Creative Suitland Proposals

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Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability
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Contents

Creative Suitland and Sustainability

Creative Suitland began in February 2020 as an "arts-based community development strategy" that aims to support local arts through "job creation, artist opportunity, audience development, creative placemaking, and arts education." Suitland, Maryland is an unincorporated community within Prince George's County with approximately 25,000 residents. At its colorful facility, filled with locally sourced artwork, Creative Suitland's weekly classes for all ages aim to create space for residents to build relationships through affordable arts entertainment. The facility includes a large auditorium, studios for dance classes, and rooms for meetings and art classes.

Creative Suitland has the advantage of a unique community location. Across the street from the U.S. Census Bureau and near four public schools (William Beanes and Suitland Elementary Schools, Drew-Freeman Middle School, and Suitland High School), Creative Suitland is highly accessible, provided that the infrastructure exists to attract and manage artists. Volunteers have done an exceptional job of fostering an environment that emphasizes community needs and preferences. Further improvements can solidify Creative Suitland as a community asset.

Exterior work that complements the building's interior improvements can help Creative Suitland make bold placemaking statement. In conjunction with the Creative Suitland team, this report's recommendations seek to enhance the beauty, accessibility, and sustainability of Creative Suitland's building exterior and outdoor space. We suggest the flowing elements to bridge the arts, community development, and environmental sustainability:

- sustainable lighting
- green infrastructure
- outdoor stage
- outdoor furniture
- green roof
- grants and funding opportunities
- pedestrian bridge.

Maryland's Environmental Sustainability Efforts

Environmental sustainability unites politics, economics, and social sciences. Efforts to increase sustainable practices have increased in the past decade. In the commercial sphere, private companies across the nation have been encouraged to build environmentally sustainable structures through LEED-style building certifications and tax breaks.

Maryland has been at the forefront of these efforts, earning the title of "most improved" in the 2019 Energy Efficiency Scorecard from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. The state also created Sustainable Maryland, a certificate program for municipalities that want to "go green," save money, and sustain quality of life for years to come. Sustainable Maryland is a collaborative effort between the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland and the Maryland Municipal League. Suitland is not yet classified as a participating community, but as more groups in the area increase their environmentally sustainable practices, the community may be inclined to join the program.

A notable effort in tactical urbanism and placemaking is the Maryland's Smart Growth campaign. This campaign "advocates for a more environmentally and economically sustainable future that creates opportunities for all Marylanders through better development patterns" (Preservation Maryland).

The campaign works with local and state governments to advocate for smart growth as well as hosting workshops and conferences to educate leaders on smart growth trends and provide technical assistance to municipalities and organizations planning smart growth projects. The campaign has helped municipalities get grants and other opportunities.

Former governor, Parris Glendening was a vanguard of smart growth in Maryland and built much of his campaign on "preserving existing open space, protecting natural resources, reinvigorating established communities, and stemming the tide of suburban sprawl" (University of Maryland). He is currently the president of Smart Growth America's Leadership Institute and is on the advisory committee of the Governor's Institute on Community Design where he "advises state and local governments on smart growth, transit, and sustainability policies and practices" (Smart Growth America).

Maryland and Prince George's County offer a number of financial incentives and programs to cities, businesses, and residents to implement green practices (see page 17). Programs include the Raincheck Rebate program. Furthermore, the Maryland Energy Administration's EmPOWER Maryland program works with energy providers to pay commercial clients 40 to 70 percent of the total project cost to install new energy-efficient equipment. These programs offer incentives to take on green initiatives for their own merit by offering possible savings.

As Maryland increases its environmental sustainability efforts, we believe Creative Suitland can be a community leader in sustainability and environmental justice.

