



Baltimore County Design Review Panel

Residential Review Handbook

September 2024
Baltimore County Department of Planning
105 W. Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 101
Towson, MD 21204
Phone: 410-887-3480 Fax: 410-887-5862

Introduction

The Design Review Panel (DRP) is established by Section 32-4-203 of the Baltimore County Code, as amended. The goal of the DRP is to encourage design excellence through the application of design guidelines contained in the Master Plan, the Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies, and adopted community plans, as applicable. The DRP's general charge is to assure the overall quality of a project. In residential DRP areas, the panel may increase the setback requirements for the proposed development. The DRP acts in a technical consulting capacity. Its recommendations are made a part of the record at the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) proceedings.

This packet contains information applicable to the review of residential projects in designated areas of Downtown Towson District, Historic East Towson, Honeygo Gateway, Middle River, Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland, Sudbrook Park, and Towson Estates as well as alternative site design projects.

Visit the Design Review Panel website at <http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/DRP>



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General Review Procedures for Full Review Process

1. The Department of Permits, Approvals and Inspections (PAI) determines that the project must be reviewed by the Design Review Panel (DRP). DRP review is required for areas in Downtown Towson District, Historic East Towson, Honeygo Gateway, Middle River, Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland, Sudbrook Park, and Towson Estates, as well as alternative site design projects.
PAI notifies the applicant of required review by the DRP, and refers the applicant to the Design Review staff (Jenifer Nugent or Marta Kulchytska, Department of Planning, 410-887-3480).

It is recommended that Design Review Panel meetings be completed as early as possible after the plan submittal. Final approval of the plan will require inclusion of any changes deemed necessary by the DRP. Should a project require a zoning hearing, the DRP will make a recommendation to the ALJ. Therefore, if any variances are required for the project, it is recommended that the applicant get DRP approval prior to the zoning hearing (32-4-203).

2. Fee (for alternative site design projects* and residential projects greater than three lots): a three hundred dollar (\$300.00) non-refundable,

one-time fee must be paid prior to scheduling a DRP meeting. Make checks payable to Baltimore County, Maryland. Inquiries about fee requirement, please contact the Department of Planning. Fee is paid directly to PAI at 111 W. Chesapeake Ave., Room 111, County Office Building, 410-887-3335.

- Housing types as described in the Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies using alternative site designs and setbacks such as z-lots, zipper lots, etc.
3. At least one week before the packet submittal deadline, the applicant shall meet with Department of Planning (DP) staff. This meeting is required for all new projects and particularly for first-time applicants. This meeting must be scheduled by the applicant.
 - a. Applicant submits completed application and one electronic copy of the project site plan to DP.
 - b. Applicant and staff discuss appropriate DRP submittals for specific project (see checklist on page 17).
 4. DP provides a contact list of community/business associations to the applicant.
 5. The DRP advises that the applicant meets with the community association in advance of the DRP meeting.



6. DP schedules the DRP meeting when submittals are ready and fee is paid (if required). DP must receive the packet submittals 15 business days (or 10 business days for resubmittals) prior to the DRP meeting (for meeting and submittal dates see <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/boards-commissions/planning/design-review-panel>). The submittals shall include:
 - a. One hard copy and one electronic copy of the plan and accompanying materials (see checklist on page 17).
 - b. A certification letter that a meeting notification letter and a site plan has been sent to all community/business associations, adjacent property owners, the County Council representative, and the press (see pages 7 and 8 for sample letters).
 - c. DRP filing fee receipt (if required).
 - d. Completed application if not previously submitted.
7. DP sends the electronic copy of the review materials to the panel members In advance of the meeting.
8. For large residential projects greater than three lots, DP prepares a staff report that is provided to the applicant and panel members prior to the meeting.
9. At the meeting, applicant presents the project to the DRP (see page 18 for presentation suggestions).
10. DP provides draft written minutes of the DRP meeting within ten business days of the DRP meeting to the panel members and the applicant, and posts the approved minutes on the county website after being confirmed by the DRP panel members at the next DRP meeting. (<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/boards-commissions/planning/design-review-panel>).
11. Projects may be approved, approved with conditions or required to return to the DRP for further review.
12. If a follow-up meeting with DRP is required, applicant sends a meeting notification letter and site plan, if revised, to the following by First Class Mail:
 - a. Individuals included in the original mailing.
 - b. Additional individuals attending the last DRP meeting as recorded from the meeting sign-in sheets, and as requested by attendees.
13. A project may be approved with conditions, requiring DP approval through an administrative review. For this review, the applicant submits one hard copy and one electronic copy of all revised documents to the DP reflecting the recommendations of the DRP. DP review the submittal with the DRP chair and communicate with the applicant if there are additional questions and comments.
14. Once the project is approved, the DP issues a letter recommending approval to either the Director of PAI or the ALJ. For approvals that don't involve a development plan or Administrative Law Judge Hearing, the Director of PAI will act as the designee to consider the recommendations of the Panel and grant final approval.



