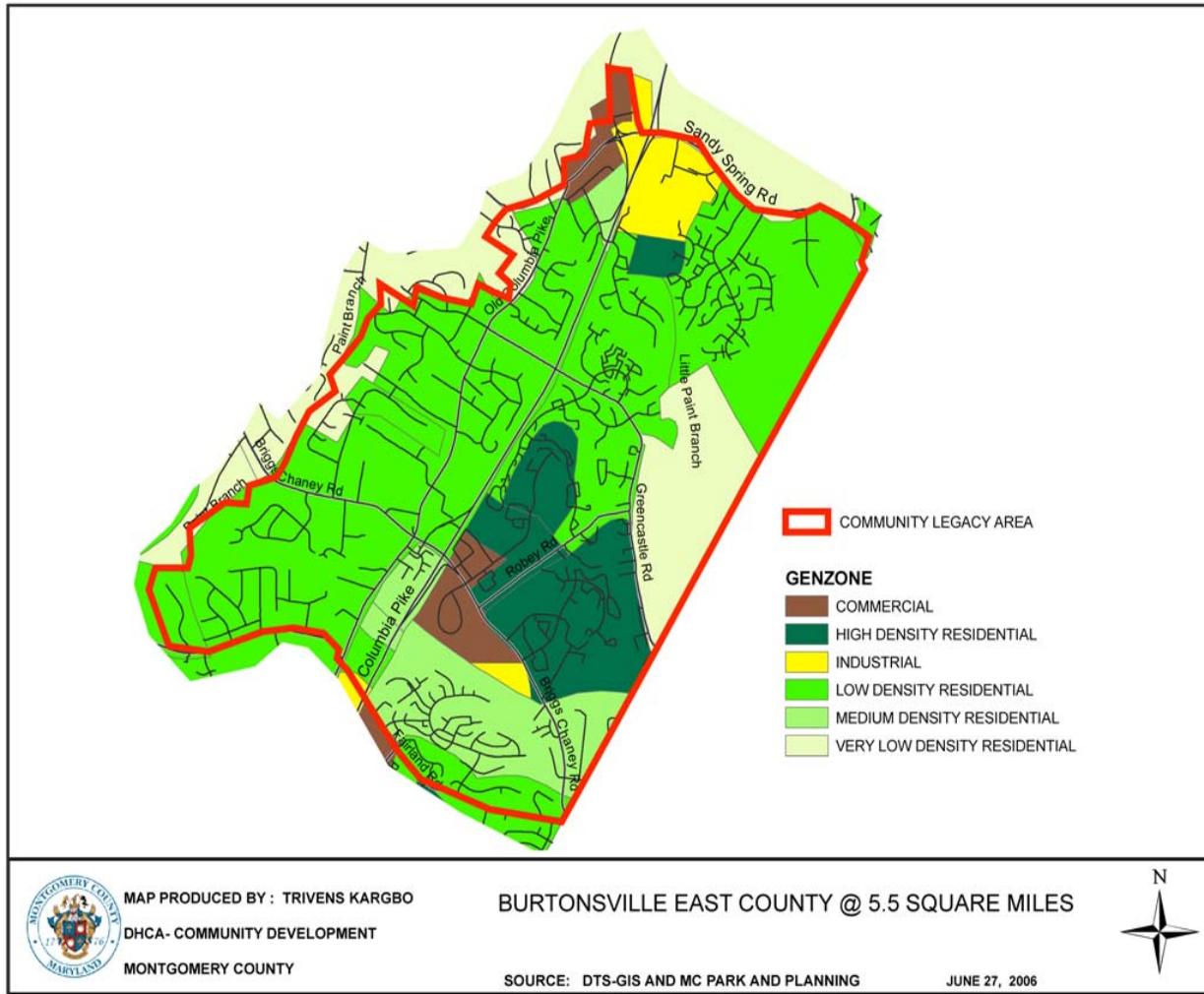
Situated in southeastern Montgomery County near the Patuxent River, the Burtonsville Community Legacy Area is home to a unique commercial crossroads that was once the center of a rural community. Today, the commercial crossroads at MD Route 198 and US Route 29 still serves the needs of the local community, although recent and planned changes have prompted questions about the area's future economic viability.