Sustainable Lighting

Description: To increase lighting in the parking lot and the building exterior, we suggest a minimum of three light fixtures; one to illuminate Creative Suitland's sign, another in the middle of the parking lot, and one near the site's northeast corner. Improvements should use sustainable lighting to decrease Creative Suitland's carbon footprint.
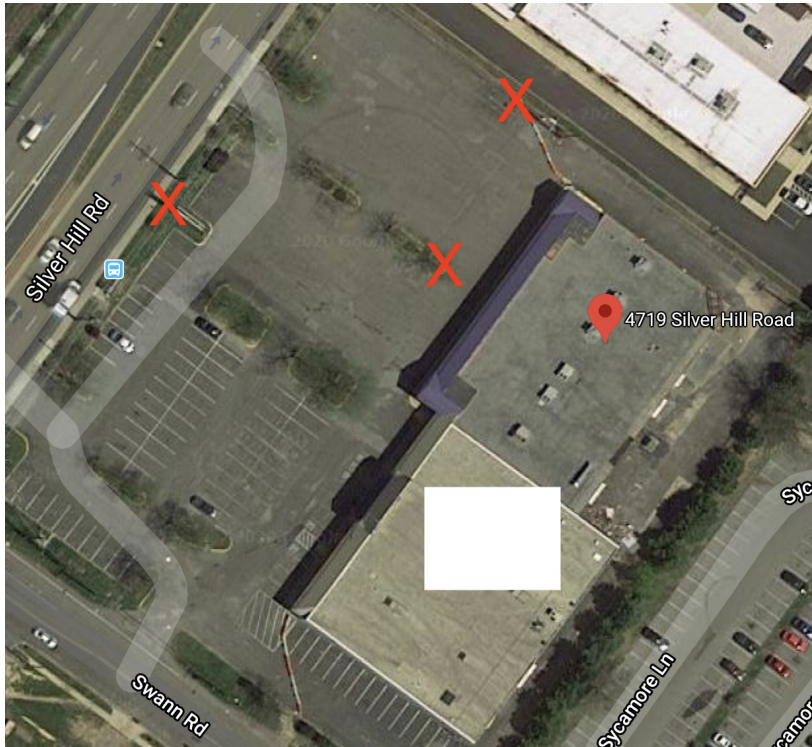

Figure 1. Proposed locations of new sustainable lighting fixtures

Community considerations: Since May 2018, six of the 18 events held at Creative Suitland have started at 5:00 p.m. or later, with event attendees on the premises during the evening hours. Because many events target youth and senior citizens, new lighting is a valuable safety tool. Additionally, Creative Suitland occupies an inconspicuous lot off Silver Hill Road; adding light fixtures could be a marketing mechanism to increase the community's awareness of the space.

Costs: The costs comprise permit fees, the streetlights, and projected PEPCO service charges. The service fees could be lowered by the state's EmPOWER Maryland program, which offers financial subsidies from the Energy Savings for Business Program for electricity charges associated with new sustainable light fixtures. Subsidies range from $50 to $85 dollars. More information on this grant can be found on page 17.

We recommend the Phenas 48W LED streetlight. It has a lifespan of more than 50,000 hours and a five-year warranty. Additionally, the light is weatherproof and resistant to rust.

Type	Cost
Electrical Permit Fee – light fixture (168010)	$25
Electrical Permit Fee – light pole (168010)	$40
Phenas 48W LED streetlight	$76.99

Timelines: The Prince George County's Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) oversees all streetlight requests. Requests for lighting in developed areas such as Creative Suitland are investigated via a lighting needs study that takes between 30 to 60 days to conduct. If the study warrants support for street lighting, the County will initiate the project if funding is available. Once initiated, the project it can take from one to two years to complete.

Stage	Time
Request	7 days
Lighting needs study	30 – 60 days
Lighting project	1 – 2 years
Total	**3 years**

Regulations: The Prince George County Code of Ordinances, Subtitle 23, Division 3, Section 23-140 discusses streetlight requirements. The relevant language follows:

> (c) In accordance with the Design and Construction Standards, the permittee shall be responsible for preparing an engineering plan for lighting all County roadways within and adjoining the permit area and, upon review and approval of the plan by the County and the utility company, for having the lights installed.

> (d) The permittee shall be responsible for ordering the installation of the streetlights from the utility company and for the payment of all associated costs related to the installation to the utility company.

(e) When the utility company has notified the County that the installation of the streetlights has been ordered and the costs for the installation have been paid in full, the road construction permit which is in effect will be processed for acceptance, provided the street construction is complete. The bonds posted for the construction of the roads should not be released until the utility has notified the County of receipt of payment for the streetlights, all other permit requirements having been met.

(f) The utility company shall be responsible for notifying the County when it has completed the installation of the streetlights covered by a particular permit.

