

Letter from Bill McCormack and Ginny Thomas:

Dear Oakland Mills Resident,

After more than a year of meetings, hearings, and work sessions, Task Force: Reinventing Oakland Mills is ready to present the updated version of the 2007 Oakland Mills Master Plan, now known as the Village Center Community Plan (VCCP).

Many of you have already contributed your ideas and input during our work sessions, but now we want to share the entire document with the community so all Oakland Mills residents have a chance to comment on it.

Why do we need a VCCP? There are three reasons:

- In 2009, the Howard County Council passed CB29-2009, creating a process for the redevelopment of Wilde Lake. The key to the process is a VCCP, containing specific elements. Converting our Master Plan to a VCCP is crucial to ensure that the community has a voice in redevelopment and could also strengthen our case for getting Oakland Mills designated as a Revitalization Zone by the county.
- A lot has happened in the 8 years since the Master Plan was published. The VCCP reports which of the desired short- and mid-term improvements have been accomplished and which remain to be done.
- The four “Significant Improvements” that were at the heart of the 2007 Plan have been rewritten to reflect current realities and a fifth, “Advocate for Schools in the Oakland Mills Cluster,” has been added.

To give everyone time to read the draft, we are posting it on the Oakland Mills Village website. The Village Office will have copies available for anyone who needs hard copy, but keep in mind that we want to “go green” and avoid unnecessary paper use for this long document.

On **January 20 at 7 PM**, we will hold a Residents Meeting in The Other Barn. At the meeting, we will distribute a form for written comments so everyone can provide input even if time doesn't permit everyone present to speak. If you can't attend the meeting, please email your comments to [manager@oaklandmills.org](mailto:manager@oaklandmills.org) by January 23.

Note that the VCCP draft is text only; photos, maps, and graphics will be added after the wording is finalized.

Please join us on **January 20<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM in The Other Barn**. Your input is important.

*Ginny Thomas & Bill McCormack*

**OAKLAND MILLS  
VILLAGE CENTER COMMUNITY PLAN (VCCP)**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**The 2007 Master Plan.** In 2007, Oakland Mills became the first of Columbia’s ten villages to publish a Master Plan. The process for this groundbreaking document, as described in Appendix A, was lengthy, but the result became a model for other villages, especially the older villages that were looking ahead to redevelopment.

At the time, the community was especially optimistic about a planned mixed-use development project by Metroventures that would bring new life to the former Exxon site at the Village Center.

**Council Bill 29-2009.** As Columbia’s first village, Wilde Lake, began considering how to revive its faltering retail center, the Howard County Council passed Council Bill 29-2009, which facilitated a drastic change in the configuration of Wilde Lake’s center. The bill set standards and a process for creating a Village Center Community Plan (VCCP).

Once finalized, a VCCP is submitted to the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning, where it is kept on record. All plans for future development within the boundaries of the VCCP are reviewed for compatibility with the VCCP.

Existence of a VCCP is also key if an area is designated as a Targeted Growth and Redevelopment Zone by the county. This designation can bring benefits, including various types of incentives.

**Why Update the 2007 Master Plan?** Although the 2007 Master Plan contained the essential elements of a VCCP, it did not spell out several items, such as “Historical or Signature Aspects.”

Moreover, the 2007 Plan confined itself to the area bounded by Whiteacre, Santiago, and Stevens Forest Roads. The VCCPs filed by other villages encompass a wider area, including adjacent schools, recreational facilities and multi-family housing.

The wisdom of defining a broader area became evident when the Columbia Market Study of 2014 predicted that older villages might need to find a focus other than a grocery store to anchor the commercial portion of older village centers. The Howard County Housing Commission’s purchase of the 251-unit Verona apartment complex in 2013 added urgency since one of

the four “Significant Improvements” of the 2007 plan had been to “Upgrade Housing in the Village Center Area.”

