



Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan

Land Use and Zoning Best Practices

This handout includes an introduction to various best practices and concepts being discussed by the Gates Mills Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee:

- 'Town Center' Revitalization
- Benefits of Local Businesses
- Cluster/Conservation Development
- Senior Housing

“Town Center” Revitalization Fact Sheet¹

Gates Mills Village Center has evolved overtime and serves as the community’s “main street”. This key area of the Village integrates various uses in a concentrated area, including the Village administration buildings, other civic uses such as the library and post office, and a small amount of shopping, restaurant, personal service uses. Gates Mills is fortunate to have the Village Center in that it provides a sense of place and serves as an anchor for community events. Indeed, many newer suburban communities lack authentic “town centers” and are trying to replicate them with major development projects.

According to contemporary standards, a town center is defined as a walkable, open-air, multiuse district anchored by residential and nonresidential uses that are organized around a defined public realm where citizens can gather and strengthen their community bonds – functioning as the “center” of the community. It also should be the densest, most compact, and most diverse part of a community, with strong connections to its surroundings.

Key design elements needed for a strong town center include traditional building placement close to the street that enhances the pedestrian experience, walkability, good circulation, and connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Urban Land Institute provides a number of principles for sustaining and enhancing town centers: districts include:

The Making of a Vibrant Town Center

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) has published a number of resources promoting both the revitalization of traditional downtowns as well as building new town centers. The key for both is “good design that results in vibrant places”, defined as: “compact urban form that encourages pedestrian activity and minimizes environmental degradation; encourages social, economic, and land use diversity; ... connects uses and functions; has a quality public realm that provides opportunities for interaction and exchange; offers equitable access to goods, services, and facilities; and protects environmental and human health.”

Strategies to create vibrancy and strengthen town centers (regardless of size) include:

1. Promote Vibrancy

- Foster a mix of uses. Integration of multiple uses creates the diverse character that people identify with and enjoy. Uses can be mixed in the same building - vertically integrated (retail on the ground floor with residential or offices above) or horizontally integrated (single use building adjacent to a building with a different type of use).
- Use historic preservation and authenticity to spur vibrancy
- Encourage ‘higher’ density housing (higher than the average for the community), with a range of unit sizes and unit types, to retain social and economic diversity.
- Keep the commercial area compact, and maintain the traditional fabric with buildings close to the street with parking located behind buildings.
- The district must function as a place for play, with public spaces and hardscape areas where people can gather to celebrate, engage with one another, or rest; cultural and arts districts.

Features of Vibrant Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compact, walkable from one end to the other• Multiple land uses near each other• Connections to internal and external designations• Relatively high density compared to the rest of the community• Public places and outdoor open space• Discrete boundaries and edges• Critical mass: additional development increases vibrancy

¹ Main Street America, <https://www.mainstreet.org/home>. Ten Principles for Developing Successful Town Centers, Urban Land Institute, 2007.

2. Maintain Good Design with Traditional Built Form that Creates a Unique Place.

- Buildings are located close to the sidewalk with a minimum of two stories that utilize architectural detail and quality materials to enhance the pedestrian experience.
- Buildings engage the street through fenestration, materials, awnings, and store signage and lighting. Differentiated storefront designs are encouraged to avoid banality.
- The quality of materials and architecture visible from the street and public spaces are important because they shape and provide character to that space. New buildings should use materials with lasting qualities and local appeal.
- Historic buildings should be retained, where possible because they contribute to the district's sense of place and add value.
- Pedestrian scale: Streets, sidewalks, buildings, lighting, signage and landscaping are scaled appropriately to engage pedestrians. Pedestrian-scaled signage is big enough for drive-by traffic to see but not obtrusively large.
- Lighting for people, not cars: Storefront lighting can be particularly effective in creating an attractive nighttime public realm, including both ground-level and upper-level windows and signage. Intense light is detrimental to an attractive atmosphere, and too little light makes the space seem unsafe.

