

Sustainable Community Action Plan

Town of Berwyn Heights

Submitted by Town of Berwyn Heights

9/19/2017

Environment

(Environmental strengths and weaknesses can include but are not limited to quality of land, water, air, watersheds, tree canopy, risk of sea level rise, carbon footprint, energy conservation, access to local foods, green infrastructure, stormwater infrastructure/management, parks, trails and recreation, recycling, water and sewer capacity, etc)

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designation as a Tree City USA for over 20 years, as evidenced by the devotion of significant resources towards protecting and preserving the Town’s urban tree canopy, including conducting a tree inventory, a tree canopy assessment, and development of an urban forest management plan in 2016. • Active Green Team, with key activities including development of a community garden and attaining “Sustainable Maryland Certification.” • Recipient of repeat State of Maryland “Smart Energy Community,” grants used for energy efficiency projects with funds used to replace aged HVAC systems at two Town facilities. Replaced inefficient lighting in Town facilities with LED lights through a Pepco program in 2015. • Access to Indian Creek Trail, Lake Artemesia, and refurbished Indian Creek Playground. • Adoption of policies to improve energy efficiency at Town facilities (15% reduction in 5 years – completed) and reduce fuel consumption (20% reduction in 5 years – on track for completion). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prince George’s County has authority over the stormwater management system, and the Town must work through County channels for system improvements. • Most of the parks and recreational programs are under the purview of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. • Aging water and sewer infrastructure, and system improvements and management are under the sole jurisdiction of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

<u>Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures</u>	<u>Strategies and Action Items</u>	<u>Implementation Partners</u>
<p>Based on the strengths and weaknesses identify the strengths on which you would like to build and the challenges you would like to address. What outcomes are you trying to achieve? Where/ in what area do you want those changes to happen? →</p> <p>Progress Measure: Identify how you will know that you have achieved your outcome.</p>	<p>Identify strategies that will help your community to achieve each identified outcome to the left. If applicable, break down each strategy into specific action items that outline different steps of the strategy. Specify how you are planning to achieve the desired outcomes. →</p>	<p>Which community stakeholders need to be involved to realize each action step and strategy? Name specific public and/or private sector partners.</p>
<p>Outcome 1: Improve the Town’s physical appearance in the natural environment for those areas under the Town’s direct control. Goal to exceed current 59%</p>	<p>Strategy A: Increase the Town’s tree canopy and maintain tree species diversity Actionable Items: 1. Work with Pepco on replanting plan from 2016 vegetation management work resulting in removals of 100+ trees on Town property or the Town right-of-way.</p>	<p>Staff and Pepco Arborist</p>

<p>tree canopy coverage.</p> <p>Progress Measures:</p> <p>Monitor public tree health. Plant additional public trees.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Educational effort for residents on preserving and protecting trees. 3. Consider hiring an arborist, training and existing Town employee, splitting personnel with another community, or a contractor. 4. Fund maintenance and pruning work identified in the 2016 tree inventory. 5. Develop maintenance and pruning RFP from 2016 tree inventory data. 6. Solicit proposals and review proposals for tree maintenance and pruning. 7. Select vendor for tree maintenance and pruning. 8. Manage the project through existing GIS tree inventory. 9. Complete the project. 10. Consider additional tree planting efforts, including street shade trees. <p>Strategy B: Lead efforts for a healthy ecosystem</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Judicious pesticide use. 2. Preserve wildlife habitat. 3. Adhere to the Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy. 	<p>Staff with the Shade Tree Board Staff working with municipal neighbors</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Staff Staff Staff and Council Staff Staff with selected vendor Staff</p> <p>Public Works Staff with M-NCPPC Staff</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Improve the Town’s physical appearance in the built environment for those areas under the Town’s direct control.</p> <p>Progress Measures:</p> <p>Signs are installed. One landscaping bed is complete.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Currently funded beautification efforts</p> <p>Actionable items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New “Welcome to Berwyn Heights” signs with consideration of incorporating native perennial plants. 2. Replenish existing landscape beds, and create new landscape bed at Pontiac St. and Edmonston Rd. using as many native perennial plants as possible 3. Citizen of the Year marker and tree grove planted at Pops Park which is planned for installment in the upcoming months. 4. Devise a Liter Prevention educational campaign. 	<p>Staff</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff with the Green Team</p>

Economy

(Economic strengths and weaknesses can include but are not limited to regional accessibility, business attraction/retention, health of the business district and commercial vacancies, workforce/employment and economic drivers, local policies/regulations, marketing, tourism, cultural and historic assets)