**Task Force.** To address these issues, the Oakland Mills Community Association (OMCA) established a Task Force “to broaden and update” the 2007 Master Plan. During its first meeting, on December 12, 2013, the Master Plan 2 Task Force, chaired by Bill Gray, began a year-long effort to find new opportunities to revitalize the center of Oakland Mills. (See Appendix B for a list of participants.)

After the village election of April 2014, Village Board Co-Chairs Bill McCormack and Ginny Thomas assumed leadership of the Task Force under a new name: Reinventing Oakland Mills.

## **B. Process Steps for the VCCP**

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- Bimonthly meetings, including lessons-learned presentations from former Wilde Lake Village Board Chair and Kimco Vice President Geoff Glazer
- Survey on ideas for Village Center features (part of April 26, 2014 election)
- Public meeting with Howard County chiefs of Economic Development; Planning & Zoning; Transportation; Inspections, Licenses and Permitting; and Housing & Community Development
- Talks with stakeholders and property owners, including the COO of Cedar Properties; Regional Director, Grady Management (Autumn Crest); Regional Manager, Aimco (Grand Pointe); Oakland Mills Interfaith Center Board of Directors; Shadow Oaks Board of Directors; Columbia Association President; Howard Hockey Board of Directors; Columbia Figure Skating; Columbia Clippers Swim Club; Wehland Properties; Vice-President for Development of Bozzuto Homes; Howard County General Hospital and Johns Hopkins System; President of Howard Community College
- Public work sessions on draft VCCP (November-December 2014)
- Distribution of draft VCCP to the community on the OMCA website, and OMCA eNews, street captains, and other means
- January 20, 2015 Residents Meeting (including opportunity to submit written comments) in The Other Barn
- Presentation of revised draft to Village Board, January 27, 2015

### **C. Village Center Boundaries**

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Like the VCCPs of the other Columbia villages, the map now goes beyond the retail center and the barns to show adjacent properties. It now includes CA property, the Interfaith Center, two schools, Shadow Oaks condominiums, and apartment buildings.

[insert map]

### **D. Signature Aspects: The Other Barn and Courtyard.**

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The history of what is now the Village of Oakland Mills dates back to the 1700s. The village was named for a historic Howard County mill. The Other Barn, which has served as Oakland Mills Community Center since 1969, was once part of the Owings Dorsey Dairy Farm. The Other Barn is iconic in the true sense of the word. It is treasured as one of Columbia’s few visible remnants of the county’s agrarian past.

Renovated to preserve its rustic charm, The Other Barn can accommodate up to 220 people in its loft, which is fully booked for wedding receptions, parties, and community meetings. When the Oakland Mills High School Band or jazz groups perform in The Loft, the rafters literally ring. At Christmas, the Loft is transformed into the interior of a railway car for annual sold-out performances of The Polar Express.

Smaller ground-floor rooms, like The Smithy, host village meetings, including the Oakland Mills Board of Directors and the Oakland Mills Resident Architecture committee (RAC). Everything from plant sales to village elections takes place in The Other Barn, which is truly the hub of the Oakland Mills community.

### **E. Vision (same as 2007 Master Plan)**

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The Oakland Mills Village Center will become a true destination with a clear identity that is cohesive and well planned, supports thriving businesses, and serves as a real center of community life.

## **F. Architectural Review**

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As established by the OMCA Covenants, the Village Board has architectural review for residential property. In May 2014, the OMCA also adopted design guidelines for commercial development within the village.

Appendix A: Process and Participants for Master Plan 2007

Appendix B: Participants in Reinventing Oakland Mills Task Force

Appendix C: Recommendations by Education and Housing Subcommittees

Appendix D: Summary of Responses to January 20 Survey

## **II. ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2007**

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The 2007 Master Plan divided the steps toward revitalization into three categories:

- Relatively simple improvements (3-24 months)
- Moderate improvements (2-5 years)
- Significant improvements (5-20 years)

As of January 2015 –8 years after publication of the plan—many of the improvements listed in the first two categories have become reality.