In 2005, US Route 29 was realigned, and a loss of north-south pass-through traffic put pressure on selected businesses. The potential widening of MD Route 198, which is currently under consideration, could without mitigating changes further reduce access to businesses. Finally, the relocation of the Dutch Country Farmer's Market, a local landmark and destination for regional visitors, has created a need for action to ensure residents and visitors will continue to patronize businesses within the Burtonsville commercial core. Local residents have also expressed desire to see enhancements to the Burtonsville commercial crossroads, and have voiced interest in a more cohesive, visually appealing area – specifically, a Village Center.

To understand characteristics of households and firms in the 5.5 square mile Burtonsville Community Legacy Area (CLA), BBPC performed a demographic and economic review. The Community Legacy Area (CLA) has a 2008 population of 26,589. Median household income in the CLA was \$78,079 in 2008. In comparison, the Area Median Income (AMI) for Montgomery County, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was higher at \$99,000 in 2008. The percent of total households in the CLA earning incomes below \$100,000 per year is expected to decline over the next five years, while the percent above \$100,000 per year is expected to increase. The Burtonsville CLA contains a significant amount of housing, with approximately 2,400 out of a total of approximately 5,200 acres devoted to residential use. However, housing is generally not co-located with employment in the CLA, though County leadership supports the co-location of housing and jobs Countywide.

Commercial uses in the CLA are focused around MD Route 198 and US Route 29, and consist of a mix of retail, office, and industrial space. Neighborhood-serving retail uses dominate this mix, and benefit from proximity to the residential neighborhoods situated in the CLA as well as access to nearby thoroughfares. Residential uses dominate developed areas within the CLA, and include a mix of high-density, medium-density, and low-density housing. High densities are congregated on the southeast side of MD Route 198 away from the Patuxent River Watershed. Open spaces are also prevalent surrounding the CLA, and primarily include evergreen forest, deciduous forest, mixed forest, and brush.

The Burtonsville commercial district was recently evaluated as part of the 2007 *Burtonsville Market Study and Consumer Shopping Survey*. The *Market Study* identified a total of 320,000 commercial square feet, including two shopping centers and a cluster of neighborhood shops along MD Route 198. Burtonsville Shopping Center, currently 49,400 square feet, has plans to demolish the existing center and redevelop it with a 130,000 square foot center including out-parcels. The Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center currently has a grocery store anchor tenant and a range of neighborhood retailers.



### Short-term Recommendations (1-5 years)

#### Design of the public and private space:

- Enhance streetscape along MD Route 198 and the former Columbia Pike to include street furniture such as benches and bike racks, landscaping, sidewalks, signage, banners and lighting.
- Provide façade enhancements to existing buildings along MD Route 198.
- Develop a new village green between the proposed Burtonsville Access Road and Burtonsville Elementary School. This improvement will contribute to creation of the Village Center sense of place.
- Improve landscaping treatments at key gateways, along pedestrian paths, vehicular thoroughfares, and within the village green.
- Identify opportunities to create greenways to link the commercial area and residential area to the natural environment.
- Improve community signage including wayfinding and business signage.
- Improve directional signage to Burtonsville Village Center along US Route 29 and MD Route 198.

