

2015



# East Riverdale Beacon Heights SECTOR PLAN

**RECOMMENDED GOALS, CONCEPTS, GUIDELINES  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
SEPTEMBER 24, 2015



## INTRODUCTION

The Prince George’s County Planning Department seeks to initiate a sector plan for the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights area of the County. It will be a multi-year sector plan. The area is currently governed by master plans completed over 20 years ago, prior to demographic and character changes in the neighborhood and the planned Purple Line light rail project.

This new sector plan will build on a number of key studies and local efforts, including the 2008 *Central Kenilworth Avenue Revitalization Study*, the 2014 *Sustainable Action Plan for Greater Riverdale*, and 2014 *Purple Line Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study*, to address targeted issues impacting the neighborhoods surrounding the two proposed Purple Line stations. A major goal of this effort is to provide a viable, strategic plan of prioritized action steps for multiple stakeholders to enhance the quality of life of current and future residents, businesses, and surrounding neighborhoods and to maximize the benefits of the Purple Line. Plan preparation and community outreach will primarily be led by the Planning Department’s Community Planning Division. A project team consisting of staff from the Prince George’s County Planning Department, County agencies, and a hired consultant team led by Toole Design Group will engage in an intensive process to develop a strategic plan to address targeted issues in this sector plan area.

As legislated by Subtitle 27, Part 13 of the County Code, this document fulfills the requirements outlined for initiating a new Area Master Plan or Area Master Plan Amendment. This document summarizes initial plan goals and concepts identified during the pre-planning phase of this project for consideration by the community. The Public Participation Program segment of this document outlines our community outreach approach, which is designed to gather and provide input from various stakeholders. And lastly, the project schedule segment identifies key milestone dates for developing and completing the sector plan.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### *Purpose*

The East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Sector Plan is being initiated for neighborhoods surrounding two planned Purple Line light rail stations – East Riverdale and Beacon Heights. It is a strategic plan to evaluate, prioritize and capitalize on opportunities created by the Purple Line to revitalize communities and focus improvements on the following: land use, economic prosperity, transportation and mobility, natural and built environment, housing and neighborhood, community heritage, culture and design, public facilities and parks and recreation.

The following are key reasons for developing this sector plan:

1. **Need to develop an action-oriented plan** promoting commercial revitalization in the sector plan area and transit-oriented development (TOD) around the Riverdale Park and Beacon Heights Purple Line light rail station areas that support safe, pedestrian-oriented, multi-modal transit-friendly communities.

2. **Need to implement growth policies and strategies of the 2014 *Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan*** and several countywide functional master plans for this area.
3. **Need to amend outdated portions** of the 1994 *Approved Master Plans and Sectional Map Amendments for Planning Areas 68 and 69* and revisit planning assumptions for this area.
4. **Build upon previous planning efforts and study recommendations** in the 2008 *Central Kenilworth Avenue Revitalization Study*, 2014 *Sustainable Action Plan for Greater Riverdale*, and 2014 *Purple Line Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Study*.

Given the extensive analysis conducted by the 2013 *Purple Line Transit-Oriented Development Study* and the expected construction of the Purple Line project, the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan will be very strategic in nature to address critical issues. The sector plan will include detailed objectives and prioritized strategies. In fact, it will create a framework for performance measurement that will provide stakeholders and decision makers with a way to monitor plan implementation and make future adjustments due to changing circumstances.