### **A. Relatively Simple Improvements**

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#### **1. Enhance the connection to Town Center and Blandair Park.**

This project is now close to fruition at both ends. In fact, it exceeds the goals of the Master Plan. The Multi-Use Path will link Downtown Columbia with the Oakland Mills Village Center, using an existing CA right-of-way. The Howard Hughes Corporation must complete the path in order to satisfy the Community Enhancement Program and Public Amenities requirement of the Downtown Columbia Plan, so there is a strong incentive to finish it quickly.

When completed, the path will start at Blandair Park, skirt the Village Center, and then cross Route 29 to west Columbia via the pedestrian/bike bridge.

But it doesn't stop there. After walkers and riders reach Town Center, they can continue on the path all the way to Howard County Community College and Howard County General Hospital.

The site development plan for Phase I of the Multi-Use Path is well along in the approval process of the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning. It incorporates many features suggested in our 2007 Master Plan, including signage, additional lighting, widening and grading for handicapped accessibility, tree trimming, and security measures. However, there are notable deficiencies, such as light poles spaced too far apart. The Board must vigorously pursue development of the path in a way that will optimize use of the existing bridge and be compatible with the new one.

For a full discussion of the transformation of the bridge (Bridge Columbia) and the addition of public transit, see Part III.

**2. Raise awareness/profile of the OMVC through improved signage.**

Howard County added directional signs alongside Broken Land Parkway and Thunder Hill Road. Cedar Properties erected signs at both ends of the retail center listing the shops and restaurants. None of these signs approach what the 2007 Plan envisioned in terms of spotlighting the Village Center. In general, Howard County needs a more coherent, distinctive signage program.

Wooden pillars display the village logo at Robert Oliver Place and Stevens Forest Road, but these predate the 2007 Plan and are not eye-catching.

The Columbia Association continues to maintain signs and plantings at the entry to Oakland Mills at three junctions: Route 175 and Thunder Hill Road; Stevens Forest Road and Broken Land Parkway; and Thunder Hill Road and Route 108. However, these simply announce the entry to the village and do not point the way to the Village Center.

**3. Maximize potential of current configuration.**

The Village Board advocated on behalf of the Second Chance bar/restaurant when it almost lost its lease in 2014. The village encourages residents to patronize local merchants by including coupons in the Welcome Packet for new residents.

Nevertheless, the Food Lion is struggling, and vacant spaces remain in a retail space between Food Lion and the Ice Rink. The retail center's current configuration does not align with market trends and the village's secluded location, according to the Columbia Market Study of 2014.

(For a full discussion of this issue, see Part III, Cohesive Mixed-Use Development.)

**4. Create an International Arts and Entrepreneurs identify for the OMVC.**

Every October, the OMCA runs a successful Fall Festival that includes performances by the Oakland Mills High School Band. It also gives local artisans, nonprofit organizations, and arts boosters in the village an opportunity to connect with residents of all ages.

Lively Arts for Little Ones is a beloved tradition in Oakland Mills; some of the attendees are grandparents who confide that this is the third generation in their family to attend the series. Jazz in the Mill draws top jazz artists from the Baltimore-Washington area and frequently sells out. Both are considered among the best cultural series in Columbia.

The Interfaith Center on Robert Oliver Place features a gallery in which local artists can display their works throughout the year. The village continues to have a range of ethnic restaurants: Thai, Chinese, and Italian.

**5. Increase activity and vibrancy at the OMVC with outdoor activities.**

The Sunday Farmers Market, which operates from 9 am to 1 pm from May through November, has grown into one of the most successful such markets in the region. In addition to produce and baked goods, it offers coffee beans, free-range eggs and meat, local wines, and gourmet sauces.

The Little Library program, launched in April 2013, is a sterling example of bringing culture outdoors, making books available and inviting to residents of all ages.