#### Transportation and parking:

- Support construction of the master planned Burtonsville Access Road as previously designed to the rear of businesses to the north of MD Route 198, beginning at the School Access Road, wrapping around the planned community green space, and continuing up to the western entrance to the proposed Burtonsville Town Square shopping center on MD Route 198. Negotiate with the State Highway Administration regarding a traffic signal at the intersection of the new Burtonsville Access Road and MD Route 198.
- Reconfigure parking in the commercial area north of MD Route 198. The majority of the parking should be located to the rear of the existing structures, reserving one parking row along MD Route 198. This reconfiguration provides the opportunity to introduce improved pedestrian walkways and prepares for the proposed widening of MD Route 198.
- Construct bicycle and pedestrian linkages that connect existing commercial and residential areas, and introduce enhanced pedestrian crossings.
- Recommend that the MD Route 198 roadway improvements in Burtonsville continue to be identified as a high priority for Montgomery County Government to the State of Maryland.

#### Art and culture:

- Construct gateway improvements on both sides of the US Route 29 bridge, including public art features.
- Construct complementary gateway/public art at MD Route 198 and Burtonsville Access Road.

#### Social aspects:

- Acquisition of property between the proposed Burtonsville Access Road and Burtonsville Elementary School for creation of a new village green for community gathering that may be used for special events, including a country market.

#### Environmental sustainability:

- Include green and low-impact design features within the proposed village green, at gateways, along pedestrian thoroughfares and in infrastructure improvements.
- Enhance landscaping on the road sides and in the median, and install flowering plants on the bridge slope with an increased use of low-maintenance, native species (see illustration below)
- Encourage residential, commercial and private institutional property owners to improve stormwater runoff conditions on their property by using more natural drainage design techniques, including those supported through the Rainscapes Rewards rebate program of the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

#### Economic development:

- Provide funding to conduct an analysis of the redevelopment potential of properties to the north of MD Route 198 consistent with the protection of the Patuxent Watershed. The analysis should include an assessment of the current building condition useful life and provide options for redevelopment. In addition, the analysis should include an estimate of costs associated with potential redevelopment and revenue loss during construction.
- Provide funding for a market study to explore the demand for development of the Burtonsville employment center including the types of tenants this area would attract. This would be distinct from and complimentary to the commercially-focused *Burtonsville Market Study* completed in 2007.
- Outreach to new and existing businesses.

# Legacy Plan

## Overview

The Burtonsville Community Legacy Plan is comprised of a series of short- and long-term recommendations grouped in element areas. These recommendations promote a revitalized commercial district, improved linkages to the surrounding residential neighborhoods, and an enhanced sense of community. The Community Legacy Plan is distinctively different from a Master Plan, in that no land use or zoning changes are included in the former document; rather, the Community Legacy Plan offers a clear path for future public and private investment with a prioritized list of recommendations.

Public and private stakeholder input inspired the vision for the Community Legacy Plan. Over the course of the study, numerous discussions were held with Montgomery County and State of Maryland officials and staff members, property and business owners, and the residents. During these meetings, the shared desire emerged for a cohesive and revitalized Village Center in the Burtonsville commercial area, a community gathering place and pedestrian- friendly and well-connected neighborhoods.

*The vision is that Burtonsville will be a healthy, sustainable community with an integral sense of place and identity, good connectivity and safe access to a strong vibrant commercial center.*

From this vision, the BBPC Project Team delineated a Community Legacy Plan that builds upon the area's current assets and provides practical, achievable recommendations to facilitate revitalization. The Community Legacy Plan contains short-term and long-term recommendations.

- Short-term (1-5 years)
- Long-term (6-10 years)

## Elements

The short-term and long-term recommendations are further organized in seven element areas. Community revitalization and the emergence of a Village Center require comprehensive action. The elements of the Community Legacy Plan address the many factors that impact revitalization, connection to the residential community and economic vitality. These elements include:

- **Design of the public and private space:** streetscape, building facades, landscape treatment, and signage
- **Transportation and parking:** bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular access, and parking for public and private uses
- **Art and culture:** public art at commercial area gateways
- **Social:** community gathering space that can provide an increased sense of place, an enhanced community identity and venues for special events
- **Environmental sustainability:** green and low-impact design features, green spaces, and landscaping
- **Economic development:** promotion of new stores and restaurants, and flex/industrial spaces with associated employment opportunities
- **Housing:** a variety of housing options at appropriate densities in the Community Legacy area.