(g) All small wireless facility permittees shall comply with Sec.23-144 the Design and Construction Standards, and the Design Manual for Small Wireless Facilities when locating small wireless facilities on streetlight poles.

Through PEPCO, Creative Suitland can apply for a Street Lighting Project, for assistance with the planning, code regulation maintenance, and installation periods.

Stakeholders:
- Creative Suitland
- Prince George County's Department of Public Works & Transportation
- Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO)
- Suitland community members
- Commuters on Silver Hill Road

Personnel:
- Prince George County's Department of Public Works & Transportation staff
- Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) staff

Green Infrastructure

Description: Green Infrastructure is an approach to water management that mimics the natural water cycle and protects, stores, and cleans urban runoff water. Examples include rain gardens (bioretention gardens) and porous pavements. Creative Suitland should plant rain gardens surrounding the building and through parking lot to increase sustainability, beautify the building's exterior, and increase community engagement and learning about environmental justice and sustainability.

Rain gardens use native plants to catch stormwater, which helps prevent flooding and filters stormwater before it reaches natural bodies of water or the drinking water supply. In urban environment, rain gardens are often designed to capture water running off impervious surfaces, such as parking lots and sidewalks. They can also filter nutrients and other pollutants in rainwater runoff. Native plants are well adapted to the environment and require fewer resources to maintain, while providing ecosystem services.

Figure 2. Examples of urban rain gardens

Community considerations: It takes patience and time for a community to choose its go-to gathering place, generated from the community rather than the organization. Offering community opportunities to beautify Creative Suitland's outdoor space and learn about environmental justice and sustainability could increase community involvement in Creative Suitland as a cultural hub. Building an outdoor space is an opportunity for Creative Suitland to create community engagement supporting the goal to make Suitland "a place of choice to work, live, and maintain a sense of place for existing residents" (Creative Suitland). Beautiful outdoor space will also add to Creative Suitland's curb appeal, enticing potential new members who may otherwise pass by the space.

Costs: The initial investment of site preparation and materials make up the bulk of the costs, with a self-installed rain garden less expensive than commercially installed rain gardens, which require permitting and installation of infrastructure in or around the garden itself to collect and drain water. Residential rain gardens average $4 per square foot (based on material costs), while commercial rain gardens average $10 to $40 per square foot.

Grants are often available to fund commercial rain gardens. The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin has a helpful cost calculator.

Garden	Costs
Self-installed rain garden	Planters: $70-$150 per planter Native plants: $7-$150 per plant depending on size and type Soil: $12-$50 per cubic yard Gardening tools (gloves, shovels, watering cans): $3-$15 Maintenance, such as yearly weeding or spraying, will be required
Commercially-installed rain garden	Depending on size, upwards of $500 per plot Rain garden plots and labor: $10-$40 per square foot Native plants: $7-$150 per plant depending on size and type Soil: $12-$50 per cubic yard Gardening tools (gloves, shovels, watering cans): $3-15 Maintenance, such as yearly weeding or spraying, will be required

Creative Suitland could use the garden as an educational tool, inviting native plant specialists, urban gardeners, and environmental justice advocates to talk about the importance of green infrastructure and community engagement in environmental initiatives.

Timelines: The timeline for a self-installed native plant garden is flexible, the garden can be built in pieces based on the budget or on scheduling community planting events. However, native plants are typically installed in early spring. A possible timeline for a self-installed garden follows:
- January: designate area for planting, either in a standing planter(s) or in space around the building (including the parking lot or around the Creative Suitland sign)
- February: advertisement community planting event(s)
- March: purchase native plants, soil, and tools
- March/April: community planting event

A more substantive timeline for a commercial rain garden can be found on the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin website.

Stakeholders:
- Community members: Community members' engagement with Creative Suitland will make it a true community space. They must be actively engaged in the process.
- Creative Suitland leadership and staff: The group's board must approve community outreach events and infrastructure changes while staff will implement community planting event(s), coordinate with any contractors, and purchase materials.
- The Capitol Market: Next door to Creative Suitland, the Capitol Market is new and likely looking to increase its visibility. Beautifying Creative Suitland's outdoor area would help the Capitol Market as well, and a partnership on community planting events could benefit both.
- Prince George's County government agencies: If Creative Suitland chooses to invest in a commercially installed rain garden, they will likely need permission and involvement by the county.