### ***Project Area***

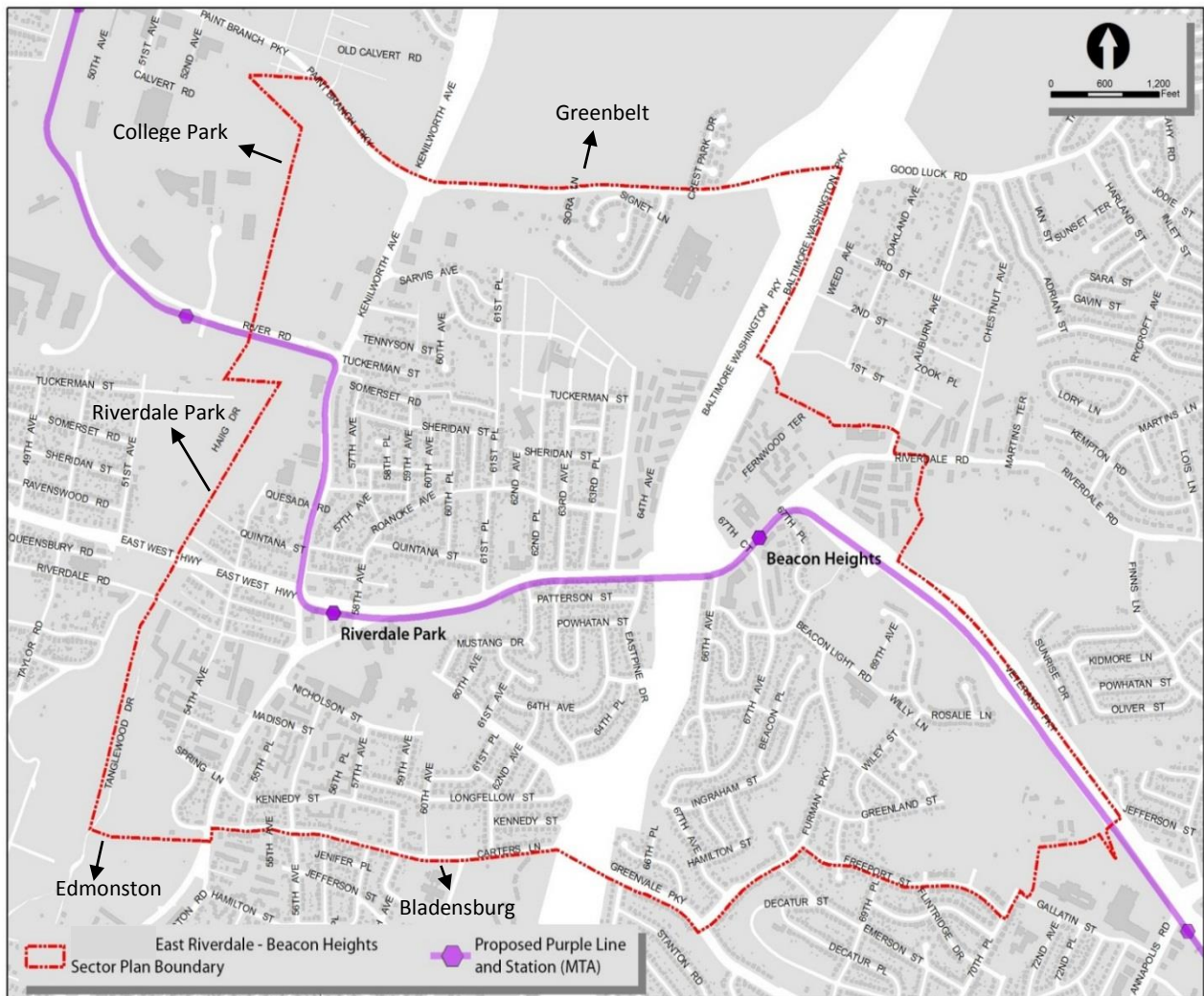
Located in the northwestern quadrant of Prince George's County in Planning Areas 68 and 69, most of the sector plan area is in Planning Area 69. Five municipalities abut the sector plan area including Riverdale Park, College Park, Greenbelt, Bladensburg, and Edmonston. The sector plan area is located in close proximity to the College Park and Prince George's Plaza Transit Districts, which call for mixed-use transit-oriented development.

The sector plan area contains 1,340 acres and includes the eastern portion of the Town of Riverdale Park. Its boundaries are framed by the Anacostia River Stream Valley Park and East Branch of the Anacostia River to the west, Greenbelt National Park to the north, Veteran's Parkway to the east, and the neighborhoods of Riverdale Heights, Riverdale Hills, Crestwood, Templeton Knolls, Eastpines, and Beacon Heights to the south. The Baltimore-Washington Parkway runs vertically north to south and Riverdale Road runs horizontally east to west through the sector plan area. The preliminary boundary for this sector plan area is shown on Map 1 on the following page.