Projects Subject to DRP Review

The goal of the DRP is to encourage design excellence through the application of design guidelines contained in the Master Plan, the Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies, adopted community plans and/or section 260 of the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations, as applicable.

Design Review is conducted for all development located within designated design review areas and for alternative site design projects. "Development" for purposes of the DRP review, includes a minor subdivision but does not include a Planned Unit Development. In addition, "development" includes both new construction and a substantial addition or change to an existing development plan, as determined by the Department of Planning.

A new dwelling proposed for a residential single lot of record within a designated residential design review area is reviewed by the DRP. An addition to a dwelling that is more than 50% of the gross square footage of the existing dwelling is also to be reviewed. The gross square footage calculation includes an attached garage, storage areas and/or the basement, if present.

Procedures for Limited Review

Although legislation has been passed to include a limited review procedure for certain residential projects, there are currently no procedures adopted for limited review, with the exception of Historic East Towson. Projects in Historic East Towson may be subject to a limited review, which requires the applicant to present plans to the Department of Planning for review. The staff will advise the applicant of design guidelines and other requirements, as well as Community Association contacts. If the Community Association approves of the proposal, a letter of support must be submitted to the Department of Planning. This letter of support will waive the Design Review Panel meeting requirements.

All other projects will be reviewed under the DRP full process until limited review procedures are developed for other designated residential DRP areas.



Project Review Criteria

Projects will be reviewed for compliance with the following guidelines, standards, plans, and other criteria as applicable.

All Projects

- Part III: Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies: Applicable Sections
- Section 260.2-260.6 of the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations
- Section 32-4-203(c) of the Baltimore County Code, Objectives for Assessment

Alternative Site Design Projects

- Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies (CMDP): Residential Standards - Alternate Housing Types

Downtown Towson District

- Downtown Towson District – adopted 11/21/16
- BCZR Section 259.16.

Historic East Towson

- Towson Community Plan (by Resolution 12-92) – Adopted 2/3/92
- East Towson Design Standards - Adopted 10/2/03
- Bill 100-20
- Resolution 111-20

Middle River

- Resolution 77-07
- Bill 60-07
- Pursuant to BCZR Section 260.2.F, any single-family detached lot in the area that is part of a development plan and is zoned D.R. 3.5 is subject to the design standards set forth in Section 260 of the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations.
- Windlass Run/Bird River Road Area Community Plan – Adopted 1/4/1999
- Middle River Bird River Community Plan – Adopted 1/22/2002
- Middle River Community Plan – Adopted 9/4/2007

Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland

- Resolution 88-04
- Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland Area Community Plan - Adopted 2/22/11

Sudbrook Park

- Resolution 17-99
- Sudbrook Park Community Plan - Adopted 4/5/99
- Note: The DRP will defer review of projects within the Sudbrook Park County Historic District to the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Towson Estates

- Towson Community Plan (by Resolution 12-92) - Adopted 2/3/92
- Resolution 66-15
- Bill 100-20
- Towson Estates Design Guidelines - Adopted September 2020

