

2008 Comprehensive Plan: Downtown Element

The Downtown chapter of the 2008 Comprehensive Plan addresses the downtown's role and establishes policies to strengthen the downtown. *The two major goals* being to: (1) re-inforce downtown Hagerstown's role as the region's government, economic, institutional, and cultural center; and (2) to enlarge the City's share of regional retail and tourist revenue by concentrating specialized businesses and cultural amenities in the downtown. *Two challenges needing to be addressed* are: (1) inadequate progress of Downtown revitalization; and (2) downtown's limited share of the overall regional retail and tourist spending.

Land Use Issues

- Minimize through traffic.
- Promote residential rehabilitation.
- Identify and attract additional economic activity.
- Adjacent residential areas will not rehabilitate if business areas do not upgrade.
- Develop infill sites and adaptively reuse large underutilized historic buildings and large vacant multi-use buildings.
- Develop a Downtown Parking Master Plan.

Improve Image through Enhancement of Physical Environment

- Traffic calming measures.
- Improve public parking facilities.
- Link downtown to attractions (such as the City Park and Fairgrounds Park) and adjoining neighborhoods with open space greenways and/or distinctive sidewalk treatments.
- Add Landscaping and streetscaping elements, such as widening and bricking the sidewalks.
- Develop distinctive downtown gateway elements.
- Continue to restore historic buildings and spaces.
- Uniform signage.

Bring People Downtown

- Encourage appropriate retail facilities (see the Economic Development Element).
- Encourage projects such as the School for the Arts.
- Add cultural facilities in the Arts and Entertainment District.
- Enhance existing destinations such as the Central Branch of the Washington County Free Library and the Miller House; and
- Encourage and support special events.

Housing Improvements

- Encourage improvement of quality of housing stock with a diversity of price ranges.
- Add new downtown residences: rehabilitated townhouses, conversions of larger non-residential buildings to apartments and/or condominiums, upgrades to existing vacant upper floor apartments, and creation of mixed-use buildings with apartments over

retail and service uses.

- Add housing for middle- and upper-income households.
- Add artist housing in the Arts and Entertainment District.

Parking

- Create and expand safe and attractive parking areas.
- Encourage businesses to establish attractive secondary entrances toward the rear where parking has been established.

Urban Form

- Maintain solid street facade with passageways and alleys to the interior.
- Locate parking in interior of blocks.
- Create secondary entrances to stores on the alleys.
- Allow construction in air rights over the interior alleys to provide opportunities for additional commercial space.

Increasing the Demand for Office, Housing, Retail, and Cultural Space

- Diversify recruitment approach to cultivate and accommodate a mix of customers: downtown workers, locals, and visitors.
- Consider implementing a Maryland Main Street Program—to assume the day-to-day responsibility of organizing downtown revitalization activities (e.g., organize retail clusters, attract new businesses, assist businesses with storefront designs and displays, and manage promotions).
- Make “quality of shopping experience” improvements and develop marketing plan.
- Create disincentives to discourage holding buildings vacant.
- Develop new parking facilities in the center of city blocks to eliminate interference with the street facades.
- A higher income population is needed to attract and support additional services, so need to invest in additional amenities to attract middle- and upper-income families and redevelop existing spaces into middle- and upper-income housing.

Make Hagerstown a Vacation and Leisure Time Destination

- Encourage outdoor dining and other street-level activity.
- Create pocket parks where appropriate.
- Add exhibit space for heritage exhibits.
- Bring life to downtown after business hours with special evening hours or events, market-rate housing and accommodations, and expanded offerings at the Maryland Theatre.
- Encourage the creation of a small inn and/or a hotel with enough conference space to support small regional and State meetings.
- Focus on history, arts, and culture.