This sector plan area includes a robust transportation network with five major roadways - Riverdale Road, Kenilworth Avenue, Good Luck Road, Baltimore-Washington Parkway and Veteran's Highway. Furthermore, there are two proposed locations for Purple Line light rail station in the sector plan area - Riverdale Park and Beacon Heights.

The sector plan area includes a mix of land uses, such as commercial, residential, institutional and open space. The sector plan area is generally defined by a growing multicultural community, lower- to medium-density residential development, auto-oriented suburban-style strip commercial shopping centers, roadways organized around collector and arterials, poor pedestrian and bicyclist environments, and high bus transit ridership service. The sector plan area has many opportunities and challenges, which makes it an ideal location to revisit past planning recommendations to take advantage of new opportunities.

**Map 1: Boundary of East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Sector Plan Area.**



***Relationship to Other Plans and Studies***

**Plan Prince George’s 2035 Approved General Plan**

The 2014 *Plan Prince George’s 2035 Approved General Plan (Plan 2035)* provides a framework for long-term growth and development within the County that include policies and strategies to capitalize on local and regional strengths and assets. The East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan area is located in two growth policy areas designated in the *Plan 2035* – Established Communities and Neighborhood Centers (Local).

According to *Plan 2035*, *Established Communities* are intended to be areas most appropriate for context-sensitive infill and low- to medium-density development that maintain and enhance existing public services, facilities and infrastructure. *Plan 2035* identifies the planned Riverdale Park and Beacon Heights Purple Line stations as *Local Neighborhood Centers* that are “primarily residential areas that are often

lower in density. These areas generally have fewer transit options and offer neighborhood-serving retail and office uses” (Page 107).<sup>1</sup> *Established Communities* and *Local Neighborhood Centers* should guide the sector plan analysis and recommendations. Any sector plan recommendations that strengthen or do not align with *Plan 2035* policies will be identified as proposed amendments to *Plan 2035*.

### **Approved Master Plans and Sectional Map Amendments for Planning Area 68 and Planning Area 69**

The following two master plans govern portions of this sector plan area: 1) 1994 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Area 68*; and 2) 1994 *Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Planning Area 69*. These plans only focus on select portions of the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan area, primarily the Town Center in the Town of Riverdale Park along Route One or Riverdale Road. Both master plans are outdated and do not reflect the current issues and makeup of these areas. This new sector plan will amend portions of the Approved Master Plans and Sectional Map Amendments for Planning Areas 68 and 69.

### **2013 Purple Line Transit-Oriented Development Study**

The primary goal of the *Purple Line Transit-Oriented Development Study* was to prepare development strategy plans to maximize the transit-oriented development (TOD) potential at five Purple Line stations in the County. The Purple Line TOD Study provides a number of strategic recommendations and existing conditions analysis that will be considered and used in the development of the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Sector Plan effort.

### **Sustainable Community Designation for Greater Riverdale**

The State of Maryland Sustainable Community program aims to help existing communities create clear action plans for revitalization as designated sustainable communities. A sustainable community designation is a threshold requirement to apply for various state funding and grant programs and/or receive priority consideration. In the spring of 2015, the Greater Riverdale area was designated a Sustainable Community by the state. It includes portions of the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan area and is comprised of properties east of Kenilworth Avenue (MD 201) to just north of the Bladensburg municipal boundary. The Sustainable Community Application for Greater Riverdale included an in-depth analysis of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the area. It also developed a comprehensive action plan to support the existing community, reduce environmental impacts, build upon community assets, enhance economic competitiveness, and promote equitable access to housing, and support transportation efficiency and access. The East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Sector Plan will build upon the community action plan contained within the *Sustainable Community Application for Greater Riverdale*.

