

Focus Area 1: The York Road “Main Street” Corridor

York Road in downtown Towson is Towson’s “Main Street.” This is historically the civic and commercial heart of Towson, where parades were held and where retail activity was at its most concentrated. This area includes the three block stretch of York Road from the roundabout, south to Towsontown Boulevard. The Ma and Pa Railroad, which until the mid 1960’s crossed over York Road on a trestle, marked the limit of the main shopping street. Long before the roundabout existed, that space was occupied by the Towson firehouse, which was the northern demarcation of downtown. While both of these landmarks are gone, the historic pattern of this section of York Road as the main commercial street remains, reinforced by the two major commercial cross streets of Pennsylvania and Chesapeake.

In this short but important corridor, efforts should be focused initially to begin to transform downtown into a more pedestrian friendly destination. Design recommendations include:

Infill and redevelopment:

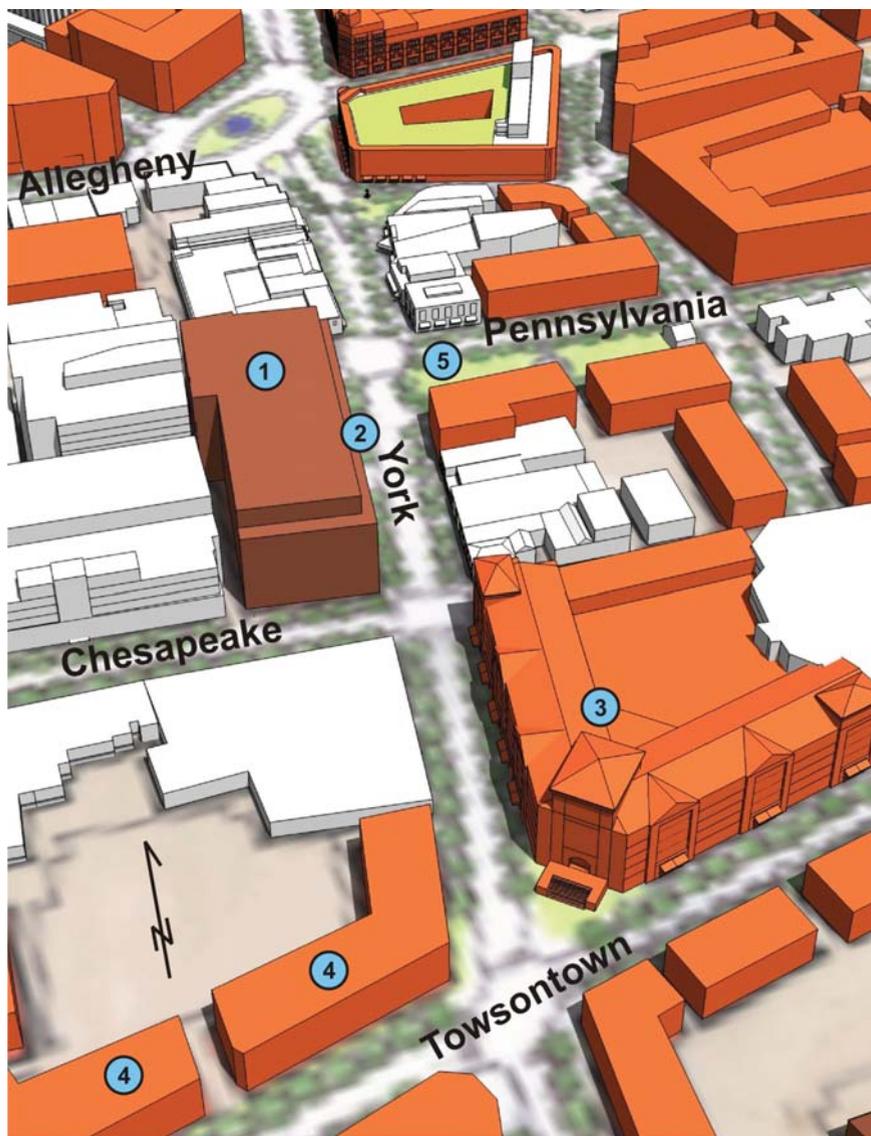
1. **Ensure appropriate Towson Commons re-design.** Towson Commons is slated for redevelopment in the near future. It is imperative that it continue to be mixed-use, with retail and restaurants on the ground floor and offices and/or residential above.

2. **Consider Bankers Way connection.** There is also the potential to create an opening in the new building to allow views and access to the Old Courthouse. This should *only* be included in the design if Bankers Way leading to Washington Avenue can be redesigned to become an attractive pedestrian space, something the UDAT recommended.