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming close economic development partnerships with the surrounding municipalities of College Park and Greenbelt, as evidenced by approval of a 2017 Technical Assistance Panel grant from the Urban Land Institute to study the MD Route 193 corridor. Proximity to major employers including Federal and State agencies. Town government is debt-free with dedicated, budgeted reserves for capital projects. Development of a Special Public Safety Taxing District for commercial and industrial properties to fund the salary and expenses of the Police Department’s Detective. There are a high number of banks, pharmacies, and gas stations/convenience stores that are viewed as criminal targets, and the Detective investigates these crimes. Adoption of an Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy, with an emphasis on purchasing from local vendors when possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fading interest from the commercial and industrial property owners in participating in the Town’s Commercial District Management Authority (CDMA). Relocation of the FBI headquarters to the Greenbelt Metro Station was to be a major economic driver and finding an alternative tenant is likely many years away. There is no traditional Main Street. The commercial area is along a State Highway, and the State Highway Administration has not prioritized investments in making the street more visually appealing or safer for bicyclists or pedestrians. Town government reliance on real property tax revenue as the largest revenue source and lowering assessments strain the ability to provide level-funded services.



Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures →	Strategies and Action Items →	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Enhance Economic Development Opportunities</p> <p>Progress Measures:</p> <p>Hold follow-up joint Council Work Session with College Park and Greenbelt.</p> <p>Submit “Sustainable Communities” designation application.</p> <p>Conversation with UMD business incubator on future regional office space needs.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Implement the County’s Sector Plan for Commercial and Industrial Areas</p> <p>Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Greenbelt on advocacy efforts to implement the County’s Route 193 Sector Plan with the State and Prince George’s County. Explore Main Street designation, but it is not applicable. Explore State funding and grant opportunities, including the State Department of Community Housing and Development’s “Sustainable Communities” designation. Consider aligning with Hyattsville, University Park, the University of Maryland, and others in a regional economic development coalition. The Route 1 corridor group may be an option if it is still active and meeting. Explore options for new business attraction. UMD is positioning 	<p>Staff, Council, and CDMA</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff, Council, and other communities</p> <p>Staff with UMD</p> <p>Staff and Council</p>

	<p>itself to become a business incubator for students and alumni. There could be a need to develop office space for businesses expanding beyond the incubator, and work towards mixed-use properties along Greenbelt Rd.</p>	<p>Staff and economic development consultant</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Emergence of a thriving commercial and industrial area.</p> <p>Progress Measures: Stay attuned to Prince George’s County Zoning rewrite efforts. Continue Code Compliance’s efforts to work with business community to keep properties in compliance and attractive.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Seek Expertise of an Economic Development Consultant to Provide Actionable Recommendations and Expertise</p> <p>Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider possible approaches after FBI headquarters announcement. 2. Budget to hire an economic development consultant. 3. Speak with surrounding communities on what has worked, and not worked with their use of an economic development consultant. 4. Develop RFP to hire an economic development consultant to study and make actionable recommendations. 5. Solicit and review proposals. 6. Select economic development consultant. 7. Manage the project, including inviting feedback from stakeholders such as residents, and the business community. 8. Complete study recommendations, likely involving Prince George’s County on zoning and land-use matters, and private property owners. 	<p>Staff and Council</p> <p>Council Staff</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff Council</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff</p>