---

<sup>1</sup> Plan Prince George’s 2035 Approved General Plan <http://planpgc2035.com/approved-plan>

## PROJECT GOALS AND CONCEPTS

A set of preliminary framework goals and concepts for the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Sector Plan were developed based on staff’s initial existing conditions research, interviews, and meetings with community stakeholders during the pre-planning phase of this project. The goals and concepts focus on eight key elements — land use; economic prosperity; transportation and mobility; natural and built environment; housing and neighborhoods; community heritage, culture and design; healthy communities; and public facilities. The following section identifies critical issues associated with each major plan goal that should be explored and answered in the sector plan:

	Goal	Concepts
<b>Land Use</b>	Direct medium- to medium-high residential and limited commercial to areas within a one-half mile radius of the Purple Line stations.	Ensure complementary land uses support multi-modal transportation.
		Recommend zoning that supports transit-oriented mixed use development where appropriate.
	Support context sensitive infill and low- to medium-density development outside the Purple Line station areas to support established communities.	Recommend land use polices and zoning to promote safe, attractive space for public use.
		Support land use transition areas between Purple Line station areas and residential areas with continuous pedestrian connectivity.

<b>Economic Prosperity</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Concepts</b>
	Maximize economic benefits from the development of the Purple Line.	Provide a proper mix of retail that creates a distinctive neighborhood local centers that complement nearby regional transit development districts that facilitate walkable and mixed-use neighborhoods.
		Concentrate neighborhood-serving retail to connect employees and residents to desired goods and services.
		Enhance and support existing shopping and commercial centers in order to retain existing and attract new businesses.
Identify support for enhancing business retention efforts in the sector plan area.		
<b>Transportation + Mobility</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Concepts</b>
	Expand and improve multi-modal transit service and connectivity.	Explore mechanisms to facilitate improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians in sector plan area.
		Identify and prioritize pedestrian safety, quality of experience, and mobility improvements.
		Promote better multi-modal connections between residential neighborhoods, commercial uses/activity center, and employment centers. Explore alternative modes and efficiencies for better connecting people in residential areas to activity centers.
Explore the feasibility of a multi-modal transfer facility in the sector plan area.		

<b>Natural &amp; Built Environment</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Concepts</b>
	Protect and enhance the natural and built environment.	Identify strategies to reduce impervious surfaces in the sector plan area.
		Improve and maintain water quality through stormwater management and water resource protection.
		Improve access to open space and trails connections and consolidate park opportunities.
		Protect wildlife habitats, ecosystems and minimize adverse impacts to wildlife.
	Promote low-impact development and sustainable development techniques.	
<b>Housing + Neighborhoods</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Concepts</b>
	Strengthen existing communities and encourage new context sensitive infill development and rehabilitation.	Preserve and strengthen the existing neighborhood character.
		Promote the development of new, varied housing types that attract a mix of incomes.
		Rehabilitate and maintain the affordable housing stock and address displacement concerns around the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Purple Line light rail stations.
		Promote universal design for existing and new housing to accommodate people of all abilities and ages.



<b>Community, Heritage, Culture + Design</b>	Goal	Concepts
	Celebrate and promote community identity, character, and history.	Increase awareness of communities’ diverse heritages and cultural traditions.
		Implement urban design solutions to ensure appropriate transitions between high- and low-density development and conflicting land uses.
		Identify block size, building placement, and density requirements that support walkable, mixed-use development and compact design strategies.
		Protect historic resources and sites.
		Increase historic preservation efforts through investigating opportunities for education and promotion.
		Use history to inspire and influence the design of buildings, open space and the public realm.
Design attractive and accessible public spaces that serve the collective community.		
<b>Healthy Communities</b>	Goal	Concepts
	Improve opportunities to access health services and promote healthy and active lifestyles.	Identify suitable sites that may be appropriate for urban agriculture activities, community gardens, and farmers’ markets.
		Improve residents access to fresh foods, particularly for households living in low-income areas with limited transportation options, and promote sources of fresh foods.
		Reduce the prevalence of “food swamps,” a place where unhealthy foods are more prevalent than healthy foods.
Increase neighborhood access to and awareness of parks and recreational opportunities.		