3. **Redevelop Towson Library.** The Towson Library should be redeveloped into a mixed use building that retains the library on site, but adds

retail and/or other active uses at the street level and office or residential on floors above the library. Part of this new building should be designed as a liner building to mask at least the first several floors of the parking garage fronting Towsontown Boulevard.

4. **Redevelop key parcels at NW corner of York and Towsontown.** These properties should be redeveloped as mixed-use buildings. At this writing, a developer is in the process of preparing a concept plan for this site. This is a highly visible and prominent site, and will be important to develop in a manner consistent with principles fostering walkability.

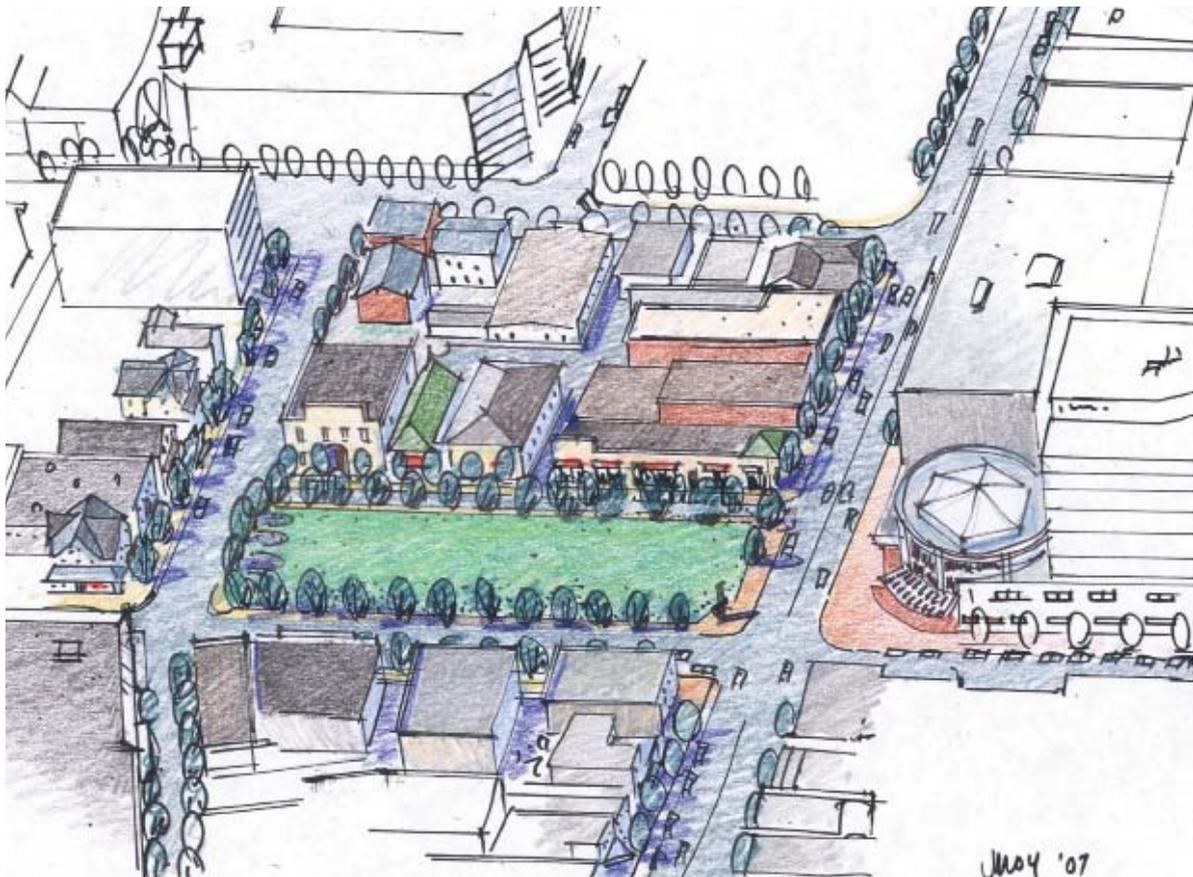




Bankers Way — The charrette team embraces the UDAT idea of using Bankers Way as a possible link between the Old Courthouse and York Road, but only if the alley can be made more attractive to pedestrians.