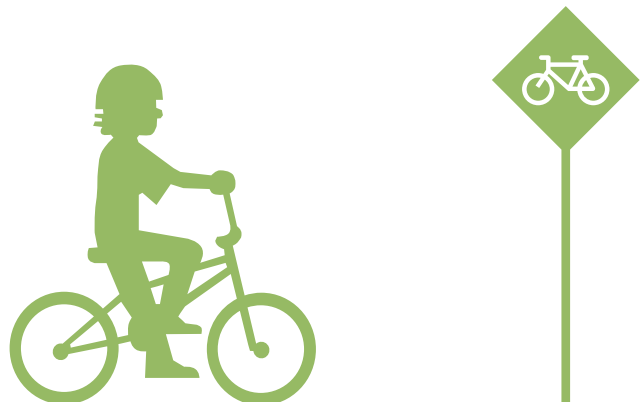
Honeygo Gateway

- Bill 59-21
- The Honeygo Plan - Adopted 7/5/1994
- Section D of Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies (CMDP): Honeygo Overlay District Design Guidelines



Objectives for Assessment

1. Demonstrates a satisfactory spatial, visual, and functional relationship to the topographic characteristics, the natural features, and the built features of the site as well as the surrounding features of the site;
2. Gives primary design consideration to the visual and functional integration of streetscapes, pedestrian pathways, playgrounds, recreational amenities, and parks;
3. Demonstrates that streets and sidewalks are laid out as safe and convenient linkages and that parking becomes a positive design element that contributes to the overall image of the site;
4. Demonstrates that buildings, parking garages, and other accessory structures are spatially and visually integrated and suitable to their surroundings in proportion, massing and type, materials and colors, signage, and other elements of urban design; and
5. Demonstrates that plant materials are selected and sited to define the site, provide a theme or image appropriate to the development, frame views, enhance architecture and street characteristics, develop continuity of adjacent open spaces, improve the micro-climate, provide transition between dissimilar uses, screen the objectionable views and uses, reduce noise level and glare, and provide seasonal colors and other visual amenities.



Design Review Elements

The Department of Planning and Design Review Panel will evaluate each project to determine how the project elements meet the criteria listed in the Objectives for Assessment, adopted plans and zoning or development regulations. The Panel will provide a technical review of the proposed project. Issues relative to zoning, setback relief, environmental and stormwater management and traffic regulations do not fall under the purview of the DRP and are regulated through the appropriate agencies responsible for those aspects of the development plan review process.

Circulation

- Road alignment
- Pedestrian access
- Integration of streets and pedestrians
- Parking: Mix (garage, grade level, street, deck), location, access

Building

- Orientation
- Entry (location & design)
- Scale, mass, setback, height, fenestration
- Building materials
- Utilities
- Service areas
- Trash

Landscaping

- Plant materials
- Streetscape and hardscape
- Site furniture
- Relationship to architecture and site
- Screening
- Lighting
- Signage

Site Planning

- Grading
- Retention of existing vegetation
- Building orientation—what faces the street
- Arrangement of buildings—spaces between buildings

Open Space

- Type
- Accessibility
- Location
- Amenities



Groups to be Notified for Full Review Process

The applicant must send a copy of the proposed site plan and a notification letter stating the location, date, and time of the Design Review Panel meeting by **First Class Mail** at least 15 business days prior (or 10 business days for resubmittals) to the Design Review Panel meeting. A sample notification letter is provided on page 8. The applicant must send the mailing to:

1. All adjacent property owners
2. Council representative's office
3. Community and business associations as provided by the Department of Planning
4. Others as identified by the Department of Planning
5. Newspapers (listed below) Note -- Notification of the meeting only; no site plan is required to be mailed to newspapers. This provides notification to the newspaper of the meeting, should they desire to attend. The applicant is not required to place an advertisement of the meeting in any newspaper.

See page 9 for required certification of mailing.

Tom Baden

Daily Record
200 St. Paul Place, Suite 2480
Baltimore, MD 21202
PH: (443) 524-8100
E-mail: tbaden@thedailyrecord.com

Alison Knezevich

Baltimore Sun
300 E. Cromwell Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
Phone: (410) 332-6100
E-mail: Alisonk@baltsun.com



Council Representatives

Council District 2 – Israel "Izzy" Patoka

Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland Design Review Area
Sudbrook Park Design Review Area

Council District 5 – David Marks

Downtown Towson District Design Review Area
Historic East Towson Design Review Area
Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland Design Review Area
Towson Estates

Council District 6 - Cathy Bevins

Middle River Design Review Area

Council Office:

400 Washington Ave.
Towson, MD 21204
(410) 887-3196
(410) 887-5791

* Note: For alternative site design projects, staff will advise applicants which Council representative to notify.