Public Facilities	Goal	Concepts
	Ensure public facilities provide efficient and equitable service to existing and future residents and businesses.	
		Locate/site any needed public facilities for social, economic, and environmental community benefits.
		Reduce barriers to access public facilities access for residents.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM**

The Public Participation Program (PPP) is an important element in preparing the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights Sector Plan. The PPP will help facilitate comprehensive participation by area residents, community organizations, business owners, nonprofits, civic leaders, and other stakeholders. In addition, a strong public participation program will provide a better understanding of community issues and opportunities, help build consensus from residents and key stakeholders, encourage community ownership of the plan, and guide plan implementation. Outreach meetings with the following stakeholders during the pre-planning phase of the project will gather input on public outreach preferences and how staff could enhance the sector plan’s public outreach process:

- County Council Member Dannielle Glaros for District 3;
- The Mayor and administration of the Town of Riverdale Park, City of New Carrollton, and City of College Park
- The National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education
- East Riverdale/Bladensburg Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI) Team

### **Consultant Team Coordination**

M-NCPPC contracted with the Toole Design Group, a professional planning, engineering, and landscape architecture and design consultant firm, to provide specific transportation and environmental analysis for the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan. They will be an engaged partner in this process.

### **Purple Line Project Coordination**

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) is poised to move forward with the Purple Line project. MDOT noted recently the plan is to choose a winning bid to design, build, and operate a light-rail Purple Line by January 2016. It is expected that design and construction work could begin May 2016. As part of this sector plan effort, we intend to invite and engage the community and public and private partner stakeholders involved with the Purple Line project to help develop the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan. Some of these partners will include the Purple Line Coalition, the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education, and MDOT Purple Line project management staff.

### **Gathering & Communicating Information**

Significant discussion and collaboration are vital to the success of any planning process. We will use several tools outlined below to engage the public. All communication outreach to the public will be led by the M-NCPPC project team and include e-newsletters, a project website, community meetings, briefings, public notifications, media outlets, etc. Information will be communicated in both English and Spanish where possible throughout the planning process.

Listed below are the key public participation elements that will be used for this project:

- Community Meetings
- Multi-Day Charrette
- Community Online Wikimap Tool
- Steering Advisory Committee
- Key Stakeholder Interviews
- Email – Constant Contact
- Website
- Public E-Newsletters
- Briefings to Decision makers
- Required Public Notifications
- Media Outlets

The three most critical elements of our PPP are implementation of an online Wikimap tool, conduction of a multi-day charrette, and establishment of a project Steering Advisory Committee. The consultant team Toole Design Group will prepare and manage the project's online community Wikimap information crowdsourcing tool that allows one to add points (specific locations) and lines (transportation routes) representing ideas about the future of the community. It will be reviewed by the project team and the consultant and will provide invaluable information for the plan. A multi-day charrette will also be led by the consultant team to gather community data, input, analysis and recommendations for the plan. And finally, the M-NCPPC project team will help assemble a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) representing a broad range of policy and community interests.

The goal of the sector plan PPP is to help educate and engage the public about the planning process and provide project updates. Sustained public participation will be critical to the success of this sector plan project. Therefore, this public engagement process will require multiple stakeholders, including the community and public agencies, to be advocates for and stewards of this sector plan, both prior and after approval.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

At plan initiation, the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan project team will request a five-month extension to the plan development schedule in order to provide adequate time for the project team, consultant, and various community and agency stakeholders to conduct extensive public outreach and develop and prioritize recommendations to fully support the community’s vision and needs for this area. The additional time needed to prepare the East Riverdale and Beacon Heights sector plan will also help to ensure that recommendations are coordinated with the planned Riverdale Park and Beacon Heights Purple Line light rail stations. Table 1 below reflects our proposed schedule and identifies all major legislative approved milestones.

**Table 1. Plan Preparation Milestones (with five-month extension)**

<i>Plan Milestone</i>	<i>Anticipated Completion Date</i>
Formal Plan Initiation – Planning Board	September 2015
District Council Authorization	October 2015
Permission to Print Preliminary Plan Document	November 2016
Joint Public Hearing	January 2017
Planning Board Adoption & Endorsement	March 2017
Plan Transmittal to District Council	April 2017
District Council Approval or Set 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hearing Set	June 2017
Second Joint Public Hearing	July 2017
Approval by County Council	July 2017