Personnel:
- Creative Suitland board and staff
- Community members
- Local gardener(s) or native plant expert(s)

Outdoor Stage

Description: As an arts center, Creative Suitland could use an outdoor stage for a number of activities, including live performances. An outdoor stage would present an opportunity to engage with the surrounding community by putting on shows or concerts. Additionally, it could provide a community space for the surrounding neighborhood.

Community Considerations and Stakeholders:
- Creative Suitland: The stage's primary user will be Creative Suitland and it must be designed to fit their needs. Given the highly customizable nature of this project, tailoring it to their vision would not be difficult, including its design and finish. In concert with the aim of environmental sustainability, a wooden stage would have a minimal negative environmental impact and can be designed to be environmentally friendly.
- Community members: As audience members, the community members should also be considered in the stage's seating and acoustics. Building the stage could be an opportunity to involve the community in construction, painting, and decorating the stage and surrounding area.
- Local sanitation: As noted by a Creative Suitland administrator, the stage should be designed and placed to accommodate service and emergency vehicles.

Costs: most of the work to create a 10 x 10 stage could be done in-house to keep the costs within a reasonable range. A sample stage and estimated cost breakdown follows and the sample design can be found here.

Without the knowing alley dimensions and the space required for trash collection, an exact price is hard to determine. However, this estimate could be scaled up down to fit the site. Additionally, a stage designed for outdoor use would have minimal enduring costs unless repairs are required.

Building a stage would be significantly cheaper than buying one premade. Premade stages start at $1,200. With this in mind, building one allows customization and could save money. Premade stages can be found online at The Stage Depot.

Material Quantity and Cost	
2x6x10' boards (21)	$167.56
2x10x10' boards (9)	$141.93
4x4x8' boards (1)	$7.77

3" deck screws (5 lbs)	$29.98
1⁄2x6" carriage bolts (16)	~$25
1⁄2" galvanized nuts (16)	~$15
1⁄2" galvanized washer (16)	$9.50
2"x10" joist hangers (8)	$15.52
1" Simpson nails (1lb)	~$20
Estimated cost	**$432.28**

Personnel: No specially trained personnel would be required. Volunteers would be necessary.

Figure 2. Potential design for an outdoor stage

Outdoor Furniture

Description: To invest in space-making, the facility should install outdoor furniture. The furniture would contribute to the organization's mission to improve sustainability by making outdoor activities more accessible to the public. Sustainability would be further supported by using furniture made from recycled materials; they may cost more, it is because they are sustainably sourced.

Benches, picnic tables, garbage cans, and bike racks should be placed at the front and side of the building. Benches would provide community members with a place to eat and congregate outdoors, as well as a waiting area for family members participating in Creative Suitland classes. Picnic tables will be essential when the Capitol Market opens up. Individuals will be able to take their meals outdoors and enjoy the fresh air. The tables may also attract nearby Census Bureau workers. Garbage cans are necessary to discard food trash and bike racks are an attractive, sustainable, outdoor item that can incentivize individuals to ride their bikes rather than drive to Creative Suitland.

Figure 3. Proposed furniture

Community Considerations: Planning outdoor space must consider community preferences. The proposed furniture has color options that match the colorful, bright, and welcoming theme the Creative Suitland team is using to draw attention to their facility. We also considered the Census Bureau employees when developing this plan, to extend and encourage community engagement. We address transportation methods with the installation of bike racks. Outdoor furniture can directly address Creative Suitland's social objectives in a sustainable way.

Costs: Benches, picnic tables, garbage cans, and bike racks range in price. The following estimates are from Belson Outdoors.

Type of Furniture	Cost	Source
Single Benches	$395-$460 depending on size and mount	Belson Outdoors
Picnic Tables	$680-$800 depending on size and ADA compliance	Belson Outdoors
Garbage Can	$670-$830 for a heavy-duty steel can	Belson Outdoors
Bike Rack	$150-$630 depending on number of bikes	Belson Outdoors

Creative Suitland should identify how much seating will be required for their outdoor space. Estimating how many people are expected for outdoor events, would allow a more specific cost estimate. That estimate should include shipping and installation costs. Quotes are offered on the Belson website.

Along with these initial costs, in the long-term, the furniture may need to be painted or updated, though steel furniture weathers more slowly than wooden outdoor furniture. Belson offers a three-year warranty.