Weather permitting, the Fall Festival is held outdoors, and summer concerts take place in the Courtyard between the barns.

**6. Make OMVC more pedestrian- and bike-friendly and inviting.**

The pedestrian connection from the Barns to the Interfaith Center was vastly improved by a Howard County Public Right-of-Way grant. The county also added a traffic island in the median of Lightning View Road near the intersection with Thunder Hill Road.

In fall 2012, two pedestrian islands were built on Kilimanjaro Road opposite the entrances to Oakland Mills Middle School and Oakland Mills High School. Pedestrian islands were also installed outside Thunder Hill Elementary. Traffic-calming street humps were added to Thunder Hill Road at several points both north and south of Route 175, thanks to a major petition effort by residents.

In summer 2014, a new pedestrian island was created between the Stevens Forest Neighborhood Center and the point where Owen Brown Road dead ends. This also gives walkers from the lower end of Stevens Forest a safer way to cross to the elementary school.

In fall 2014, the intersection of Route 175 and Thunder Hill Road was improved with the installation of traffic islands with better pedestrian refuges.

Howard County added bike lanes along Stevens Forest Road in 2012 and extensive sidewalk and curbing improvements in front of Stevens Forest Elementary School in fall 2013.

**7. Improve appearance and consistency of roads and streetscapes.**

Phase I of the county’s Oakland Mills Streetscape Enhancement is nearing the end of the approval process and is on track to be implemented in 2015. It will redesign and build the public right-of-way along White Acre Road from Stevens Forest Road to Basket Ring Road as well as from Stevens Forest to Santiago Drive. Enhancements include storm water management facilities, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, shared bike lanes, lighting, preservation and planting of trees, roadway medians, on-street parking and relocated bus shelters.

**B. Moderate Improvements**

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**1. Upgrade/remodel The Other Barn to serve as the center of the community.**

As the only original buildings in the village center, The Other Barn and The Barn are now designated as having “Signature Aspects,” in accordance with Council Bill 29-2009.

Major remodeling of The Other Barn took place in 2008; the restrooms were remodeled to achieve full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act in 2013.

The 2007 Plan suggested repurposing The Barn, currently used as The Teen Center, if teens and after-school programs could be housed in nearby schools. So far, this effort has not succeeded although CA frequently schedules meetings and other programs there during the day. Nevertheless, the dream of using the smaller building for artists’ studios and lofts remains unfulfilled.

**2. Maintain a grocery store/food market as the retail anchor.**

The Food Lion has been struggling, doing about one-third of the business of the average Food Lion. The Columbia Market Study, published in 2014, found that national supermarket chains prefer to locate within sight of a major highway and not too close to other supermarkets. According to the Study, “It would be both reasonable and prudent to begin to discuss alternative uses for grocery store space in other village centers so that there is a pro-active rather than reactive approach in place....” While the study concluded that Food Lion may choose to remain as “a convenience-based grocery anchor,” the Task Force opted for the prudent approach of seeking alternatives (see Part III, Mixed-Use Development for full discussion).

**3. Create enhanced public and civic spaces in the OMVC.**

The Second Chance Restaurant, which is alongside the smaller barn, provides outdoor dining spaces during the summer and fall.

The suggestions to create a dog park and a skateboard park in the pathway between the Village Center and Town Center were not accepted as part of the Multi-Use Path Project. The labyrinth for the Interfaith Center and the open-air ice rink remain unrealized. Blandair Park may ultimately accommodate some of these concepts.

**4. Improve traffic flow into and through the Village Center.**

Traffic into the village from Route 175 ends abruptly at the Interfaith Center. Traffic patterns are confusing, and Robert Oliver Place is indistinguishable from parking space. To address this, the 2007 Master Plan suggested continuing Thunder Hill Road directly into the Village Center. Action on this appears unlikely until major redevelopment occurs.