Notification Letter for Full Review Process

RE:

Dear

Date:

Time:

Location: **ALL MEETINGS ARE CURRENTLY HELD VIRTUALLY.**

For Instruction of attending the virtual meeting or listening to the meeting by phone see <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/boards-commissions/planning/design-review-panel>.

The purpose of this meeting is for the applicant to receive comments regarding design elements of the proposed project. You are invited to attend and participate in this meeting.

Should you have any questions regarding the meeting, please contact Jenifer Nugent or Marta Kulchytska, Department of Planning, 410-887-3480. To check for any last minute schedule changes, you may call 410-887-3480 or view the meeting agenda on the county's website at: <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/boards-commissions/planning/design-review-panel>.

Sincerely,

Enclosure:

Certification of Notification for Full Review Process

Prior to the DRP meeting, the applicant shall provide a letter of certification to the Department of Planning that notice of the Design Review Panel meeting was mailed, along with a list of who the material was mailed to.

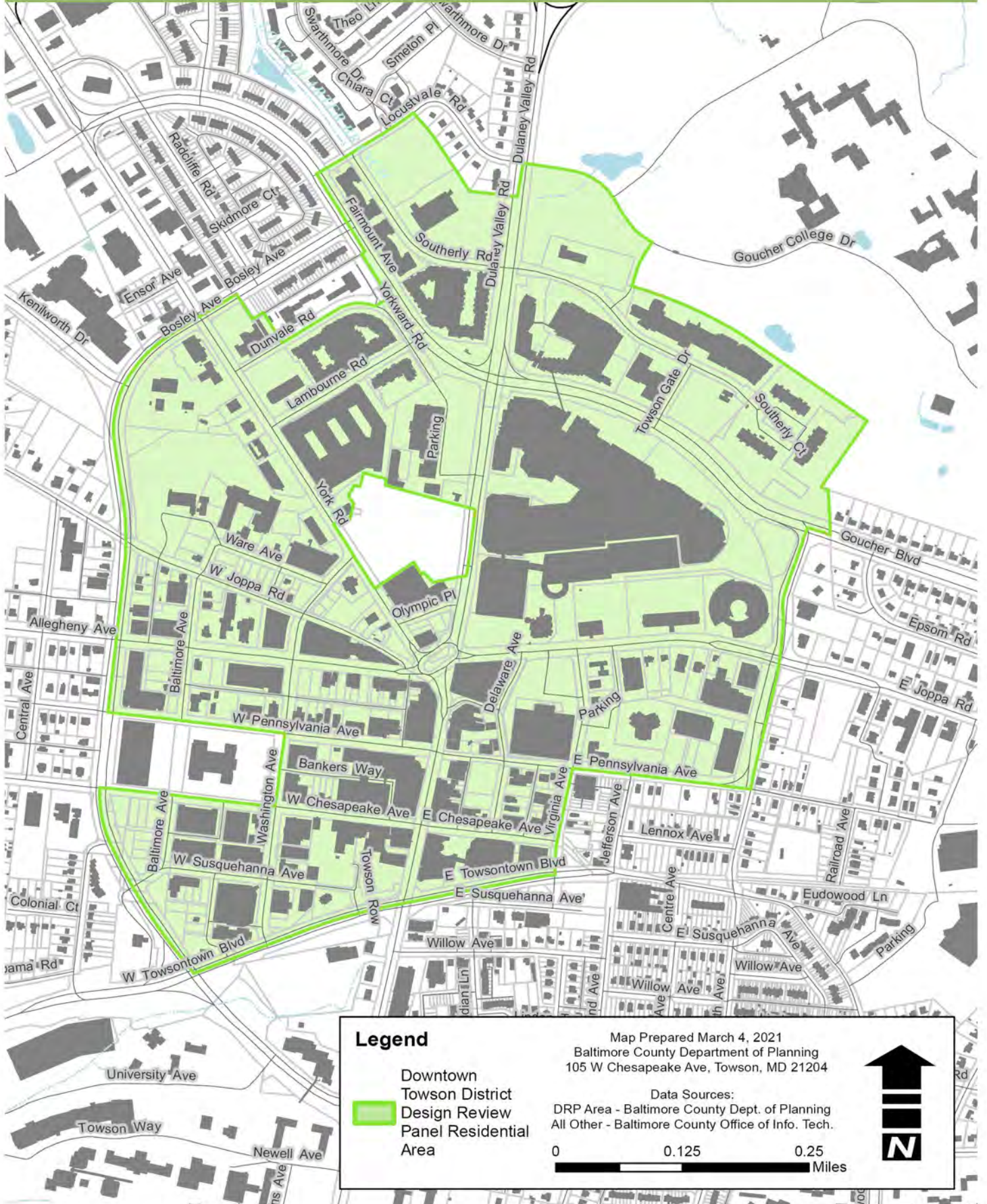
The Certification shall read as follows:

Signature of Applicant

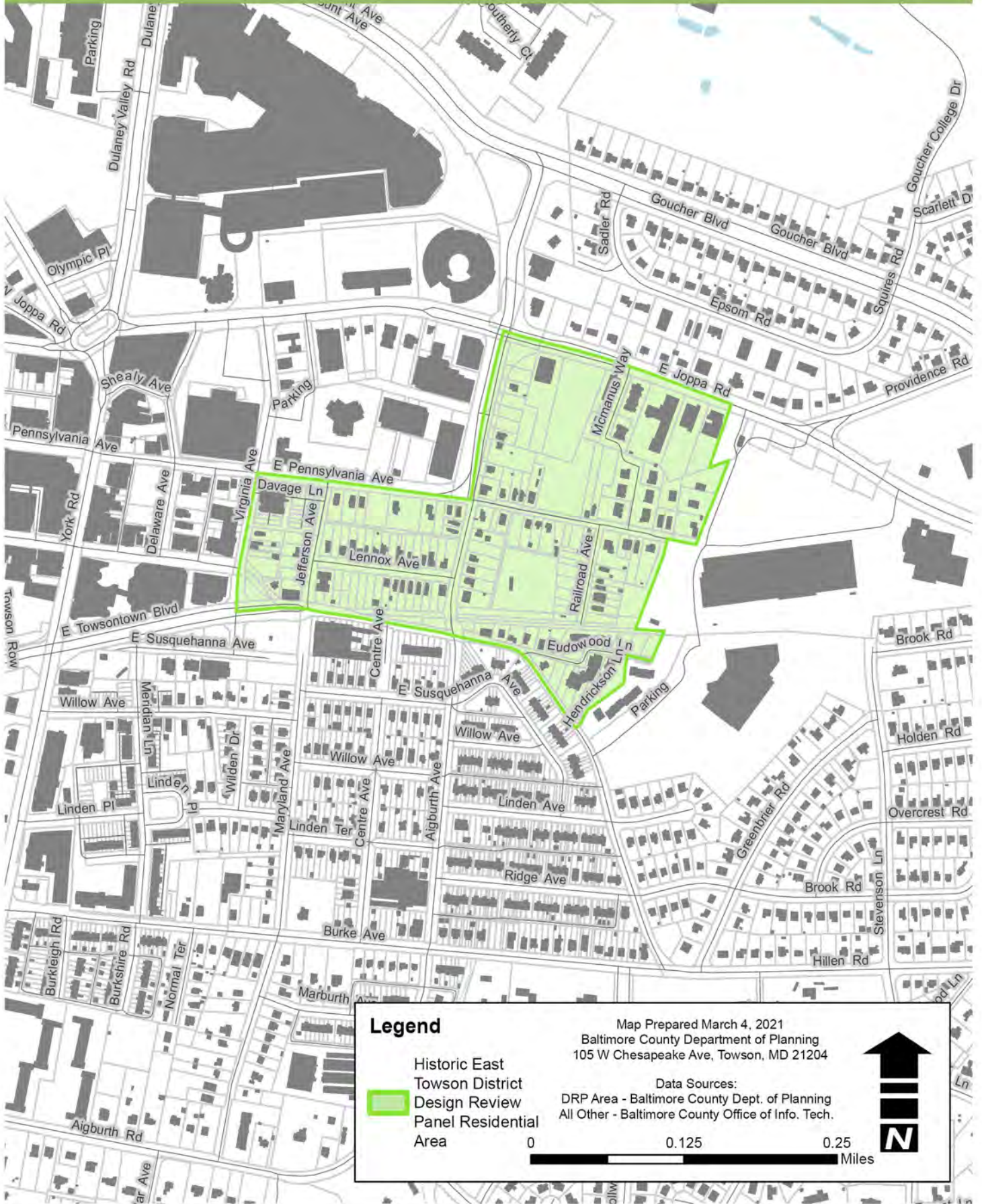
Date

(Print Name)