Timeline: Ordering and shipping takes approximately one month.

Stakeholders:
- Creative Suitland Administration: The primary stakeholder is the Creative Suitland administration which will determining the budget, preferred style, and amount and type of seating.
- Community members: Community members will use the furniture and the choice and placement should consider their preferences and use to maximize the customer experience.

Personnel: Individuals will be needed to install the furniture and, in the future, there may be a need to repair broken or weathered furniture.

Green Roof

Description: A green roof is "a vegetated roof system that stores rainwater in a lightweight, engineered soil medium."[1] These structures help reduce water pollution and stormwater runoff by absorbing and filtering stormwater that would normally run off roofs in urban environments. They also help clean air, reduce urban heat, and provide food sources for at-risk pollinators. A green roof would provide Creative Suitland with a unique, eye-catching building feature, as well as reducing the building's heating and AC costs.

There are two styles of green roofs, extensive and intensive. An extensive green roof has two to six inches of substrate or soil mix and consists of low-lying, low to zero maintenance plants. Intensive green roofs are designed to be easily accessible, with a variety of plants, and a minimum of six inches of substrate.

Community Consideration: Green roofs should and do attract pollinators, including bees. This could hinder the use of Creative Suitland's outdoor community gathering space, given that people have bee allergies or don't want to be stung. Of course, measures can be taken to minimize this occurrence during outdoor events.

Costs: According to estimates in Prince George's County's green roof guidelines, installation costs between $10 and $30 per square foot, with annual maintenance costs of $0.75 to $1.50 per square foot. Green roofs require year-round, low-level maintenance, with added maintenance during droughts and in the first two years after installation. Installing a green roof requires a permit application and a contractor who can consult and install. While leaks are a concern and potential future cost, the chance of leaks forming has decreased as green roof technology has advanced. Leak detection systems can be installed with the price varying by contractor.

Prince George's County offers has a rebate program that could be a source of funding. The Rain Check Rebate program (see page 17) provides $10 for every square foot of extensive green roof and $20 for every square foot of intensive green roof on a nonprofit or commercial building. To qualify for the rebate, the project must seek approval from the County's Department of Environment prior to construction.

Stakeholders:
- Creative Suitland team
- Community members

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[1] Prince George's County Department of the Environment

- Prince George's County government

Personnel:
- Creative Suitland team
- Prince George's County Government
- Green roof contractor

Grants and Funding Opportunities

Description: This list of grants could help offset the costs of the proposed improvements. Maryland's strong commitment to bettering the environment is manifested through many projects, programs, and grants. The goal is to make it easier and more intuitive for businesses and residents to incorporate sustainability into their everyday routines. These grants will defray the costs of various green projects as well as educating Creative Suitland employees and community members on the importance of these projects.

If additional help is needed in finding more grant opportunities, with grant writing, or with understanding how programs work, UMD's [Environmental](#) [Finance Center](#) staff is a source of help and information. This office's purpose is to strengthen the capacity of local decision-makers to analyze environmental problems, develop innovative and effective methods of financing environmental efforts, and educate communities about the role of finance and economic development in protecting the environment.

Costs: Creative Suitland may need to hire a part-time staff member with experience in grants and sustainability projects. Some of these programs are loan-based, and will need to be paid off. There might also be enduring costs associated with project maintenance or new staff hired to maintain them.

Stakeholders:
- Creative Suitland staff: The staff member dedicated to this work will need to be knowledgeable about the projects Creative Suitland is engaging in and how they can support sustainability to qualify for these grants and programs. Staff could also educate community members about opportunities and about sustainability in general.
- Suitland community: There is an opportunity to educate the Suitland community. Many residents can also take advantage of these grants and pursuing them could generate community discussion of how residents can save money while positively effecting their community.

Personnel:
- Creative Suitland staff
- County or state offices

Timeline: Timelines vary with each project from a few days to a few weeks to assemble and submit a grant application. It takes a few weeks to a month to hear from the grantor and together the grantor and grantee can establish a project timeline.

Stormwater Management

These programs deal with projects that aim to reduce runoff and improve water quality.