Parks and plazas:

5. *Develop new “central” park at the southeast corner of York and Pennsylvania.* The drawing below illustrates the park setting, which is currently occupied by a retail building and parking lots in front and behind it. New commercial buildings, possibly “live/work” units, would be developed to front on the new park. The idea of establishing a green space at this location has been explored by county staff and the Greenways Committee of Tomorrow’s



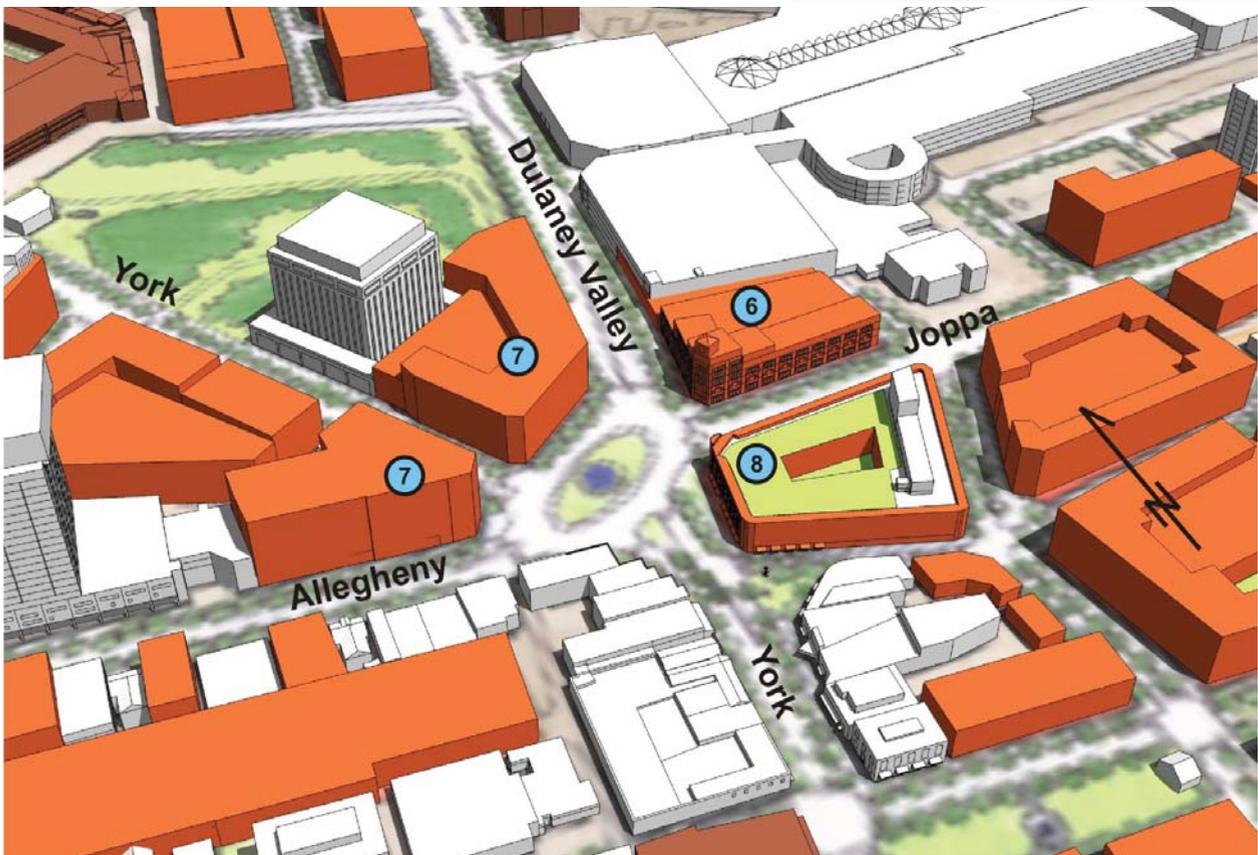
Focus Area 2: The Roundabout area

The roundabout area has the potential to be one of the most exciting places in Maryland — perhaps as engaging as one of the most appealing urban centers in the world. The photo at right and above shows Picadilly Circus in London while the photo below it shows the Towson roundabout area at the same scale. Notice how Picadilly, one of the most vibrant and exciting places in the world, occupies roughly the same space and pattern as the Towson roundabout area. Also notice that Picadilly's vibrancy is achieved with buildings that are only four to five stories tall, and with narrow streets.

While the greatest potential for bold change in the plan area is near the roundabout, the challenges in achieving this transformation would also be great. Despite the challenges, the benefits to Towson in terms of identity, recognition, prominence, and desirability would be enormous.



Towson meets London — The Towson roundabout's scale and street pattern (below) is similar to that of Picadilly Circus in London (above).

