



Land Use and Visual Analysis

Land Use

US 1 Corridor

Commercial and office uses dominate the US 1 corridor, consisting of several professional office buildings, one free-standing and one fast-food restaurant, a gas station, and a pharmacy. On the east side of US 1, south of MD 410, is a block of older commercial storefronts that contain a restaurant, a dentist's office, a veterinary hospital, and a church.

On the east side of US 1, north of MD 410, there are a few single-family homes, as well as two office buildings, a post office, and a dental laboratory. Church uses occupy a former professional building and are located above the Riverdale Post Office.

Historic Core

There is a mixture of residential and commercial uses in the historic core, including small apartment buildings east of the MARC station, a carry-out restaurant and liquor/convenience store, a bookstore, a bar, a consignment shop, and a doll store. Three small municipal parks contribute to a small-town feel in this area and provide green space.

Industrial Area

Light industrial uses dominate the area north of MD 410 and the historic core, including a towing service, automobile repair facility, construction companies, and a professional exhibit and display fabricator.





Visual Analysis

Building

Height

Building heights vary within the proposed town center, ranging from one-story structures of approximately 12–20 feet to four-story buildings approximately 40–50 feet tall along the US 1 corridor.

In the historic core, commercial buildings are between one and two stories tall, averaging 15–25 feet in height. Adjacent residential buildings stand between two and three stories tall.

The industrial area consists of one-story buildings between 12–25 feet in height.

For buildings with first-story retail, storefront heights range from approximately 9–12 feet.



Historic core: Mix of heights, from approximately 14 to 28 feet, one story or two.

Width

Building width varies throughout the study area. Most structures, especially along the US 1 corridor, are oriented parallel to the street. Buildings on the east side of US 1, just south of MD 410, run from property line to property line, joined by parti walls (a wall shared by two buildings). This development pattern results in buildings that occupy one or two lots. Other structures stand alone, often separated from the street by parking or landscaping.

Buildings in the historic core are more closely spaced than along US 1, reflecting historical patterns of development.

These buildings typically span the width of the property and adjoin neighboring buildings.

In the industrial area north of the MARC station, some larger structures occupy four or more lots, and buildings are more set apart than in the historic core.

Setbacks

Setbacks vary depending on the time the building was constructed. Historic buildings along the US 1 corridor were built with flat facades joined by common parti walls and have a uniform setback from the street. More recent buildings have a suburban character consisting of greater setbacks, and parking lots and landscaping often separate the building from the street.

The historic core commercial buildings feature a uniform setback and common parti walls. Residential buildings are set back farther from the street than commercial structures to allow for a transition zone between public and private space.

Buildings in the industrial area are separated from the access road by parking spaces or loading docks and are typically oriented to the side rather than the front.

The creation of a consistent and uniform street wall is a positive element in the development of a town center and generally presents a more historic and vibrant feel that enhances the character of the community. This type of character is present on the block south of MD 410 along US 1 and in the historic core block along Rhode Island Avenue. Also, several buildings, such as Dumm's Corner, are built to the sidewalk, enhancing the street wall and reflecting historical patterns of commercial development.



Buildings with a uniform setback form a pleasant street wall.



Roof Types

The predominant commercial roof type in Riverdale Park is flat, with or without a parapet wall. There are also some buildings with hipped and sloped roofs present in the town center. Most buildings along the US 1 corridor incorporate a flat roof.

Commercial structures in the historic core are consistent with historic roof patterns, featuring flat or sloped roofs. Adjacent residential buildings have hipped or gabled roofs reflecting the residential nature of these historic homes.

Roofs in the industrial area are flat, some with parapet walls and minor variation of roof height.

Consistency in roof types helps lead to a defining skyline and rhythm. However, some variety in roof form, similar to what currently exists in Riverdale Park, breaks up monotony, provides character, and is consistent with historical patterns of development.

Materials

Masonry, primarily brick and stone, is the predominant construction material in the town center. Brick is the most prevalent material in use. Other materials include wood frames, wood siding, glass, plaster, metals such as iron and steel, and concrete block. Glass and masonry are heavily utilized along the US 1 corridor, especially in office buildings.

Materials in the historic core are more traditional, with a preponderance of masonry, wood siding, and glass storefronts.

Concrete block construction and temporary buildings constructed with modern, synthetic materials characterize the industrial area. Brick is also used in this area, but the materials used in these buildings are characteristic of mid- to late-twentieth century industrial construction.