- Prince George's County Raincheck Rebate
    - provides eligible applicants reimbursement for installing approved stormwater management practices. Homeowners, businesses, and nonprofit entities can recoup some of the costs of installing practices covered by the program
    - can be used for rain barrels, cisterns, urban tree canopy projects, rain gardens, pavement removal, permeable pavement, and green roofs
    - can receive up to $20,000
    - there is an approved landscape contractor list
    - rolling deadline, first come-first served

Energy

These programs deal with clean energy and energy efficiency projects.

- Jane E. Lawton Conservation Loan Program
    - provides eligible borrowers with loans that ranging from $50,000 - $500,000 to identify and install energy conservation improvements. Borrowers can use the cost savings generated by added improvements as the primary source of revenue for repaying the loans
- Empower Maryland
    - incentives for energy efficiency projects including lighting fixtures, energy assessments, etc. from various utility companies
    - deadlines depend on the utility provider
- Commercial Clean Energy Rebate Program (C-CERP)
    - State rebates to businesses, nonprofits, local governments, and State government agencies and departments that install clean energy systems on their facilities
    - qualified systems: solar photovoltaic ("PV"), solar thermal (water heating), and geothermal heat pumps
- Extensive database of energy incentives

Pedestrian Bridge

Description: This bridge, connecting the Census Bureau offices and the Metro station could be completed in two ways. The first option is a bridge from Suitland Metro to the Creative Suitland parking lot over Silver Hill Road. The second option is a bridge from Towne Square at Suitland Federal Center to the Census Bureau, over Suitland Road.

Community Considerations: Getting from the Suitland Metro and Census Bureau offices to "Suitland proper" is difficult. A pedestrian bridge would enable walkers from Towne Square at Suitland Federal Center to reach jobs at the Census Bureau by foot. It would allow people who work at the Census Bureau to reach Towne Square at Suitland Federal Center.

Cost: $1-2 million, based on Excel Manufacturing's Cost of a Pedestrian Bridge at $1,000-2,000 per foot. Maintenance costs would include paint and repair as needed.

Timeline: 10 years

Due to its high cost and long timeline, this project would need to be funded and constructed by Prince George's County. The County Planning Department and Planning Board would support the project with planning, approval, and funding.

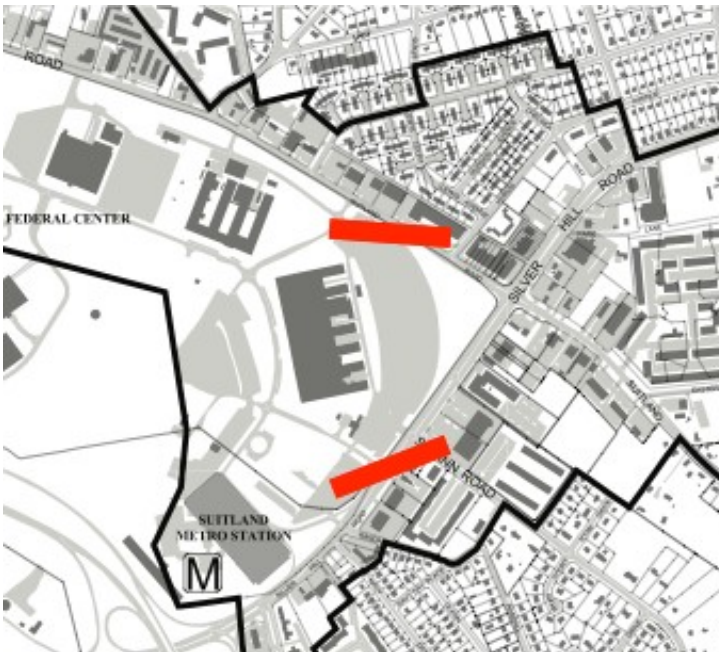**Personnel**: MD DOT inspection cycle

Figure 4. Two location options for the proposed pedestrian bridge

Conclusion

At the heart of community engagement lies trust-building, intentional changes to the built environment, and community practices that raise the quality of urban life for all community members. Sustainability and environmental justice activism promote equality, increased awareness, and healthier, more vibrant communities.

Maryland has taken great strides to include equity in its Smart Growth initiatives and sustainability-centered programs. This report provides proposals for Creative Suitland to enact sustainable environment practices. We hope that they can be a community engagement-centered guide for Creative Suitland that will help promote sustainability leadership and innovation for all of Suitland.

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