Downtown Towson District



Historic East Towson

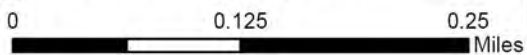


Legend

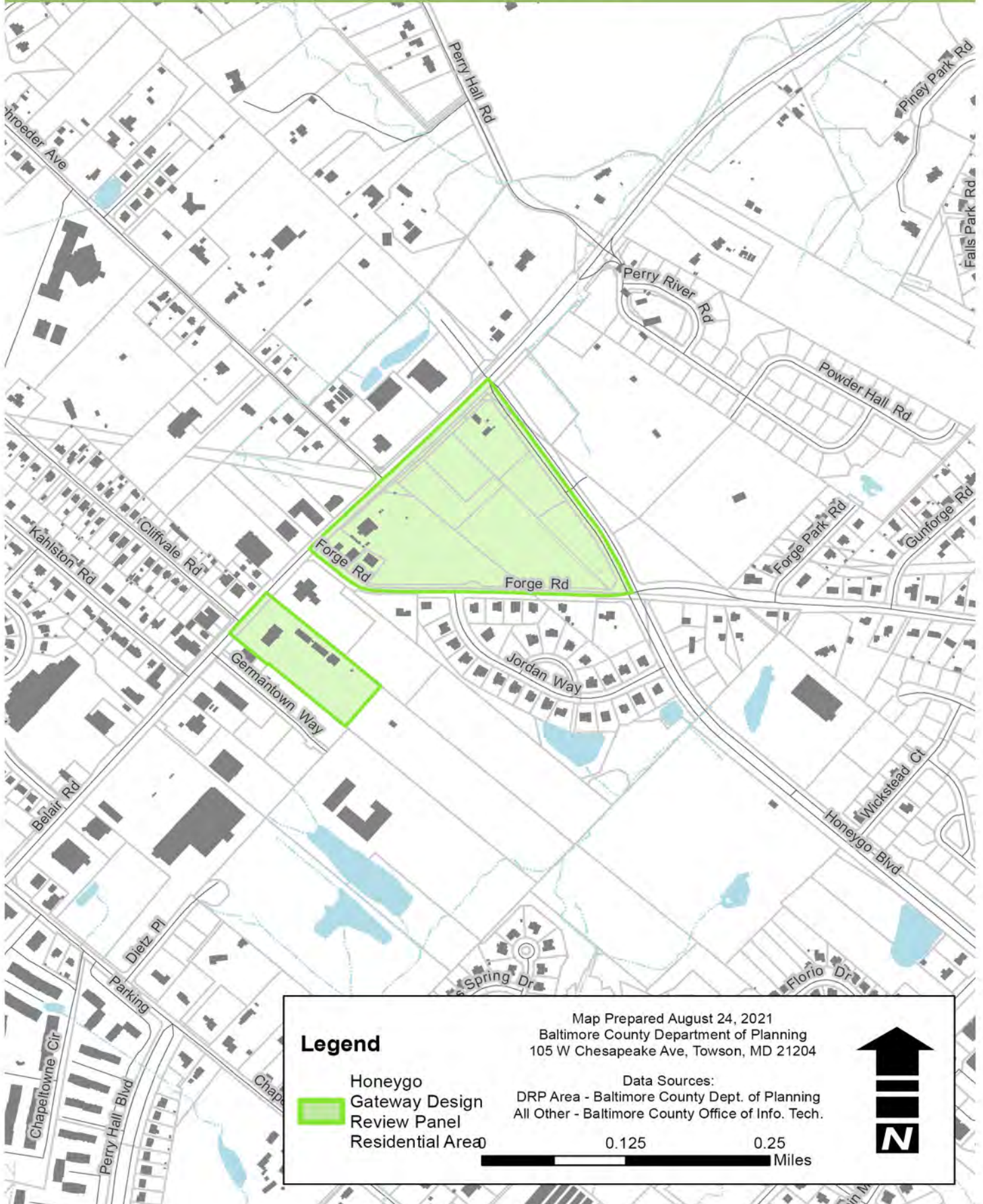
- Historic East Towson District
-  Design Review Panel Residential Area