### III. SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS

*The 2007 Master Plan called for four significant improvements. Only one (the Gateway to Town Center) has seen major progress; the rest will require a major investment of resources in order to become reality. Given the importance of school quality to perceptions about Oakland Mills, the VCCP adds a fifth “significant improvement” regarding education.*

#### **A. Encourage Well-Planned, Cohesive Mixed-Use Development**

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The 2007 Master Plan called for a mix of housing, commercial, and retail space that would increase foot traffic and provide the essential mass needed to support businesses and amenities in the center. Moreover, mixed-use development allows people to live, work, shop, and socialize around a lively and walkable village center.

Mixed-use development remains a highly desirable objective. What has changed, however, is the need to find something other than a supermarket as the focal point. The 2014 Columbia Market Study indicated that Food Lion might choose to remain as “a convenience-based grocery anchor,” depending on “when/if it responds to the impact of nearby grocery competition.” Over 5,000 square feet of retail space in the center is vacant, and there is no coffee shop or café for socializing.

Thus it appears prudent to find some other focus, like a state-of-the-art hockey facility, a sports medicine/rehab center, or a 50-meter pool with water park. The most important attribute is something that attracts people from outside Oakland Mills on a regular basis to achieve the critical mass needed to support amenities like a coffee shop and café. Ideally, the anchor should also be something that attracts young people to rent and ultimately, as they form families, settle in our village. It should also create job opportunities, during and after construction.

#### **Design Principles To Be Followed During Redevelopment:**

- Development should center on a clearly defined, pedestrian-friendly civic plaza or town square and should retain the feel of a village center.
- New buildings should frame streets and define areas.
- Design guidelines should create consistent streetscapes and lighting.
- Materials and construction should be high quality and appropriate in color and scale.
- Parking should be coordinated and shared, located discreetly behind buildings.
- Assemblage of property (there are eight separate owners in the retail area) should be considered for more integrated and cohesive redevelopment.

## **B. Create a Strong Gateway to Town Center**

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As stated in 2007, improved connectivity would capitalize on the Village Center's close proximity to Downtown Columbia. The only direct connection, however, is a pedestrian/bike bridge over Route 29, caged by chain-link fencing, that connects some paths in the Columbia Association right-of-way on either side of the bridge. The bridge is sadly in need of improvements to make it safe, accessible, and attractive to residents and visitors.

What seemed like a pipe dream in 2007 is now close to reality, thanks to the perseverance of an independent group of citizen advocates called Friends of Bridge Columbia. Their success is a remarkable example of what can be achieved by well-informed, highly persistent citizens.

The group includes architects, engineers, urban planners, landscape architects, cycling enthusiasts, and individuals with a vision: an east-west link that would allow walkers, cyclists, and bus riders to travel from Howard County General Hospital to Blandair Park--a distance of 10 kilometers. The route offers direct access to a myriad of cultural, recreational, retail, dining and other activities along the way.

Properly developed, the bridge will become the lynchpin connecting existing transit rights of way to form a bus system that will benefit the whole community.

Bridge Columbia got a boost when the Downtown Columbia Plan required the developer, Howard Hughes Corporation, to complete a **Multi-Use Path** that crosses the bridge, ultimately linking Howard County General Hospital at one end to Blandair Park in east Columbia. Stops along the way include the Howard Community College, Downtown Columbia, and the Oakland Mills Village Center. The path should include lighting, landscaping, and grading improvements that would make the bridge safer and more appealing.

When the county's first feasibility study concluded that the desired makeover would be too costly, Bridge Columbia demanded a new study by an independent consulting firm. The final report from the consultants (URS Corporation) contains **five structural options**, four of which include public transit.

The cost estimate for a one-lane transit bridge running alongside the pedestrian-bike bridge is \$9.5 million; a cable-stayed version (see sketch) of a one-lane transit bridge is estimated to cost \$20.4 million. Including public transit would make the project eligible for federal and state grants that could, in some cases, defray 80% of the total cost.