3. Create an Enduring and Memorable Public Realm.

- Provide attractive, centrally-located gathering spaces that are visible from the street, and defined and enhanced by its design, placement and surrounding uses, and integrated with adjacent uses that significantly enliven the public space, such as bookstores, libraries, public buildings, cultural facilities, restaurants, and general retail.
- Provide well-defined sidewalks, plazas, courtyards, and walkways that connect to parking facilities and surrounding areas.
- The public space is designed for and actively programmed with events and activities that are significant to the community, such as charity events, holiday events, and civic events.
- Landscaping and art are essential ingredients in place making. Tree canopies are important defining elements in the public realm and provide shade in outdoor shopping environments. Water features, seating, landscaping features, street furniture, and signage all play important roles in defining the public realm. Public art creates unique places



4. Connect to the Community:

- Strong connections to surrounding neighborhoods and park systems help reinforce the view that the town center is accessible to all users.
- Open space is very important as is an architectural style that resonates with the place and its people.
- A great sidewalk experience that encourages pedestrian traffic is critical to the success of these uses.

5. Share the Risk, Share the Reward

Explore public and private interests and resources so that by sharing the risks, the rewards can also be shared. Public/private partnerships can be beneficial for a number of reasons:

- Private sector partners can alleviate a portion of the cost burden of public spaces.
- Ensure that inadequate or inflexible planning and zoning controls do not interfere with the desired public or private outcomes. This will require engaging existing and prospective businesses.

6. Invest for Sustainability

The goal of sustainable development is to be environmentally responsible and physically enduring while performing well over the long term. This means that adaptability, commercial performance, and a strong social fabric are critical.

- Climate conditions. Take advantage of building orientation, prevailing winds, tree cover for cooling, and the sunlight to enhance or limit heating.
- Conserve water. Water conserving plumbing fixtures and faucets, use of graywater and rooftop rainwater systems, pervious pavement and native plants in landscaping.
- Energy efficiency. Passive solar and natural cooling principles, high-efficiency heating, ventilating, and air conditioning systems as well as lighting, appliance, and plumbing systems.

Benefits of Local Businesses Fact Sheet

Building up the local economy results in building communities that are more healthy and sustainable. Communities where small, locally owned businesses are encouraged have stronger social networks, more engaged citizens, and better success solving problems, according to several recently published studies². Places with a diversity of small-scale enterprises had higher levels of civic participation and better social outcomes than those controlled by a few outside corporations.

Local Business: Encouraging locally owned businesses results in higher per capita income, more jobs, and greater resiliency in the local economy. A locally rooted economy fosters social ties and civic engagement. There's much to be said for the value of doing business with people who know us and whose success is intimately tied to the well-being of the community. Small businesses are not merely smaller versions of large businesses; they are running on a different operating system altogether, and business decisions are guided by very different motivations. In times of crisis, economic resources that are controlled locally are much more readily marshaled and reconfigured to meet shifting local needs. Some benefits of local business operations include employing an array of supporting local/regional services such as architects, designers, and sign makers; accountants, and insurance brokers; computer consultants; attorneys, and contractors for construction. Finally, local businesses may offer a higher percentage of locally-made goods than national chains, creating more jobs for local producers.

Local Recreation: Outdoor recreation is a significant economic driver in the United States. People spend money, create jobs and support local communities when they get outdoors. Recreation and outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, camping, or wildlife viewing generate enormous economic power and fuel a far-reaching ripple effect that touches many major economic sectors.

Local Food: There is a growing local food movement based on consumer demand for food that is locally produced, marketed, and consumed. According to the USDA Economic Research Service, there is no consensus about how to define "local food systems" in terms of the geographic distance between production and consumption, thus the definition "local" is based on marketing arrangements—such as farmers selling directly to consumers at regional farmers' markets or to retailers/foodservice industry such as schools. Production of locally marketed food is more likely to occur on small farms located in or near metropolitan counties. Local food markets typically involve small farmers, heterogeneous products, and short supply chains in which farmers also perform marketing functions, including storage, packaging, transportation, distribution, and advertising. Local foods build new social connections, and new skills. There are a variety of government programs and policies that support local food initiatives, and the number of such programs is growing. Small-scale community gardens that provide plots for local residents help foster an appreciation for fresh fruits and vegetables. Gardens also build a sense of community and promote healthy eating. Locally produced food cuts down on truck traffic, saving fuel and reducing air pollution.