Transportation

(Transportation strengths and weaknesses can include access to transit corridors, pedestrian safety and accessibility/sidewalks, alternative modes of transportation, such as bikeways and trails, public transit, such as bus and rail, carpooling, proximity to transportation centers, parking, road conditions)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent access to major transportation routes (I-495/Capital Beltway, I-295/Baltimore-Washington Parkway, and Route 1). • Proximity to WMATA Green Line stations of Greenbelt and College Park, and close to the planned Purple Line connecting Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. • Accessible to bus routes connecting with WMATA's Orange Line, BWI-Marshall Airport, and the University of Maryland-College Park. • Receipt of a 2015 bicycling planning and wayfinding signage grant from Maryland Milestones/Anacostia Trails Heritage Association used to develop interpretive directional signs, and shared bike lanes. • Receipt of a 2015 Maryland Department of Transportation Safe Route to Schools sidewalk construction grant for creating a safe path to Greenbelt Middle School. • Completion of a 2016 capital construction sidewalk project to retrofit 10 street blocks with sidewalks. • Dedicated funding source for infrastructure improvements of a portion of the real property tax and the State's Highway User Revenue. • Town's Call-a-Bus program providing rides on demand for the elderly and disabled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuting options are primarily by car; limited viable commuter options to walk or bike. • Last comprehensive municipal road resurfacing project was in 1996.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures 	Strategies and Action Items 	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Create a prioritized action list to make street and infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>Progress Measures:</p> <p>Meet with possible vendors to better understand areas of consideration for drafting the RFP. Hire a consultant.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Conduct a needs assessment of the municipal road/infrastructure system</p> <p>Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing road repair, maintenance and reconstruction plan. 2. Estimate budget costs for hiring a consultant to study existing road/infrastructure conditions and develop a prioritized action list. 3. Budget cost of a hiring a consultant to study existing road/infrastructure conditions and develop a prioritized action list. 4. Develop RFP for hiring a consultant. 	<p>Staff Staff</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Staff</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Solicit proposals and review proposals. 6. Select consultant. 7. Manage the project. 8. Implement the study recommendations. 	<p>Staff Council Staff Staff and Council</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Increase alternative modes of transportation.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Progress Measures:</p> <p>Attend the majority of bicycle coalition meetings. Install missing crosswalks. Research State and Federal transportation grant opportunities.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Enhance current transportation features in the community.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider installation of benches at bus stops to include busy stops such as 60th Ave. and Greenbelt Rd. and near the Greenbelt Road Shell Station. 2. Work with Greenbelt on missing sidewalk sections of Branchville Ave. 3. Installation of missing crosswalks connecting existing sidewalks. 4. Litter prevention campaign aimed at transit users. 5. Consider State or Federal transportation grant opportunities. 6. Consider bus shelters at high use transit stops. <p>Strategy B: Improve communication about alternative modes of transportation</p> <p>Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use rideshare programs such as “commuter connections” as a blueprint to create a similar resource in the community. 2. Fully participate in existing bicycle advocacy coalitions. 	<p>Staff with WMATA, The Bus (Prince George’s County), and University of Maryland Shuttle Bus. Staff with Greenbelt, and State Highway Administration Staff Staff with Green Team Staff Staff with WMATA, The Bus (Prince George’s County), and University of Maryland Shuttle Bus.</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff with organizations such as ATHA/Maryland Milestones</p>

Housing

(Housing strengths and weaknesses can include affordability, homeownership vs rental, housing stock diversity, housing condition and value, housing programs, foreclosures, residential vacancies, property values, home sale values)



Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing is affordable when compared to the overall Washington, D.C. region. Significant stock of well-preserved historic and older homes. The number of vacant homes is under 10, and the number of foreclosures has stabilized after the latest recession. Housing values are beginning to increase coming out of the latest recession period. Rental housing is available, and about 20% of the residential housing stock is classified as properties available for rent. Majority of residential properties comply with Town Code. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicting views in the community about redevelopment of existing homes. Prince George’s County has sole zoning authority, and the Town has limited control over proposed “by-right” development. Some resident opposition to multi-family housing, multi-story development, and affordable housing.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures →	Strategies and Action Items →	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Encourage aging in place</p> <p>Progress Measures: Ask Senior Club to host a meeting to gain feedback and interest.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Explore options to work with developers interested in building assisted-living, 50 + community residential spaces.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Review Prince George’s County zoning re-write for zoning changes. 	<p>Staff</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Explore stakeholder feedback on attitudes towards multi-family, multi-story, and affordable housing</p> <p>Progress Measures: Speak with other communities with recent multi-family, multi-story affordable housing developments to understand how the projects were successfully approved.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Solicit feedback about community values and perceptions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consider as part of economic development consultant work, i.e., holding stakeholder meetings. 	<p>Staff and Council</p>

Quality of Life

(Strengths and weaknesses can include crime, socio-economic demographics, educational opportunities, museums, libraries, historic and cultural assets, civic amenities, faith-based organizations, economic health of households, sense of place, etc)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town government is full-service providing 24/7 Police Department coverage; Public Works provides weekly collection of refuse, recycling, yard waste, and bulk material, and snow removal; Code Compliance ensures adherence to the Town’s property maintenance laws and regulations; Administration provides day-to-day Town management, finance, human resources, and risk management. Town Council is a non-partisan political body. A vibrant, diverse community welcoming to all ages, races, and genders. Organizations such as the Recreation Council, Historical Committee, Green Team, and Neighborhood Watch/Emergency Preparedness provide quality of life programming such as Berwyn Heights Day, outdoor concerts, walking tours of historic properties, environmental workshops, and assist the Police Department in executing a successful annual National Night Out. Very low crime rate, especially in comparison to Prince George’s County’s crime rate. Strong Town relationships with the Berwyn Heights Volunteer Fire Department (BHVFD) as evidenced by the Town’s annual financial contribution, and BHVFD’s efforts to participate in community events. An active Senior Center, open Monday-Friday, located within a Town facility. Renovated parks and playgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The same residents seem to provide feedback on government operations and programs. Prince George’s County has a perceived high crime rate. Prince George’s County Public Schools do not have the high performing reputation of those in neighboring counties. Town is not reaching all residents, especially those non-English speakers. Lack of resident interest in serving on the Council or in Town organizations. Outdated community reputation and branding as a “Mayberry” or a “small town near the big city.”