Map Prepared March 4, 2021
 Baltimore County Department of Planning
 105 W Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204

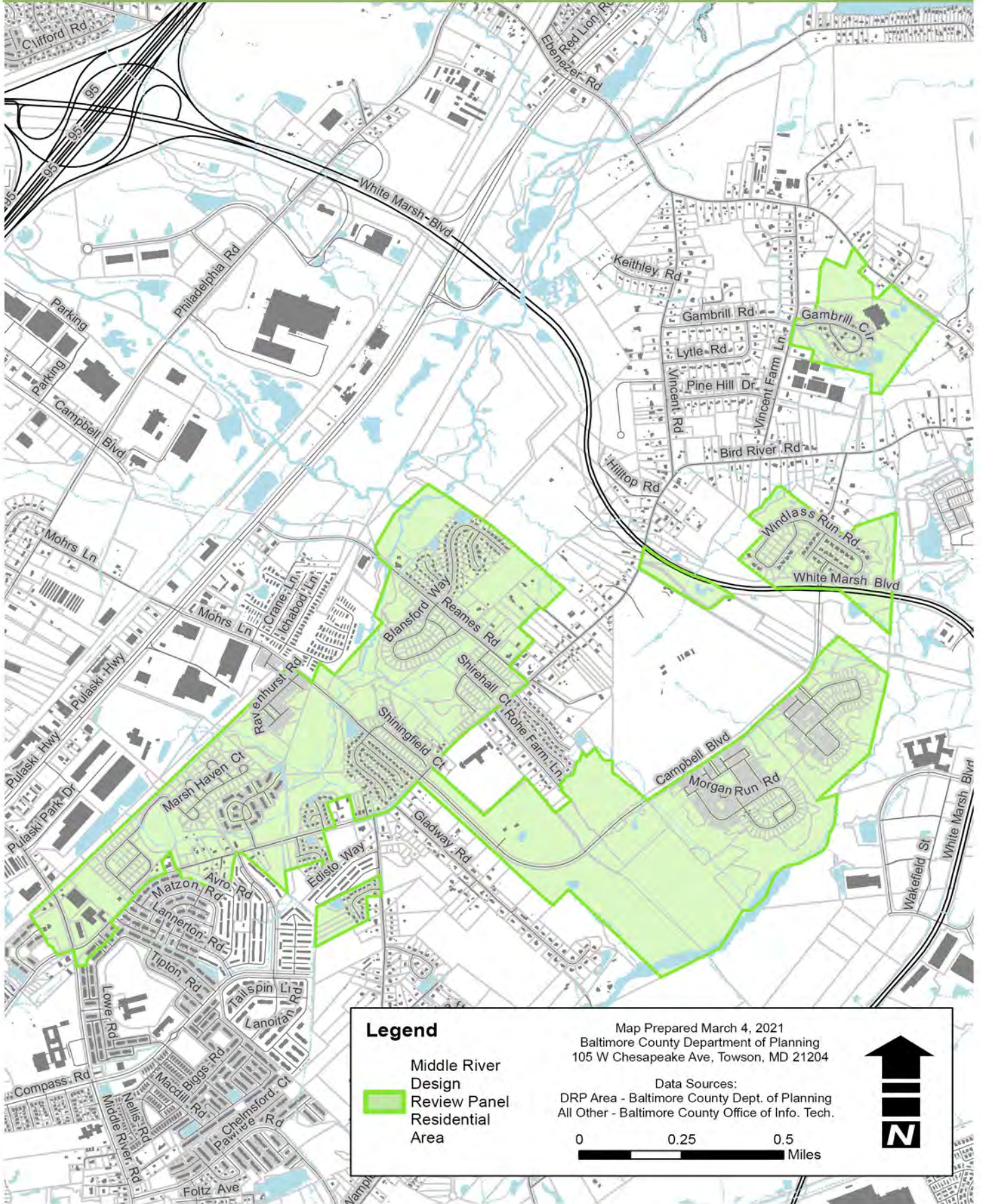
Data Sources:
 DRP Area - Baltimore County Dept. of Planning
 All Other - Baltimore County Office of Info. Tech.