² Institute for Local Self-Reliance. <http://www.ilsr.org/locally-owned-businesses-communities-thrive-survive-climate-change/>

Cluster/Conservation Development Fact Sheet

In the latter half of the 1990s, when Gates Mills was experiencing increasing residential growth pressures related to the expansion of adjacent suburban areas, the Village adopted a Growth Management Plan. The purpose of the plan was to address concerns that increased residential development was straining municipal services and causing increased failing septic systems and stormwater runoff which frequently caused flooding downstream.

As a result of the growth management plan's recommendations, the Village increased the minimum lot size in the U1-A1 District from 2.5 acres to 5 acres. It also adopted zoning regulations for conservation development – a type of cluster development that includes the same number of houses as a standard subdivision (density neutral), but on smaller lots so that a large portion of the development site (at least 50%) is designed and preserved as contiguous protected open space.

Cluster Development vs Conservation Development.

Residential **cluster development** is a form of land development in which principal buildings and structures are grouped together on a site, thus saving the remaining land area for common open space, conservation, agriculture, recreation, and/or public and semipublic uses.

Cluster developments differ from traditional residential developments in various ways. A **cluster development** provides the developer with flexibility in meeting dimensional and other standards on each individual lot while ensuring that the overall density of the project is **consistent with the community's requirement**. In exchange for the flexibility, the developer is required to preserve a portion of the site permanent common open space. Typically, the same number of homes is clustered on a smaller portion of the total available land, and the remaining land, which would have been allocated to individual home sites, is now converted into protected open space and shared by the residents of the subdivision and possibly the entire community.

Cluster development has a number of distinct advantages over conventional subdivision development. A well-planned cluster development concentrates dwelling units on the most buildable portion of the site and preserves natural drainage systems, vegetation, open space, and other significant natural features that help control stormwater runoff and soil erosion. It is the flexibility provided by cluster development option that allows for more site-sensitive design so as to reduce the development's impacts on the environment. Such sustainable development practices also serve to reduce development costs related to grading and site preparation, storm water management, and the construction of infrastructure such as road and utilities, and have been shown to enhance the value of the lots sold.

Cluster development regulations can be an option for any development density. And, in some cases, communities adopt incentive-based ordinances that allow for development of more homes than otherwise permitted in a traditional development in exchange for providing features that are desirable to the community but not required for traditional development.

Conservation development is a specific type of cluster development so named because of the amount of open space required specifically for the preservation/conservation of natural features on the site. This land development strategy takes into account the natural landscape and ecology, maintaining the most valuable natural features and functions of the site, while still allowing development to occur. More specifically, conservation development is characterized by three features that truly conserve the site's natural features.

- At least 40% of the land in the development is dedicated as open space.
- The open space is "high quality" and linked to other areas of open space.
- The design of the open space protects natural and cultural resources.

Conservation development integrates protection of natural resources based on a community's preservation **priorities** (e.g. conserving forested land, wetlands, steep slopes, and/or cultural resources), with the development needs of the community. Residents appreciate the natural beauty and open space that conservation developments can provide. These amenities increase home values boosting local property tax revenues.

Development costs for site preparation and stormwater management infrastructure are reduced since only a portion of the site needs modification and the remaining natural landscape can be used to filter and absorb stormwater, which helps protect water resources. Protected natural areas provide wildlife habitat, protect biodiversity, and contribute to regional greenways and natural area networks.

Benefits of Conservation Development

At the heart of conservation development is the idea that community resources and open spaces can be conserved while still allowing the construction of houses. Research shows that conservation developments can provide the following benefits:

- Lots in conservation developments are shown to sell at the same, or greater, value, than lots in a conventional development of comparable overall density.
- Infrastructure costs for roads and utilities are often reduced on conservation developments.
- Conservation development projects have been found to have faster absorption than comparable conventional developments, resulting in lower “soft costs” for the developer.
- There is a price premium for lots adjacent to preserved open spaces.