Color

There is a variety of colors present in the buildings of the town center. The dominant colors are red, brown and beige, reflecting the natural colors of the many brick buildings located in Riverdale Park. Other common colors include white, off-white, gray and blue.

Distribution of Windows/Door Openings

The historic buildings of the town center were constructed with retail on the ground floor and residential uses on upper levels. As a result, most of these buildings, especially in the historic core, have storefront windows and slightly recessed door openings on the ground floor and vertical, punched window openings on the second floor. This pattern of



Horizontal window banding, a distinctive characteristic of late twentieth-century office buildings.

fenestration is appropriate for a historical appearance and provides pedestrian interest, an essential element of successful streetscapes.

Other structures feature a range of fenestration patterns. Office buildings along US 1 utilize large expanses of glass in both vertical and horizontal orientations, several of which incorporate continuous horizontal bands of windows encircling the structure. This is reflective of late twentieth century office construction, where the horizontal is emphasized over the vertical and little effort is made to provide window and door entrance detailing on a pedestrian scale. Several buildings have been converted from residential to commercial uses. These buildings have been modified to the point that they no longer present residential, single-punched window patterns on the ground floor.

In the industrial area, buildings typically feature a small number of single-punched windows set among large expanses of concrete and masonry walls. These buildings were designed with security and industrial uses in mind and, therefore, have a minimum of window and door openings.

Architectural Styles and Ornamentation

The predominant building type in the town center is a flat-front commercial building with a flat roof. Pedestrian-scale ornamentation is present in the historical buildings but is often in poor condition due to vacancy or lack of maintenance. Newer commercial buildings along the US 1 corridor are larger than the historic structures, and generally reflect mid- to late-twentieth century suburban office development. There is a gas station and two trademark-style buildings present along the US 1 corridor, and some bungalow-style housing is also found in this area, some of which has been converted into commercial use.



Renovations mask the building's original entrance on the corner and its architectural detailing.

In the historic core, fire has damaged many of the historic buildings, and renovations have removed or obscured some of the detailing that was once present on the facades of these structures.

Industrial area buildings contribute little to the community by way of style, largely due to their utilitarian nature. There is little, if any, detailing or architectural ornamentation to be found on these structures.

Signs

Signs along the US 1 corridor are crafted to be visible to cars moving at high speed through the corridor. These signs are sometimes large and detract from the appearance of the area. There is also an inordinate amount of temporary signs along US 1, most consisting of cardboard stapled to light poles or wood post signs driven into the ground.



This billboard in the industrial area detracts from the built and natural environment of the community.

Signage in the historic core is generally lacking, with only a few existing businesses utilizing signs, most of which are small plastic signs mounted on the facade. Two small businesses in the area feature a number of temporary signs and banners, in some cases obscuring facade windows and doors.

There are few signs present in the industrial area. Those that do exist are usually small and located adjacent to an entry or along a security fence enclosing a business. However, there is an exception present in the form of a tall billboard oriented to auto traffic along MD 410.

Awnings and Canopies

Awnings and canopies are used sparingly in the town center. When they are employed, they are typically located above entrances to define entries and provide some shelter from the elements. The few awnings and canopies that do exist are of canvas/cloth construction, which is appropriate for use in a town center.

Mechanical Equipment

Visibility of mechanical equipment from roads and adjacent properties is not a major issue in the town center. Most equipment is located to the rear of buildings, or on the roofs screened by a parapet wall. However, equipment to the rear of buildings is visible from parkland located adjacent to both the US 1 corridor and historic core. Visible mechanical equipment from adjacent properties is undesirable, and adequate screening should be employed.

Parking

View from the Road

There are no on-street parking spaces along US 1 through Riverdale Park, but there are off-street parking areas that separate newer commercial buildings from the street. These



Common, shared parking lot in the historic core.



parking areas are located immediately in front of the building, are inadequately screened from the street, and are clearly visible from the road. Appropriate screening should be utilized to visually shield the cars from the street.

The historic core commercial buildings along the Rhode Island Avenue right-of-way are visually separated from Queensbury Road by a large shared parking lot. However, the visual impact of this parking lot is less than along US 1 due to an increased pedestrian orientation of the block and a wide sidewalk and landscape strip that separates the parking area from the street.

Parking in the industrial area is set before the main entrances of the utilitarian buildings located in this area. Several buildings feature loading areas that face the access road, and little attempt has been made to screen parking areas from public view from the street.

Paving Materials

Bituminous asphalt is the common paving material on the parking lots, which is both common and appropriate for this use. Some parking areas require patching, resurfacing and striping.