Honeygo Gateway





Middle River



Ruxton-Riderwood-Lake Roland



Legend		Map Prepared March 4, 2021 Baltimore County Department of Planning 105 W Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204	
	Ruxton/ Riderwood/ Lake Roland Design Review Panel Residential Area	Data Sources: DRP Area - Baltimore County Dept. of Planning All Other - Baltimore County Office of Info. Tech.	
		0 0.5 1 Miles	
			

Sudbrook Park



Submittal Requirements Checklist

Note: Plans and building elevations may be at a reduced, readable scale. Electronic formats must be submitted in addition to one hard copy information.

First Review - Any submittal requirements checked as NO will result in the submittal being returned to the applicant as incomplete.

YES	NO	Requirements
		1. A short paragraph describing the proposed project.
		2. Zoning map and aerial photo showing outline of proposed site and surrounding neighborhood. (DP staff will provide)
		3. Photographs/slides to document existing conditions of site, street character, and surrounding context.
		4. Site plan, drawn to scale, with existing and proposed grading, and adjacent buildings showing the neighborhood context. A legible site plan prepared by a registered engineer or landscape architect is strongly recommended.
		5. Schematic landscape plan, showing existing & proposed vegetation.
		6. Photomontage, perspective sketches, or model (where necessary, DP staff will advise) to illustrate massing and scale of the proposed building in relationship to its surroundings.
		7. Elevations of all building facades at a scale sufficient to understand the building fenestration, entrances, roof designs, materials and colors. (The proposed building height dimensions and building materials must be labeled on all building elevations).
		8. Cross sections, where necessary (DP staff will advise), to understand the relationship of building to site especially in areas of extensive grading.
		9. Floor plans.
		10. Samples of all proposed building materials, potential color schemes, and proposed external lighting fixtures MUST be included in the presentation for the DRP meeting and be in PDF or Powerpoint format, 15 MB or less.
		11. Written confirmation of a scheduled community meeting prior to DRP meeting that includes all adjacent property owners as well as the respective Community Association.
		12. A copy of the receipt of payment (see page 1).
		13. A copy of the notification letter along with a list of all recipients (see pages 7 and 8).
		14. A copy of the certification of notification (see page 9).

Subsequent Review - Frequently the Design Review Panel will require a subsequent review requiring additional information to be submitted (DP staff will advise).

YES	NO	Requirements
		1. Final versions of the above material
		2. Additional specifications, materials, and design of any required improvements
		3. Elevations of building and site plan

Presentation Suggestions

It is advised that individuals giving presentations to the Design Review Panel make every effort to present visual, high quality materials, i.e. maps, plans, etc., using a digital format such as Power Point or PDF that can be scrolled through the presentation. All the materials should be combined in a single file that is not greater than 15 megabytes (MB). It is also recommended that, when possible, the architect/designer of the project give the presentation so that he/she may accurately describe the intricacies of the proposed designs as well as informatively answer the questions of the panel. Please contact Jenifer Nugent or Marta Kulchytska at 410-887-3480 at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to test digital presentations.

It is strongly encouraged, but not required, that a representative knowledgeable of the architectural design of the project be present at the meeting so that they may answer any specific questions for the panel.



Application Form for Residential Projects Baltimore County Design Review Panel

Applicant Information

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
Email: _____

Property Owner Information (if Different)

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
Email: _____

Project Information

Design Review Area: (Check One)

- Alternative Site Design
- Downtown Towson District
- Honeygo Gateway
- Historic East Towson
- Middle River
- Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland
- Sudbrook Park
- Towson Estates

Type of Review

- Full Review
- Limited Review

Planning Staff Comments

(For staff use only)

Fee Receipt: _____

(For alternative site design only & residential projects greater than three lots)

Checklist Complete: _____

Accepted for Scheduling by: _____

Date of Initial DRP Meeting: _____

Incomplete: _____ *(State Reasons)*