Standard Large Lot Subdivision



Conservation Development that protects forest

Gates Mills’ Conservation Development Regulations

The Village’s zoning code includes provisions for CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT in Chapter 1160. The Conservation Development District is defined as “a contiguous area of land to be planned and developed as a single entity, in which housing units are accommodated under more flexible standards, such as building arrangements and setbacks, than those that would be applied under single-family district codes, allowing for flexible groupings of houses in order to conserve open space and existing natural resources.”

The Conservation Development District’s key regulations are summarized below:

- It is a ‘density neutral’ code in that the number of houses is limited to one dwelling per five acres or the achievable density determined by a Yield Plan.
- Development sites must have at least 25 acres.
- Single-family detached dwellings and dwellings with up to three attached units are permitted.
- At least 50% of the development site must be preserved as restricted open space, protected via a perpetual conservation easement.
- It includes specific standards to preserve floodplains, wetlands, and areas adjacent to rivers and streams.
- It requires the developer rezone the site to the Conservation Development District. As part of the rezoning process, the developer must provide a Preliminary Development Plan that includes an existing conditions site report that identifies the site’s important natural features (including a tree and woodland evaluation), a stormwater management plan, and architectural plans for proposed buildings. In addition, the developer must also prepare a Yield Plan that shows the layout for a traditional subdivision in full compliance with the Village Code and taking into consideration all information depicted on the Existing Conditions Site Report.

There have been no new subdivisions built in Gates Mills since the Conservation Development District option was adopted; all recent housing construction has occurred without the need to build a new street. A previous proposal for a cluster development did not comply with the requirements of the Conservation Development District.

Senior Housing Fact Sheet

According to the US Census, more than 16.5% of the American population is above the age of 65 and by 2030 all baby boomers will be over the age of 65. As the population ages, many people are faced with the prospect of revising their living arrangements. Seniors can be overwhelmed by home upkeep, need help with certain services, or simply want more transport and social amenities. Options include either retrofitting existing houses with universal design features (though programming for senior services will still be needed) or encouraging the construction of alternative housing options such as independent living communities.

Facts:

- Two-thirds (67%) of all adults — and 79% of those 50-plus — want to stay in their current communities. **Adults primarily value communities that foster good health, promote street safety, and provide good opportunities for community engagement and social interaction.**
- The majority of seniors (persons over age 65) live in their own home
- At least 80% of seniors are living with one or more chronic health conditions; 50% have two or more
- 41% of adults age 65+ have limitations that inhibit personal care or detract from quality of life
- Only 33% of communities ask for input from older people when making planning decisions or policies
- Millions of older Americans are choosing to go small in retirement. According to a Zillow report, 46% of baby boomers who sold homes in 2017 were in the process of downsizing.

“AGING IN PLACE.”

According to research by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), nearly 77% of adults 50 and older want to stay in their own homes as they age, often referred to as “aging in place.” Even if they begin to need day-to-day assistance or ongoing health care during retirement, most would prefer to stay in their homes. Only a few express a preference for moving to a facility where care is provided (9%) or for moving to a relative’s home (4%). The Center for Disease Control defines aging in place as “the ability to live in one’s own home and community safely, independently, and comfortably, regardless of age, income, or ability level” for as long as they are able. Properly aging in place means that an elderly person can have the things and assistance they need to maintain their quality of life.³

Senior Friendly Housing. With the onset of COVID-19, homes became the center of life and affected various aspects of well-being. AARP identified housing features that seniors find are especially important in the later years as they begin to experience reduced eyesight, poorer balance, reduced flexibility, etc.:

- Safety features such as non-slip floor surfaces (80%)
- Bathroom aides such as grab bars (79%)
- A personal alert system that allows people to call for help in emergencies (79%)
- Entrance without steps (77%)
- High-speed internet (76% of adults 50-plus, compared to 70% for adults under 50).
- Wider doorways (65%)
- Lever-handled doorknobs (54%)
- Higher electrical outlets (46%)
- Lower electrical switches (38%)