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures 	Strategies and Action Items 	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Improve Town engagement with residents and businesses</p> <p>Progress Measures: Continue communicating through website, social media, and monthly printed bulletin delivered to all homes and businesses, and duplicating the message across all available mediums.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Improve communication with Town residents and businesses</p> <p>Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research best practices on survey methods and approaches, and developing performance benchmarks. 2. Conduct survey to determine resident communication preferences. 3. Present survey to Council. 4. Allocate funds if using a survey firm. 5. Analyze results. 6. Present findings to Council. 	<p>Staff</p> <p>Staff and Council</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Staff and Council</p> <p>Staff</p>

	7. Implement new communication strategy.	Staff and Council
<p>Outcome 2: Encourage greater community participation and involvement</p> <p>Progress Measures: Assess volunteer base on a quarterly basis to determine what is working, and what needs improvement in attracting and retaining volunteers.</p> <p>Consider which locations in the commercial area offer greatest visibility for community events.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Increase resident participation in Town activities Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather best practices from existing Town committees. 2. Gather feedback from past volunteers. 3. Conduct a survey on current activities to determine satisfaction with programming and gaps. 4. Recruit multi-generational and multi-cultural ambassadors. 5. Develop promotional materials in English and Spanish (possible additional languages). 6. Expand presence at Berwyn Heights Elementary School with a presentation or table to meet residents. 7. Use frequent or annual community events as a way to engage with residents i.e., National Night Out and Berwyn Heights Day, and consider holding events in the commercial district. 8. Consider greater utilization of the snack stand at Sports Park as a refreshment stop for bicyclists on Indian Creek Trail and Lake Artemesia. <p>Strategy B: Create physical spaces (temporary or permanent) as a way to bolster civic involvement and interest in the commercial district. i.e. parklets, “truckeroo,” and pop-up shops.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine which businesses might be interested in hosting. 2. Explore options for visual art in public spaces to encourage sitting and congregating. <p>Strategy C: Better community utilization of existing public spaces</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marketing of existing public spaces like playgrounds and parks for activities such as fishing, bird watching, biking, walking, and children’s recreation. 	<p>Council Council Council</p> <p>Council Staff</p> <p>Council</p> <p>Staff and Council</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Staff with CDMA Staff with CDMA</p> <p>Staff with Recreation Council and M-NCPPC</p>

Local Planning and Land Use

(Strengths and weaknesses in the local planning and land use subject area include but are not limited to zoning, land use, policies, taxes and fees, historical patterns of development, lot sizes and shapes, etc)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority of housing is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood character. Residential housing is located on a mix of smaller and larger lots. Nearby communities have been successful in attracting high quality mixed-use commercial and residential developments leading to tax base enhancement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prince George’s County has sole zoning authority, and the Town has limited control over proposed “by-right” development. Prince George’s County taxes in general are some of the highest within the State of Maryland. Commercial and industrial property is generally underutilized, with a fair amount of vacancies. Current lot sizes of industrial property especially lack depth needed for significant redevelopment opportunities.

Desired Outcomes and Progress Measures →	Strategies and Action Items →	Implementation Partners
<p>Outcome 1: Make Town facility improvements</p> <p>Progress Measures: Speak with other communities in progress and recently completed capital projects for facility construction to discuss lessons learned.</p>	<p>Strategy A: Conduct comprehensive study of Town facility security and adequacy</p> <p>Actionable Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research best practices for space planning and analysis. 2. Explore funding options for gaining expertise in space planning and analysis, particularly hiring an architecture/engineering firm. 3. Estimate budget costs of hiring architecture/engineering firm. 4. Budget project of hiring architecture/engineering firm. 5. Develop RFP of hiring architecture/engineering firm. 6. Review proposals for hiring architecture/engineering firm. 7. Select architecture/engineering firm. 8. Manage the project. 9. Complete project. 10. Implement the project recommendations, and consider State infrastructure assistance options through DHCD programs. <p>Strategy B: Consider location of Town facilities, especially Police Department currently in leased space. The Maryland 193/Greenbelt Rd. Section Plan recommends locating municipal facilities in the commercial corridor.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess perspectives from the Police Department on station location. 2. Assess community perspectives from the Police Department on station location. 	<p>Staff Staff</p> <p>Staff Council Staff Staff Staff and Council Staff Architecture/engineering firm Staff and Council</p> <p>Staff Staff and Council</p>