Implementation of the Community Legacy Plan requires commitment from all community stakeholders including public entities such as the County and State and the private sector such as property owners, business owners, and most importantly the community itself.

## Short-Term Recommendations

Enhancements to the Burtonsville commercial area, including improved linkages to residential neighborhoods are recommended for implementation in the next five years. These enhancements promote a revitalized Village Center with a vibrant mix of shopping, dining, and service options with better connectivity to local neighborhoods.

Architectural façade treatments; streetscape, landscape, and parking improvements; transportation investments; new gateway areas; bicycle and pedestrian connections; and the creation of a community gathering space and focal point are recommended to improve the image and economic viability of the existing commercial base. These enhancements set the stage in the long-term for future employment opportunities and enhance synergy between the community's residential and business centers.

# Assets & Issues

## Assets

Assets are the building blocks upon which community development is based. Many Burtonsville stakeholders identified similar views as to the underlying strengths of the community.

**Country Nostalgia and Convenience:** A formerly rural wedge just outside the Washington DC Beltway, Burtonsville maintains a small town character by encouraging low density residential development and loyal patronage to "mom and pop" stores. Residents' daily needs are met within the community.

**Local Businesses:** Buying from your neighbor generates pride and local economic stability. Burtonsville residents celebrate the reward associated from "buying from your neighbor". Several local shops characterize the commercial corridor, such as lawn mower repair, restaurants, hardware and auto repair.

**Green Spaces:** A natural barrier to urban development, the Patuxent River Watershed provides open areas for recreation and lends scenic character to Burtonsville. The Fairland Recreational Park, Tanglewood Neighborhood Park and the Fairdale Road Neighborhood Conservation Area are a few examples of open spaces for recreation in the CLA.

**Access to Major Employment Centers:** Situated between Washington DC and Baltimore, Burtonsville residents have easy automobile access to both these cities by way of MD Route 198 and US Route 29, and to suburban employment nodes throughout Montgomery County. Additionally, a 500-space Park-N-Ride lot connects commuters to seven bus routes.



*To keep elementary students and parents safe, Burtonsville residents joined together to bring a stop light to the road leading to the elementary*



*A lawnmower repair shop captures the small town community character of Burtonsville.*

**Effective Public Facilities:** The Marilyn J. Praisner Branch Library (formerly the Fairland Library), the Marilyn J. Praisner Community Recreation Center (formerly the Fairland Community Recreation Center) and the Burtonsville Elementary School help to provide places to meet neighbors and instill a strong sense of community.

**Plant Nurseries:** Several plant nurseries currently serve as unintentional gateways into the Burtonsville commercial area. These retailers bring colorful flowering plants and shaded parking lots that contribute to the overall bucolic atmosphere, though many are solely "for the trade" and not open to residents.

**Strong Residential Areas:** Community pride and high involvement in community initiatives characterize the residents of Burtonsville. Shown through support of local businesses and enthusiasm for public services such as the library and schools, the residents value each other and support initiatives which promote the general welfare of the community.

**Diversity in Housing:** Communities that have a range of housing choices are able to increase the diversity of the population. Apartments, townhomes and single family homes characterize the variety of housing types within the Burtonsville area. Burtonsville offers both affordable housing options and market rate homes which enable people moving to the community to find the "right fit". More diversity within the population brings retail choices for residents.

## Issues

Situated in one of the fastest growing counties in the region, Burtonsville has felt growth pressures. In turn, issues have developed that could compromise the rural community character of Burtonsville.