Landscaping

Landscaping in parking areas is scarce, consisting of a few trees in small tree boxes and narrow medians. Visual screening, when present, consists of small shrubs and widely spaced trees.

Circulation

Major Roads

US 1, Queensbury Road and Rhode Island Avenue are the major roads serving the town center. Rhode Island Avenue is the only access to the existing industrial area north of the historic core. Rhode Island Avenue runs through the historic core parking lot, which creates an unsafe condition for pedestrians because of the industrial vehicles passing through the parking lot.

The section of US 1 that is in the town center is designated a collector with a 90-110 foot-wide roadway in the Planning Area 68 master plan. The existing right-of-way along this portion of US 1 varies from approximately 60 to 67 feet, and the roadbed varies within this right-of-way from 47 to 54 feet in width. The roadway currently contains four travel lanes and one turn lane dividing the north and southbound lanes. The lanes vary in width from 9–10 feet, which is smaller than the 11 feet currently recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards.

Crosswalks

Painted striping in the intersections along the US 1 corridor denotes crosswalks. In the historic core, brick crosswalks have been constructed between the historic buildings and the shared parking lot. There are some minor street crossings with no crosswalks in close proximity, and there are no crosswalks in the industrial area since the railroad tracks lie along the east side of the access road. Consideration should be given to marking crosswalks with a more permanent material that has a higher durability than street paint. The Planning Area 68 master plan recommended that "all pedestrian crossings should be located at intersections and be clearly marked by utilizing a different paving material."

Pedestrian Passageways

Pedestrian passageways are not present in the town center. However, there are passageways in the historic core that give access to the rear of the block but are in disrepair. They are poorly lit and in physically poor condition. Several of these passageways are gated and are usually kept locked. To become a key element of the pedestrian network, these passageways should be improved and kept open. Alleys should also be considered along the US 1 corridor and in the industrial area to help with pedestrian, as well as vehicle, circulation.

Streetscape

Sidewalks

Sidewalks run along both sides of most streets. Along US 1 these sidewalks are paved with poured concrete and are about four feet wide throughout most of the corridor. Sidewalks fronting the block immediately south of MD 410 on the east side of US 1 are between 14 and 20 feet wide.

In the historic core, sidewalks have been improved to be between 12 and 24 feet wide near the historic, early-twentieth-century buildings and feature an alternating pattern of brick and concrete. Other sidewalks through this area are standard, four-foot-wide concrete paths. There are a few locations where sidewalks are in a state of disrepair or stop abruptly, but for the most part, they are well maintained and in good shape.

Sidewalks in the industrial area are nonexistent.

Furniture

Street furniture is concentrated in two areas: in the historic core close to the MARC station and along US 1 in front of the historic buildings at the corner of MD 450. There is a mix of materials—cast iron at the historic core and concrete and metal along US 1. Consistency in street furniture can enhance pedestrian comfort and provide a welcoming and inviting atmosphere, as well as create a unique identity for the town center.



Pedestrian amenities in the historic core.

Landscaping

Landscaping is relatively sparse in the town center along commercial frontage, consisting mainly of grassy strips and widely spaced street trees. Several planters are located along US 1 but are not contributing factors in the overall landscaping scheme of the area. Trees, planters and planted areas could help break up the monotony of concrete sidewalks and provide shade and a pleasant environment, which are essential for the success of pedestrian-based, mixed-use areas.

Public Space

Provisions for public space are few along US 1. The block south of MD 410 on the east side of US 1 is marked by wide sidewalks that provide sufficient space for outdoor seating for the Calvert House restaurant. The bulk of the remaining public space along this corridor consists of sidewalks and the street itself. A small park lies behind the US 1 corridor along Beale Circle, and a second small plot of open space stands along 44th Place, west of US 1.

Public space is more closely integrated within the historic core, with a veterans memorial and Mabelle L. Munch Park east of the MARC station. The historic cemetery where several members of the Calvert family are buried is located on a small rise behind the historic buildings along Rhode Island Avenue. The shared parking lot, just west of the MARC station, also serves as a public square, especially during seasonal farmers' markets held in the historic core.

There is no public space in the industrial area, but an informal path runs through the Rhode Island Avenue right-of-way, just to the west of the industrial buildings. Also, a neighborhood park lies adjacent to this right-of-way, between Tuckerman Street and Sheridan Street.



Mabelle L. Munch Park, just east of the MARC station.