Most of these features do not currently exist in most seniors’ homes.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). Another option for aging in place is living in a small unit located on the same lot as, but independent of, a primary dwelling unit. Whether an apartment or a small separate house located on the same property lot as a single-family residence, ADUs play a major role in serving a national housing need. This traditional

³ Binette, Joanne. 2021 Home and Community Preference Survey: A National Survey of Adults Age 18-Plus. Washington, DC: AARP Research, November 2021. <https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00479.001>

home type is re-emerging as an affordable and flexible housing option that meets the needs of older adults and young families alike. Depending on community codes, ADUs can be either detached or be part of the primary unit, such as with above-garage apartments or in-law suites.

Senior Friendly Communities. The features that contribute to a positive aging in place community:

- Sufficient medical facilities, including but not limited to, inpatient and outpatient care, emergency care, in-home care companies, assisted living options
- Clubs for social activities or volunteering
- Places to learn, community colleges, libraries, community organizations or other places to expand the mind
- Faith-based institutions
- Shopping close to home
- Transportation for those who no longer drive
- Services that help with home care like maintenance, law care, cleaning, cooking or meal delivery etc.

OTHER SENIOR HOUSING OPTIONS

According to the AARP study, many older adults are homeowners and want to stay in their residences and communities as they age; indeed, only 29% said they plan to relocate to another community. Respondents said they value communities that provide access to clean water, healthy foods, quality health care and safe outdoor spaces. Of those who prefer to stay in their community,

According to the MetLife Mature Marketing Institute, 91% of pre-retirees age 50 to 65 responded that they want to live in their own home in retirement. Of that group, 49% want to stay in their current home, and 38% want to move to a new home, including housing oriented to their needs.

Independent Living communities are housing communities designed for independent seniors that desire the conveniences of community living. These communities offer a senior lifestyle with easy access to recreational, educational and social opportunities. Some even offer safety features such as community gates and security patrol. Independent Living Communities may also be called "Retirement Communities".

There are many types of independent living facilities, from rental complexes to separate houses, and come in a range of costs. Continuing care retirement facilities provide independent living, as well as other housing with more services at the same facility.

Senior Rental Units. Senior rental units are complexes restricted by age, usually 55 and older. Rent may include community services such as recreational programs, transportation services, and meals served in a communal dining room.

Senior Housing Community. Senior Housing communities are groups of owner-occupied housing units for those aged 55 and older. These housing units can take a variety of forms such as single-family homes, duplexes, and townhouses. If you decide to buy a unit, additional monthly fees may cover services such as outside maintenance, recreation centers, or clubhouses.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs). CCRCs offer service and housing packages that allow access to independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing facilities in one community. If residents begin to need help with activities of daily living, for example, they can transfer to an assisted living or skilled nursing facility on the same site.

NORC - "Naturally Occurring Retirement Community" (NORC) refers to housing complexes or neighborhoods, not specifically planned for older adults, yet have a high concentration of older residents. A NORC program is often a public private partnership with flexibility to identify and provide the kinds of services needed by the community and the seniors who live there, e.g. senior transportation and better street lighting for safety.

Site Design

A project for this age group should be designed especially for this purpose, incorporating necessary safety and convenience features. In general, the site amenities provided should be more attractive than for multifamily projects, since seniors spend nearly all their time on the site. The yards and passive recreation areas should be extensive in quantity and fully landscaped. There should be a composition of small, intimate, private yard and court areas for a variety of passive activities.

Safety must be emphasized. Vehicular circulation drives shall be only at the perimeter of the project. Parking areas may penetrate into the perimeter of the site. The interior of the site shall be assigned completely for pedestrian use. Abrupt grades shall be avoided, and all changes in grades in the walk system shall be accomplished by ramps. There shall not be more than two exterior steps to any buildings used by the occupants, and all buildings of two or more stories measured from the main entrance shall be served by elevators. Lot layout and size should be based on anticipated future development patterns that are informed by market and feasibility studies.