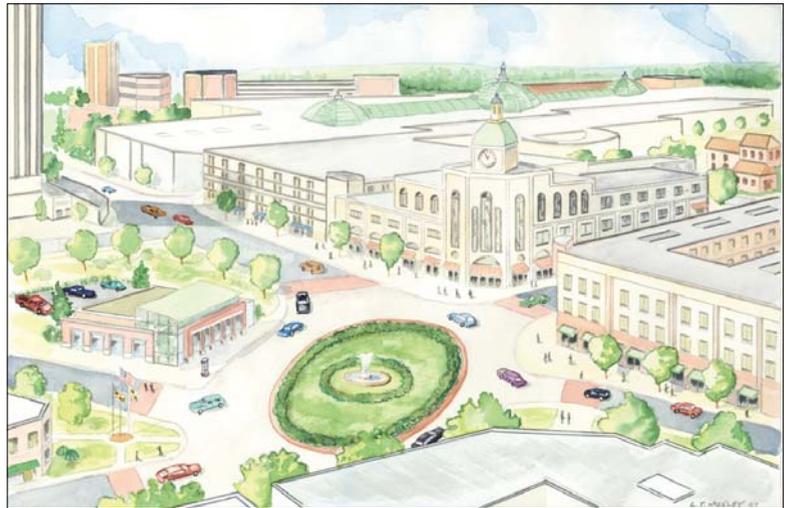


Infill and redevelopment:

6. **Develop a mixed-use building over the “Canyon.”** Developing this site is key to improving walkability in the heart of Towson, particularly because of its key location between downtown and Towson Town Center. Necessary steps should be taken by the county to ensure that this important site is converted to its best and highest use. The existing parking and retail functions can continue below street level as they do today, and the addition of a new building at street level, potentially as part of an expansion to the mall, should be developed. The new building, which could be designed as an extension of the mall itself, should feature a prominent, street-level entry on the roundabout, leading pedestrians directly to and from the mall, possibly through a classic retail arcade.

7. **Redevelop other key properties around the roundabout.** Both the newly constructed Fidelity Investment building and the small park proposed for the former gas station site are improved uses at their locations. However, these should be seen as temporary placeholders until it becomes feasible to replace them with higher and better uses that front the roundabout, namely, substantial mixed-use buildings.

8. **Towson Circle upper floor conversion.** The Towson Circle redevelopment of the vacant Hutzler’s department store was a very progressive and positive change for downtown Towson in the 1990’s. Given the market conditions at the time, a self storage facility use for the upper floors made economic sense. However, housing would be a more appropriate use of this space, and greatly help increase street life in the vicinity of the roundabout and York Road. This was also a recommendation of the UDAT. The re-design of the building could include an atrium and green roof.



Baltimore County Office of Planning

Towson’s roundabout area could be transformed into one of the most exciting and recognizable places in Maryland. The rendering above shows a short- to mid-term view, including the new Fidelity Investment building and the park being planned by the county at the former Shell gas station. These recent projects show progress in Towson’s continuing evolution. The rendering to the right depicts a potential, long-term buildout.



Focus Area 3: Towson Town Center Area

The mall is where the greatest amount of pedestrian activity occurs in Towson on any given day. Thousands of pedestrians stroll the corridors of the mall, shopping and eating. Most of them arrive by car, but a few shoppers enter the mall on foot. There is little synergy between downtown and the mall, but it doesn't have to be that way. Creating a seamless retail connection between the mall and downtown will not cause competition between the two retail destinations, but rather increase the appeal of both destinations. The mall expansion currently underway creates street-facing retail and new pedestrian entrances. This is an important positive step in the evolution of the mall, and creating more pedestrian oriented connections between the mall and its surroundings will make Towson more walkable.

Infill and redevelopment:

9. **Develop liner buildings along Dulaney Valley Road in front of parking garage.** In conjunction with the mixed-use building in Recommendation #6, there should also be street level retail shops designed to mask the existing parking garage on Dulaney Valley Road. This should extend all the way to the current mall entrance on Dulaney Valley. This would require removing one or two bays of parking at ground level to create shallow, but leasable retail frontages.

10. **Ensure appropriate redevelopment along mall edge on north side of Joppa Road.** Due to their location and potential higher value, market conditions may lead to a redevelopment of Bahama Breeze and the adjacent office building, particularly as part of a future phase of mall expansion. If and when this occurs, the designs should include proper pedestrian oriented frontages.

Streets and intersections:

11. **Work with SHA to Improve pedestrian realm along Dulaney Valley Road from roundabout to Fairmount Avenue.** Further study beyond this plan is needed to improve walkability along Dulaney Valley Road. This could potentially include adding on-street parking to the east side of Dulaney Valley Road in front of new street-fronting retail, and reducing travel lane widths in both directions from 12' to 10'. This would reduce vehicle speeds and permit the widening of sidewalks.

Streetscapes and frontages:

12. **Improve west side of street along Prospect Hill Cemetery and the Investment Building.** Improvements should include better landscaping that creates a more visible and attractive edge to the cemetery. Refacing the concrete retaining walls with a more attractive material would help. Removal or redesign of the covered parking entry to the Investment Building, in conjunction with its redevelopment, should also be explored.

