

Bethesda

Downtown Plan Design Guidelines

community
identity

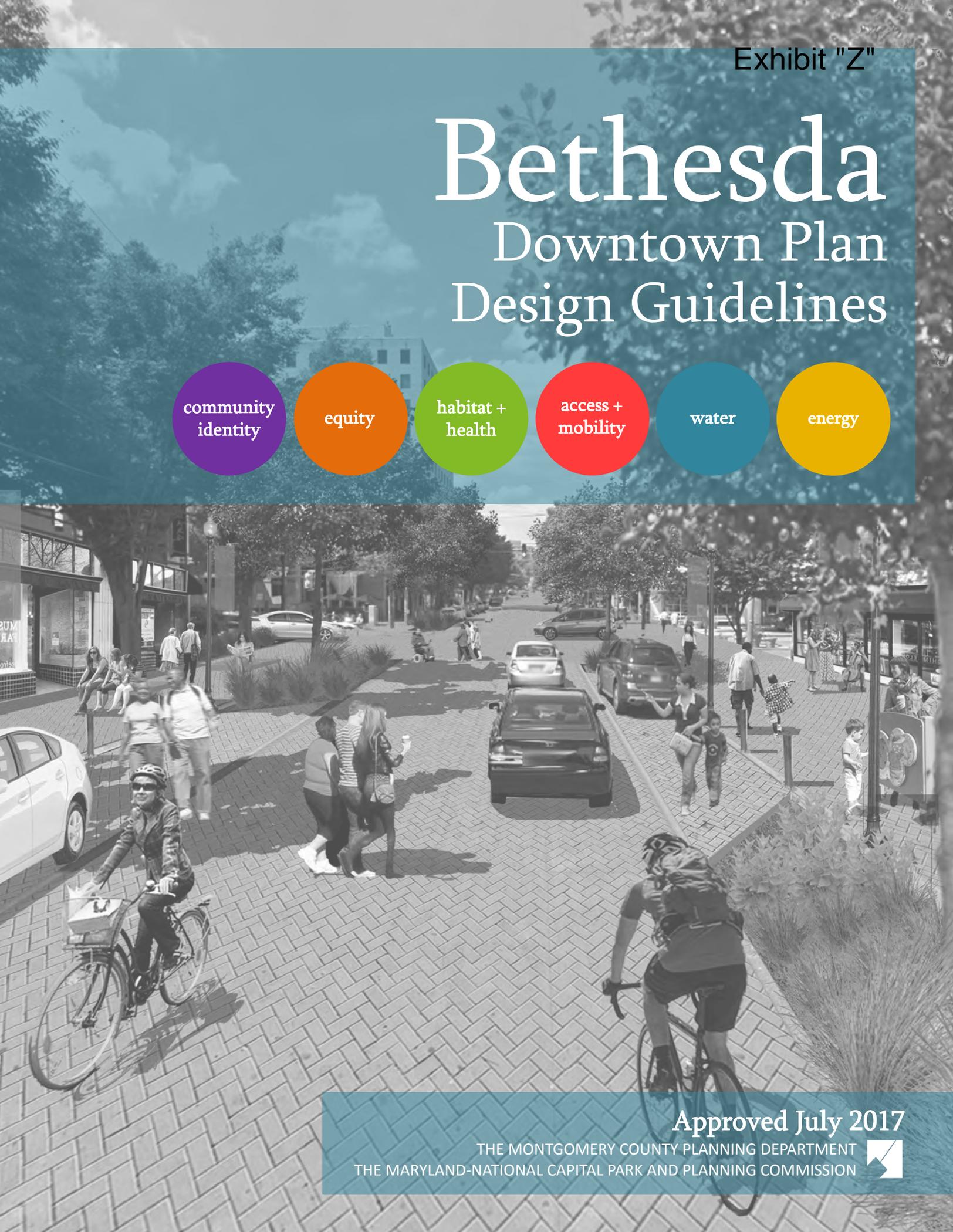
equity

habitat +
health

access +
mobility

water

energy



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THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION





A large, multi-unit development incorporating lush landscaping, individual entries and a clear path for pedestrians and cyclists to pass through. Source: Mithun

2.1.9 Public Through-Block Connections and Trails

Intent: To improve connectivity for people to walk and bike throughout Downtown Bethesda and create additional outdoor public spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Public Through-block Connections

Public through-block connections are most important within long blocks to provide an efficient pedestrian network to connect to adjacent streets and destinations such as open spaces and transit stations. These connections should be high-quality, open to the sky and wide enough to allow pedestrians and cyclists to pass through comfortably, and others to pause and sit or access building entrances. They should be highlighted through retail that wraps the corner, public art, signage or other design elements, which draw people into the connection from the sidewalk. Landscape can be added to create visual interest, and elements such as paving, lighting, seating, planters or trees should make the connection more inviting. Small-scale, urban recreational uses could also be considered in these spaces.

The aim is to have no more than one through-block connection on a block to not interrupt the continuous building wall. If there are multiple new developments on a block, they are encouraged to have party walls between the base floors to ensure this continuity. If additional gaps are required by building code, consider other uses such as service alleys.

Trails

The Capital Crescent Trail and North Bethesda Trail are important public connectors for walking and biking to destinations throughout the county and region. In Downtown Bethesda, development should enhance the trail experience for users and minimize negative impacts. The facade of new development should be oriented toward the trail with ground-floor activating uses and landscaping or provide an appropriate transition with setbacks and landscape buffers.

The upper floors of buildings should step back from the trail to allow access to sunlight and sky views as well as to provide compatibility with detached homes in close proximity. Building orientation along the trail should include elements such as entrances to common areas or retail, ground-floor transparency, individual unit entrances, outdoor terraces, plantings and seating areas. If the building does not provide orientation to the trail, it should include a larger setback with a planted landscape buffer.



Ground-floor retail incorporates transparency and outdoor seating areas oriented onto the Capital Crescent Trail.

Properties on a trail confronting a Residential Detached or Residential Townhouse zone should see the Montgomery County Code Chapter 59 Section 4.1.8 Compatibility Requirements for base height and upper floor step-backs.

Figure 2.04: Public Through-Block Connections and Trails



* Additional public through-block connections are possible. Exact location and alignment to be determined during the development review process.