In October 2014, the OMCA passed a resolution advocating an option that includes public transit. Both candidates for County Executive endorsed the resolution in writing. In December 2014, the Village Board voted to join Friends of Bridge Columbia in advocating for a bridge with **two-lane public transit**.

Once the county selects a particular option, it will be crucial for the community to ask county officials to designate the project as “high priority” and to gain support from the Columbia Association Board of Directors and the delegation to the Maryland General Assembly in order to take advantage of all funding options.

Implementation of Bridge Columbia with public transit is a critical to the success of the Oakland Mills Village Center Community Plan.

The 2007 Plan also suggested the following, which should remain under consideration:

- Study the feasibility of extending Robert Oliver Place from the village center to pedestrian bridge
- Study the feasibility and desirability of vehicular connection to Town Center via overpass over Rt. 29
- Create mixed-use development along the gateway
- Include attractions along the gateway to encourage activity: ice cream shop, bike rental, etc.
- Consider including a non-profit, shared-facility office complex

## **C. Promote High Environmental Standards for Redevelopment**

Oakland Mills should be a model for “green” development and sustainability. Redevelopment should be designed to respect the land, protect the environment, and save energy.

- Encourage projects to include performance standards adopted by the U.S. Green Building Council’s (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Energy Star.

Standards evaluated by these systems include:

- Energy efficiency
  - Water Conservation
  - Materials beneficial to the environment
  - Waste management
  - Community linkages—compact and connected development
  - Environmental protection
  - Green building
- In order to protect stream quality, development should be environmentally low impact, employing a systematic approach to water management that uses such technologies as rain gardens, green roofs, and pervious surface to manage storm water.

## **D. Upgrade Housing in the Village Center Area**

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The 2007 Plan called for “creating upscale housing” to achieve a full spectrum of housing in the area around the Village Center. It also suggested adding senior housing and incentives to help teachers, police, and firefighters buy homes in the village. While lamenting the declining condition of the apartment complexes adjacent to the Center, it concluded that redevelopment, including increased density, “could once again make this area a highly desirable location.”

Due in part to the recession, the goal of a full spectrum of housing remains elusive, as most of the 984 apartments in the Village Center rent at or near the bottom of the rent range for Howard County. However, that should change, thanks to Council Bill 2009-09 to help fuel redevelopment of the older villages with tax incentives and other tools. In addition, the impetus to proceed with Bridge Columbia—a direct link to downtown—will help Oakland Mills capitalize on its prime location in the heart of Columbia, making this area more attractive for upscale housing.

Adding a major sports facility or medical complex would bring in young professionals to rent, and ultimately buy, creating a new market for upscale townhouses, condos, and suites at the heart of the village. A reinvented center will also attract empty nesters and seniors looking for low-maintenance housing with public transit to downtown and the community college.

The Columbia Market Study emphasizes the need to increase the residential density to achieve a population near the Village Center that is large enough to support new facilities. Oakland Mills’ biggest asset is its proximity to Downtown, with the potential for direct bus and, ultimately, vehicular access. The bluffs along Route 29 that overlook Town Center and Lake Kittamaqundi offer the best location for high-end condominiums in Columbia. Increased density also allows for the addition of more and better restaurants.

Given the amount of affordable housing currently surrounding the center, it is crucial for the county to implement a Comprehensive Housing Plan to provide ample opportunities for tenants at all income levels throughout the county. The plan should recognize that builders in Oakland Mills Village Center are not required to provide additional subsidized units, having already met the legal requirement for affordable housing.

In line with the objective of upgrading housing, the Housing Committee of the Oakland Mills Task Force recommended specific measures to restore economic diversity to the area in and around the Village Center and to rescue abandoned or foreclosed homes throughout the village. (See Appendix C for a list of recommendations.) These will help carry out the following goals from the 2007 Master Plan:

- To achieve a full spectrum of housing within the village center boundaries, add upscale and mid-range housing.