### Poor Access to Local Businesses

The rerouting of US Route 29 put future retail opportunities for Burtonsville business owners in jeopardy. Thus, maintaining access to local businesses is crucial for retaining the current customer base. Current traffic conditions along MD Route 198 make it difficult for shoppers to make left turns into and out of the businesses. Accidents on this thoroughfare can reduce retail opportunity in the commercial corridor. Enhancing access to local businesses along MD Route 198 would decrease the outflow of retail sales and benefit the community as a whole.



*Walking in the commercial area is dangerous due to a lack of sidewalks, random business entrances and high speeds.*

### High Volume and Speed of Traffic

Especially during rush hour, the high volume and high speed of traffic within Burtonsville endangers the safety of visitors and residents alike along Burtonsville's main corridors. Specifically, the current uses along MD Route 198 support auto-oriented activities and cater to people in cars.

**State Highway Administration (SHA) Realignment:** The SHA anticipates that Spencerville Road, MD Route 198, will be realigned. Current SHA plans include a potential widening and elimination of access points to the shops and businesses that presently front on the north and south side of MD Route 198. Business owners are concerned that the realignment will result in loss of customers.

### Inadequate and Unsightly Infrastructure

Infrastructure for pedestrians is limited in the Burtonsville Community Legacy Area. Sidewalks are disconnected, and many intersections lack pedestrian signals. Where sidewalks exist, they are inadequate for meeting the safety needs of the pedestrian. Often, the sidewalk is narrow and without a buffer from the busy street. Cluttered overhead powerlines, lack of landscaping and signage, and poor drainage create an unsightly appearance.

### Limitations on Redevelopment:

Redevelopment of the Burtonsville commercial area is challenging because the parcels in the developable area are small and shallow. Constraints to redevelopment are described in greater detail in Appendix A.

**Old US Route 29:** Now that pass-through traffic has been taken off the Old Columbia Pike (the former US Route 29), residents now report this roadway offers excess capacity and serves as a barrier between the major shopping centers in Burtonsville: the Burtonsville Shopping Center and the Burtonsville Crossing Shopping Center. Residents indicated that the Old Columbia Pike right-of-way should be used in a more productive way.

### Lack of a Community Gathering Spot

Without a public place to gather, Burtonsville residents are finding it difficult to interact with and meet their neighbors. The most common places for residents to gather are at Rita's restaurant outdoor seating area and the Starbucks.

**Relocation of Dutch Country Market:** The Dutch Country Market served as a regional destination and became integral to the cultural, business and community image of Burtonsville. The Market served as a community focal point and source of identity for Burtonsville, and with its relocation, there is a need for renewed sense of community identity and the creation of new focal points. Without the Dutch Country Market as a regional anchor, Burtonsville may also weaken as a destination for regional visitors.



*Shoppers seek refuge to relax and chat, but without a public meeting place many use private spaces such as the Starbucks outdoor seating.*

**Lack of Design Continuity:** A lack of consistency among building facades, signage, and landscaping treatment result in a lack of cohesive design character in the commercial area. Additionally, without cohesive signage and design, visitors have a difficult time navigating the shopping environment.

**Scarcity of Choices in Retail:** Residents suggested that they desire a broader variety of retail choices within Burtonsville. For example, a second grocery store was mentioned as a desired additional retail use.

**Regional Retail Projects Nearby:** New retail developments to the north (Maple Lawn) and southeast (Konterra), both of which are less than 5 miles (less than a 10-minute drive) from Burtonsville, are quickly increasing the competition to the existing stores and causing a limitation to the amount and type of retail supply Burtonsville can support.



*Tangled powerlines, lack of sidewalks, large and visible parking lots, inconsistent façade designs, misplaced signage and the absence of landscaping characterize the Burtonsville Commercial core.*



*In five years, comprehensive changes to the Burtonsville commercial area will improve the area's appeal to both residents and visitors. A more attractive, inviting, and defined sense of place will enhance the commercial area as both the commercial and social center of the Burtonsville community. A community greenspace will serve as a focal point within the revitalized center.*