- Upgrade and renovate rundown housing in the village center area.
- Consider increasing density in exchange for redevelopment.
- Improve the percentage of owner-occupied housing.
- Encourage senior housing to provide seniors with easy access to village center amenities.
- Create incentives for Howard County teachers, police, firefighters, and civil servants to purchase in Oakland Mills.

## **E. Advocate for Schools in the Oakland Mills Cluster**

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The relationship between the current and future Village Center and the schools serving Oakland Mills is substantial as the Village Center is the economic hub of Oakland Mills and the most densely populated residential portion of the community. The schools in Oakland Mills are very much community schools. Physically, they draw a large proportion of their student populations from within the Village Center boundaries and the surrounding areas. More importantly, however, the schools are very community-oriented and play an important role in linking families from very diverse backgrounds and experiences.

In fact, Oakland Mills schools are among the most economically, socially, and culturally diverse in Howard County. As a result, our schools and their supporting organizations like PTAs, PTSAs, and booster clubs, offer services and opportunities to the broader community not found in other areas. For example, beyond their core educational missions, our schools and their supporting organizations sponsor food drives, cultural festivals, international nights, community dinners. Our village works with our schools to support and advocate for them. Each year, OMCA donates funds to each school or its PTA. OMCA also promotes school events and news through its social media and through free use of its facilities.

However, we must ensure our schools afford Oakland Mills students the same opportunities as students elsewhere in the county. Because our schools have higher proportions of children coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, as measured by the percentage receiving Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), the PTA and other support organizations do not have the same capability to do in-house fundraising. This can translate to a less equitable provision of support and materials beyond what the school system officially provides. A stronger economic hub for Oakland Mills, via a reinvented Village Center, could help mitigate this.

OMCA's Education Committee continues to advocate for our schools under the following mission and objectives:

- Discuss and highlight the positive events and accomplishments at each school in the Oakland Mills Cluster.
- Engage the PTA at each school in the Oakland Mills Cluster through their communication officials.
- Discuss with PTAs and school administrators whether schools need OMCA advocacy for additional funding or special project assistance.
- Develop and foster strategies that will help retain families throughout the community from elementary to middle to high school in Oakland Mills.
- Advocate for a county policy to prohibit any redistricting that would create a FARM rate above 30% at any Howard County school or would increase the FARMs rate at any school already above 30%.
- Advocate for a countywide plan to deconcentrate below-market housing and FARM rates that features coordination among the County Council, county departments (and commissions) and the Howard County Public School System/Board of Education.

**IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

ACTION	Timeframe	Lead	Agencies and Partners
Continue to advocate at county, state and federal levels for implementation of Bridge Columbia with two-lane public transit.	Ongoing	OMCA	County Exec & Council; State Delegation
Advocate for development of Multi-Use Path consistent with implementation of Bridge Columbia so that short-term path improvements do not have to be undone or redone when new Bridge is completed. Short-term improvements should focus on safety, e.g., lights and clearing the undergrowth	Short-term	OMCA	Dept. of Planning & Zoning, Howard Hughes Corporation, CA
Advocate for completion by the county of improvements to the Stevens Forest--Whiteacre Road--Thunder Hill Road streetscapes.	Short-term	OMCA	Dept. of Planning & Zoning
Explore and promote new uses, such as a major recreational facility, that will revitalize the Village Center area.	Ongoing	OMCA	Community groups, developers, CA
Advocate adoption and enforcement of a Howard County Comprehensive Housing Policy/Plan to restore economic diversity in the Oakland Mills Village Center area and establish it throughout the county.	Short-term	OMCA	Howard County Executive
As a major OMCA priority, promote equitable and appropriate allocation of resources to Oakland Mills' public schools and supporting organizations to ensure equitable opportunities for achievement	Ongoing	OMCA	Board of Education, County Council

and advancement throughout the county.			
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